The Christ-Story of Philippians 2:6-11: 

Narrative Shape and Paraenetic Purpose 

in Paul’s Letter to Philippi 

A thesis submitted 
in fulfilment of requirements for 
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy 

by 
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July 2015
For Anne, Matthew, and Stephen

and in appreciation
of dear brothers and sisters
living under great pressures in the Arab world

“for he has graciously granted to us
the privilege not only of believing in Christ,
but of suffering for him as well”

Philippians 1:29
I want to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection
and the participation in his sufferings,
becoming conformed to his death,
and so somehow to attain
to the resurrection from the dead

Prayer of the Apostle Paul
Philippians 3:10-11
Abstract

This thesis argues the case that Philippians 2:6-11 represents a Pauline prose narrative (and is not a pre-Pauline hymn), which may be called the Christ-story, and should therefore be interpreted as prose narrative in terms of its form, function, and content; and that doing this provides fresh insights into a much studied and debated passage, some of which have hitherto remained unnoticed (or at least unreported), while providing a framework that now allows some previous major contributions to the study of this passage to be brought together in order to form a comprehensive overall interpretation.

The thesis is arranged in four parts: Part I first introduces the passage of Philippians 2:6-11, noting the vast amount of scholarship written about it, highlighting some important contributions of relevance, and outlining the plan of the study (Chapter 1), then introduces the letter to the Philippians itself, the basic situation of both Paul and his Philippian recipients and the occasion of the letter, including brief discussion of some critical issues, though focussing on the intersecting narratives of the epistle and, given that Philippi in the first century was a Roman colony with life dominated by Roman governance and values, on the letter’s political background (Chapter 2).

Part II then deals with major lines of interpretation in the study of this passage, beginning with the issues of its literary form and authorship, whether Philippians 2:6-11 represents a pre-Pauline hymn or a Pauline narrative; (Chapter 3); next attempting to specify the precise function of the passage within its epistolary context – whether it is ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘exemplary,’ or whether another more nuanced designation may be more appropriate, in particular by providing a detailed treatment of the paraenetic context of vv. 6-11 and by strengthening M. Bockmuehl’s case for a particular reading of the elliptical v. 5b, pointing additionally to a paradigmatic understanding of the passage in which participation is invited (Chapter 4); then, thirdly, seeking to identify the implicit stories within the explicit narrative, by focussing on the influential contribution of N. T. Wright on interpretation of the passage in light of his and R. W. Hoover’s rendering of Philippians 2:6b, discussing its narrative-theological significance, and then asking what clues the text itself offers for identifying a particular narrative background against which it may be understood, particularly for its first hearers (Chapter 5).

The third Part (III) builds upon the conclusions of the previous chapters and begins to analyse and interpret the passage as a narrative, offering the major contribution of the thesis in two chapters. Initially, Chapter 6 explores previous attempts at defining a chiastic shape, regarded by the author as unsuccessful, before suggesting a more appropriate method to define the narrative shape of the passage, and explaining in detail how the passage works in terms of its narrative syntax, sentence structure and function. Then, Chapter 7 focuses on the narrative shape of Philippians 2:6-11, identifying its overall shape, and positing of it a modified narrative chiasmus, so structured as a consequence of Paul carefully narrating a series of reversals in his account of the story of Christ. The particular narrative reversals are discussed and justified in some detail, followed by an examination of two important narrative threads running through the entire story, with the chapter going on to provide a detailed literary analysis of the passage, exploring the narrative setting, characters, stage and function of each element in the text, and seeking to integrate interpretative decisions made earlier in the study.
Part IV, in final conclusion, offers a brief summary of the work, describing the main results demonstrated concerning the form, function and meaning of Philippians 2:6-11 in its epistolary context, and considering the power of the story as a shaper of other stories and in inviting participation in it (Chapter 8).

More specifically, the investigation, in supporting the overall thesis mentioned above, presents a case for each of the following conclusions:

(i) That Philippians 2:6-11 should no longer be regarded as an early Christian hymn incorporated by Paul in his letter to the Philippians, but instead is best understood as two sentences of prose narrative, written by the apostle himself, and which may better be described as the ‘Christ-story’;

(ii) That the story of Philippians 2:6-11 should be interpreted as an exemplary-paradigmatic Pauline narrative, that is, with a dual epistolary function: as an exemplary story, it models the mindset in thought and action that Paul desires to be reproduced in the lives of his status-obsessed hearers, thus supporting the surrounding paraenesis in the epistle; and as a paradigmatic narrative it both functions to structure Christian existence in various ways and also invites participation in Christ, so that his story might begin to shape their own lives, from their situation at the time of writing, and until the last day;

(iii) That the Christ-story also implicitly relates a counter-imperial narrative, with implicit contrasts to the emperor and other ancient rulers, in which Paul implicitly calls the Roman Philippians to supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and to the new heavenly politeuma under his lordship, while also providing them with encouragement as a Christian community in Philippi to appear as lights in a hostile world, with hope for future vindication of the steadfastness and unity that Paul urges them to maintain in the face of such opposition.

(iv) That Paul has given the Christ-story a (modified ‘V’)-shape, and has carefully crafted it in order to narrate several key reversals in the journey of Jesus Christ (up to now unreported as such), which has resulted in the creation of a modified narrative chiasmus, a chiasmus of narrative events, the elucidation of which helps us to understand better the passage as a whole;

(v) That two narrative threads also run through the passage as a whole, which may be described as the story of the visible cruciform God, and the motif of the obedient servant; the first relates the story of the invisible God made visible, representing Christ’s identity, posture and praxis, leading to his death on the cross, and implicitly revealing the surprising character of God, while the second both exemplifies and implicitly commands obedient servanthood for the Philippian community, closely linking the passage to its preceding and following paraenetic context;

(vi) That as a narrative in both form and content, the Christ-story needs to be interpreted as a narrative, allowing a detailed literary appreciation of its shape, motifs, and construction to assist in determining its overall meaning and function for both its first and subsequent hearers and readers. Further, having concluded this, a final extensive literary, narrative analysis is provided, which relates each element of the text to its meaning for, and likely impact upon, the first hearers, while integrating other previous interpretative decisions into the discussion;
(vii) Finally, that the climax of the story as a whole is to be found not in the act of acclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, but in the centre of the narrative, in the shocking reference to Jesus dying what was regarded as a slave’s humiliating death on a Roman cross; this conclusion is related to the other narrative elements to convey the overall narrative impact of this climax for both original and subsequent recipients of the letter.

The investigation is further supported by four appendices and offers an extensive bibliography.
Preface

A thesis focussing on one of the most discussed and demanding texts in Paul’s letters, the Christ-story of Philippians 2:6-11, particularly in view of the voluminous secondary literature written about this passage, and of the complexity of debates about virtually every word and element in the text, with up to twenty major interpretations of individual words in the text, could not have been completed without the faithful support and encouragement of my family, many friends, academic advisors, and colleagues, not to mention visits to many libraries over an extended period of time (which the bibliography may bear witness to).

In the introduction to the study, I share briefly some aspects of the journey that has been mine, researching Paul’s letter to the Philippians (among other passages in his letters) and developing this thesis, so here I will focus on offering thanks to some of those who have so supported me throughout or at particular stages of my doctoral studies.

Reading for the thesis has taken place variously in Dunedin, Auckland, Melbourne, Cambridge, and Amman, Jordan. I would thus first like to offer thanks to institutions hosting the libraries I gathered many excellent resources from, including their librarians, for their practical support and help as I read, researched and wrote this thesis: especially Tyndale House Library (Cambridge, UK) (with special thanks to Dr Elizabeth Magba, [former] Librarian, and to the Warden and Staff of Tyndale House, for several short periods of residency there, which were hugely beneficial, including facilitating borrowing access at the Cambridge University Library); Laidlaw College Library (Auckland); John Kinder Theological Library, St John’s College (Auckland); The Dalton McCaughey Library (Melbourne); Melbourne School of Theology Library; Leon Morris Library, Ridley College (Melbourne); and to the Otago University Distance Library Services, many thanks for your superb support and help (especially to Emma, but also to Christy, Bronwyn, and Dana); thanks are also due to staff at the Otago University Doctoral Office (especially Tina Shaw and Andrea McCready) and to staff in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Otago University.

Special thanks are due to my two doctoral supervisors, one in each of the home countries I share an attachment to, New Zealand (my wife, Anne being a Kiwi) and Australia: Professor Paul Trebilco, Professor of New Testament Studies, Department of Theology and Religion, University of Otago and Dr Colin Kruse, Senior Lecturer in New Testament, Melbourne School of Theology, who both have provided invaluable feedback on my work and much encouragement along the way, over many years, which has been greatly appreciated.

I would also like to express thanks for the support of colleagues and friends at the Program for Theological Education by Extension (PTEE), in Amman Jordan; and of colleagues and friends in MECO International, with whom we serve the Church in the Arab world.

In particular I express my immense gratitude and appreciation for family, friends, supporters, and supporting churches, including our two home churches in Melbourne and Auckland, and a newly adopted church in the small country town of Marton (NZ), many of whom encouraged me (and our family) greatly throughout the journey, including some who prayed regularly and sacrificially throughout the entire course of my studies. Thank you ever so much, each one of you!
Special thanks are also due to my beloved wife, Anne, and our two beloved sons, Matthew and Stephen, for your great sacrifices, love, patience, and constant support throughout the extended duration of research and writing of this thesis, including enduring some periods of separation as a family, or other times when together, but when I had to be sitting at the desk reading and writing; you are each so wonderful and I love you very much!

Lastly, I must express gratitude for the Apostle Paul, himself, whose epistolary writings have now kept me inspired over three decades of my life, and to his Lord, and mine, Jesus Christ, to whom I finally offer all praise and thanks.

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## Abbreviations

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<td>AARAS</td>
<td>American Academy of Religion Academy Series</td>
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<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible (now Anchor Yale Bible)</td>
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<td>ANRW</td>
<td>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</td>
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Part I

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Invitation to Begin a Climb

Of all the passages in the Pauline corpus, perhaps even in the New Testament itself, none has been more studied or commented on than Philippians 2:5-11, described by Ralph Martin as ‘the beating heart of this letter.’ Douglas Campbell has recently described it as ‘one of the most famous christological paragraphs that Paul ever penned.’ That could be an understatement; based on all that others have written about it, it might well be the most famous. John Reumann recently noted that the passage ‘has long been the Mt Everest of Philippians study,’ to which John Lounibos wryly added, ‘the difficulty of the climb is the big crowd of climbers and their baggage at the base camp.’ It is probably time for scholars to admit that on this passage (at least) it is now impossible to keep up with all the relevant secondary literature. As N. T. Wright now says (of Pauline studies generally): ‘We are long

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2 D. A. Campbell, Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 147.
4 J. B. Lounibos, Self-Emptying of Christ and the Christian: Three Essays on Kenosis (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) 62. Lounibos (62) also reports that the first draft of Reumann’s Philippians (the product of ‘decades of writing and research’) amounted to 2,800 pages and, while the (posthumously) published volume was by comparison a mere 805 pages, it cited over 3,000 scholars.
5 Cf., to list but a few, the summaries of: M. Bockmuehl, The Epistle to the Philippians (BNTC 11; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, London: Black, 1998) 115: ‘a passage which in the twentieth century has been the subject of an uncontrollable deluge of scholarly debate’; and earlier in his “‘The Form of God” (Phil 2:6): Variations on a Theme of Jewish Mysticism,’ JTS NS 48 no. 1 (1997) 1: ‘Few [canonical Christian texts] if any have in living memory received even a comparable amount of scholarly attention. We have come to the point where none but the most conceited could claim to have mastered the secondary literature, and none but the dullest would find pleasure or interest in wading through it’(!); see also G. D. Fee, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 39: ‘the secondary literature on this passage … has mushroomed incrementally [sic] over the past forty years’ [surely he means exponentially!]; and the comments of S. E. Fowl, Philippians (THNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 49; and M. D. Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 88 (orig. publ. in Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel [E. E. Ellis & E. Grässer, eds.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975]), both of whom cite
past the time when one could read, or even skim-read, “everything.”’¹ And yet Martin, who himself devoted some forty years to the study of this passage,² admitted, in the 1997 preface to his A Hymn of Christ (formerly titled Carmen Christi, but now, in its 3rd edition, a work of nearly 450 pages), that ‘this text has not yet yielded its full secrets or rich treasures.’³ And one year later, in a major compilation of essays on the passage, Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2,⁴ he was able to add, ‘it is … clear that the last word on Philippians 2 has not been spoken.’⁵ With such an invitation to offer some new thoughts on the passage, we may begin to climb the mountain, albeit with a high degree of trepidation.

### 1.2 About the Journey and Climb Ahead

This dissertation is about what I am calling ‘the Christ-story’ of Philippians 2:6-11. Whatever its literary genre may be, it clearly contains a story in which Jesus Christ is the protagonist or the recipient of actions directed towards him. Sometimes I will refer to this passage as Phil 2:6-11, and sometimes as Phil 2:5-11. Verses 6-11 represent the story proper, a careful narration of selected events in the life and journey of Jesus Christ predominantly using main verbs in the indicative mood,⁶ with dependent participles. Verse 5 represents an imperative clause, without any form of narration. Yet while the story formally commences in v. 6a, with a clause begun with the relative pronoun ὃς (‘who’), nevertheless v. 5 supplies not only its antecedent, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦ (‘Christ Jesus’), but also functions as a linking transition from the

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¹ A. B. BRUCE (in 1876): ‘The diversity of opinion prevailing among interpreters in regard to the meaning [of this passage] … is enough to fill the student with despair and to afflict him with intellectual paralysis’ (The Humiliation of Christ [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876] 8), to which HOOKER (in 1975; repr. 1990) adds, ‘Nearly 100 years later, the cause of despair has increased out of all proportion – but the paralysis has apparently still not overtaken us’ (‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 88). Since HOOKER, a further 40 years of scholarship has been added, and a comprehensive bibliography for this passage alone would be well over 800 items by now!


⁴ MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xl; see prev. note for full reference; the original edition was titled Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship (SNTSMS 4; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967; 2nd ed. with same title: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).


⁶ There are also two main verbs in the subjunctive mood in vv. 10-11.
preceding paraenesis to the story itself, and thus as its introduction. But there will be more (in fact, much more) on these and other details later.¹

Paul’s letter to the Philippians² is written to a Christian community in the Roman colony of Philippi, previously a Greek settlement founded in 356 B.C. by, and hence named after, Philip II, king of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great.³ Paul himself founded this Christian community (Phil 1:5-6; 4:15; cf. Acts 16:9-40) and his letter reveals a very close and intimate friendship between him and his epistolary recipients.⁴

The current consensus on Phil 2:6-11 is that it represents an early Christian hymn, which Paul has incorporated into this letter (or letters) to the Philippian believers. Some of those who suggest this believe Paul may have added one or more lines to this early hymn as he composed Philippians. Due to the extended christological focus of the passage, it has very often come to be designated as a ‘Christ-hymn,’⁵ belonging to a supposed species or genre of ‘Christ-hymns’¹ or ‘hymns to Christ’² within the New Testament.³

¹ Even though almost everything one says about Philippians, especially about this passage, is debated by scholars (cf. the preceding section, esp. p. 1 n. 5), I will attempt a degree of restraint from launching into such debates at this introductory stage in the investigation, mostly saving them up for subsequent chapters (reader, be warned). I should also clarify my use of ‘cf.’: this will mean ‘compare,’ always referring to views that are similar or comparable; for contrasting, opposing, or differing views, I will instead use ‘contrast’ or ‘contra,’ or otherwise make that clear.

² Or ‘letters’ if one accepts the hypothesis that the extant, canonical epistle represents a compilation of two or more letters written by the apostle to this community; this issue of the literary integrity of Philippians will be discussed briefly in Chapter 2 following.

³ F. F. BRUCE, Philippians (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989) 1; most commentaries give more information on the early settlement and colony of Philippi, but as it is widely available, I will not repeat it here; however, a brief overview of critical issues in Philippians studies will follow in Chapter 2 below.


⁵ To cite but a few examples among many using this designation, see F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 68; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 79; B. B. THURSTON & J. M. RYAN, Philippians and Philemon (Sacra Pagina 10; Collegeville, MN: Glazier/Liturgical, 2005) 80 (THURSTON authored the commentary on Philippians); HANSEN, Philippians, 133; D. FLEMMING, Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition (NBBC;
This study will seek to challenge this existing consensus, by building on and expanding the work of a few lone voices ‘crying in the wilderness’ who have begun to raise doubts and serious questions about the alleged hymnic origin and genre of the passage.

Specifically, it aims to demonstrate in a comprehensive fashion that vv. 6-11 in Philippians 2 represents a Pauline prose narrative (and not a pre-Pauline hymn) and should therefore be interpreted as prose narrative in terms of its form, function, and content. Given the wide recognition of the significance and importance of this narrative of Christ Jesus within Paul’s letter, which we can confirm as we examine its paraenetic epistolary context, I will therefore suggest and defend the proposition, mentioned above, that a new referent to describe the passage (vv. 6-11) should be ‘the Christ-story.’ This will involve overturning the popular modern label, ‘the Christ-hymn’ and I will explain why that is important for modern scholarship on the passage.

But the primary purpose is not simply to identify a narrative composition of prose writing. The ultimate goal (our Everest summit) in respect of Phil 2:6-11 will be to analyse and interpret it, in its epistolary context, as a narrative. To date, a thorough-going, detailed

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1. [refer to the prev. page] Reinhard DEICHGRÄBER, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit* (Göttingen: Van-denhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) 106-196, defines it thus in answer to his own question, ‘What is a Christ-hymn [Chrisushymnus]?’: ‘We understand by this such passages whose contents speak of Christ and his work (especially his humiliation and exaltation) and because of whose vocabulary, style and construction can truly be described as poetic’ (p. 106; ET: R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, xliii n. 8).


3. [refer to the prev. page] R. P. MARTIN’s list of ‘carmina Christi’ includes Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 1:20; 3:18-22; Heb 1:3a-4; John 1:1-14; Rev 5:1-14 (*Hymn of Christ*, xxxii); DEICHGRÄBER lists Rom 11:33-36 as a ‘hymn to God’ and Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 2:21-25 as ‘hymns to Christ’ (*Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus*, 9, 61-64, 118-155); such lists are, of course, disputed; as evidence that such ‘hymns’ existed in the Pauline assemblies, MARTIN points to the testimony of Col 3:16-17 and Eph 5:19-20; cf. 1 Tim 3:16 (p. xliiv).
literary analysis of the passage as a story has not yet been attempted. My identification of the overall narrative shape of the story and particular patterns within the story represents an approach that others might have seen, but to the best of my knowledge have not yet articulated. With interpretative interest focussing on an alleged early Christian hymn that is not surprising; much effort has gone into identifying its supposed hymnic structure, and its hymnic purpose (both as a hypothetical independent composition, and as found within Paul’s letter), to the neglect of the story within it.¹ I intend therefore to offer a modest original contribution to study of this unique text by highlighting both narrative form and content, allowing a new appreciation of its literary shape, motifs, and construction, and thereby assisting in determining afresh its overall meaning and function for both its first and subsequent hearers. In the course of this study we will see how the narrative content of the passage determines its form, and then how the narrative form expresses and even enhances its content, meaning, and function. The journey towards that goal is multi-faceted, and I will discuss the route to be taken shortly.

However, a caveat is needed here; it is not possible to deal with all the issues raised by this text (even if we wanted to do that), for the subject matter raises so many complex and controversial issues for the modern interpreter. Entire PhD theses are being written on individual words in the passage.² Markus Bockmuehl is honest enough to admit, ‘a comprehensive treatment of the whole passage now seems scarcely possible – or, dare one say it, even desirable.’³ This work, therefore, and with some necessity (for both sanity and space), will be focussed upon issues relating to the passage as a narrative within its epistolary context.

Yet this particular attempt to reach our summit draws upon the work of many others, some of whom have made significant contributions – cutting a track to follow in, and setting up ropes and ladders in the difficult sections of the climb. Space does not allow them all to be mentioned in this introduction; and nor does the technical complexity of the materials we are about to engage with and the mind-boggling volume of secondary literature on this passage.

¹ Cf. my discussion further below on pp. 53-54.
² One recent example is Daniel J. Fabricatore’s important study (of, in this case, a twice-mentioned word), Form of God, Form of a Servant: An Examination of the Greek Noun μορφή in Philippians 2:6-7 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010).
In what follows, therefore, I will restrict my comments to those scholars with whom I repeatedly interact, or to whom I express a significant debt as I build upon and develop their previous work.¹

1.3 A Brief Glance at Some of the Climbers, Past and Present²

Perhaps the most wide-ranging study of Phil 2:5-11 to date has been that of the late R. P. Martin, mentioned above, *A Hymn of Christ*.³ Yet the bulk of this major work was written in 1963, and published in 1967,⁴ nearly fifty years ago. Martin since added two updates in 1983 and 1997, though without altering the main body of the 1967 monograph.⁵ I have learnt much from his thorough scholarship and find myself in agreement on many smaller details, but in disagreement over three critical ‘big picture’ issues, namely his insistence upon the passage being called a ‘hymn of Christ’ (*carmen Christi*), his one-sided advocacy for the so-called ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ interpretation of the passage, in which he largely follows Ernst Käsemann’s noteworthy but polemical article on Phil 2:5-11,⁶ and also his translation and theological understanding of v. 6bc in relation to the whole passage. Those matters will receive attention in subsequent chapters.

I referred above to a few lonely voices crying in the wilderness, in relation to the literary genre of the passage. Notable among the small minority pointing away from a ‘hymnic’ designation for Phil 2:6-11 have been Gordon Fee and Stephen Fowl.⁷ The specifics of their

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¹ On my referencing of particular viewpoints, the convention I will adopt is explained in p. 2 n. 1 above.
² As mentioned above, this section, of some necessity, will indeed be a brief glance; in the main body of this work I will discuss the views of many scholars upon seemingly uncountable details concerning these six verses in Philippians 2, but which are simply too numerous to mention here.
³ See p. 2 above.
⁵ The 2nd edition (1983) added a new preface (pp. xi-xxxix of *Hymn of Christ*), accounting for scholarship from 1963-1983, while the 3rd edition (1997) added a further extended preface to account for scholarly discussion since 1983 (pp. xl-lxiv); MARTIN also added a brief reflection in 1998 in the volume, *Where Christology Began*, ‘*Carmen Christi* Revisited,’ 1-5; and added a further 73 pp. in his revision of HAWTHORNE’s WBC volume on Philippians in 2004 (see p. 1 n. 1 above; the revision does not entirely satisfy, since it sometimes contradicts HAWTHORNE’s views within the same commentary).
contributions and my indebtedness to them will become evident as we proceed. However, the present work will seek to explore a fuller range of evidence for determining the literary form and genre of the passage.

Demonstrating that the passage represents a Pauline composition of prose narrative will, as I have suggested, lead to fresh insights into a much studied and debated passage, some of which have hitherto remained unnoticed. It will also provide a framework that may allow some previous major contributions to the study of this passage to be brought together in order to form a robust overall interpretation. While we will consider the views of many scholars in the pages to come, there are four whose input into interpretation of the passage has been particularly important and relevant to the present work.

Arguably one of the most significant contributions to study of the Christ-story of Phil 2:6-11 has been N. T. Wright’s 1986 article, ‘ἀρπαγμός and the Meaning of Philippians 2:5-11,’¹ which he revised and set within a wider context in a chapter on Phil 2:5-11 in his 1991 work, The Climax of the Covenant.² Building upon the philological analysis of Roy Hoover,³ it has been one of the most helpful in cutting through a large amount of theological confusion and difficulty in interpreting the passage, and for enabling a persuasive, coherent theological understanding of the whole text in its context to emerge. I will discuss it in some detail later, and will respond to several challenges to Wright, which to this point in time have largely gone unanswered, even by Wright himself.⁴ While essentially correct, I believe, it is not without its weaknesses. I will suggest that Wright ‘overworks’ the text attempting to identify multiple stands of biblical meta-narrative within the passage.⁵

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⁴ See especially Chapter 5, Section 5.2 below.
⁵ Thus, in addition to his excellent understanding of the passage as a story of God and God’s character, while also being a story of Christ (N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 83-84, 86-87), Wright (p. 90) further sees ‘Christ as Adam, Christ as Servant, and Christ the pre-existent one’ combined in the passage to form an ‘Adam-christology and Servant-christology,’ both of which ‘are really Israel-christologies’ (cf. pp. 57-62, 90-97; and his recent *Faithfulness of God*, 686).
However, more pertinently, I hope to explicate a crucial political implication of his findings on v. 6bc for a narrative understanding of Phil 2:6-11, which Wright himself had not seen in 1991. He appears more recently to have recognized this interpretative key in general terms, but is yet to expound in any detail its significance for the passage. It remains to be seen, then, to what extent the present work may anticipate Wright’s long awaited ICC commentary on Philippians by offering my own carefully nuanced political reading of his (and Hoover’s) findings on v. 6bc.

Wright’s own more recent recognition of a political background to read Phil 2:6-11 against is due in large part to the doctoral work of one of his students, Peter Oakes, to whom I also express a debt of appreciation. Oakes’ excellent 2001 study, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, alongside a persuasive account of the composition of the Philippian church situated in its Roman community, has made a careful and compelling case to read Phil 2:6-11, especially vv. 9-11, against a political, counter-imperial background. We will discuss this and its implications in later chapters. Although not the first to read Phil 2:6-11 in this way, Oakes, together with a now growing number of other scholars, has begun to convince others on this

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1 See my discussion of this on p. 362 below (and see nn. 1, 4 there); for Wright’s admission of his previous lack of ‘sight’ on this issue, see *Faithfulness of God*, 687; however, cf. 1292-1299, which represents a small attempt on his part to remedy the deficiency, although still not discussing it in relation to Phil 2:6.


3 I will certainly not presume, however, that Wright will agree with my interpretation and analysis.


6 On the interpretation of Paul or Philippians 2 against a political background, among many others being written (not all of which I am in complete agreement with), see: (i) discussing the issue with respect to Philippians, Oakes, ‘Remapping the Universe,’ 301-322; N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 59-79; N. T. Wright, ‘Paul’s Gospel,’ 173-183; his ‘Philippians, Book of,’ *DTIB* (2005) 588-590; and also *Faithfulness of God*, 687, 1271-1319, esp. 1292-1299; D. Seeley, ‘The Background of the Philippians Hymn (2:6-11),’ *JHC* 1 (1994) 49-72; L. Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* [NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995], 41-67, 217-224; M. Tellbe,
passage, as he has Wright, to the point that Joseph Hellerman in his 2005 monograph, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum*, is able to conclude, ‘that Christ is presented in the passage in contrast to the Roman emperor and to imperial ideology can no longer be disputed.’

However, in one area I will seek to re-align Oakes’ contribution to the political background of Phil 2:6-11. He primarily draws out the implications of vv. 9-11 against such a background (and on those verses I am substantially persuaded by him), yet he fails, in my opinion, to see that the imperial contrast should be drawn much earlier in the story, at v. 6bc, and then

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1. Note Oakes’ own comments on this in his *Philippians*, 137.

2. J. H. HELLERMAN, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (SNTSMS 132; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 162. It should be noted that others have drawn comparisons instead between Christ and Alexander the Great: W. JAEGER, ‘Eine stilgeschichtliche Studie zum Philippberbrief,’ *Hermes* 50 no. 4 (1915) 550-552; A. A. EHRHARDT, *Jesus Christ and Alexander the Great,* *JTS* os 46 no.s 181-182 (1945) 45-51; cf. the discussion of R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 155-157; and recently, note S. VOLLKENWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub” der Gottgleichheit: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vorschlag zu Phil. 2.6(-11),’ *NTS* 45 no. 3 (1999) 413-433, esp. 424-427 (on him, see pp. 292-298 in Chapter 5 §5.2.6 below). To my mind, it is not an either/or situation; I will argue for an implicit contrast in v. 6bc not only with the Roman emperor (though he might be heard by the Philippians as the primary contrast) but also generally with other ancient rulers and despots (who might well include Alexander, given his connection to Philippi; see p. 3 above).
continuing into vv. 7-8. I will argue that Paul’s Philippian recipients would identify an implicit contrast with the emperor (and other ancient rulers) from the beginning of the story, as they hear the first two words (v. 6b) of the main verb clause of v. 6bc in relation to the opening participial phrase (v. 6a), and then the adversative ‘but’ of v. 7a, surprisingly and shockingly, introducing the contrastive actions of Christ in vv. 7-8, all the way to his death on the cross. I will also argue that v. 6b, therefore, has a particular narrative function, which is vital to the imperial contrast of the whole story.

Hellerman, who I mentioned above, is another scholar to whom I am indebted in this study. Alongside his appreciation of the political background to the passage, he has carefully explored the Roman social context against which we may better understand not only vv. 6-11 themselves, but their function within the paraenetic context of the letter. In particular, Hellerman makes a convincing case that the passage, at least in part, addresses issues of social status, honour, position and power, which have immediate relevance to Paul’s specific exhortations to the community in the preceding and following context of the passage, and to their Roman social and cultural background. He also helpfully highlights the importance of visual indicators of social status, which I will argue is central to one of the key narrative threads running through the passage. Hellerman further offers a brilliant analysis of Christ’s social descent in the first half of the story, vv. 6-8, which he calls a *cursus pudorum* or sequence of ignominies, and which challenges and subverts the Roman (and Philippian) preoccupation with the converse *cursus honorum* or sequence of progressively increasing honours and social standing.

If Oakes gets the political background of the story right in its second half, but falls short in not recognizing an implicit political contrast in its first half, I will suggest that Hellerman

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1. This is not surprising, given his supervisor, Wright’s inability to see this implication when he first wrote on Phil 2:6.


3. On the social status implications of the text, alongside Hellerman, one should also consult the valuable 2001 work of Oakes, *Philippians*, 175-210, and Fowl’s earlier, important 1990 monograph, *Story of Christ*, 53-58; both of them are sensitive to Hellerman’s concerns, though he offers the most important account from this perspective.

4. On this, see especially Figure 7.3 in Chapter 7 on p. 426 below.
correctly recognizes the status implications of the first half of the story, including in its respective distinct narrative stages, but fails to see the way Christ’s ascent in the second half of the story functions as a detailed narrative reversal of his descent in the first half.1

Each thus emphasizes, in different ways, a separate half of the story. Oakes mainly emphasizes the political dimension of the text (in vv. 9-11), while nevertheless being attuned to its social status implications, while Hellerman emphasizes the social status dimensions of the text (in vv. 6-8), while also being sensitive to its political backdrop. The two emphases are entirely complementary, and need to be brought together, though recognizing the limitations of each. My hope is that the present study can embrace the respective contributions of each of these scholars in a more comprehensive fashion, together with implications arising from the earlier work of Wright, building upon their respective strengths and remedying their weaknesses, while offering my own analysis of the passage in order to arrive at an even more satisfying interpretation of the whole.

The vehicle that can best bring these various contributions together is, I believe, a thorough-going narrative approach to the passage. If, as I am arguing, the genre of the passage is narrative and its content is a story, then it is narrative analysis that will enable us to see (with a close eye on the epistolary context, of course) most clearly the meaning, significance and implications of the passage for its original and subsequent hearers and readers. Herein, as mentioned before, lies the primary contribution of the present work.

A narrative approach to Paul, however, is not new, even if it is being applied freshly to a passage most consider to be a hymn. This study’s particular offering will add, I trust, to a

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1 This is, in part, a consequence of his largely negative evaluation of the Roman cursus honorum in relation to Paul’s understanding of what will make for a harmonious Christian community living their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil 1:27); in HELLERMAN’S view Paul is criticizing ‘social ascent’ at the expense of other people, and praising a ‘social descent’ that considers the needs of others before one’s own (Phil 2:3-4); hence he refrains from labelling vv. 9-11 as a cursus honorum corresponding to the explicit cursus pudorum of vv. 6-8, and instead regards vv. 9-11 as functioning to ‘reconstruct honour’ for the Philippians (note the main title of his monograph, Reconstructing Honour in Roman Philippi). There is nothing wrong with his logic in that; his social analysis of the text, and understanding of the function of social (re-)construction implicit in the passage is brilliant. However, I will later argue, that vv. 9-11, in a different sense, represents a progressive reversal in ascent of the narrative stages of descent in vv. 6-8. It is this narrative reversal that HELLERMAN apparently has not seen. But more on that in Chapter 7 below.
now substantial and steadily growing body of literature on the subject of ‘narrative dynamics’ in Paul’s letters.¹

1.4 The Story Behind the Climb

In the last 32 years, since Richard Hays’ seminal work on ‘narrative substructure’ in Paul’s letter to the Galatians,² interest in the narrative dynamics of Paul’s letters has been growing rapidly. Hays himself has been a prolific contributor to this surge of interest,³ as has N. T. Wright,⁴ and, in quite a different way, Michael Gorman,⁵ who has been a fourth


important influence upon the present work (I will mention why shortly). Discussions now focus, variously, upon Paul’s narrative thought-world, the corresponding meta-narrative of Scripture, with its component micro-stories, narrative echoes, narrative theology and soteriology, narrative units, narrative discourse, autobiographical narratives, narrative unity, narrative patterns, plot and characterization, and even narrative spirituality.  

A growing number of articles and monographs with a narrative approach to specific Pauline letters are also now being written.  

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The present study fits into the latter category, focusing specifically upon the story of Christ in Philippians 2, though owing a debt to those mentioned in the footnotes above. Yet, most efforts to date have focused on narrative worldview, meta-narratives, and narrative substructures (as allusions to people or events in the Old Testament or in the life of Jesus Christ), which Paul draws upon as a framework or grounding for his theological and epistolary endeavours, and not a great deal of attention has been given to analysis (and especially literary analysis) of explicit narratives within the Pauline corpus, both with respect to Christ (such as in Phil 2:6-11) or with respect to Paul’s own narrated story, found in the autobiographical sections of his letters. Where this study, then, complements and goes beyond previous research on narrative dynamics in Pauline thought is in highlighting the significance of one crucial, explicit narrative within Paul’s writings – the Christ-story of Phil 2:6-11.

In fact, in the journey of this author, the original aim had been to explicate the meaning of one or more of Paul’s autobiographical narratives. The stories of Paul’s own life are worthy of study in their own right as a part of an approach to Paul which takes narrative seriously within his overall thought. Focus on the epistolary genre and character of Paul’s letters – which is indeed their essential form – has tended to eclipse their narrative character and created neglect of significant explicit narrative units within them, stories of Christ and of Paul’s own life, among others.1 New Testament scholarship has engaged too exclusively in

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1 In Philippian, two other stories are also narrated, that of Timothy (2:19-24) and of Epaphroditus (2:25-30).
the quest to determine and explain the theology of Paul as a theologian.¹ Thus, Gorman rightly complains of a ‘blind spot’ in New Testament and Pauline scholarship, wherein, most accounts of Paul ‘pay insufficient attention to his religious experience – his spirituality – and to his fondness for narrating that experience.’²

Indeed it is difficult to abstract the theological content of Paul’s writings from the stories he tells, of himself as a person, and of the Christ he very personally calls ‘my Lord’ (Phil 3:8), for the two are inextricably entwined. As Karl Barth insists concerning the doctrine of reconciliation, ‘the atonement is history. Who wants to know it, must know it as such. Who wants to think about it, must think about it as such. Who wants to talk about it, must tell it as a story.’³ In seeking to understand Paul’s teachings, particularly those related to his gospel, a message centering on the death and resurrection of Christ, the connection – sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit – between his theology and the narrated experiences of his own life, of his Lord, and also of the communities he writes to, must be brought into the


² GORMAN, Cruciformity, 3 (emphasis mine); there are of course exceptions to this general neglect, such as those highlighted in the previous note and n. 1 on the following page below (among yet others). Similarly, in the field of New Testament ethics, Richard A. BURRIDGE, Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 31 has complained that ‘too many studies of the ethics of Jesus have concentrated solely upon his words, his sayings and teachings, and have missed the important biographical narrative context in which they are recorded.’ He argues that ‘central to all ancient lives’ (bioi or biographies) ‘is that the picture of the subject is built up through both their words and their deeds’ (28), but notes further, that frequently in ancient bioi, ‘both the deeds and the words lead up to the account of the person’s death,’ which will often also ‘reveal something further about the person’s life, or bring the author’s major themes to a climax’ (p. 28; cf. 29; and also his earlier What Are The Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography, 2nd ed. [Biblical Resource; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004] 145-148, 180-183); that could well be, as we will later see, a good description of the function of the climax of v. 8cd in Phil 2:6-8.

³ K. BARTH, Church Dogmatics, Vol IV/1 The Doctrine of Reconciliation (G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, eds.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956) 157 - my own translation from the German original, allowing the verb erzählen to modify the sense of the second ‘Geschichte’: ‘Die Versöhnung ist Geschichte. Wer sie kennen will, muß sie als solche kennen. Wer ihr nachdenken will, muß ihr also solcher nachdenken. Wer von ihr reden will, muß sie als Geschichte erzählen’ (Die Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/1 [Zürich: Evangelischer, 1953] 171). BARTH himself practises what he preaches; note the opening titles of Chapter XIV in Volume IV, Part One of his Church Dogmatics (p. 157; German original, p. 171): ‘Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant … The Obedience of the Son of God … The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country’; all describing the storied experiences of Christ. I was first alerted to this chapter in BARTH’s Dogmatics by R. B. HAYS, ‘Paul’s Gospel,’ 238-239.
foreground. In the case of Barth, the ‘decisive expression’ for his narration of the atonement is none other than Phil 2:6-11.

Interestingly, when Paul narrates his own life and ministry within several extended autobiographical passages, he connects his own experiences to the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, if Jesus’ bios, or life-biography, and Paul’s gospel, centres on the account of Christ’s death and resurrection, it may be noted that Paul’s bios centres on the account of his death and resurrection with Christ. Paul’s autobiography provides a clear picture of his


3 Thus, Paul’s autobiographical account in Galatians 1-2 concludes with a reference to him having been ‘crucified with Christ’ but living by the ‘Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20); his narration of his sufferings and weaknesses in 2 Cor 11:16:12:10 and his experience of Christ’s power in and through his weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10) are interpreted in 13:4 in relation to Christ who ‘was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God’; and the personal account in Phil 3:3-11 concludes with Paul’s desire ‘to know Christ in the power of his resurrection and the participation in his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death’ (3:10).

4 The term is from BURRIDGE’s study of ancient ‘lives’ or bioi in his Imitating Jesus, 28-29 (see p. 15 n. 2 above).


identity as a follower of Christ. But Jesus Christ is always ‘in the picture’ as he narrates his own life-story (cf. Phil 3:7-11). William Beardslee appropriately explains, ‘the “little story” of Paul’s life finds meaning by being related to the “big story” of which the organizing center is Christ.’ It is that larger story of Christ that Paul invites his readers to share in.

It is that larger story that has captivated this present writer. Thus, returning to the account of my own journey, my initial interest was in Paul’s autobiographical account in Phil 3:2-21, which centres around vv. 10-11, a key text employing the motif of death and resurrection with Christ. However, as I investigated that passage more closely I became aware that one could scarcely discuss it without reference to the narration of Christ’s story in 2:6-11, for it seemed to me that Paul’s account of his own life in Philippians 3 has clear narrative parallels with, and perhaps (at least in part) was even modelled or based upon the account of Jesus Christ in Philippians 2. Yet when I realised that, in my opinion, a satisfactory understanding


of Phil 2:6-11 as a narrative had not yet been arrived at in the Pauline scholarly community, it became apparent to me that as a matter of priority work needed to begin with Philippians 2; and any further efforts on Paul’s autobiography in Philippians 3 (or elsewhere, such as in 2 Corinthians and Galatians) would need to build upon findings from study of the former passage.

For a story comprising only six verses in one chapter of a four chapter epistle in the scriptures, a mere seventy-six words in the Greek text of Phil 2:6-11, one could be forgiven for thinking that the task might be fairly simple and straightforward. Reality, however, is not always what one might wish for. Indeed the story of Christ in Phil 2:6-11 in contemporary Pauline studies, it so feels, has the gravitational pull of a supergiant star, sweeping up all around it. Attempting to say anything about the passage, let alone anything new, previously unseen, or as yet unarticulated, requires strenuous effort, concentration, and the patience of Job as one interacts with innumerable competing views and seeks to unravel multiple technical complexities within the text. My conclusion in the end was that passage clearly deserves investigation on its own, but from which explorations of other texts related to it can and should subsequently proceed.

While indeed a relatively concise story, one with rare richness and beauty, it is also of such profundity and importance, not only within the letter to the Philippians, that it carries implications for Christian theology, christology, soteriology, and ethics, as well as for Christian spirituality, life, and existence in the world in which one lives. For a short

1 The Greek text I am using is the NA28 (which, in the case of Phil 2:5-11 is identical to the UBSGNT46).
2 Any student of Phil 2:6-11, despairing of the vast literature written about it, might well feel that it instead has the gravitational pull of a gigantic black hole, sweeping up any new scholarly effort into a central singularity, from which there is no escape … but the analogy of a black hole is not entirely apt, given that black holes arise from dying, collapsing supergiants; hardly appropriate to describe the story of one who will one day ‘transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself’ (Phil 3:21).
3 Although in itself the passage (vv. 6-11) is not explicitly soteriological or ethical; these are implications drawn from the passage in its context – a matter for extended discussion in Chapter 4 below.
4 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 13, thus speaks of the ‘generative power’ of the passage for Pauline theology and of ‘its ubiquity in the Pauline corpus’; for what follows in this paragraph, cf. his Cruciform God, 12-13 and Cruciformity, 88; cf. also R. P. MARTIN’s ‘formidable list of reasons’ as to why Phil 2:6-11 remains a major focus in biblical studies in his ‘Carmen Christi Revisited,’ 2-4.
narrative, it is also relatively comprehensive in scope, beginning with the protology of Christ’s pre-existence in the form of God, dealing with his incarnation and earthly life, and concluding with the eschatological expectation of the entire cosmos acknowledging his supreme lordship. Fittingly, Gorman refers to it not only as the ‘centrepiece’ of Philippians, but as Paul’s ‘master story.’ A key reason for so naming this passage is because of the preponderance of narrative motifs in it, which are paralleled or echoed elsewhere in Paul’s letters. Gorman refers to these motifs as ‘narrative patterns of the cross,’ and speaks of ‘Paul’s narrative spirituality of the cross.’ I have summarized these ‘narrative patterns’ in Appendix 3, but will refer frequently to one notable structural pattern identified by Gorman (relating to the syntactic structure of Phil 2:6-8) in the chapters that follow.

Personally I have found Gorman’s Cruciformity to be refreshing and inspiring. His definition of ‘cruciformity’ is ‘conformity to the crucified Christ,’ and most encouraging, I believe, is his desire to relate Paul’s message of ‘Christ crucified’ (1 Cor 2:2) to its corresponding application in Paul’s own life and spirituality and, more significantly, to Christian daily life

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1 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 12 & n. 15;
2 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 12-13; Cruciformity, 88, cf. 88-92, 164-172, 278-280, 316-319, 357-358, et passim. GORMAN offers four specific reasons for his designation in Cruciform God, 12-13, three of which I have referred to in this paragraph. Of the story’s ‘comprehensive scope’ (his reason #1) he also refers to its relation to the story of Israel, referring to allusions or echoes in the text to pre-existent Wisdom, Adam, the Isaianic suffering servant, and Israel’s ‘eschatological monotheism’ within the framework of Isaiah 40-45 more generally (pp. 14-15); but while the last is more certain (note the citation of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10-11; the term ‘eschatological monotheism’ is from R. BAUCKHAM, “The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11,” in MARTIN & DODD [eds.], Where Christology Began, 128-139; and his Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008] 33, 37, 184-185, 202), the other three are debatable (see my discussion of the matter in Chapter 5 [§5.3] below). The fourth reason he gives (p. 12) is ‘its simultaneous credal and counter-imperial character, rooted in the confession that “Jesus [– not Caesar –] is Lord’”. He further explains that there are three major cultural echoes in the passage: the reality and ideology of slavery, the Roman ideology and pursuit of honour, and the theology and practices of the imperial cult (pp. 14-15, and see those he cites in support of these assertions); I am in agreement with the first two, but with OAKES (‘Remapping the Universe,’ 319, and his Philippians, 133, 136; cf. 204-207) I would refer more specifically to imperial accession ceremonies and to the qualifications for imperial candidacy, rather than to the imperial cult as a whole; I suggest the implicit comparisons Paul makes are more focussed. GORMAN’s designation ‘master story’ has been criticized as overstated (cf. LIM, Sufferings of Christ, 22-23; and GORMAN himself, Cruciform God, 12 n. 15), but I regard it as an appropriate description.
3 See GORMAN, Cruciformity, 82-92; I discuss these ‘patterns’ or motifs in Appendix 3 below.
4 See Chapter 4 in his Cruciformity, 75-94. As I indicate in Appendix 3, I prefer to use the term ‘motif’ in place of GORMAN’s use of ‘pattern,’ reserving the latter term for specific literary and structural patterns in the text; but this is a minor quibble.
5 The subtitle of his Cruciformity; note pp. 1-7 for his explanation of this title and subtitle.
6 This is what he refers to as a ‘pattern of voluntary renunciation and self-humbling’; see GORMAN, Cruciformity, 167; explained further in Cruciform God, 16-29; and ‘Paul’s Master Story,’ 153-163.
7 GORMAN, Cruciformity, 4-5.
and experience. As Neil Elliott writes, Paul’s encounter with Jesus as the crucified one not only generated ‘the revolution in his conviction and action that we customarily call his “conversion,”’ but ‘it energized his entire apostolic endeavour … through which he sought to order the lives of Christian congregations by pulling everything into the tremendous gravitational field of the cross.’ Following, then, in the footsteps of many who have climbed this mountain before, my hope is that the present work on this passage of Philippians 2:6-11 may also help to ‘lift high the cross’ of Jesus Christ.

### 1.5 The Southeastern Route (A Plan of the Climb)

It remains now to outline the plan of this study, and to offer a few explanatory caveats, warnings, and definitions. I should clarify that I will be using the terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ fairly interchangeably. Technically, (according to Gérard Genette) ‘story’ refers to the totality of events that may be narrated, ‘narrative’ [as a noun] the discourse, oral or written, that narrates them, and ‘narrating’ the act of recital which produces the discourse. However, Phil 2:6-11 represents very much both ‘story’ and ‘narrative,’ that is, both the events themselves and their recital, as Richard Hays notes: ‘Paul’s gospel is a story, and it has a narrative structure, but is not a narrative except when it is actually narrated, as in Phil 2:6-11.’

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1. Gorman, Cruciformity, 4-7.
2. N. Elliott, Liberating Paul, 93 (also cited by Gorman, Cruciformity, 5).
3. Referring to the title and refrain of the 1887 hymn by George W. Kitchin (revised in 1916 by Michael R. Newbolt); given my description of the narrative shape of Phil 2:6-11 in Chapters 6 and 7 below, there is here a degree of deliberate irony, though the hope I express at this point is fully sincere.
4. I take the liberty in this section to continue picking-up on Reuman’s reference to Phil 2:6-11 as ‘the Mt Everest of Philippian study’ (see p. 1 above); thus, here, we will metaphorically ‘follow’ the ‘Southeastern Route’ in our climb (see http://www.expeditioneverest.org/route.php and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Everest#Southeast_ridge, both accessed 22 July 2015, for descriptions of the various ‘camps’ and ‘climbing stages’ that lie ahead – and follow below); the difficulty of climbing the real Everest is indeed well matched by the difficulty of the material we will encounter in the course of the present study.
5. As an adjective, ‘narrative’ means ‘having the form or character of a story’ (cf. R. B. Hays, Faith of Jesus Christ, 18-19, who was not then aware of adjectives cognate to ‘story’); while ‘story-shaped’ could mean ‘having the form of a story’ or describe something ‘that is shaped by a [particular] story’; the related adjective, ‘storied’ is not quite the same, meaning, in this context, ‘recorded in history or in a story.’
7. R. B. Hays, Faith of Jesus Christ, 19 (emphasis his); the definition he uses of ‘story’ is ambiguous: ‘it can mean both the report and the thing reported’ (p. 19), but technically the emphasis should fall on the latter (cf. p. 18). Hays goes on to explain (p. 19) that for Paul there is no separation between the events of his
We should note, though, that the events behind vv. 6-11 could in fact be narrated differently; for example, an account of the resurrection of Christ could have been included in v. 9. Thus, Paul’s narrative account of Christ is necessarily a selective account, with events selected (or omitted) and described for particular purposes; it is not ‘the whole story’ but it is a story,\(^1\) clearly one of great significance for him, his first hearers,\(^2\) and for us as later readers. Our ultimate goal in this investigation is to examine the ‘Christ-story’ itself as a narrative. But our climb to the summit will require a steady ascent in successive stages.

However, an initial warning is necessary for the prospective climber: the climb is not going to be an easy one. Practically, what I mean by this, is that virtually every point of discussion about this text is somewhat controversial from someone’s point of view, and this necessitates either a high level of interaction with commentators and scholars (previous climbers) or documentation of their viewpoints (which should always be regarded as representative rather than exhaustive)\(^3\). Thus, the demanding, technical complexity of the subject material at hand, and the huge volume of secondary literature written about it, will demand a much higher level of documentation, referencing, and cross-referencing (read: lots of footnotes) than might otherwise be necessary in a dissertation on a different passage of holy scripture.

The following chapter might be described as our trek to Everest’s ‘Base Camp.’ It ensures that we will be acclimatized and have all the appropriate equipment to begin our journey and ascent. Thus, Chapter 2 will provide a very brief introduction to Paul’s letter to the Philippians, examining some of the critical issues facing scholars of this epistle (notably those of relevance to the present study), the purpose of the letter, the situation of both Paul and the Philippians, and an overview of what I am calling the ‘intersecting narratives’ of the letter.

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1. Cf. BAUCKHAM, ‘Reading Scripture,’ 43.
2. As is widely noted, Paul’s letters would have been publicly ‘read aloud’ to the congregations addressed, and thus ‘heard’ by the recipients; thus, E. R. RICHARDS, Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004) 202 & n. 1, who goes on to report that ‘ancient letter writers gave thought to how their letters would be read, meaning read aloud before a congregation’ and notes that ancient people were trained in how to read aloud; thus rhetorical studies from Paul’s time could speak of the ‘performance’ of a letter in a public reading to an assembly (p. 202).
3. Please see p. 2 n. 1 above (for the convention I use in comparison and contrast), and note again p. 1 n. 5.
Once we are ready to begin our climb, some critical issues of interpretation need to be dealt with, and these at some length. This will form Part II of the journey, encompassing Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Although virtually every word and theological concept in this much studied and debated passage is contested in one way or another, the major lines of interpretation of the passage as a whole include the following: 1 (i) Are vv. 6-11 best described as a hymn or a narrative? (ii) Are they to be regarded as Pauline or pre-Pauline? And (iii), more importantly, how should they be interpreted in terms of their nature and function: kerygmatically or ethically, as the two main opposing options are labelled? Then, are these labels in fact the best ones to use? (iv) Fourthly, we might go on to ask, what is the narrative-theological background to the passage?

We shall basically tackle each of these in turn; however, because the issue of authorship is so entwined with the case for particular designations of literary form, it seems appropriate to deal with these first two critical concerns, (i) and (ii), together, and we shall do that in Chapter 3. That represents a careful navigation through the treacherous Khumbu Ice Falls to arrive at ‘Camp I.’

From there, the third key issue (iii), the function of vv. 6-11 within the letter will receive detailed attention in Chapter 4; this will be our climb up the Western Cwm. 2 I will examine the two main competing interpretations, and engage in a thorough-going context-based approach to the passage, before suggesting a participatory understanding of the introductory, transitional verse 5, and then I will offer my own more nuanced interpretation of the function of the passage, which will signal our arrival at the ‘Advanced Base Camp’ or ‘Camp II’. It seems appropriately named, because, having dealt with the major interpretative issues of genre, authorship and epistolary function, from this point forwards (or upwards) we begin to interpret the passage afresh as a narrative.


2 ‘Cwm’ (pronounced /ku:ma/) is Welsh for valley, now a common proper name in its Everest usage.
Thus, the fourth issue (iv) mentioned above, that of the narrative background to the passage is to be examined in **Chapter 5**. Here we begin to ascend the Lhotse Face by exploring the implicit stories within the Christ-story. In particular we will examine in some depth N. T. Wright’s decisive contribution in explicating the meaning and narrative-theological significance of the enigmatic phrase οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ... ἀλλὰ ... (v. 6b-7a). As Wright’s interpretation has not gone unchallenged, Chapter 5 will also evaluate, and respond in some detail to, three particular challenges, one grammatical, one theological, and one philological, which have yet to be answered substantially by anyone, including Wright himself. Then I will briefly examine the suggestions commentators have made about the narrative background to the passage, relegating most as unfounded or less important, and ultimately focussing on one that has, until recently, largely been overlooked, that the οὐχ of v. 6b signals an implicit contrast is being made, with Wright’s reading of ἀρπαγμὸς pointing to a political, counter-imperial contrast. At the end of this difficult climb we will have reached ‘Camp III.’

This appropriately brings us to **Part III** of the journey, the final stages of ascent, where we may focus much more closely on analysing the text of vv. 6-11 as a narrative. In **Chapter 6**, we begin by examining narrative patterns and syntax, briefly referring to narrative patterns and motifs of the cross in Paul (Section §6.1), considering previous attempts to describe a literary shape via several suggested chiastic structures (I will suggest why they represent unsuccessful attempts to climb the summit), and then reframing the search for the story’s shape by arguing that it should be determined by the narrative events, primarily described by the main verb clauses of the text (§6.2). This will lead to an initial description of the narrative shape and outline of the passage, together with an arrangement of the text (in Greek and English) that sets the agenda for the detailed literary analysis of Chapter 7 (§6.3). However, before that, at the end of Chapter 6, I will endeavour to show the passage ‘works’, with a detailed analysis of sentence structure and syntactical function in the two halves of the story (§6.4). This will bring us to ‘Camp IV’ on the South Col, the last camp before the final ascent to the summit.

**Chapter 7**, then, seeks to suggest and elucidate a fresh, but definitive narrative shape for the Christ-story. I will argue that this is a modified ‘V’ shape (which I will graphically illustrate), carefully crafted by Paul to narrate several key reversals in the journey of Christ, which
together form a modified narrative chiasmus (Section §7.1). These chiastic narrative reversals will be discussed and justified in some detail (§7.2). Figuratively, we will have reached ‘The Balcony,’ allowing a chance to ‘rest and gaze at the peaks to the south and east in the early light of dawn.’ From there I will posit and explain two important narrative ‘threads,’ which run through the entire narrative, not altering its basic shape, but adding to its character, significance, and impact for its hearers. Thus, now following the ridge to the South Summit, I will first describe what I will call ‘the story of the visible cruciform God’ (§7.3) and then secondly, ‘the motif of the obedient servant.’ The latter, I will show runs over into both the preceding and following paraenetic context of the passage (§7.4). We will then have reached the South Summit, ready for the final ascent and, hopefully, able to make it all the way to the top, as I describe a final, overall (literary) analysis, describing the narrative setting, characters, stage, and function of each textual element in relation to the whole (Section §7.5).

In the final stages of ascent (in Chapters 6-7), I need to warn the reader that there will be an unavoidable degree of repetition of similar material. This is necessary in order to avoid confusion of the particular threads or patterns being described. Thus, effectively, in Sections §6.4, §7.1-2, §7.3, §7.4, and §7.5, there will be five successive narrative readings of the text, each of which needs to stand on its own to some degree, highlighting and explaining quite distinct components of a complex whole. Each successive reading should add a new layer of appreciation of the passage, and while each may sound progressively more familiar, the cumulative effect will hopefully allow us to reach the summit together.

Finally, Chapter 8, the sole chapter in Part IV of the journey will represent some reflections upon the journey, perhaps now safely back in a Kathmandu hotel. It will attempt to summarize the previous climb and what has been achieved along the way to the summit. In addition, it will offer some concluding reflections and suggestions as regards the meaning and significance of the study within Pauline scholarship.

The overall journey up and back will be supported by four Appendices (a list may be found above in the Contents), either (i) describing various (sometimes lengthy) sub-arguments needed to support desired conclusions or results in the main body of the study, but which

1  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Everest#Southeast_ridge.
would otherwise distract from the flow of the main arguments, or (ii) offering discussions, which are not absolutely essential to the main arguments, but which nevertheless complement or enhance some aspect of understanding or appreciation of the main text.

With all that said, for the geared-up reader now joining me, our trek to ‘Base Camp’ now begins …
2.1 A Brief Introduction to Paul’s Letter

As noted before, in this chapter a brief introduction to Philippians is necessary to set us on our way to examining Phil 2:6-11 (in its context). Because our focus is upon a narrative interpretation of this one passage, it is not incumbent on us to discuss all the critical issues related to this letter. Rather I will mention those that have some bearing upon the present investigation. Given that these issues are well covered in the standard introductions to most commentaries, I will aim to summarize or reference any relevant views, rather than discuss them in great depth.

Before we do that it may be beneficial to get a limited ‘feel’ for the content of the letter by noting the most prominent nouns used by Paul in writing it. The proper noun found most frequently is Χριστός, with thirty-seven instances in the extant letter. It is followed by Ἰησοῦς and ὁ θεός, each occurring twenty-two times, and then by κύριος (‘Lord’; fifteen).

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1 The Pauline authorship of the letter to the Philippians (explicitly claimed in 1:1) as a whole is rarely challenged today and for good reason; see Hawthorne’s summary of the issue in his Philippians, xxvii-xxix. This study assumes that almost unanimous consensus. However, many claim that Paul was not the original author of Phil 2:6-11 (and that he is there quoting an early Christian hymn) – this claim is critically examined in Chapter 3 below – and one or two suggest that Phil 3:20-21 may be a hymnic fragment used there by Paul, but the evidence seems to be against this possibility (see Reumann, Philippians, 583-584; and his ‘Philippians 3:20-21: A Hymnic Fragment?’ NTS 30 no. 4 [1984] 593-609; and O’Brien, Philippians, 467-472).

2 For example, the issue of opponents to either Paul or the Philippians, although significant in Philippians studies, does not affect the interpretation of Phil 2:6-11 in any way, and will not be discussed further here. It does especially affect interpretation of Chapter 3 (esp. vv. 2, 18-19), but any reference we make to 3:18-19, for instance, will not actually require a precise identification of the ‘enemies of the cross of Christ.’ However, on this issue, see again the standard introductions in Philippians commentaries, and for some more recent works, S. E. Porter (ed.), Paul and His Opponents (PAST 2; Leiden: Brill, 2005); J. L. Sumney, ‘Servants of Satan’, ‘False Brothers’ and Other Opponents of Paul (JSNTSup 188; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Tellbe, Between Synagogue and State, 259-278; D. K. Williams, Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians (JSNTSup 223; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002).

3 Including all cognate nouns, Χριστός is found in Phil 1:1(x 2), 2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29; 2:1, 5, 11, 16, 21, 30; 3:3, 7, 8(x 2), 9, 12, 14, 18, 20; 4:7, 19, 21, 23.

4 With cognates included, Ἰησοῦς is seen in Phil 1:1(x 2), 2, 6, 8, 11, 19, 26; 2:5, 10, 11, 19, 21; 3:3, 8, 12, 14, 20; 4:7, 19, 21, 23; and θεός in 1:2, 3, 8, 11, 28; 2:6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 27; 3:3, 9, 14, 15, 19; 4:6, 7, 9, 18, 19, 20.
The next most prominent noun is εὐαγγέλιον (‘gospel’) with nine instances in the letter, yet it too is explicitly defined with reference to Christ in Phil 1:27. In addition, pronouns referring to Jesus Christ occur a further seventeen times and he is the subject of twelve verbs, no less than nine of them within the first three verses of Phil 2:6-11. God also is the subject of twelve verbs, two within Phil 2:9-11 of which Christ is the object. Christology and theology very much dominate the letter’s contents. Paul clearly wishes to highlight in this letter (i) the special significance of the past, present and future actions of Christ and God, most notably of actions narrated within 2:6-11, and (ii) the relational importance of the person of Jesus Christ in particular, but also of God, for the Philippians, himself, and all believers.

Regarding critical issues that have some bearing (even if limited) upon discussion of Phil 2:6-11, three may be mentioned at this point: (i) the provenance of Paul’s letter; (ii) the question of its literary integrity; and (iii) the genre of the letter. These are discussed quite briefly in the following three sub-sections. The question of the purpose of the letter, a description of the situations of Paul and the Philippians, and a brief overview of the connections between the themes and theology of the letter and its ‘intersecting narratives’ will follow in Section 2.2.

### 2.1.1 The Provenance of Paul’s Letter

The paraenetic context of Phil 2:6-11 speaks of both Paul’s and the Philippians’ suffering (1:27-30). Paul narrates his own circumstances of suffering at the time of writing in 1:12-26. We learn from four separate mentions in chapter 1 (vv. 7, 13, 14, 17) that Paul is imprisoned (οἱ δὲ σωμαῖν μου literally means ‘my chains’ or ‘bonds’),5 ‘for Christ’ (ἐν Χριστῷ;
v. 13),¹ probably under guard (cf. v. 13),² and probably facing a capital charge which could lead to his death, but from which he hopes to be acquitted (vv. 19-26). The place of imprisonment (and thus of writing), however, is disputed.³ For our study, the actual place is relatively unimportant; however, under which Roman emperor was it written has a small degree of significance,⁴ and therefore the date of the letter is perhaps more of a concern. Two key references in the letter in their contexts, suggest to many that Rome is the place of writing, which would point to a dating between 60-62 AD (during the reign of Nero):⁵ (i) the fact that his imprisonment ‘for Christ’ is ‘well known throughout the whole praetorian guard’ (1:13); and (ii) that a congregation is nearby him containing enough members of ‘Caesar’s household’ who had become believers in Christ to make them worthy of special mention in the final greeting of 4:22.⁶ Rome would be the place most likely to fulfil those two factors.⁷

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¹ I am in agreement with Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 112-113, that the phrase εν Χριστω (1:13) means at the surface level, that Paul is in chains ‘for Christ,’ that is, because he is ‘a person in Christ’ (cf. 1:21) but the particular preposition (εν) chosen in proximity to ‘my chains’ also signifies a deeper level of meaning, that his chains are part of his discipleship as one who is ‘participating in the sufferings of Christ’ (3:10); so also O’Brien, Philippians, 92; F. F. Bruce, Philippians, 113; M. Silva, Philippians (WEC; Chicago: Moody, 1988; most of my references to Silva will be to the 1st ed. [1988] of his commentary; where I cite his Philippians, 2nd ed. [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005] that will be made clear) 68.

² Verse 13 refers to the πρατώριον (adapted from the Latin Praetorium), originally the ‘Praetor’s [general’s] tent’ or ‘headquarters in a camp,’ but which here could potentially refer to the imperial palace or a governor’s residence (e.g. in Caesarea as in Acts 23:35), the barracks of the Praetorian (or imperial) guard, or the actual Praetorian guard itself, meaning the ‘body of men’ or the officers and regiments of the guard. With most commentators, I believe J. B. Lightfoot, St Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations, 3rd ed (London: Macmillan, 1873) 97-100 is correct in asserting it is the latter. Theoretically, this means Paul’s imprisonment could be located in any city where the Praetorian guard was stationed, and not necessarily the imperial capital.

³ Among the better discussions of the issue, see R. P. Martin, Philippians (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980) 36-57; Hawthorne, Philippians, xxxiv-xliv; Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, xxxix-l; O’Brien, Philippians, 19-26; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 25-32. However, note that while O’Brien [p. 19 & n. 2] dismisses the option of Corinth, without discussion, by four mere words and a footnote, others such as Bockmuehl and Fleming, Philippians, 24-26 ignore it completely; yet given the recent renewed push for Corinth by Douglas A. Campbell, Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], this option needs to be re-included in standard introductions to the letter; but on this see my brief response in p. 30 n. 4 below).

⁴ On this, see further below.

⁵ Acts 28:30 describes a two-year imprisonment under house arrest in Rome, where Paul was free to receive visitors.

⁶ Furthermore, the congregation must have been sufficiently numerous and diversified to take sides for and against Paul in his imprisonment, as described by Paul in Phil 1:15-18; so F. F. Bruce, Philippians, 13.

However, the δἰκος of Caesar may refer to the imperial administration, which like the praetorian guard could be scattered throughout the empire, leaving open the possibility of alternative locations fitting the textual data. Partly because of two perceived problems about Rome as the place of writing, previously thought to make it less likely, scholars have variously suggested alternatives of Ephesus (54-55 AD, again under Nero), Caesarea (57-59 AD, under Nero), or Corinth (51-52 AD, under Emperor Claudius I) instead. However, given

\[\text{Framing Paul: Der formale Aufbau des Briefs als Schlüssel zum Verständnis seines Inhalts} \ (BWANT 135; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994) 191; \] and a majority of commentators.

1 Briefly, (i) it was supposed that the distance between Rome and Philippi was too great to allow the four journeys between the two cities, which are implied by Paul’s letter as having already taken place, or the three future journeys envisaged by the letter (on these, see F. F. Bruce, \textit{Philippians}, 15; followed by O’Brien, \textit{Philippians}, 25); and (ii) that if written from Rome, Paul appears to have changed his previous plans to visit Rome enroute to Spain (Rom 15:24, 29) by now intending to visit Philippi shortly after he is released from prison (Phil 1:25-27; 2:24), which would mean travelling in the opposite direction (see the discussion of F. F. Bruce, \textit{Philippians}, 14-15; O’Brien, \textit{Philippians}, 25-26).

2 Some recent leading proponents of Ephesus as the place of writing include Reumann, \textit{Philippians}, 3, 13-15; R. P. Martin, \textit{Philippians} (NCB), 36-57, esp. 48-57; and Martin’s revision in Martin & Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, xliii-xliv, [50]. Against it, Ephesus was the capital of a senatorial (and not imperial) province, and so would not have hosted a governor’s headquarters (for which there is no known evidence); and there is also no positive evidence that Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus; so F. F. Bruce, \textit{Philippians}, 11-12; O’Brien, \textit{Philippians}, 21-23; Flemming, \textit{Philippians}, 26; furthermore, as Hooker (‘Letter to the Philippians’ [2000], 474) indicates, Paul had many friends in Ephesus, whereas he appears to have been feeling extremely isolated when writing to Philip (cf. Phil 2:20-21).

3 Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, xli-xliv, remains the main proponent of Caesarea; it had the advantage that it had a Governor’s palace, Herod’s Praetorium (the word for governor in NT times was propraetor), and we know that Paul was imprisoned there for two years (Acts 23:35); however, it was a ‘political backwater’ unlikely to meet the requirements of the textual data mentioned above; furthermore, the account in Acts appears to show that Paul was never there under the threat of execution as Phil 1:19-26 implies; so F. F. Bruce, \textit{Philippians}, 12-13; Flemming, \textit{Philippians}, 25-26.

4 D. A. Campbell has recently made a fresh push for Corinth as the place of writing, though prior to his 2014 work, \textit{Framing Paul}, it had been rejected as ‘unlikely’ by many (see p. 29 n. 3 above). After suggesting the general plausibility of a Corinthian provenance (\textit{Framing Paul}, 123-125), Campbell’s main argument for it is a postulation of Nebenadressat (or ‘addressees alongside’); 28-29, developing further a theory initially proposed by C. Hartwig & G. Theissen, ‘Die Korinthische Gemeinde als Nebenadressat des Römerbriefes: Eigentextreferenzen des Paulus und Kommunikativer Kontext des Längsten Paulusbriefes,’ \textit{NovT} 46 [2004] 229-252), whereby, in this case, the letter to the Philippians addresses issues of relevance also to the community so strongly that Paul was writing from (thus a second audience is ‘listening in’ on a letter primarily written to another community), and that the disunity in the church in Corinth best explains Paul tackling this issue so strongly in Philippians, where the main explicit mention of disunity is only two leaders in a state of conflict over an unspecified issue (Euodia and Syntyche; Phil 4:2-3) (\textit{Framing Paul}, 146-154). With Campbell, I agree that the notion of possible Nebenadressat does now need to be considered seriously by Pauline scholars as they study his epistles. However, in this case, I am not convinced that the letter to Philip requires a second listening audience; indeed any community facing significant external pressures (e.g. Phil 1:27-30) is going to need to be proactive in ensuring their unity, as even a small disagreement among them (e.g. Phil 4:2-3) could negatively impair their ability to ‘live worthy of the gospel of Christ’ (1:27) or to ‘appear as lights in the world’ (2:15). The speculative nature of the theory of Nebenadressat means it could be relevant for interpreting a letter once a provenance is known (or reasonably assumed), or for adding to the plausibility of a claim supported strongly by other evidence, but I am less sure that it can be used itself with evidential value favouring a particular place of writing as Campbell uses it here (admittedly, alongside other more complex chronological ‘framing’ arguments). In addition, while Paul mentions that he has been imprisoned multiple times (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23), we have no explicit evidence of any imprisonment in Corinth (and it is doubtful that his mention of ‘my chains’ in Philippians is purely metaphorical). Furthermore, given that Paul clearly had supporters in
that: (i) each of the two perceived problems has found ready answers, which eliminate the
need to posit alternatives;¹ (ii) each of the alternatives to Rome, while plausible, has
weaknesses and falls short in compelling their acceptance;² (iii) that the Roman provenance
arguably fits the data better; as well as (iv) from an early date it being the traditional place of
writing,³ this study will follow the majority of commentators in supporting a provenance in
Rome, with the likely date to be later in Paul’s two year period of imprisonment.⁴

Concerning the issue of which period of imperial rule Paul would have been writing under,
only a Corinthian provenance changes the situation and only slightly, given that it would
then have been during the reign of Claudius I (41-54 AD) rather than Nero (54-68 AD).
Its relevance to this study is that if, as I wish to argue later, Paul is drawing an implicit
comparison between the attitudes and actions of Christ (in Phil 2:6-11) and the emperor (in
particular, though not exclusively), then would that contrast have been as obvious to the
Philippians under Claudius I, or Nero, given that Nero’s behaviour appeared to be far worse
in general terms? If we were to press for a comparison with a specific emperor the matter
would obviously be significant; however, I do not intend to do that.⁵ In either case, however,
the Philippians would have been well aware of the excesses and abuses of other emperors,
and especially those of Gaius Caligula before Claudius I.⁶ Thus, my conclusion is that the

¹ Thus, F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 14-15 (followed by O’BRIEN, Philippians, 25-26) notes concerning the two
supposed problems (refer back to p. 30 n. 1): (i) that the journey from Rome to Philippi in either direction
required about 40 days; there is therefore ample time for all of the journeys to have taken place, even within
the space of a year, let alone the two year duration of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome; (ii) it is quite
reasonable to expect that Paul may have needed to change his travel plans somewhat given the unforeseen
and unforeseeable sequence of events following his letter to Rome, including his journey to Judea, arrest in
Jerusalem, two years of captivity in Caesarea, journey to Rome under armed guard, and then two years
under house arrest in Rome awaiting a summons to appear before Caesar, and given the flexibility of his
travels subject to his awareness of divine guidance.

² FLEMMING, Philippians, 26.

³ The earliest attestation to a Roman provenance is in the second-century Marcionite prologue to Philippians;
so O’BRIEN, Philippians, 19.

⁴ That is, during 61-62 AD, to allow (i) time for the situation described in Phil 1:12-18 to develop; (ii) the
likelihood that Paul’s imprisonment was coming to a climax which could result in either his death or release
(cf. Phil 1:19-26); (iii) sufficient time for all the journeys related to the epistle to be made; so O’BRIEN,
Philippians, 26.

⁵ Unlike, say CASSIDY, Paul in Chains, 124-210, who presses for a specific comparison with Nero; aside
from the usual arguments in favour of one location or another, for him, ‘Rome and the Era of Nero’ are
particularly important as the setting for Philippians given various contrasts between Paul and Nero, which
he finds to be implicit in the letter; but for my purposes, as noted here, the specific identification of Nero as
the emperor at the time Paul wrote Philippians is not so critical.

⁶ See my discussion of this below, pp. 335-336 & p. 335 nn. 1-2; cf. also (concerning Caligula) p. 412 n. 6.
exact date of writing would not greatly change the impact of an implicit contrast within Phil 2:6-11 to Caesar in general (and, as I will argue below, to other ancient dictator-rulers), although it may well have had heightened impact if Paul was writing under Nero.

2.1.2 The Integrity of the Letter

A second critical issue concerning Philippians is the issue of the unity or literary integrity of the epistle.¹ The abrupt change of tone, and disjunction of thought, at the beginning of chapter 3 (together with other features), has led a good number to believe that Philippians is a composition of more than one literary fragment. Collange, for example, argues that three separate letters [4:10-20 (A); 1:1-3:1a & 4:2-7 & 4:21-23 (B); and 3:1b-4:1 & 4:8-9 (C)] may be identified.² But, one must ask, why did a later redactor let such ‘obvious’ disjunctions stand in the document when he had finished with it? Hawthorne comments that ‘any claim to be able to isolate separate letters and to identify the theology and Sitz im Leben of each meets only with disagreements and proves to be a critical exercise in futility.’³

The contention that the epistle has strong literary integrity finds wide support amongst recent commentators.⁴ Watson helpfully suggests that Phil 3:1-21 is a further development of the

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¹ Good discussions of the issue can be found in R. P. Martin, Philippians (NCB), 10-22; Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, xxx-xxxi; O’Brien, Philippians, 10-18; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 20-25.

² Collange, Philippians, 3-15; by comparison, Reumann, Philippians, 3 (summarizing his views) posits 4:10-20 (A); 1:1-3:1 (and likely parts of 4:1-9, 4:21-23) (B); 3:1-21 (and perhaps parts of 4:1-9) (C); other alternative multiple letter theories are offered by a few commentators, with most disagreements revolving around the alleged letter B (see the extended list of suggested partitioning arrangements compiled by D. E. Garland, ‘The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors,’ NovT 27 [1985] 155 n. 50). One reason that 4:10-20 is suggested as a separate letter is that it seems odd to some that Paul should save his ‘thanks’ for the Philippians’ gift to him, sent with Epaphroditus, to the end of the letter, and it is argued that Paul may have sent off a thank-you letter soon after receiving the gift; however, others respond that this is perhaps the most ‘delicate’ or sensitive matter for Paul to write to them about, and thus he has saved it deliberately to the end of the letter; so Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 29-30.

³ Hawthorne, Philippians, xxxii; cf. Bockmuehl, Philippians, 22, 24-25, who raises questions about the combination of both editorial cleverness and blatant clumsiness within an alleged redacted letter.

proposition of the letter, namely 1:27-30. Other scholars have also pointed out verbal and thematic links between various sections of the letter presumed originally to have been in separate letters. Gerald Peterman, for example, points to echoes in 4:10-20 of the vocabulary used in 1:3-11, suggesting that the two passages thus form a deliberate inclusio. Similarly, the words for joy and rejoicing, partnership (κοινωνία), and ‘to think, have a mindset’ (φρονεῖν) appear in all three supposed fragments of the letter, and many words and concepts from Phil 2:6-11 resurface throughout the entire letter. It could be argued that the scholarly consensus has now shifted far enough in favour of the letter’s literary integrity, that it can be reasonably assumed by any commentator or reader of the epistle, and conversely that the burden of proof now is firmly in the court of those who would insist upon partition theories.

What makes this conclusion even stronger are the findings of recent research on ancient editorial activity, most strongly stated by D. A. Campbell (himself building on the 2003 study by Hans-Josef Klauck), that (i) it was not unusual for writers to compose letters over a period of time (which could lead to perceived disjunctions); and particularly that (ii) there is considerable doubt as to whether deliberate ancient editorial activity ever took place (especially with respect to interpolations, as implied by Philippians ‘partitionists’), apart from what Klauck refers to as ‘simple’ compilations, which all bear tell-tale signs of such compilation. We are on good grounds, therefore, to reject partition theories concerning Philippians as most unlikely.

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1 D. F. Watson, ‘Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians,’ 76.
2 See for example, Garland, ‘Composition and Unity,’ 157-162; and others mentioned in n. 4 above.
3 G. W. Peterman, Paul’s Gift from Philippi: Conventions on Gift-exchange and Christian Giving (SNTSMS 92; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 90-120, 121-161. This evidence would imply that one of the main purposes in writing the letter was to thank the Philippians for their gift; and also, of course, that the letter is unity.
4 Flemming, Philippians, 39.
5 See my tabulation of this evidence in Tables 3.1a and 3.1b below (pp. 98-100).
7 Klauck, ‘Compilation of Letters,’ 154, cited by D. A. Campbell, Framing Paul, 154, who thus coins the phrase ‘Klauckian simplicity’ to represent a standard by which ancient editorial activity might be definitively identified (p. 101).
8 See D. A. Campbell, Framing Paul, 44-45, 50-51, 100-101, 126; telltale signs in ‘simple’ compilations would include, for example, fully preserved letter openings and closings; note his conclusion (p. 51; apropos of partition theories concerning the letter to the Romans): ‘We can posit the occasional haphazard
One important recent alternative view, however, has been suggested by D. A. Campbell, that Phil 3:2-4:3 is in fact a previous letter to Philippi [or, using his shorthand, PLP], written by Paul from Corinth, three to four months before the main letter, also written from Corinth, and requoted by Paul himself within the extant epistle. In this way Campbell argues that the extant letter is a literary unity, and that the evidence cited by partition theorists now points in the direction of his own theory. Campbell cites as evidence (i) Polycarp’s casual remark that Paul had written ‘letters’ [plural] to the Philippians, and (ii) Paul’s comment in 3:1b, ‘to write the same things is no trouble to me’ (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ οὐκ ὁκυηρῶν).

The first is important and suggestive, requiring an openness to the possibility that our present letter incorporates text from a previous letter (or letters), or is a compilation of such letters, though proving nothing concerning any specific partition theory or alleged ‘PLP’ citation, while the second is ambiguous and could equally refer to things that Paul had told them during his previous ministry among them (cf. the explicit ὁ υἱὸς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν [‘of whom I often told you’] in 3:18). Campbell’s hypothesis of a previous letter to Philippi,

collation of letters by ancient editors with a degree of confidence in the presence of telltale contradictions ... But in the absence of such contradictions in Paul ... we have no reason yet to believe that ancient editors did act in this way in general, or that Paul’s editor did so in particular.’ Note the similar comments of WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 17 (himself referring to FEE, Philippians [NICNT], 22): ‘we have no historical evidence that ancient scribes edited letters together in such a poor and piecemeal fashion [as would be the case in Philippians]. In fact do we have any historical evidence at all that scribes edited personal letters together? I know of none.’

1 See also WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 15-17, 184-185, 186-188; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 21-23.

2 D. A. CAMPBELL, Framing Paul, 131-138, 145, 154-157, 397-398, 408-409; the possibility has been noted also by BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 178; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 351 among others.

3 D. A. CAMPBELL, Framing Paul, 154, 187-188, 408-410, 412-414; see my brief discussion of the suggested Corinthian provenance for Philippians and his related theory of Corinthian Nebenaddressat (‘addressees alongside’) in Philippians in n. 4 of p. 30 above.

4 D. A. CAMPBELL, Framing Paul, 132-133, 145; he notes that strictly speaking, therefore, 3:2-4:3 would not be a later interpolation, but rather a deliberate quotation (cf. p. 44).

5 D. A. CAMPBELL, Framing Paul, 125-133, esp. 132.

6 POLYCARP, Phil. 3:2, discussed by CAMPBELL in Framing Paul, 126.

7 See his discussion of Phil 3:1b in Framing Paul, 127-132 & nn. 9, 11.

8 However, as BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 24 points out, POLYCARP’s statement also highlights ‘the early Christian compilers’ evident respect for the received apostolic corpus,’ casting appropriate doubt as to whether early compilers would even dare to redact two or more revered Pauline letters to give the appearance of a single letter. This, I should hasten to note, does not rule out CAMPBELL’s own theory that Paul may have quoted himself – it merely provides another argument against partition theories concerning the extant epistle.

9 AS CAMPBELL himself notes, but disputes (Framing Paul, 132 n. 11; cf. 131 n. 9). Although CAMPBELL demurs (131 n. 9), I tend to agree with BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 178 (cf. 179-180) and FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 292 n. 30, that it is significant that Paul is writing ‘the same things’ (τὰ αὐτὰ), rather than writing ‘once again’ (πάλιν). This, of course, does not prove the case against the PLP theory, for we cannot really be certain of what Paul might or might not write in a second letter about a PLP, had he indeed written one (rightly, CAMPBELL, Framing Paul, 131 n. 9). Yet I think it altogether likely that Paul’s auto-
which is part of a larger, more complex chronological ‘framing’ argument, is intriguing, but remains only a possibility. Given my concerns with his argument for a Corinthian provenance, I am not yet convinced it will win the day.

With respect to this present study, Campbell’s theory is the only one that would present a small difficulty to my belief that Phil 2:6-11 provides a paradigm for Paul’s Christian life, which in turn is reflected in the re-telling of his own spiritual pilgrimage in Phil 3:3-14. In the case of most letter partition theories, Phil 3:2-21 is usually considered to have been written after Paul had dictated 2:6-11; in Campbell’s case, Phil 3:2-4:3 (if indeed it is a ‘PLP’) is thought to have been written a few months earlier. However, in the extant letter, which was received as a whole by the Philippians (under his theory), such parallels as may be drawn between 2:6-11 and 3:3-14 would still have validity as the two narrations would be heard together. One could further posit a shaping influence upon Paul’s story if one assumed that the general contents and shape of the story of Christ (if not also its specific language) were already in Paul’s mind when he wrote the alleged PLP; and that seems to be a reasonable assumption.

biographical journey, described in 3:2-14, his spiritual pilgrimage toward faith in Christ, including the warning of 3:2, would have been orally shared with the Philippians as his own personal testimony to the gospel message he first proclaimed among them (cf. 1:5-6) and, with the evidence of Phil 3:18 cited above, to my mind the balance of probability tips in favour of understanding Phil 3:1b as referring to previous oral sharing, rather than writing (notwithstanding the additional counter-arguments mentioned in Framing Paul, 132 n. 11; I suggest that the claim that the ‘burden’ formula of 3:1b ‘makes sense only if [Paul] is burdened by an act of written repetition’ [emphasis added] requires further evidential support – it too is quite ambiguous [for us; though clearly Phil 3:1b would not have been for the Philippians]); cf. also O’BRIEN, Philippians, 350-352; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 292-293 & n. 30; SILVA, Philippians, 167, 171-172; GARLAND, ‘Composition and Unity,’ 164-165; POLLARD, ‘Integrity of Philippians,’ 61-62; the possibility is also discussed by BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 179. I am not convinced, however, by the latter’s suggestion (Philippians, 180-182; cf. G. B. CAIRD, Paul’s Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon [NCIB; London: Oxford University Press, 1976] 131-132; among others) that τὰ οὕτω is a reference to Paul’s instruction to rejoice (3:1a), previously mentioned in 2:18 and later twice in 4:4.

1 See above p. 30 n. 4.
Over time various suggestions have been made concerning the overall genre and structure of Philippians as a whole. These do not greatly impact our study of Phil 2:6-11, except where there is general agreement, namely that Philippians represents, in part, a letter of paraenesis or moral exhortation. Letters of moral exhortation generally possessed two fundamental characteristics: (i) the writer was the recipient’s friend or moral superior; and (ii) they aimed at ‘persuasion’ of recommended habits of behaviour and action, conforming to certain models of character, and also at ‘dissuasion,’ away from contrasting negative models of character. Philippians seems to fit these characteristics well, as indicated by the presence of two major hortatory or paraenetic sections, comprising nearly half of the letter: 1:27-2:18 and 3:1-4:3, which include or are accompanied by four positive exemplary paradigms, intended to ‘persuade’ toward one type of behaviour (Christ in 2:6-11; Timothy in 2:19-24; Epaphroditus in 2:25-30; and Paul, especially in 3:3-14, but also in 1:12-26; 2:17; 4:11-13, and note the explicit calls to imitate Paul in 3:17 and 4:9), and two negative paradigms,


2 Thus, STOWERS, *Letter Writing*, 96; FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 11.

3 The precise epistolary function of Phil 2:6-11 will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 4 below.

intended to ‘dissuade’ from another type of behaviour (the ‘enemies of the cross’ in 3:18; and Euodia and Syntyche in 4:2-3, who are praised for past ministry, but now exhorted to put right their present disharmony).¹

Because of this emphasis upon exhortation and models aiming at persuasion or dissuasion from particular behaviours, a majority of those who engage in rhetorical analysis of this letter appear to agree that Philippians is basically a deliberative speech, with some epideictic features.² This is an important judgment, to which I will refer in subsequent discussions.

We will return to the rhetoric of the letter in a moment.

Philippians has in the past also been compared (by those looking for a corresponding epistolary genre) to the Graeco-Roman ‘friendship letter.’³ Given its clear hortatory

¹ FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 11.

³ See some of those cited in p. 3 n. 4 above; on this type of letter, see also STOWERS, *Letter Writing*, 58-70.
character, Fee thus calls it ‘a hortatory letter of friendship.’ However, I believe a more persuasive case has been proffered by Loveday Alexander that we should compare it instead with the Graeco-Roman ‘family letter.’ In other words, Philippians may, again in part, be understood as a family letter written by Paul to some of his closest Christian family – the brothers and sisters in Philippi. In Table 2.1 below I will present Alexander’s basic outline of Philippians, as slightly expanded and modified by Hansen.

Yet Paul’s letters were substantially longer than most Graeco-Roman letters and they clearly did not always conform to the standard conventions of letter-writing in his day. I believe that Witherington is generally correct, though, that most of the letter falls under the rubric of a speech or discourse, meant to be orally delivered, and accordingly is mainly explicable not on the basis of epistolary conventions or letter types but on the basis of rhetorical conventions. This would be particularly true of the central paraenetic section in the letter (Phil 1:27-4:3). A few scholars have made a case, however, which I support, for the integration of epistolary and rhetorical conventions, arguing that the two can be complementary and should be in constant dialogue with each other.

In Table 2.1 below I have combined the epistolary outline of Philippians (following the general structure of ancient ‘family letters’) with a rhetorical structure, following

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1 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 12-14.
3 See WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 14, 17-21 (here 21).
4 ALEXANDER, ‘Hellenistic Letter-Forms,’ 94; HANSEN, Philippians, 11-12; cf. also WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 17-21.
5 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 21; for a succinct account and definitions of the various terms generally used in rhetorical analysis, and for what follows below, see his earlier Friendship and Finances, 11-20, esp. 12-13; for more detail and explanation, see the excellent article by Frank W. HUGHES, ‘The Rhetoric of Letters,’ in The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis? (K. P. Donfried & J. Beutler, eds.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 194-240; there are many other works describing ancient rhetorical conventions.
Witherington’s outline, but expanding his probatio and making some small changes.¹ It can be seen that epistolary and rhetorical structures can indeed be integrated, with a relatively small number of structural differences. I believe that an epistolary approach, combined with insights from rhetorical criticism especially with respect to the paraenetic sections of the letter, will best serve this present study.²

The following outline should be kept in mind as the investigation proceeds:

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¹ WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 29-30, and vi, 110 (for the four divisions within the probatio, but with two of his four titles altered by me; though I would include 4:1 with 4:2-3 rather than with 3:1-21 as he does); for a comparison of four suggested rhetorical outlines for Philippians, see S. E. PORTER, ‘Paul of Tarsus and His Letters,’ in Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 BC – AD 400 (S. E. Porter, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1977) 554-558.

² Cf. the similar methodological approach of HANSEN, Philippians, 14-15, and FLEMMING, Philippians, 38, who each treat Philippians as both letter and rhetoric, though HANSEN refrains from positing a rhetorical structure, believing that ‘a preoccupation with rhetorical form over substance is an obstacle to understanding the meaning of the theological themes and practical exhortations in Paul’s letter’ (pp. 14-15); a still more conservative approach, recognising the ‘rhetorical impact’ of various models in the letter is C. B. COUSAR, Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009) 12-14. I am, however, in sympathy with D. F. WATSON, ‘Integration of Epistolary & Rhetorical,’ 406, that the rhetorical analysis should be primarily (though not entirely) responsible for defining the function of some letter sections, especially the paraenetic sections of the main body of the letter, due to the limitations of epistolary theory. Yet, in the case of say 4:10-20 (see Table 2.1 below), I believe the epistolary outline offers a better description of the passage than WITHERINGTON’S ‘concluding arguments’ (Philippians, 30) in the rhetorical outline, and thus I have suggested a better title: ‘concluding affirmation of partnership.’
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**Table 2.1, Epistolary and Rhetorical Outlines of Philippians**

Of most importance for the present study are the rhetorical sections of the *propositio* and the *probatio*. Many are in agreement that the *propositio* in 1:27-30 represents the central proposition or thesis of the letter:⁴ the need to live public lives that are worthy of the gospel of Christ.

It signifies a significant stylistic shift in the letter from first person indicative verbs (in Paul’s narration of his own circumstances) in 1:12-26 to second person plural imperatives, which then dominate the *probatio* of 2:1-4:3 (and especially in 2:1-18, with the exception of the

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¹ I disagree with D. F. Watson’s designation of 2:19-30 as a *digressio* (‘Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians,’ 71-72), believing the two accounts of Timothy and Epaphroditus to be more integral to the paraenetic or deliberative purposes of Phil 2:1-4:3.

² On this change from Witherington’s title for this section, see p. 39 n. 2 above.

³ In Table 2.1, the items in italics within the epistolary outline represent additions from Hansen (which had been omitted in Alexander’s outline); on these, see p. 38 & n. 4 above; similarly I have made some small changes in the *probatio* from Witherington’s rhetorical outline (mentioned in p. 39 & n. 1 above); on the rhetorical terms used in the outline, see the references cited in p. 38 n. 5 above.

⁴ Apart from Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 25, 29, 96-98; see also D. F. Watson, ‘Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians,’ 65-67, 79; and his ‘Integration of Epistolary & Rhetorical,’ 405 (but surprisingly on p. 404 calls this section a *narratio*); D. A. Black, ‘Discourse Structure,’ 46-49; Basevi & Chapa, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 348; Reumann, Philippians, 261, 277-278; Flemming, Philippians, 36-38, 83-84; among others; cf. also Fowl, Philippians, 59; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 155, 160-161; O’Brien, Philippians, 37-38, 143-144; Hansen, Philippians, 31; C. Osiek, Philippians Philemon (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000) 47, who do not themselves employ a rhetorical outline, but nevertheless also recognize the centrality of this section for at least most of what follows in chapter 2.
third-person story of Christ in 2:6-11 and some occasional side comments\(^1\), representing the primary arguments used by Paul to persuade his listening audience. Thus, in 1:27-2:18 seven imperatives are found,\(^2\) which clearly mark this section of the letter as a hortatory section. As Charles Cousar has pointed out, four of the imperatives appear to head key sub-sections in the argument of this section:

(i) ‘live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ …’ (1:27-30);
(ii) ‘complete my joy by …’ (2:1-4);
(iii) ‘have this mindset among you …’ (2:5-11);
(iv) ‘continue to work out your salvation’ (2:12-18).\(^3\)

Structurally, the *propositio* also sets the agenda for what follows in the whole of the *probatio* (2:1-4:3). Thus, Ralph Brucker has noted that the three main clauses (1:27c, d, 28a) following the first imperative (1:27a), as well as indicating the thrust of the *propositio* of 1:27-30 and defining what it means to live as citizens a life worthy of the gospel (1:27a), also announce thematically the three-fold structure that follows:

(i) 1:27c: ‘stand firm in one Spirit’ (2:1-11);
(ii) 1:27d: ‘with one soul striving together for the faith of the gospel’ (2:12-18);
(iii) 1:28a: ‘without being intimidated by those who oppose you’ (3:1-21).\(^4\)

I would add that 1:27d also anticipates the short commendation of Timothy in 2:19-24, who served with Paul in the ‘furtherance of the gospel’ (2:22), while 1:28a anticipates the commendation of Epaphroditus in 2:25-30, who gave his all, albeit not in the face of opponents but in the face of death (2:30). Similarly, both clauses of 1:27c and 1:27d are picked up in 4:1-3, respectively in 4:1 (‘stand firm in the Lord’) and 4:2-3 (to Euodia and Syntyche, ‘live in harmony in the Lord … [you] women who have shared my struggle in the [work of the] gospel’).

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1 OSIEK, *Philippians*, 47.
2 Thus, 1:27, πολίτευσθε (‘live as citizens [worthy of the gospel]’); 2:2, πληρώσατε (‘complete [my joy]’); 2:5, φρονεῖτε (‘[this] mindset have [among you …]’); 2:12, κατεργάζομεθα (‘continue to work out [your salvation]’); 2:14, ποιεῖτε (‘do [all things without …]’); 2:18, χαίρετε … συχνάρετε (‘be glad [and] rejoice with [me]’).
3 COUSAR, *Philippians and Philemon*, 42.
4 BRUCKER, ‘Christushymnen’?, 294-295; similarly, for HANSEN, *Philippians*, 95, these three phrases ‘unpack the obligations of good citizenship’; cf. Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT), 155, who notes, in his own alternative analysis, that two main issues are evident in 1:27-30, which drive the whole of 1:27-2:18: (i) Paul’s concern for the Philippians’ steadfastness and unity; and (ii) responding to this concern in the context of the opposition and suffering they are facing.
Given the importance, then, of this *propositio* (1:27-30) for what follows in the letter, including the story of Christ in 2:6-11, we will need to give it further attention, both in the next section, and later in Chapter 4, when we consider the paraenetic context of 2:6-11.

### 2.2 The Purposes of Philippians

#### 2.2.1 The Occasion of the Letter

Briefly we should note the occasion for Paul writing this letter to Philippi.¹ We have noted the warm and friendly relationship between Paul and his Philippian brothers and sisters. Paul’s own circumstances and those of the Philippians play a role in the origin of the letter as well. Up to the time of writing Paul had enjoyed a long-term partnership in the ministry of the gospel with the Philippians (1:5-7), who had supported him financially and in other ways (1:5; 4:10-20). However, now Paul finds himself in prison, and knows that the Philippians have heard about this, as they have sent Epaphroditus to him with a gift and in order to minister personally to his needs (2:25, 30; 4:14, 18), but also bringing news of Philippians with him.

Paul thus has a double concern: (i) to reassure the Philippians that his circumstances (in prison) have nevertheless turned out ‘for the greater progress of the gospel’ (1:12, though see vv. 12-20); and (ii) because he fears for the progress of the gospel in Philippi (cf. 1:25, 27; 2:15-16) under their own very difficult circumstances (1:28-30; 2:15), due to their apparent lack of unity and harmony (1:27; 2:2-4, 14; and 4:2-3), and hence the exhortations of 1:27-2:18 in particular, but effectively all of 1:27-4:3, including the notable example of humility and selflessness in the story of Christ in 2:6-11.

But the situation is complicated further, in that Epaphroditus had became very sick and almost died (2:26-27, 30; it is unclear whether this was on the way to Paul, or after his arrival) and the Philippians have apparently heard about this (2:26). Thus, Paul determines to send Epaphroditus back to them with this letter to (i) reassure them about himself and also Epaphroditus (2:25, 28a) and (ii) with the exhortations of his letter, that his concerns about

¹ For what follows, see the excellent account of ‘how Philippians works’ by Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT), 24-39, esp.37-39, to which I am partly indebted.
them might begin to be alleviated (2:28b). Paul is clearly concerned enough, though, that he also intends to send Timothy to them shortly afterwards, and then to return back to him with what he hopes will be positive news about their actions upon receiving the letter (2:19, 23a). However, he hopes to have news of a resolution in his own case before he sends Timothy (also bringing that news to his friends) (2:23b; 1:20-26) and, further, that he himself wants to visit them thereafter (1:25-26; 2:24), such is his concern for them. With the two emissaries to be sent, first Epaphroditus (bearing the letter), next Timothy, and then finally hoping himself to join them, if and when he is released from prison (making a total of three significant journeys of 1,300km to deal with their situation), Paul’s apprehension about the progress of the gospel in Philippi, alongside from his genuine friendship with the Philippians, are the motivations for him to make these three travel plans. Fee is surely then correct to surmise that the gospel represents ‘the ultimate urgency of this letter.’

Yet, there are some additional reasons for writing the letter: (i) Paul firstly wishes to warn them, for their safety (3:1-2, 18-19) of matters (probably most of 3:2-19), which he had shared with them previously (note 3:1b, ‘to write [now] the same things [mentioned to you before] is no trouble to me’), but now also including resetting their vision to the eschatological future (3:20-21); (ii) although implicit in his earlier exhortations, Paul specifically addresses the need for harmony between two women who had previously been noted co-workers of his in the work of the gospel (4:2-3); and finally, (iii) before closing the letter with some greetings (4:21-23), he needs to acknowledge the Philippians’ gift, ‘so that the final words they hear will be those of gratitude, reciprocity from God himself, and doxology’ (4:10-20).

2.2.2 Themes, Theology and Story in Philippians

Unfortunately, space does not allow us the luxury of exploring all the major themes of this letter, which each relate in some way to Paul’s purposes in writing the letter, and affect the impact of the whole upon his Philippian recipients. Here I will mention them only very briefly. I have already referred to the progress of the gospel (1:12) as central among Paul’s

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1 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 47.
2 See again my short discussion of this in Section 2.1.2 above.
3 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 39.
reasons for writing the letter. His relationship to the Philippians is defined by a shared partnership or participation (κοινωνία) in the gospel (1:5; 4:15), he himself reports that he is in chains ‘for the defence and confirmation of the gospel’ (1:7, 16), which has in fact ‘turned out for the greater progress of the gospel’ in his city (1:12-13), encouraging local believers to share God’s word with more courage (1:14), despite the difficulties some local preachers are causing him (1:15, 17). Now Paul is concerned about the progress of the gospel in Philippi. A number of recent studies highlight this theme by focussing on Paul’s implicit and explicit exhortations to evangelism and mission (esp. 1:27; 2:15-16; cf. 4:2-3).¹

Related to this is the theme of partnership or participation (κοινωνία), which is picked up in different places in the epistle, variously related to the gospel, God’s grace, the Spirit, suffering, and financial support of gospel work (1:5, 7; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14-15), and supported by a significant usage of Paul’s σὺν language in Philippians.²

Other themes, such as suffering, and joy, also figure prominently in discussions of the themes of Philippians. Further, the epistle raises several very significant theological themes. Among five mentioned recently by Dean Flemming are ‘the surpassing knowledge of Christ,’ ‘the gracious work of God,’ ‘cruciform living,’ ‘partnership in the gospel,’ and of most relevance to this study, ‘the defining story of Christ,’³ referring of course to Phil 2:6-11.

Given the centrality of Jesus Christ in the letter, reflected, as we saw, very noticeably in its vocabulary, and the prominence given to the narrated, current, and pending actions of Christ (and God), especially within Phil 2:6-11,⁴ it seems appropriate to posit with Bockmuehl that

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² On this theme, see particularly WICK, Philippbericht, 142-148, and note his table of σὺν-compounds in the letter (p. 144); there are many more studies of κοινωνία more generally (see REUMANN, Philippians, 162-163 for a starting bibliography).

³ Thus, FLEMMING, Philippians, 39-43; cf. also FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 46-53; HANSEN, Philippians, 30-35.

⁴ See above, pp. 27-28.
the christology of 2:6-11 underwrites the argument of every part of the epistle.1 Fee is also on
the mark to observe that ‘theology in Philippians first of all takes the form of story’ and
rightly observes that to separate the theology from the story, as if the story were irrelevant to
the theology, would be in effect ‘to eliminate one of the primary theological contributions of
the letter!’2

But while the story of Christ takes central place in the letter, and indeed in the present work,
Philippians is also about the stories of Paul, the Philippian congregation, and to a lesser
extent about their respective emissaries, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Thus, I want to discuss
briefly the intersecting narratives of Philippians, before looking at a further issue related to
Paul’s purposes, the politics behind the letter.

2.2.3 The Intersecting Narratives of Philippians

Paul’s letter introduction (1:1-2) describes himself and Timothy as ‘bond-servants’ (δουλοί)
of Christ Jesus, which makes for a notable link between himself and Timothy and Christ who
is described as a δουλός in 2:7. His close relationship with the Philippians is underscored by
his prayer for them in 1:3-11, commenting on how both they and he participate in the gospel
and partake of God’s grace together. Then Paul goes on to narrate his own personal
circumstances in 1:12-26 (on these see above), again expressing his close relationship with
the Philippians and his desire, not only to be released, but to be with them again (1:24-26),
not only because of the news he has heard from Epaphroditus, but also because their
respective stories have been entwined from their ‘first day’ together (1:5). Notably, each time
Paul refers to the situation of his imprisonment he mentions something about how it either
advances the gospel (1:12, 14, 16) or exalts Christ (1:13, 18, 20), and also begins to link his
circumstances to his concern for the advance and joy of the faith of the Philippians (1:25).

It is in 1:27-30, however, that we find the first significant intersection of the three key stories
that make our letter to the Philippians what it is. We saw earlier that Paul’s letter is partly
shaped as a response to his knowledge of the situation of the Philippians related to him by

2 FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 47.
Epaphroditus. One of his concerns in writing is to encourage the Philippians as they endure suffering as a result of opposition to them in Philippi,\(^1\) probably at the hand of the Roman authorities.\(^2\) Paul speaks again of his concern for the gospel of Christ (1:27a), and the faith of the gospel (1:27d; cf. 1:25, 29b), and explicitly links both his sufferings and Philippians’ suffering in the service of the gospel. Thus, Paul shares two key insights with his Philippian friends: (i) their affliction is ‘on behalf of Christ’ (τῷ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ; v. 29a), and (ii) they are engaged in ‘the same struggle’ as Paul faces (v. 30), which, in Paul’s case, is suffering in the defence of the gospel (v. 7) and also (given he is facing trial before Caesar) at the hands of the Roman Empire (cf. 1:13).\(^3\) Thus, they share a similar, though non-identical, situation of suffering, which for both them and him is ‘suffering for [Christ’s] sake’ (1:29c), and which is suggested to be a ‘gracious privilege’ (note the verb ἐξαρίσθη in v. 29a) alongside believing in Christ (v. 29b). The three stories of Christ, Paul and the Philippians are thus very closely connected.

In the \textit{probatio}, which follows 1:27-30, Paul bases his initial exhortations (2:2-4) upon their common παρὰκλῆσις ‘in Christ’ (ἐν Χριστῷ; 2:1a) and then picks up the ἐν Χριστῷ reference again in 2:5 as he urges the Philippians to have-as-their-mindset, that which is\(^4\) seen in Christ Jesus,\(^5\) which introduces the story of Christ in 2:6-11. Just as Paul’s life revolves around Christ (‘for to me to live is Christ’; 1:21a), so the Philippians’ lives are to revolve around their present relationship with Christ, but defined by his story now narrated in 2:6-11. At the centre of that story, as we will later see, is the jarring mention of Christ’s death on a Roman cross (2:8d), which the Philippians would readily understand as including unthinkable (and unmentionable) suffering.\(^6\) But more on that story in Parts II and III of this examination.

In the exhortations following the story of Christ in 2:12-18, Paul again alludes metaphorically to the shared experience of suffering between the Philippians and himself (2:17), though he urges the Philippians also to join with him in rejoicing in their respective situations (2:17-18).

\(^{1}\) On the background to their general situation, and specifically their situation of suffering, see the excellent account in OAKES, \textit{Philippians}, 55-76, 77-102.

\(^{2}\) FEE, \textit{Philippians} (NICNT), 167.


\(^{4}\) The present tense ‘is’ is deliberate here; see my discussion of Phil 2:5 in Chapter 4 below.

\(^{5}\) I will discuss each phrase in Phil 2:5 in significant detail in Chapter 4 below; here we focus on the briefest of overviews, and cannot begin to discuss the complexities involved in interpreting this key verse.

\(^{6}\) For the significance of Paul’s mention of the cross in 2:8d, see pp. 329-330 & n. 2, 439-441 below.
Then follows a key transitional section, where Paul mentions various travel plans and the stories of two partners, Timothy and Epaphroditus. It is notable that Timothy, first mentioned, is to be sent as Paul’s emissary to the Philippians, to be sent bearing news of the outcome of Paul’s case (2:19-24), and then Epaphroditus, mentioned second, has been their emissary to Paul, sent to minister to Paul in his situation of suffering (2:25-30), which represents an important intersection of their lives and stories at this point. It is significant, as we will later see, that both accounts in 2:19-30 bear striking resemblances to parts of the story of Christ in 2:6-11 (note 2:21-22 of Timothy and 2:27, 30 of Epaphroditus). Thus, 2:19-30 also strongly links the ongoing stories of Paul and the Philippians to that of Christ, described in our central passage.

In Phil 3:3-21 (especially 3:4-14) Paul begins to narrate his own story, emphasizing the remarkable privilege of knowing Christ (3:8, 10), and describing his life, also with resemblances to Christ’s story, and where his κοινωνία in Christ’s sufferings (3:10c) is a conformity to Christ’s death (συμμορφωσία τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ; 3:10d). After narrating his only journey, he then invites the Philippians to follow his example and to live according to the pattern they have already seen in his and his co-workers’ lives (2:17; cf. 4:9, where the call is repeated). But this pattern is described in stark contrast to the behaviour of ‘the enemies of the cross of Christ’ (2:18), clearly alluding to the notion that the pattern of Paul’s life, which he desires to be reproduced in the Philippians’ lives, is closely tied to the first half of story of Christ in 2:6-8, which culminates in Christ’s death on the cross. At the end of Philippians 3, Paul describes their common eschatological hope with language (in 3:20-21) which contains multiple verbal echoes of the story of Christ (in 2:6-11).

In Phil 4:1-3 Paul urges the Philippians to stand firm ‘in the Lord’ (ἐν κυρίῳ; 4:1), and draws attention to two women now among the Philippians who had previously laboured alongside Paul in the work of the gospel (Euodia and Syntyche; 4:2-3).

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1 I discuss their stories and the resemblances to 2:6-11 in more detail in Chapter 4 below (see especially pp. 158-163).
2 See further p. 17 n. 2 above.
3 On the important motif of the imitation of Paul, see p. 36 n. 4 above.
4 I have tabulated these echoes in Table 3.1b below (pp. 99-100).
Finally, at the end of the letter, which highlights the inter-linking of Paul’s and the Philippians’ stories (4:10-20), Paul, who is unable to reciprocate the Philippians’ gift himself, turns to petitionary prayer, in confidence that God will supply their needs according to his riches in glory ‘in Christ Jesus’ (4:19), who then features twice again in the concluding greetings of 4:21-23. Unmistakably, their common lives and situations are once more linked to their common relationship with Jesus Christ.

These remarkably intertwined narratives within the epistle confirm the need to highlight story as a vehicle for understanding Paul in this epistle (though we could add in many of his letters). Significantly, the intersecting narratives of Philippians all revolve around one central story, that of Christ in 2:6-11. But, we must ask, is it really story? Why do so many describe it as a hymn or a hymn of praise? We discuss that issue in the following chapter. But first we need to tackle one more introductory issue, that of the political background to the letter.

2.2.4 Politics Behind the Letter to the Philippians

Oakes has provided a very good introduction to Philippi as a Roman colony, showing that while not all of its citizens were necessarily Roman citizens, Romans and Roman institutions dominated the life of the colony. Bockmuehl notes that not only citizenship and political loyalties were Roman, but even the form of local government was patterned on that of Rome. He concludes that when Paul wrote Philippians, ‘the citizenship, language, culture and religion of Rome had been the city’s dominant frame of reference for over a century.’

What is significant, then, for our letter, is the striking use of some key phrases employing quite political language. Philippians has recently been described as ‘the most political letter of the Apostle.’ Many commentators recognize that Paul is making a rhetorical play on words in his use of the Roman political terms, πολιτεύεσθε (1:27) and πολίτευμα (3:20) in Philippians, alluding to their ‘dual citizenship’ of both the Roman empire by virtue of being residents of the polis of Philippi, and simultaneously of heaven through their faith in Christ.

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1 See OAKES, Philippians, 1-76, here 74; cf. also FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 25-26, 161-162, 378-379.
2 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 4.
3 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 6.
4 VOLLENWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub” der Gottgleichheit,’ 429-430.
and belonging to the Christian community there.¹ Bonnie Thurston is probably correct to suggest that due to pride in their Roman citizenship and values, Paul had to remind them (at 1:27 and 3:20) that their true citizenship was in heaven.²

Of the key Greek imperative in Phil 1:27, πολιτεύομαι is recognized by most commentators to be in part similar to Paul’s far more common περιπατέω (‘to live, conduct oneself, walk’), but also to go beyond it in meaning.³ While some have suggested a Jewish background to the term,⁴ more are convinced of a Roman background in the context of this letter, where the followers of Christ were drawn from a Roman colony in Philippi. Raymond Brewer, after examining the lexical history of the verb πολιτεύομαι, suggested that it was used ‘when conduct relative to some law of life – political, moral, social, or religious – is signified.’⁵ He paraphrases Phil 1:27 as: ‘continue to discharge your obligations as citizens and residents of Philippi faithfully and as a Christian should.’⁶ In the Philippian context, the political overtones of the verb should be regarded as most important.⁷ As Fee further explains, πολιτεύομαι was common in Greco-Roman authors, which in the active voice denotes to ‘live in the polis [city state] as a free citizen,’ but which in the middle voice (as here) meant ‘to take an active part in the affairs of the polis,’ hence to ‘be a citizen’ (usually always literally, either of the polis or empire).⁸ Edgar Krentz also rightly recognizes the inherent political nature of this reference. He notes that the term politeuma denotes a political party to which one belongs and then suggests, given the reference to the heavenly politeuma in


² THURSTON & RYAN, Philippians, 8; cf. HANSEN, Philippians, 94.

³ Thus O’BRIEN, Philippians, 146; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 97; T. C. GEOFFRION, The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians: A Call to Stand Firm (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical, 1993) 42-49.

⁴ Thus E. C. MILLER, ‘Πολιτεύεσθε,’ 86-96; cf. MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 69; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 146-147 (with concern that MILLER’s case is overstated).

⁵ BREWER, ‘Politeuesthe,’ 76-83, here p. 80.

⁶ BREWER, ‘Politeuesthe,’ 83.

⁷ So O’BRIEN, Philippians, 146; cf. Oakes, Christ and the Philippians, 177-178.

⁸ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 161 n. 21.
Phil 3:20, that it may be better to describe Phil 1:27 as meaning the Philippians were to ‘live [their] lives as citizens of the πολίτευμα’ (rather than of the polis), and thus as ‘a heavenly, eschatological colony inside Philippi.’

It is significant that both the verb πολιτεύεσθε (1:27) and the noun πολίτευμα (3:20) occur in contexts where the same two verbs follow: στήκω (‘to stand firm’; 1:27; 3:1) and συναθλέω (‘to contend, struggle’; 1:27; 4:3). The Philippian believers thus have a dual allegiance, but one in which their belonging to the heavenly, eschatological colony should take precedence over their belonging to Rome, and necessarily brings with it a mutual and corporate responsibility. The implication is that their conduct is expected to be set somewhat in opposition to the prevailing Roman culture and society. Bockmuehl believes that against the privileged and coveted Roman citizenship which many of the Philippians enjoyed Paul interposes a ‘counter-citizenship’ whose capital and seat of power is not earthly but heavenly, and whose Lord is not Nero but Jesus Christ.

A further implication of the verb πολιτεύομαι should not be lost on Western readers in the twenty-first century: the Philippians have a communal, corporate responsibility to live out their citizenship and all which that involves. Not only is the verb in Phil 1:27 in the second person plural, addressed to the whole Christian community, but the concept of citizenship is inherently one of corporate responsibility.

As ‘the church at Philippi is a personal colony of Christ the Lord above all (2:10-11)’ the Philippians’ exercise of heavenly citizenship needs to include conduct that is worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27). The adverb ἀξίως means ‘in a manner worthy’ or ‘worthily’ and belongs with πολιτεύεσθε (‘conduct yourselves as citizens’), but by way of introducing a prepositional phrase in the genitive case, ‘in a manner worthy of τοῦ εὐσυγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ’. What is noteworthy given our discussion of the meaning of πολιτεύομαι above, is

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1 KRENTZ, ‘Civic Culture,’ 258.
2 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 146; cf. BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 98.
3 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 98.
5 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 98.
that Paul usually employs ἀξίωσι in admonitions with the verb περιπατέω (‘walk, live’; 1 Thess 2:12; cf. Col 1:10; Eph 4:1; Rom 16:2).¹ This confirms the nuance of conduct or behaviour implied in the verb πολιτεύομαι, but supplies the basis for the outward life of the Philippians in ‘the gospel of Christ.’ Thus John Schütz is correct to posit that ‘the gospel establishes the norm of the Philippians’ conduct.’²

Having considered some introductory matters concerning the letter as a whole, we move now to Part II of the study, to consider Philippians 2:6-11 in some considerable detail. Yet the foregoing observations and descriptions, though necessarily brief, should be kept in mind, and we will from time to time refer to them as we proceed.

¹ O’BRIEN, Philippians, 147.
Part II

CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETATION LINES I: PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11
AS PRE-PAULINE HYMN OR PAULINE NARRATIVE?

3.1 Posing the Question: Hymn or Narrative?

Perhaps it is appropriate firstly to enquire as to whether vv. 6-11 (to which v. 5 serves as an introduction) should be regarded as a hymn or a narrative, if we may put the alternatives in such sharp opposition. That is, what form or genre best describes the nature of this text?

As we examine this question, we will, as a matter of course, begin to deal with the issue of the authorship and provenance of this literary form – was it written by Paul himself at the time of writing the letter to the Philippians, or was it a pre-existing composition of some sort, and if the latter, was it written by Paul, or by others? If by others, the label ‘pre-Pauline’ becomes appropriate, but further questions are then raised as to the form and provenance of such a pre-existing composition, not to mention adding to the many interpretative difficulties connected to this much discussed and debated passage. The issues are very inter-connected.

Indeed, the form of the passage has in the last 20 years become a live issue. It is frequently designated as a ‘hymn’, but that view is now being strongly challenged. The passage clearly, at least, contains a narrative of Christ – the story of his humbling and subsequent exaltation. And, naturally, it stands to reason that even a ‘hymn’ could well contain within its verses a narrative, as would obviously be the case if Phil 2:6-11 is regarded as a ‘hymn’.

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2 As suggested by the title of Stephen Fowl’s enlightening study, The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus, with pp. 23-24, 49-101
to suggest below that not only do the verses contain a narrative, but that narrative actually best describes the genre of the passage. Hence, my suggestion, mentioned above, that the passage needs a new referent: the ‘Christ-story.’

To call the passage a ‘hymn’, as many do, is already to be making a strong statement about its supposed liturgical use, its provenance (almost certainly pre-Pauline, if indeed it is a hymn), and the reasons why Paul has incorporated it into his letter, including what he has changed, left out, and what he has added to the composition. This then begins strongly to colour and pre-determine the interpretation of the passage, at the expense of considering its canonical context and, critically, its very content, not to mention its purpose or function in the letter.

Unfortunately, the frequent designation of these verses as ‘hymnic’ has the practical tendency toward obscuring their narrative content – of emphasizing literary form (with its corresponding alleged literary origin) at the expense of content – and that, for this writer, is a cause for disquiet. If the debate can be resolved now in favour of its genre as not being a hymn, as I believe it should be, then its narrative content can only be further highlighted, a result that would be of some pertinence to this study. It would also unlock new interpretative possibilities that hitherto have been obscured in the torrent of modern scholarship on the passage, which on the whole have argued for, and then explicated, the passage as a ‘hymn.’

So when did the passage first come to be designated as a ‘hymn’ and what is the case for seeing it as such? Let us attempt an answer briefly, evaluate it in detail, and then examine what the alternatives are to such a designation.
3.2 A Multiplicity of Proposed Hymnic Structures

Johannes Weiss was the first in modern times, in 1897, to notice the poetic, rhythmic nature of these verses. He arranged the passage into two main, balanced strophes (vv. 6-8, and vv. 9-11) of four lines each.¹

Then, in 1928, a ground-breaking study of form-critical analysis by Ernst Lohmeyer identified Phil 2:6-11 as a pre-Pauline christological psalm.² His arrangement differed, identifying six strophes (vv. 6, 7a-b, 7c-8, 9, 10, 11) of three lines each.³ The arrangement of the Greek text in NA²⁸ (also NA²⁷ and NA²⁶) basically follows Lohmeyer’s structural arrangement, although he regarded v. 8d, ⁴ θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, as a Pauline gloss on an alleged original hymn.⁵ It remains the most commonly accepted – Martin notes that most scholars since have adopted Lohmeyer’s scheme or some modification of it⁶ – though there are alternative suggestions, as we shall see shortly. The lines of the NA²⁸ text are presented here, though with Lohmeyer’s strophic separations added:⁷

¹ J. WEISS, ‘Beitraegen zur paulinischen Rhetorik,’ in Theologische Studien für B. Weiss (Göttingen, 1897) 165-247, cited by O’BRIEN, Philippians, 189.


³ LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus, 4-6.

⁴ In many English versions v. 8d (representing θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ) would actually be v. 8e, however here and in the following discussions I will refer to the Greek text versification, rather than to that of the English versions (see further p. 56 n. 7 below).

⁵ LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus, 8, 44-46; followed, for example, by KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 75-76; BEARE, Philippians, 85; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xvi-xvii, lxii, 220-222 (see also those cited by him).

⁶ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 30; for example among recent commentators, one may note HANSEN, Philippians, 123, himself impressed by C. BROWN’s presentation of LOHMEYER’s structure (‘Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus,’ 7-10). See further R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 24-41 for a fuller history of research on the alleged ‘hymnic’ form of the passage; cf. O’BRIEN’s discussion and mention of other older commentators who have followed LOHMEYER (Philippians, 189-190).

⁷ For ease of reference in the following discussions verse parts (a, b, c etc.) for Phil 2:6-11 will follow those mentioned below. For both the Greek and subsequent English translation below I have reluctantly followed the versification of NA²⁸ and UBSGNT⁴c (cf. NRSV), which begin v. 8 with ἐπιστάναμαι ἐμαυτόν. Most English versions, however, begin v. 8 more appropriately with a translation of καὶ σχήματι ἐσώθησιν ὡς ἀνθρώπος. Because I later wish to argue that μετά θανάτου represents a distinct new stage in the narrative flow of the text, I will hereafter refer to it as v. 8c, and θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ as v. 8d (it should be noted, however, that some would instead label the phrases as part of v. 8b, and v. 8c, respectively).
In fairly literal English the arrangement looks like this:

v. 6 a who in the form of God being
b not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage did he consider
c equality with God,

v. 7 a but himself he emptied,
b the form of a slave taking,
c in the likeness of human beings becoming;
d and in appearance being found as a human being

v. 8 a he humbled himself,
bc becoming obedient to death,
d even death on a cross.

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1 Why the NA should place the óti at the end of v. 11a and not, as does LOHMEYER (Kyrios Jesus, 6), at the beginning of v. 11b seems inexplicable. While it belongs with the verb ἐξομολογήσται, it seems strange to allow a logical connector to hang at the end of a line, and not to place it with its subordinate clause. This flaw is clearer in the following literal English translation, which highlights all the logical connectors in the text.

2 Here I use italics for Greek participles, boldface to show main Greek verbs, and underlining to identify the important logical connectors. [Bracketed words] are interpretative. At this point in the discussion I will not defend any of the exegetical conclusions that this translation is based upon.

3 In Greek this extended phrase is one word (ἀρπαγμόν).
v. 9  a Therefore also God him **has highly exalted**
b and **has granted** him the name
c that is above every name,

v. 10 a **so that** in the name of Jesus
  b **every knee** should **bow**,
  c in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

v. 11 a **and** every tongue **should acclaim** that
  b [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ
  c to the glory of God the Father.

We may note, in striking contrast to the $\text{NA}^{28}$ text arrangement, that the $\text{UBSGNT}^{4c}$ displays the passage instead as prose sentences.\(^1\) But we shall return to the description of the verses as ‘prose’ later.

Remembering that Lohmeyer regarded v. 8d, $\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\upsilon\varphi\omicron\upsilon\chi\tau\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\delta\varepsilon \sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\omicron\omega\omicron\upsilon$, as a Pauline addition to an original ‘hymn’, his proposed structure has been regarded as useful for a couple of reasons. Firstly, as both Walter Hansen and Colin Brown explain, his arrangement recognizes that the verbs provide the narrative structure for the ‘hymn.’ In the first half of the passage (vv 6-8), there are three independent or main verbs, one in each stanza, expressing the humiliation of Christ unto death. In the first stanza the verb is framed by a participle and an infinitive, while the second and third stanzas have verbs framed by two participles. In the second half of the passage (vv. 9-11), signifying a turn of events with an emphatic $\delta\iota\omicron\kappa\omicron\iota$ (‘and therefore’), the fourth stanza has two main verbs, together relating a unified divine action, the exaltation of Christ and granting of the name above all names. The fifth and sixth stanzas each have a main verb expressing the appropriate response of worship. In each of the three final stanzas nouns take the place of the participles in the first half.\(^2\) Brown goes on to note an important observation. The first and fourth stanzas each relate a divine act, which are followed by two stanzas (each with a main verb) describing the consequent course of Christ’s life (stanzas two and three) and the responsive worship of creation (stanzas five and six).\(^3\) This recognition of divine action in both halves of the passage should be kept in mind when we later come

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\(^1\) So also the following English versions (at least in their online display): REB, NEB, ESV, RSV, NASB, NJB, KJV (unlike the NRSV, NIV, CEV, NLT, ISV, NCV, GNT, LEB, which display the text in poetic fashion; the worst example I have seen was an early version of the NET Bible, which put vv. 6-11 into rhyming poetry – thankfully, this has since been removed). For easy comparison of some of these versions, see the following website: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2.


\(^3\) C. BROWN, ‘Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus*,’ 9.
to consider the important contribution of N. T. Wright to our understanding of vv. 6-11.\(^1\) Thus the proposed structure does allow the narrative content of the passage to be highlighted. This is a positive result, even if other concerns may remain. But it is those other concerns which raise doubts about the proposed ‘hymnic’ structure and designation, as we shall soon see.

Secondly, and somewhat related to the narrative content of the passage, it is claimed that the stanzas exhibit a soritical, logical sequence.\(^2\) Brown thus suggests, ‘if every three lines form a unit of thought, which in turn constitutes the premise for the next three lines, the passage has a logical structure that requires the three line-line arrangement Lohmeyer discovered in it.’\(^3\) Thus, the logic flows from stanza to stanza, consequence to consequence, leading to the ultimate conclusion ‘that the one who did not exploit his divine form by seeking to be like God is universally acclaimed with the divine name to the glory of the Father.’\(^4\) However, while the identified logical sequence of the passage fits well with Lohmeyer’s proposed structure (offering a small degree of support to it), it does not in point of fact demand it, as Brown admits.\(^5\) The same logical sequence could also be highlighted in an alternative, non-‘hymnic’, prose arrangement of the passage, as I intend to demonstrate further below.\(^6\)

However, although not widely acknowledged, George Caird notes that two years after publishing his *Kyrios Jesus*, Lohmeyer, in his 1930 commentary on Philippians, went on to arrange ‘no fewer than 48 verses of the 104 verses in the epistle in poetic form, and thus robbed his case for putting 2:6-11 in a special category of much of its own weight.’\(^7\)

\(^{1}\) See below, p. 248.

\(^{2}\) C. Brown, ‘Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus,*’ 9; followed by Hansen, *Philippians*, 127. In logic a sorites is a chain of propositions in which the predicate of a statement forms the subject of the next, and the conclusion unites the subject of the first proposition with the predicate of the last.

\(^{3}\) C. Brown, ‘Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus,*’ 23.

\(^{4}\) C. Brown, ‘Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus,*’ 9; for more details as to how Brown sees the soritical chain ‘working’ in Phil 2:6-11, see further n. 16 (on p. 32).

\(^{5}\) Brown suggests, on the one hand, that Lohmeyer’s arrangement does not deny ‘that the passage could not have been rearranged in couplets to be sung or chanted antiphonally’ as R. P. Martin suggests it was (‘Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus,*’ 20, 23), while admitting, on the other hand, that the passage is most likely *not* of ‘the hymn form of pagan antiquity,’ and could well have originally been an encomium, rhetorical prose, or a confession, ‘rather than a hymn or psalm’ (pp. 20-23).

\(^{6}\) Thus, comments even R. P. Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, lviii, concerning a soritical reconstruction: ‘it is difficult to see a strict pattern other than the sequential flow of action.’ If that is correct, therefore, the logical structure of the passage cannot lend any significant support to a ‘hymnic’ arrangement by itself; it can only help confirm if a proposed arrangement is satisfactory or not.

Joachim Jeremias proposed a major modification to Lohmeyer’s structural arrangement, highlighting the parallelisms of the passage. In his proposal, the composition consisted instead of three strophes of four lines each (vv. 6a-7b, 7c-8c, 9a-11b; omitting vv. 8d, 10c, 11c as Pauline additions to an original hymn), structured to match Hebrew poetic parallelism, and with the four lines of the first two strophes also paralleling each other (thus v. 6a matches v. 7c, v. 6bc - v. 7d, v. 7a - v. 8a, and v. 7b - v. 8bc):1

v. 6 a I. Ὄς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
   bc σὺς ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῷ
v. 7 a ἀλλὰ οὕτων ἐκένωσεν
   b μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν.
   c II. Ἐν ὀμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
   d καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρώπος
v. 8 a ἐσταπείνωσεν οὕτων
   bc[d] γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου
   [θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ].
   v. 9 a III. Διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν
   bc καὶ ἐξαρίστησεν αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα,
v. 10 ab[c] ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ πάν γόνι κάμψῃ
   [ἐποιεῖνην καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθοῦναι]
v. 11 ab[c] καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξεμολογήσεται ὅτι ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ
   [εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς].

However, as Hansen notes, in the absence of any other evidence, Jeremias’ resultant perfectly symmetrical arrangement becomes the only basis for his deletion of the three lines (vv. 8d, 10c, 11c).2 His arrangement also creates what Fee quite correctly calls ‘a nearly intolerable redundancy’ in the surprising synonymity of the first two lines of the second strophe (v. 7c and 7d), the purpose of which is not apparent.3 Additionally, his parallel structure requires ‘he emptied himself’ to refer not to Christ’s incarnation, but to his death,4 which then forces a big jump in the very first strophe from the pre-temporal existence of Christ to the cross.5

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1 J. JEREMIAS, ‘Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen,’ Studia Paulina in Honorem J. de Zwann Septuagenarii (ed. J. N. Sevenester & W. C. van Unnik; Harlem: Hohn, 1953) 152-154 (here using the same part verse markers [a, b, c, d] as used in the NA28 arrangement on p. 56 above).
2 HANSEN, Philippians, 125; cf. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 190, who notes the deletions are carried out ‘at considerable cost’.
3 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 203 nn. 41, 43, 214 n. 3; note also the criticisms of R. P. MARTIN’s suggested arrangement (especially his lines C.i and C.ii) which follow below.
4 JEREMIAS sees v. 7a as a translation of Isa 53:12.
5 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 190; HANSEN, Philippians, 125-126; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 35. For a defence of the notion that Christ’s kenosis (emptying) is a reference to his death on the cross, see GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 290-293; and also, via quite different argumentation and (unlike GUNDRY) with a denial of Christ’s pre-existence in v. 6, Charles H. TALBERT, ‘The Problem of Pre-Existence in
A further problem, I believe, is that his arrangement suggests the passage describes three equal and distinct periods of Christ’s existence (pre-temporal existence, earthly life, exaltation), whereas the text seems more naturally to divide into two main parts of equal length, vv. 6-8 (the actions of Christ) and vv. 9-11 (the actions of God in response to Christ’s actions), and it would seem more likely and fitting that the literary form should match its content.¹

Martin’s own proposal is to present the passage as a series of couplets, arranged as six pairs, which he believes could have been chanted antiphonally in worship (v. 6a-bc; v. 7a-b; v. 7c-d; v. 8a-bc; v. 9a-bc; v. 10ab-11ab). His proposal attempts to identify pairs of approximately similar length lines (though not perfectly, and the length varies from pair to pair), each of which has either a main verb or a participle, which makes for more satisfactory poetry than that suggested by Lohmeyer or the NA²⁸ text.² But his arrangement also accepts, and indeed requires, vv. 8d, 10c and 11c as not being present in the early Christian ‘hymn’ which Paul has quoted, and he explains them as Pauline corrective comments on the original.³ Having removed the Pauline additions, his series of couplets highlights the Hebrew

¹ The opposite approach to this is taken by TALBERT, ‘Problem of Pre-Existence,’ 141-153, who (questionably) argues that the literary form should dictate the meaning of the content: ‘a proper delineation of form leads to a correct interpretation of meaning’ (pp. 141, 153, emphasis his). Interestingly, he argues for a reasonably well thought-out modification to JEREMIAS’ structure, which allows for the inclusion of vv. 10c, 11c (but not v. 8d), with four strophes of three lines each (p. 147). (As a side note, G. HOWARD, ‘Phil 2:6-11,’ 372-377, is one who followed TALBERT’s interpretation, though using JEREMIAS’ structure.) While TALBERT’s (still speculative) structure respects the two halves of the passage, vv. 6-8 and 9-11, his second strophe separates v. 7c from v. 7b, and becomes the basis for his denial of Christ’s pre-existence in the first strophe (pp. 148-153), and leads to a further conclusion that both Christ’s self-emptying and self-humbling are references to his death (152-153), unconvincingly, I believe, on all counts. Few have accepted his approach or exegetical conclusions (HOWARD’s approach, thus, becomes subject to the criticisms of both JEREMIAS’ structure and TALBERT’s interpretation); thus, see (from quite varying perspectives): J. D. G. DUNN, Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Doctrine of the Incarnation, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1989) 310 n. 65; J. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, ‘Christological Anthropology in Phil II, 6-11,’ RB 83 no. 1 (1976) 29; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 191 & n. 17, 266 n. 25; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xx-xxi; J. A. SANDERS, ‘Dissenting Deities and Philosophians 2:1-11,’ JBL 88 no. 3 (1969) 281 n. 12; P. D. FEINBERG, ‘The Kenosis and Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Analysis of Phil 2:6-11,’ TrinJ ns 1 no. 1 (1980) 24-27; R. B. STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Studies: Some Exegetical Conclusions,’ WTJ 41 no. 2 (1979) 251-252; I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 115-117; N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 95 n. 151.

² See my criticism of the lines of the NA²⁸ text on p. 80 below.

³ Thus R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 36-38; with the Pauline corrections explained further on pp. 33-34 (on vv. 10c, 11c), 220-222 (v. 8d), 257-265 (v. 10c), 272-278 (v. 11c), and more recently defended in his 1997 preface (pp. xlix, lx-lii).
poetic principle of *parallelismus membrorum*, 1 alongside some other rhetorical features. 2 Martin makes the reasonable claim that his display of the supposed original hymn exhibits the three necessary qualities which Quintilian regarded as important in any artistic structure, namely, order, connection and rhythm. 3 His arrangement is thus: 4

| v. 6 | a | A | (ὁς) ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων |
|      | bc | ii | οὖχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἤγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῷ, |
| v. 7 | a | B | ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσαν |
|      | b | ii | μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, |
|      | c | C | ἐν ὀμοιόματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος |
|      | d | ii | καὶ σχῆματι εὐρεθεὶς ὦς ἀνθρώπος |
| v. 8 | a | D | ἐταπείνωσαν ἑαυτὸν |
|      | bc | ii | γενόμενος ὑπίκους μέχρι θανάτου, |
|      | d |   | θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.] (Pauline gloss) |
| v. 9 | a | E | διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερψώσαν |
|      | bc | ii | καὶ ἔχαρισατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ύπὲρ πάν ὄνομα, |
| v. 10 | ab | F | ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ |
|      | c |   | [ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ κατασχονίων] (Pauline gloss) |
| v. 11 | ab | ii | καὶ πᾶσα γλώσσα ἐξουσιολογήσαται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς |
|      | c |   | [εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός]. (Pauline gloss) |

Using Martin’s own paraphrastic translation, without the alleged Pauline glosses, 5 the English reads as follows:

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1 *Parallelismus membrorum* or the ‘parallelism of members’ refers to the phrase coined by Robert LOWTH in 1839 to describe three types of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic (or constructive) parallelism. Thus, J. M. LEMON & B. A. STRAWN, ‘Parallelism,’ *DOTWPW*, 503-504. MARTIN’s explanation (*Hymn of Christ*, lviii) of this phenomenon is that ‘in Hebrew poetic couplets the second line completes and enriches the thought of the first. Indeed one can go further and argue for a “dramatization” in the complementary line that adds a new dimension to the initial statement.’

2 See R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 37 for a summary of the rhetorical or poetic features identified by him.


4 In what follows below, I have retained the same verse part identifiers (a, b, c, d) from our previous display of the *NA28* text (for ease of comparative discussion), but added the couplet markers used by Martin (A - F) and line numbers for each couplet (i, ii; here, in place of those used by MARTIN).

5 R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 38. MARTIN’s translation, without vv. 8d, 10c, 11c, shows the poetic parallelism more clearly.
v. 6 a A i Who, though He bore the stamp of the divine Image,
   bc ii Did not use equality with God as a gain to be exploited;

v. 7 a B i But surrendered His rank,
   b ii And took the rôle of a servant;
   c C i Accepting a human-like guise,
   d ii And appearing on earth as the Man;

v. 8 a D i He humbled Himself,
   bc ii In an obedience which went so far as to die.

v. 9 a E i For this, God raised Him to the highest honour,
   bc ii And conferred upon Him the highest rank of all;

v. 10 ab F i That, at Jesus’ name, every knee should bow,
   v. 11 ab ii And every tongue should own that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’.

Indeed, this is an attractive arrangement,¹ but whether it is true to an original form of the composition (if any, and whether Pauline or pre-Pauline) behind that which Paul dictated in Phil 2:6-11 is another matter. Howard Marshall justly criticizes Martin (though his comments could be applied also to Jeremias and others) for omitting three lines from an original hymn, since ‘it seems unlikely that Paul would have so spoiled the symmetry of a hymn, when quoting it in the Epistle, whether it was his own earlier composition or from another hand.’² He adds it is just possible that Paul added the brief comment in verse 8d (‘even death on a cross’), ‘but the presence of two further glosses is disturbing.’³ Marshall goes on to say that arguments that the alleged glosses in vv. 10c (‘in heaven and on earth and under the earth’) and 11c (‘to the glory of God the Father’) are clearly Pauline additions, while the language of the rest of the alleged ‘hymn’ is non-Pauline, are hard to sustain: ‘The language is neither more nor less Pauline than that of the hymn as a whole, nor can it be said that the thought expressed [in the alleged glosses] is particularly Pauline.’⁴

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¹ Martin, in his 1997 preface to Hymn of Christ (pp. lviii-lx) also proffers a similar, but modified arrangement of six couplets suggested by Werner Stenger (‘Two Christological Hymns [Phil 2:6-11; 1 Tim 3:16],’ Introduction to New Testament Exegesis [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 118-132), but with a further excision of a fourth line, ἁρφήν ὁδήγησι τὸματὶ ἐν (‘taking the form of a servant’), being required.
³ I. H. Marshall, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 115 (cf. 106); yet more disturbing would be a total of four glosses by Paul as in Stenger’s proposal (see n. 1 immediately above). However, more radical is Georg Strecker’s suggestion that the whole of v. 8 is a Pauline addition to an alleged original composition of two strophes each with six lines divided into pairs (‘Redaktion und Tradition im Christushymnus Phil 2:6-11.’ ZNW 55 [1964] 63-78).
⁴ I. H. Marshall, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 115; this means that the only reason for jettisoning the phrases is their metrical un-suitability.
Martin more recently advanced several theological reasons for the alleged Pauline glosses to an original hymn. However, Marshall’s argument that they are not especially Pauline additions still stands as valid. He appears to be correct that they have only been identified as ‘Pauline additions’ because they did not fit the poetic parallelism of the structure ‘found’ by Martin (or others, in their own respective cases). Thus, the theological reasons advanced for their insertion by Paul into a pre-existing hymn are speculative exercises designed to make the redactional transition from the suggested original ‘hymn’ to the canonical epistolary text appear more plausible – but they do not contribute to any greater certainty about the alleged form and content of the original. They build upon an assumed hymnic form, which looks attractive, and is an interesting theory, but has neither external evidence nor, as we will later see, any compelling internal evidence to support it.

Fee identifies a further significant weakness in that the sense of Paul’s text is markedly altered in couplets C and D of Martin’s proposed structure. For most interpreters, grammatically, the paratactic καὶ of line C.ii introduces a new part of the narrative (for some, indeed, a new sentence), thus linking the two main clauses in the first half of the passage (i.e. vv. 6a-7c and vv. 7d-8d). Hence the accompanying participial phrase (σχήματι ἐὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρώπος, v. 7d) in Martin’s line C.ii should belong not with what precedes it (line C.i, v. 7c), but rather with what follows it (couplet D). Consequently, Fee further explains, Martin’s arrangement, and others which see the καὶ as instead linking the two participial phrases (i.e. v. 7c and v. 7d, or lines C.i and C.ii), imposes an unnecessary asyndeton between couplets C and D, and effectively destroys the formal similarity between the participial phrases ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχον and σχήματι ἐὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρώπος and their respective main verb clauses (ἐὰν ἐκένωσεν and ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτόν). Further, the

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1 R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, xlix, lx-lxii; cf. p. 60 n. 3 above.


3 Fee, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 33.

4 Thus Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 195, 214 & n. 3; remembering that I am using verse part markers from the Greek text, not the English text; thus, v. 7d is καὶ σχήματι ἐὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρώπος, whereas in most English versions a translation of this line more appropriately begins v. 8 (on this, see above, p. 55 n. 7).

5 This criticism, in fact, and most of what follows here, also applies to Jeremias’ arrangement above (and to those who have followed him).

6 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 214 n. 3, cites H. A. W. Meyer, Loh & Nida, Hawthorne, Jeremias (on his arrangement, see the preceding discussion), J. A. Sanders, and Collange as among these ‘others.’

7 It is also difficult to understand semantically how the participle ἐὑρεθεὶς (literally, ‘being found’; in C.ii) can modify ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν (‘he emptied himself’), as this arrangement requires, grammatically (i.e. ‘he emptied himself … by being found …’ [?]). Thus, Fee, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 40 n. 42.
strophic layout forces ‘a nearly intolerable redundancy’ (as we saw in Jeremias’ arrangement, though it is exacerbated here) with two synonymous lines (C.i [v. 7c], C.ii [v. 7d]) saying almost exactly the same thing, completely unlike every other pair in this arrangement (and, indeed, completely unlike anything seen elsewhere in Paul), and which seems, when viewed as a complete strophe, to interrupt the flow of the narrative, belonging neither as the conclusion of strophe B, nor as an appropriate introduction to strophe D.¹ But v. 7d surely belongs with what follows it, rather than with what immediately precedes it. It seems appropriate to look elsewhere for a proposed layout of vv. 6-11 that is truer to Paul’s grammar and the narrative he has placed within these verses.

Perhaps the best ‘hymnic’ alternative structure to Lohmeyer is provided by Morna Hooker, who only cautiously suggests it, since she is more inclined, herself, to view the passage as being ‘rhythmic prose.’² She nevertheless offers ‘for consideration’ the proposal that, if it was originally a ‘hymn’ or a ‘poem’, then vv. 6-11 might be made up of four ‘verses’ in a chiastic structure of six lines (vv. 6a-7c) referring to Christ’s kenosis in becoming man, followed by four lines (vv. 7d-8d) continuing this theme in terms of his earthly life, and then four lines (v. 9a-c) reversing the theme with his exaltation and receipt of the name above all others, which is followed by six lines (vv. 10a-11c) expanding on this theme. She adds that each of her six-line verses could be sub-divided into two three-line sections, giving a total of six short sections.³ Her poetic arrangement of the text thus looks like this:

¹ For the above argumentation, see FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 214 n. 3; cf. 203 nn. 41, 43; and his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 40 n. 42.
² Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 94.
³ Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11’ (1990 repr.) 94-96 [(1975 orig.) 158-160] (again, using the same verse markers [a, b, c, d] as found in the NA²⁸ arrangement on p. 56 above).
v. 6 a ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
b οὐχ ἄρταγμόν ἤγγισατо
c τὸ εἶναι ἵς θεόν,

v. 7 a ἀλλὰ ἐστιῶν ἐκένωσεν
b μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,
c ἐν ὀμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·

d καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ᾧς ἀνθρώπος

v. 8 a ἑταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν
bc γενόμενος ὑπῆκοος μέχρι θανάτου,
d θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

v. 9 a διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς
b ἑαυτὸν ὕπερψεσθαι
a ἑαυτὸς ἐκείνος
b καὶ ἔχαρισατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
c τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα,

v. 10 a ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ
b πάν γόνι κάμψη
c ἑπομανῶν καὶ ἑπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων

v. 11 a καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἑξομολογήσηται
b ὁτί κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
c εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

Employing the same literal translation as used with the NA28 text earlier,¹ with participles, main verbs and logical connectors identified as before,² Hooker’s arrangement in English is thus:

v. 6 a who in the form of God being
b not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage did he consider
c equality with God,

v. 7 a but himself he emptied,
b the form of a slave taking,
c in the likeness of human beings becoming;

d and in appearance being found as a human being

v. 8 a he humbled himself,
bc becoming obedient to death,
d even death on a cross.

v. 9 a Therefore also God
b him has highly exalted
c that is above every name,

¹ From p. 56 above.
² Again, using italics for Greek participles, boldface to show main Greek verbs, and underlining to identify the important logical connectors. [Bracketed words] are interpretative.
v. 10 a so that in the name of Jesus  
b every knee should bow,  
c in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

v. 11 a and every tongue should acclaim  
b that [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ  
c to the glory of God the Father.

Her proposal has the main strength of recognizing the two main halves of the passage, vv. 6-8, describing what Christ did (‘himself he emptied … he humbled himself’), and vv. 9-11, describing God’s actions in response (‘God him has highly exalted and has granted him …’), including identifying correctly, I believe, the two parts of each half (thus fully respecting Paul’s narrative and grammatical constructions). It also highlights linguistic connections between various parts of the structure (μορφή θεοῦ with μορφήν δούλου in the first two three-line sections [vv. 6a, 7b]; ἐν ὀμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος in the sixth line [v. 7c] is taken up in the first line of the second main section, σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὁ ἄνθρωπος [v. 7d]; and similarly in the second half of the passage, ὄνομα in the last two lines of the first main section [v. 9c] is taken up in the first line of the second main section [v. 10a]). Further, each of the six short sections is introduced by key logical or introductory connectors, ὅσος, ἀλλά, καί, διό, ἵνα, and καί. Finally, Hooker’s proposal allows us to view the passage as a whole, without needing to eliminate lines that do not fit a pre-supposed structure; she rightly remarks we should ‘not think that we can pick out the Pauline garnishes to a pre-Pauline structure on the basis of literary form’. Thus, all the words and phrases of the passage are accepted as part of the original composition, and accordingly are necessary for an understanding of its meaning.

As modern poetry, the arrangement is very attractive; as an early hymn I am not so convinced. Later we will see that some of the same weaknesses applying to Lohmeyer’s

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1 See pp. 110-113 below for my own designations of the two parts of each half of the passage (I.1-I.2 and II.1-II.2), which agree here with Hooker’s division of the text. However, my explanation of this division as narrative stages in Chapter 6 below will differ significantly from Hooker’s chiastic explanation.
2 Thus Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 95-96; followed by O’Brien, Philippians, 192; and with slight modification, Bockmuehl, Philippians, 114-115, 125-126.
strophic arrangement are also to be found in Hooker’s more cautiously offered configuration.\textsuperscript{1}

Various other schemes have also been proposed by a large number of scholars, which cannot all be considered by us here.\textsuperscript{2} But we should note that even Hooker admitted she was ‘not committed’ to her own proposal, and had previously produced six or seven alternative poetic structural analyses, each of which she had found convincing at the time. Rather, the multiplicity of available structural proposals led her to hesitancy about the value of the whole exercise.\textsuperscript{3} It is easy to concur, for the plethora of proposed or suggested literary structures (and modifications of them by others), and ‘the very great lack of agreement’\textsuperscript{4} on any of them – essentially, their mutual incompatibility\textsuperscript{5} – weighs strongly, I believe, against the notion of it being a ‘hymn’.\textsuperscript{6} One has to ask the question, if the passage is so obviously ‘hymnic,’ why is the ‘hymnic structure’ of the alleged ‘hymn’ not so obvious to interpreters of the text? As Fee points out, the ‘hymnic structure’ of New Testament passages such as Col 1:15-18 and 1 Tim 3:16 is plainly visible, so why is it not here?\textsuperscript{7} An astute comment is made by Susan Eastman: ‘the verbal links connecting the phrases throughout [Phil 2:6-11] are so striking that they defy attempts to divide it into neat strophes.’\textsuperscript{8} Cousar, while believing that ‘the multiplicity of suggestions confirms the poetic nature of the passage,’ is forced to admit that it ‘also indicates the difficulty in finding a stylistic structure that honors both form and

\textsuperscript{1} See further pp. 80-81 below.

\textsuperscript{2} See the surveys of proposals for the passage’s literary form in HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 77-78; MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 99-103; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 24-41, and lviii-lx; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 188-193; FEE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 30-34; and C. BROWN, ‘Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus,’ 7-10, 20-23.

\textsuperscript{3} HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 93-94; cf. HANSEN, Philippians, 126.

\textsuperscript{4} HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 77.

\textsuperscript{5} BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 117.

\textsuperscript{6} So also FEE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 33-34; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 117; for SILVA, Philippians (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.), 93, the multiplicity of such attempts ‘should be sufficient to shatter one’s hopes of rediscovering “the original hymn”, if there was such a thing’; cf. HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 93-94; HANSEN, Philippians, 126; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 191; F. THELMAN, Philippians (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 111; contra HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 77, who argues the opposite, essentially positing the argument that the diversity of the majority position inherently shows it must be right.

\textsuperscript{7} FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 43; cf. his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 33-34.

\textsuperscript{8} EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5 n. 12; however, I am not so sure that EASTMAN’S description of the passage as a ‘libretto’ (p. 5) is very helpful; cf. HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 94: ‘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. But there is a dangerous circularity in this kind of method’; the conclusion of FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 43 is equally pointed: ‘all the arrangements are flawed in some way or another’ (cf. his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 33-34).
content.’\textsuperscript{1} Here Cousar has highlighted a very important point, to which we will later return; surely indeed both form and content should match and complement each other. Is there, then, an alternative, and non-hymnic, designation for the form of the passage, and an alternative structure that would more truly be in harmony with its content?

It is well, thus, before examining the textual evidence allegedly pointing toward the passage as being either a ‘hymn’ or a fragment of a ‘hymn,’ that we highlight again Hooker’s preferred designation, ‘rhythmic prose,’ as being a ‘more likely’ description of its form,\textsuperscript{2} and note Fee’s depiction of the passage as comprising ‘perfectly orderly prose’ sentences, ‘exalted and rhythmic as they are’.\textsuperscript{3} To these descriptions we shall return.

### 3.3 The Rationale for Identification as a Hymn

Nevertheless, since Lohmeyer, it has been virtually axiomatic for scholars to describe vv. 6-11 as a ‘hymn’ about Christ, and even to use ‘the Christ-hymn’ as a referent to the passage. But we should be more precise. In fact most scholars who see such a ‘hymn’ in our passage are technically referring only to the fragment of a hymn, as Bockmuehl correctly explains: ‘on any reconstruction this text could constitute only a hymnic \textit{fragment}, since the subject is not explicit but introduced in v. 6 by the relative pronoun, \(\overset{\circ}{\delta}\), “who.”’\textsuperscript{4} Thus, if the passage is a ‘hymn,’ it can only be part of a larger original, which, of course, we do not possess.\textsuperscript{5} The ‘hymnic’ label has in recent years found its strongest proponent in the scholarship of Ralph Martin,\textsuperscript{6} but, as we are seeing, such a view is now being challenged by several scholars.\textsuperscript{7} So, what is the textual evidence allegedly ‘requiring’ these designations?

\textsuperscript{1} C. B. \textsc{Cousar}, \textit{Reading Galatians, Philippians and 1 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary} (RNT; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001) 151.
\textsuperscript{2} Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 94.
\textsuperscript{3} Fee, \textit{Philippians} (NICNT), 42.
\textsuperscript{4} Bockmuehl, \textit{Philippians}, 117. Of course, if the passage (vv. 6-11) is not a ‘hymn’ and was actually written by Paul, then the antecedent subject, ‘Christ Jesus’ in v. 5, immediately precedes the \(\overset{\circ}{\delta}\) of v. 6.
\textsuperscript{5} This would apply even if the passage (assuming it \textit{is} a ‘hymn’) was Paul’s own original composition that he cites in this letter.
\textsuperscript{6} Thus the main title of his work, \textit{A Hymn of Christ} (and previously, \textit{Carmen Christi}). See Martin’s historical summary (1897-1967) of the literary form of the passage on pp. 24-41 of \textit{A Hymn of Christ}, and his most recent defence of vv. 6-11 as ‘hymnic’ in his 1997 preface on pp. xliiv-xlvi, lv-lxv. Cf. also his ‘Hymns, Hymn Fragments, Songs, Spiritual Songs,’ in \textit{DPL}, 419-423; and O’Brien’s history of research in his \textit{Philippians}, 188-193.
\textsuperscript{7} A. Y. Collins (‘The Psalms and the Origins of Christology,’ \textit{Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions}, [H. W. Attridge & M. E. Fassler, eds.; SBLSymS 25; Atlanta,
The main reasons for identifying the text as a ‘hymn’ or ‘hymnic fragment’ may be summarized as follows:¹

(i) The relative pronoun ὁς, with which v. 6 begins, is paralleled in other passages in the New Testament also understood to be christological hymns (namely Col 1:15, 18; 1 Tim 3:16);

(ii) The exalted language and rhythmic quality of the whole, but particularly the poetic nature and literary features of vv. 6-8;

(iii) The conviction that the whole can be displayed to show structured parallelism, of a kind with other pieces of Semitic poetry;

(iv) The language (some unusual wording, especially for Paul), theology, and structure seem to give these verses (and particularly in this regard, as some have argued, vv. 9-11) an internal coherence that separates them from the discourse of the epistle itself at this point.

These arguments will receive a more thorough fleshing-out as we consider and respond to them below.

But, while the ‘hymnic’ viewpoint has become widespread, there are multiple reasons why the case for it should not be accepted, which in the following sections I shall present in some detail and from a number of different angles.

3.4 Introducing a Hymn?

A first and obvious point is that Paul has not actually introduced the passage as a quotation, as he does in many places elsewhere (e.g. Rom 4:6-8; 10:18-21; 1 Cor 11:23; 2 Cor 6:16-18; Gal 3:10, to cite but a few), nor is there any contextual evidence that he expects the recipients of the letter to identify it as one. But this is clearly not decisive in itself, since, for example, many Pauline citations of Old Testament texts are also not explicitly introduced, and Col 1:15-20, widely regarded as a hymn as I have noted, is not introduced as a quotation.²

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¹ Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 40 & 193 n. 4, drawing on his earlier article, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 30-31. As we shall shortly see, Fee himself, is not a proponent of this position.

² Thus, Bockmuehl, Philippians, 118; cf. his ‘Form of God,’ 2.
Concerning the relative pronoun ὃς (‘who’), with which v. 6 is introduced, its use is not precisely like its alleged parallels in Col 1:15, 18 and 1 Tim 3:16. In the case of Col 1:15, 18, even though the antecedent is the “Son” of v. 13, the resultant connection of the first pronoun (v. 15) and following ‘hymn’ with its antecedent is not very smooth. In the case of 1 Tim 3:16, the pronoun is connected ungrammatically with the rest of the sentence, suggesting that it did once belong to an original hymn, and should be translated with a ‘soft’ antecedent, ‘he who’.

However, in Phil 2:6, the relative pronoun immediately and smoothly follows its antecedent, ‘Christ Jesus’ (v. 5b), forming what could instead be described as a perfectly normal Pauline sentence. Therefore, the relative pronoun does not clearly mark out the citation of a hymn or other pre-existing composition. Thus, in fact, there is no obvious or unmistakable introduction to either a hymn or hymnic fragment in our letter, and the other reasons for such a designation need to be considered.

### 3.5 The Poetic Rhythm of the Passage

With reference to the poetic nature of the passage, Bockmuehl offers an excellent summary: ‘Everyone agrees on the fact that exalted, lyrical, quasi-credal language is employed in these verses. There is an undeniable rhythm here, combined with typically poetic tension, repetition and a Hebraic-sounding parallelism.’ However, this does not necessarily mean we are dealing with a hymn, as Fee contends, for ‘Paul is capable of especially exalted prose whenever he thinks on the work of Christ.’ Even Martin, who sees a pre-Pauline composition here, observes that ‘Paul is capable of an exalted and poetic style when the occasion serves … the conclusion is that we should hesitate before saying confidently that Paul was not capable of producing such a composition as Philippians ii.’

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1. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 41-42; ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 31.
3. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 41; and his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 31, citing similar arguments made about 1 Corinthians 13 in his The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 626.
4. R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 57 & n. 3, citing as examples 1 Corinthians 13; Rom 8:31-39; 2 Cor 11:21b-33; on the latter he cites the comment of J. Héring (La Seconde Épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens [CNT 8; Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestle, 1958] 83): ‘le style se rapproche de la prose rhythmée.’
But an earlier observation and wry remark of Bockmuehl is also worth noting: even in the single sentence of the preceding paragraph (vv. 1-4), ‘there is already a widely recognized poetic rhythm in Paul’s language – though nobody finds [t]here a pre-Pauline “hymn.”’¹

This even includes rhythmical style, parallelisms, repetition, homoioteleuton, alliteration, assonance,² and a sprinkling of rare words (in fact New Testament hapaxes)³ The poetic style of vv. 6-11 in its context is thus not as surprising or unexpected as it is made out to be, a fact often overlooked by those who see here a hymn or hymnic fragment.

Despite the unquestionably exalted and rhythmic character of vv. 6-11, its sentences nevertheless follow one another in perfectly orderly prose, which is typically Pauline, and employs logical connectors and argumentation (οὖκ ... ἀλλὰ ..., vv. 6-7; καί ..., v. 7d; διὸ καί ..., v. 9a; ἵνα ..., v. 10a; ὅτι ... ἔστ ... , v. 11) that are also typically Pauline.⁴ Fee notes that one can find many other places in Paul’s writings where his sentence structure is even more balanced, but where, because of the content of the passages, no one suspects Paul of citing poetry or writing a hymn.⁵ Similarly, he adds, Paul’s own rhetorical style elsewhere is replete with examples of balanced structures, parallelism, and chiasmus.⁶ We should not therefore assume that the presence of these literary features automatically implies that

¹ Bockmuehl, Philippians, 104. The efforts of a few to detect a strophic arrangement in vv. 1-4 are unconvincing. But, crucially, none of those who see ‘strophes’ in vv. 1-4 actually call the section a ‘hymn.’ J. Gnilka (Der Philipperbrief [HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1968] 103) speaks of how the ‘stylization of the section’ (‘Stilisierung des Abschnittes’) prepares the way for the following ‘Christ-hymn’ (‘Christuslied’). In fact, D. A. Black has suggested that vv. 1-4 may also have had a prior existence, although they are probably Pauline (‘Paul and Christian Unity: A Formal Analysis of Philippians 2:1-4,’ JETS 28 no. 3 [1985] 306-307), but is well rebuffed by Fee (Philippians [NICNT], 177 n. 15) for his proposed strophic arrangement of vv. 1-4 (pp. 299-304). We also need to remember that although Lohmeyer, in his An die Philipper, put no fewer than 48 of the 104 verses of Philippians into poetic form, he did not regard the letter as an extended ‘Psalm’ (see p. 58 above). See further p. 83 below.

² See O’Brien, Philippians, 164-166, who follows D. A. Black’s modified version (‘Paul and Christian Unity,’ 299-304, 306) of Gnilka’s adaption of a strophic arrangement for vv. 1-4 (Gnilka, Der Philipperbrief, 102), which was first suggested by Lohmeyer; cf. Silva, Philippians, 99-100; but note the critical rejection of such a strophic scheme by Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 176-177 & n. 15 and, significantly, in agreement with Fee, by R. P. Martin in Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, 80-81; cf. Hawthorne, Philippians, 63-64. Although we may reject a strophic scheme, the poetic elements and rhythm in the text of vv. 1-4 clearly remain.

³ Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, 81.

⁴ Fee, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 31-32; Philippians (NICNT), 42; cf. W. Schenk, Der Philipperbrief, 193.

⁵ Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 42, 219-220; ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 31-32, citing more ‘balanced’ texts such as 1 Cor 1:22-25, 26-28; 6:12-13; 7:2-4; 9:19-22, to name a few.

⁶ Fee, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 32;
hymnic or poetic material is at hand, nor that a detection of prose should be ruled out. As we will see below, the passage reads very well as prose sentences both in the original language and in translation.

Additionally, we should note that the passage as it stands appears to offer a very uneven poetic consistency. Verses 9-11 appear to lack the balance and lyric, exalted heights of vv. 6-8, even though the content of vv. 9-11 is almost doxological and probably containing credal elements. The poetic character of vv. 6-8 was assisted primarily by a string of five participles (interlinked with three main verbs), while vv. 9-11 constitute one sentence, beginning with a strong inferential conjunction (διό, ‘therefore’) and composed of two related main verbs leading to a purpose clause with two related subjunctive verbs, but with no participial phrases at all. It very much appears to be a prose sentence that is typically Pauline. O’Brien also notes ‘in the first half … (vv. 6-8) the language has been terse and economical … Now [in vv. 9-11] it is full of echoes of OT constructions and allusions. Proper nouns appear in place of pronouns.’ Moreover, says Silva, ‘the structure of vv. 9-11 is not characterized by the large number of parallel and contrasting items that have been recognized in vv. 6-8.’ Fee is thus surely correct when he contends that ‘if this sentence (vv. 9-11) had appeared elsewhere in the [Pauline] corpus, not following the poetry of vv. 6-8, no one would ever have guessed that it was originally part of a hymn!’ Anthony Hanson even goes as far as suggesting that the whole of vv. 9-11 must have been added by Paul to an original hymn. While most scholars agree, contrarily, that vv. 6-11 essentially did belong together, whether written originally by Paul or in a pre-existing composition which he cites, the uneven quality of the two halves of the text (vv. 6-8 and 9-11) weighs strongly

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1 Cf. Basevi & Chapa, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 344, who are able to conclude that ‘the text in the letter shows many of the characteristics of rhythmical prose, which supports the view that it is a piece closer to poetical prose than [to poetical] verse.’

2 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 196, 219-220 & n. 7.

3 Cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 42, 219.

4 O’Brien, Philippians, 232

5 Silva, Philippians (2nd ed.), 108.

6 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 193 n. 4; cf. 219-220 & n. 7. Fee’s surprise (Philippians [NICNT], 219 n. 5) that Silva and O’Brien, after each has recognized vv. 9-11 as having all the elements of a prose sentence, then continue to speak of the passage using ‘hymnic’ language is understandable.

against a hymnic designation for the passage. If it were originally a hymn, surely its composer would have ensured a greater consistency and poetic balance across its two halves.

Witherington has suggested a very plausible reason for the presence of ‘poetic prose’ in Phil 2:6-11. Noting that vv. 1-11 represent ‘some of Paul’s most powerful and effective prose in all his corpus of letters,’ he goes on to note that following the propositio of 1:27-30, Paul as a ‘smart orator’ would naturally appeal to the ‘affective or emotional common ground, in this case the experiences of the Philippians and of Paul and the intersections and commonalities of the two.’ Hence, at the beginning of Paul’s first main argument, explaining how the Philippians should conduct themselves as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel (1:27), he appeals to the Philippians’ experience in 2:1-4 as a basis for his further appeal to unity and as preparation the concrete examples of such a worthy life, which he provides in the rest of chapters 2 and 3. But, in deliberative rhetoric, Witherington explains, ‘arguments built on an appeal to emotions must rely on style and tone and not just on logic, which explains why some of Paul’s most poetic prose occurs in Phil 2:1-4 and 5-11.’ Thus, not only is the exalted subject matter of vv. 6-11 – the work of Christ – a likely factor behind the poetic flavour of vv. 6-11, but the rhetorical demands of his emotional appeal to the Philippians is also very likely part of the explanation behind the poetic style and rhythm of the whole of vv. 1-11 (that is, vv. 6-11 with the preceding five verses). The ‘exalted style’ of the passage can then be properly regarded as fully compatible with the genre of epistolary and rhetorical prose, and does not necessitate an origin in pre-Pauline (or Pauline) hymnody.

Furthermore, in an important study of the ancient phenomenon of Stilwechsel (a writer deliberately shifting from one style to another), Brucker, who believes that the apostle composed the passage himself, has argued that the stylistic differences from the surrounding context can be explained by the practice of Stilwechsel. He documents the presence of epideictic elements in a number of ancient prose texts, and believes Paul is employing the same practice in Philippians. His study finds earlier support in Ewen Bowie’s discussion of Greek prose writers who imitate standard poetic forms and insert the poems into their larger

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1 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 110.
2 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 112.
3 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 112.
prose works. Thus, comments Adela Collins, it is possible that Paul has imitated the form of a prose hymn or prose encomium as he wrote about the example of Christ to the Philippians. She notes that the hypothesis is further supported by the ancient convention that the style employed should be appropriate to the subject matter being written about. Thus, the rhythmic prose of the passage could well be a deliberate change of style introduced by Paul to suit the exalted subject matter of the life and work of Christ.

3.6 A Comparison with Ancient Greek and Semitic Hymnody

Stephen Fowl, in a noteworthy contribution to the study of Pauline hymnic material, offers two further general, but rather compelling reasons for rejecting the identification of the passage as a ‘hymn.’ First, he says, there is a remarkable imprecision in the use of the term ‘hymn’ when applied to Phil 2:6-11, and to other alleged ‘hymns’. Secondly, when the term ‘hymn’ is given some precision, there is very little evidence to support its application to this passage.

An example of such scholarly imprecision is in the very recent monograph on ‘didactic hymnody’ in antiquity by Matthew Gordley, who after agreeing that the Greek style of the Phil 2:6-11 is actually rhythmic prose, still goes on to argue: ‘the combination of rhythmic prose and praise of Christ as an exalted being make it reasonable to call this passage a “hymn” provided that one recognizes the need to define that term in the broadest sense.’ Unfortunately, so to stretch the meaning of ‘hymn’ is either to deny the usefulness of the term as it applies to our passage, or alternatively to use it inappropriately in drawing further conclusions from such an identification, which strictly should not be automatically drawn.

2 Collins, ‘Origins of Christology,’ 117 n. 29; 117-123.
3 Cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 41.
4 See his important discussions of the subject in his Story of Christ, 31-45, and Philippians, 108-113.
5 Cf. Reumann, Philippians, 339, who notes an ‘increasing restiveness about the imprecision’ in recent scholarship.
7 Gordley, Teaching through Song, 282.
8 For example, that the passage is an example of New Testament didactic song, or that the passage must be interpreted as a pre-Pauline composition separate from its present canonical context.
Fowl’s main study, The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul, considered the stylistic and form-critical criteria derived from Eduard Norden’s philological research into the ‘Formengeschichte’ of religious speech in antiquity¹ and used by two major works on New Testament Hymns to identify such hymns, Gottfried Schille’s Frühchristliche Hymnen,² and Reinhard Deichgräber’s, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit.³ Fowl notes that these criteria include ‘the use of second or third person singular pronouns to begin the hymn, participial predications and relative clauses, celebratory and elevated style, and the use of parallelismus membrorum.’⁴ However, Fowl goes on to state bluntly,

What we reject is the notion that, based on these formal criteria, there is any reason to call these passages hymns in any of the senses of ‘hymn’ used by Schille, Deichgräber and others (i.e. a formalized expression of praise from the worship of the earliest church). Further, the principles used in reconstructing the original ‘hymns’ behind these passages and in situating them in some sort of Sitz im Leben of the earliest church are unconvincing.⁵

Fowl later explains this judgment in some detail, noting that in the Greek of Paul’s day the term ὕμνος (‘hymn’) had two possible uses. In the first, it generally indicated a song or poetic composition, perhaps a type of encomium, in praise of the gods.⁶ The second possible use of the Greek term ὕμνος, according to Fowl, is found in the LXX, where the large majority of usage is to designate songs of praise to God.⁷

With respect to the first type of usage, Edgar Krentz notes that the Greek rhetoricians defined the hymn as a sub-category of the encomium, itself a species of epideictic rhetoric.⁸ But if Phil 2:6-11 originally was a hymn of some kind, it has no correspondence of any kind with Greek hymnody or poetry.⁹ Klaus Berger, in a major review of the literary forms of the

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¹ See Fowl, Story of Christ, 14-15.
³ (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).
⁴ Fowl, Story of Christ, 15 n. 2; these criteria were sufficient for him to identify three Pauline passages as a ‘separate group’ worthy of treatment in his monograph (namely, Phil 2:6-11, Col 1:15-20 and 1 Tim 3:16b).
⁵ Fowl, Story of Christ, 16.
⁷ For example, 2 Chron 7:6; Neh 12:24, 46, 47; Judith 15:13; Psalms 99:4; 118:171; 148:14; Sir 44:1; 1 Macc 4:33; Fowl, Philippians, 109; Story of Christ, 32.
⁹ Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 41; ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 31.
Graeco-Roman world, has shown that ancient Greek ὑμνοί had three main structural elements: (i) a prooimium, prelude or introduction, offering the hymn to the god(s), stressing the difficulty in doing so, and justifying the need to praise the god(s); (ii) an enumeration of the qualities and works or deeds of the god; and (iii) a closing prayer, making a petition to the god(s). But our passage, while focused on a divine being, is not in its present form an expression of praise to either God or Christ, and all three of the themes of a prooimium (element [i]) are completely lacking. Further, vv. 6-11 also lacks a concluding petitionary prayer (element [iii]). Thus, two of the three major elements of a typical Greek hymn are entirely absent here. One may respond, as Krentz implies, that vv. 6-11 may be a fragment of an original hymn, and that Paul has omitted the first and third elements in Philippians. However, concerning element (ii), while our passage and ancient ὑμνοί both poetically relate the activities and praise-worthy attributes of divine figures, numerous types of encomia also do the same, and thus this shared characteristic is not sufficient reason to call our verses the more specific ‘hymn.’

Nevertheless, it is appropriate to ask, could the terms ‘hymn’ or ‘hymnic’ be applied accurately to some pre-Pauline composition that Paul has quoted from, modified, or used in some way? In other words, if our present passage, as it stands, is an incomplete quotation or only a fragment of a pre-existing composition, then could that pre-existing composition meaningfully be called a hymn? Theoretically, the answer is yes, if we could be reasonably certain of that on other grounds. But, as Fowl observes, there are many other places in Paul where he explicitly recounts what another has said or written (e.g. 1 Cor 11:23; Gal 3:10), but in Phil 2:5-11 there is no such specific statement. Nor is there anything in the immediate context to suggest that Paul is citing a pre-existing text. Neither do we have another text with which a comparison could be made to show that Paul is quoting something else. However,

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1 K. BERGER, ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1031-1432, 1831-1885, with 1149-1171 and 1171-1173 focussing on Greek hymns.
3 KRENTZ, ‘Epideiktik,’ 89, 93. On the ‘hymnic fragment’ theory, see immediately below.
4 For the above, see FOWL, Philippians, 109; Story of Christ, 32; cf. also DEICHGRÄBER, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus, 118-119; BASEVI & CHAPA, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 341 & n. 13.
5 Krentz, ‘Epideiktik,’ 89, 93. See FOWL, Philippians, 110-113, and his Story of Christ, 36, for a discussion of the issue, to which I am indebted here.
6 FOWL (Philippians, 111 n. 63) mentions Richard B. HAYS’ work, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1989) as showing that Paul does allude to Old Testament texts without explicitly citing them, and that Old Testament texts often echo throughout portions of his letters
Paul is quite capable of citing, when it suits him; though in such cases, the citation is both clearly identifiable and capable of making at least fairly good sense in its context.\(^1\) Hence, further criteria would be needed to support the view that our passage is a quotation.\(^2\)

Fowl goes on to note that the two criteria typically invoked by scholars are the uniqueness of vocabulary and evidence of redaction based on stylistic abnormalities.\(^3\) Of the first, he replies, it seems no less likely that Paul would use unusual words in a poetic passage than that he would quote them. The appearance of unusual vocabulary adds to the distinctiveness of the passage, but does not necessarily indicate that someone else has written it.\(^4\)

Concerning the second criterion, Fowl suggests it has greater potential to indicate a possible quotation, providing we could measure our text against a standard of what is stylistically conventional. But regarding say the poetic conventions found in Jewish literature or the Old Testament, the important feature of parallelism finds so many diverse forms that no one has yet defined precisely what a stylistic abnormality would look like. With respect to the stylistic standards of pagan Hellenism, again the evidence does not permit us to identify stylistic abnormalities as evidence of redactional activity,\(^5\) for as Berger writes,

> The extensive structuring of the comparable New Testament prose texts (‘hymns’) by means of anaphoric elements (repetition of relative pronouns, and connecting words) is without analogy in the [Hellenistic] poetic and prosaic hymns and encomia. The New Testament texts are in this sense a separate group.\(^6\)

Furthermore, the hymnic fragment theory makes very difficult any attempts to recreate an original hymn from our six verses in Philippians 2, let alone to determine its structure, since we really have no idea how much or little is missing, nor even if the pre-existing material necessarily was even a hymn. As Fowl points out, if indeed we did have a fragment of a

\(^1\) FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 44, explains that in such cases, we have ample evidence that is not speculative to guide us, namely Paul’s abundant use of OT material, where sometimes he adapts, sometimes he cites rather closely, and sometimes he takes over its words in an intertextual way.

\(^2\) FOWL, Philippians, 111.

\(^3\) FOWL, Philippians, 111.

\(^4\) FOWL, Philippians, 111.

\(^5\) FOWL, Philippians, 111-112.

\(^6\) K. BERGER, ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1168 (English translation by FOWL, Philippians, 112).
pre-existing composition of some sort, then theoretically we could reconstruct an equally possible confession of faith or a piece of catechetical material as we could an early Christian hymn by adding the particular missing elements from those literary forms. But our reconstruction choice would be both extremely arbitrary and speculative, balancing ‘unwarranted assumption on unfounded speculation,’ and contributing little or nothing to our understanding of the passage as it actually appears in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Thus, in the absence of any concrete evidence to support it, the hymnic fragment theory is so highly speculative, that no firm or convincing conclusions can be drawn from it in relation to our passage.

Turning now to other aspects of ancient Greek hymnody, while Phil 2:6-11 does have a clear rhythmical structure, it does not have a fixed metrical structure, as classical Greek hymns have. Basevi and Chapa point out that there is no proper classical Greek hymn without meter, as is asserted in the traditional definition of a hymn as ‘any metrical address to a god, originally sung.’ They state that recognized classical Greek hymns and even Greek Christian hymns demonstrate a rigorous meter. In our passage, this is absent. Bockmuehl surmises that ‘occasional proposals to identify a clear meter have been forced and implausible.’

Regarding the second possible use of the Greek term ὑμνος, namely, songs of praise to God, such as are found in the LXX, Fowl states that while both the objects of praise and stylistic conventions in the LXX differ from Hellenistic ὑμνος, the similarity is that they are expressions of praise, which our passage is not.

Similarly, the use of ὑμνος alongside ψαλμός (‘psalm’) and ὑμνία πνευματική (‘spiritual song’) in Col 3:16-17 and Eph 5:19-20, where the context does not allow us to distinguish between the three terms, while seen as suitable vehicles for instruction and admonition, are also

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1. Fowl, Philippians, 113.
2. Thus, Fowl, Philippians, 112-113.
6. Fowl, Philippians, 109; Story of Christ, 32. Fowl (Philippians, 109 n. 55; Story of Christ, 33) goes on to note the possible relevant exceptions in the LXX where the phrase ἐν ὑμνοῖς is used in the titles of Psalms 6, 53, 54, 60, 66, 75 (and Psalms of Solomon 10), but the psalms that follow are not expressions of praise. However, they are all directed to God.
directed to God (τῷ κυρίῳ, Eph 5:19; τῷ θεῷ, Col 3:16). Thus, they too, are similar in that respect to the usage found in the LXX, and Phil 2:6-11 could not be described accurately by any of the three terms.¹

Gunter Kennel, who has undertaken a massive investigation of the common genre, or Gattung, of the early Christian hymn,² is also critical of the imprecision here. For Kennel, Lohmeyer’s stylistic observations are applicable rather generally to a wide range of other kinds of texts, and are not enough to define a specific Gattung in our text.³ Although it exhibits features comparable with more obvious New Testament hymns, for Kennel, Phil 2:6-11 appears to be the one which differs most from the Gattung of the hymn.⁴ Brown concludes similarly, that once one raises the question of Gattung or genre it is apparent that Lohmeyer and most subsequent writers have used the terms, ‘hymn,’ ‘psalm,’ and ‘song’ indiscriminately.⁵

Berger further observes that the pagan Greek hymn corresponds more to New Testament prayers, and thus Phil 2:6-11 is not to be placed in the ancient Gattung of ὕμνος.⁶ Brown can summarize, ‘in light of [the foregoing] considerations and Lohmeyer’s cogent argument for the essential completeness of our passage, it seems doubtful whether Phil 2:6-11 can be said to correspond to the hymn form of pagan antiquity.’⁷ Fowl concludes, more strongly, that ‘if one uses “hymn” to describe a distinct literary genre comparable to what a first-century Greek speaker would have meant by ὕμνος/hymnos, then one has to say that Phil 2:6-11 is not a “hymn.”’⁸

¹ Fowl, Philippians, 109 n. 55; Story of Christ, 33.
³ Kennel, Frühchristliche Hymnen?, 25.
⁴ Kennel, Frühchristliche Hymnen?, 288-289.
⁶ K. Berger, ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1150-1151, 1169-1171. For Berger, Phil 2:6-11 was more like a prose encomium (‘Christus-Enkomion’; ‘Prosa-Enkomion’), than a Greek hymn (see his ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1151, 1158, 1173-1194; and Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments [Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1984] 99, 240, 345, 367-368). We will turn to the suggestion of the passage as an encomium in Section 3.12 below (see pp. 115-124).
⁸ Fowl, Philippians, 109; cf. the similar conclusion of Vollenweider, ‘Hymnus, Enkomion,’ 224-225.
To continue using that descriptor, we are therefore using a term ‘that is the construction of a later, critical community,’\(^1\) one that is, I believe, misleading and unhelpful for this text in the early Christian period we are dealing with.

So if the alleged hymn behind vv. 6-11 does not fit with Greek hymnody, perhaps therefore it is of Semitic origin. But the alleged Semitic parallelism of vv. 6-11 is unlike any known example of Hebrew psalmody. In the present form of vv. 6-11, and even in various reconstructions of the passage, it lacks the rhythm and parallelism that would be expected of a song to be sung.\(^2\)

If the passage was originally intended to function as lines of Semitic poetry, and the structural arrangement of Lohmeyer or \(\text{NA}28\) were to be accepted, then many of the ‘lines’ would be rather irregular, occurring as they do without verbs in six places:\(^3\)

- v. 6c \(\text{τὸ ἑναὶ Ἰσα θεὸ} \) (‘the being equal with God’)
- v. 8d \(\text{θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ} \) (‘even death on a cross’)
- v. 9c \(\text{τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα} \) (‘the above every name’)
- v. 10a \(\text{ἳνα ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ} \) (‘so that in the name of Jesus’)
- v. 10c \(\text{ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων} \) (‘in heaven and on earth and under the earth’)
- v. 11c \(\text{εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός} \) (‘to the glory of God the Father’).

If, instead, we accepted Hooker’s cautiously proposed arrangement a seventh, very irregular and incomplete line – for either poetry or hymnody – must be added to this list:

- v. 9a \(\text{διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς} \) (‘therefore also God’).

Given that vv. 9-11 are commonly seen to be less ‘poetic’ than vv. 6-8, it is not surprising that four (or five) of the verbless lines are in vv. 9-11, but this casts doubt upon the assumption that the whole passage is either a hymn or hymnic fragment. Further, the verbs which do appear are not placed in a balanced poetic pattern, with verbs appearing last in lines 6a, b, 7a, b, c and 9a, and first in lines 8a, b. Fee, therefore, can conclude that ‘without discounting for a moment the “rhythmic” and “poetic” nature of some parts of this passage,'\(^3\)

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\(^1\) FOWL, *Story of Christ*, 33.
\(^3\) No verb is explicit in the nominal sentence of v. 11b, κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (‘[the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ’), but an ἔστιν (‘is’) is presupposed.
such alleged “lines” as these are simply not the stuff of poetry as such; nor are they natural to the text as “lines” at all, but are simply the creation of scholars who have here found a “hymn.”

Thus, we may argue together with Fee, that without exception, each of the proposed hymnic schemes for the passage has one or more major weaknesses. Either one must (i) excise words or lines to identify an original hymn (such as we saw done by Lohmeyer, Jeremias and Martin, among many others), (ii) dismiss the obvious inner logic of the whole (as we noted Martin apparently doing, alongside others), or (iii) create lines that are either verbless or without parallelism (as we have seen in Lohmeyer, Hooker, and the NA28 text, again among many others).

Additionally, Lohmeyer had claimed as support for his hymnic structure that ‘each strophe has lines of approximately the same length,’ but Kennel suggests that he was mistaken to maintain this, since his proposed lines actually vary between five and sixteen syllables, or between two and five words, in length. Hooker’s suggested line lengths are almost the same as Lohmeyer’s.

Some have argued that our present passage is perhaps Paul’s Greek translation from a pre-existing Hebrew or Aramaic ‘hymn’. Lohmeyer considered this as an alternative hypothesis, based on the presence of semitisms in the text, and has been followed in it by others. Deichgräber is not convinced and points to eight expressions in the text that more likely have a Hellenistic background and are difficult to imagine having been translated from

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1 FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 42; ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 32.
2 For the following three points, see FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 43; ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 33-34.
3 See above, pp. 55, 59-63.
4 See pp. 63-64 above.
5 As seen immediately above.
6 LOHMEYER, *Kyrios Jesus*, 6 (‘Jede Strophe hat Zeilen von annähernd gleicher Länge’).
7 KENNEL, *Frühchristliche Hymnen?*, 25 n. 110.
Aramaic. Basevi and Chapa offer a further compelling rebuttal to the suggestion: ‘The presence of Greek rhythmical clauses at the end of the sentences and the strong rhythmical structure of the text makes it very implausible to regard this text as a translation.’

They go on to note that study of the Greek translations of Hebrew poetry, such as the Psalms or the Servant Songs, demonstrates that, while the translators may have attempted to retain the rhythm of the original, their efforts in fact were very imperfect. Concerning our Greek text, they argue that the already ‘well-defined rhythm of Phil 2:6-11 proves that it cannot be a literal translation of a Hebrew or Aramaic text. Rather it points to a new composition or, if pre-existing, one modified with great freedom.’ Their overall conclusion is worth noting:

We believe that Phil 2:6-11 … cannot be considered a hymn, at least in the classical Greek sense of the term; it has neither in Greek nor in the supposed Semitic substratum any proper metrical structure; it fits perfectly within the lexical and rhetorical framework of Philippians (making it difficult to defend the notion of a literal quotation by Paul of a previous text); its structure suggests a strong, poetical prose, written by someone who knows Greek very well, sprinkled with both lexical and conceptual semitisms.

Regarding these evident semitisms in the passage, Bockmuehl’s summation of the issue is apposite: ‘what the feasibility of … efforts [of attempted retranslations into Aramaic] does demonstrate is not so much a pre-Pauline Palestinian origin … but that the passage is composed in language indebted to that tradition and should in the first instance be read against that formative background.’

So from the evidence of ancient Greek and Semitic hymnody, it would appear appropriate to conclude that the terms ‘hymn’ and ‘hymnic’ are inappropriate terms for describing the form or genre of our passage. Even if one prefers ‘poetic’, that term should not be used synonymously with ‘hymnic’, as that is very misleading. Similarly, we have also noted that there are good reasons why the ‘hymnic fragment’ theory is unconvincing and highly

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1 Deichgräber, Gottes hymnus und Christushymnus, 129 (see his discussion of the matter in pp. 126-130).
5 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 120; cf. Basevi & Chapa, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 142-143, who acknowledge the possibility (not certainty) that the author of the passage (in Greek) was inspired by a Semitic text and the rhythm of Semitic poetry, although they point out their preference to take a less speculative path, recognizing the evocation of some Old Testament themes in the passage.
6 Pace Fowl, Story of Christ, 16-17, 24, 45; see my comment on p. 53 n. 2 above.
speculative, ultimately requiring arbitrary choices to be made in reconstructing an alleged original text and literary form. So, how then was the passage originally read and heard?

3.7 Ancient and Modern Readers of the Passage

Concerning the argument that the structure of Phil 2:6-11 seems to give the verses an internal coherence that separates them from the discourse of the letter, we should note, as concluded above, that a ‘hymnic’ structure in the passage is not as obvious as scholars make it out to be. Firstly, a poetic style in the passage is not unexpected, whether by its first reader and hearers or by modern readers, since as we saw before it follows a single sentence in vv. 1-4 that clearly has what could be called its own poetic features.

Next, the great lack of agreement about an alleged ‘hymnic’ structure actually vitiates against an identification of the passage as a ‘hymn’ or a fragment of one; a hymnic structure, if present, should be obvious to all. Sometimes the argument that the passage stands out from its context even appears to have been made only after the presumption of a certain hymnic structure has been accepted – a very circular argument.

Rather, as Frank Thielman has correctly observed, ‘the notion that the passage is a discreet piece of poetry that can be detached from its surrounding context is thoroughly modern’ and appears only for the first time in the work of Johannes Weiss, which Martin admits to: ‘It is a singular fact that it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the unusual literary character of Philippians ii. 6-11 was detected and classified.’ Hawthorne, responding to Martin’s comment, writes, ‘This remark should make one pause before unthinkingly calling this text a hymn, especially since the early patristic commentators, whose knowledge of Greek was native rather than acquired, seemingly showed no awareness of its hymn-like

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1 See p. 71 above.
2 O SIEK, Philippians, 55-56 appears to be guilty of this: ‘It has become customary to call it a “hymn” … Beginning at verse 6 there is a natural tripartite structure of six stanzas …’ and later on the same page, ‘the general consensus that this is a “precomposed” text … is sometimes questioned by rhetorical analysis that finds the passage perfectly harmonized with its context … As was pointed out above, however, the structure of the lines in verses 6-11 is quite different from that of their surroundings.’
3 THIELMAN, Philippians, 111 (though he incorrectly cites the date as 1899; it should be 1897).
qualities.\textsuperscript{11} Thielman drives this point home quite forcefully, ‘if the section is a hymn, it is surprising that no Greek- or Syriac-speaking commentator of the ancient church recognized its poetic character’\textsuperscript{12}

Bockmuehl draws attention to a related critical weakness in the ‘hymn’ theory for the passage: a reasonable, minimal criterion in definition of what constitutes a ‘hymn’ should be ‘actual liturgical use, whether in musical chant or in public credal recitation.’ However, in the case of Phil 2:6-11, this becomes a matter of mere speculation.\textsuperscript{3} It is thus telling that, despite continuing assertions of this ‘hymn’ being \textit{sung} in one setting or another,\textsuperscript{4} there is no contextual evidence for its actual liturgical use in the early church, nor is this passage ever cited in this connection in the Christian literature of the first two centuries of the church.\textsuperscript{5} Bockmuehl concludes that while ‘poetic style and credal language are undoubtedly present, it is unwarranted and potentially misleading to call it a “hymn” in the absence of evidence for its liturgical use.’\textsuperscript{6}

Furthermore, assuming Paul had actually quoted an existing hymn, and had actually added one, two, three or more lines of his own, disturbing the ‘obvious’ structure and style of the original, one wonders how the person who read it to the Philippian church would have coped with these disruptions, particularly if the original was a Philippian composition, as Reumann maintains is the case.\textsuperscript{7} Similarly, a reader of (presumably) ‘obvious’ short lines of hymnic versification, as later proposed by say Lohmeyer or Jeremias, and in many modern

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 103 n.2.
\item THIELMAN, \textit{Philippians}, 111. THIELMAN explains that Syriac is a slightly later form of Aramaic, and notes that ‘neither John Chrysostom (ca. 347-407) nor Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428), both of whom grew up in Antioch, spoke Syriac and Greek, and wrote commentaries on Philippians, mention the hymnic quality of Phil 2:6-11 in their comments on the passage’ (p. 111 n. 5).
\item BOCKMUEHL, \textit{Philippians}, 116.
\item BOCKMUEHL, \textit{Philippians}, 116-117.
\item BOCKMUEHL, \textit{Philippians}, 117 (emphasis his).
\item REUMANN, \textit{Philippians}, 333-383. We will discuss REUMANN’s suggestion that Phil 2:6-11 is an \textit{encomium} (see especially pp. 339, 361-362, 365-374), composed by the Philippians themselves, on pp. 121-122 further below.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
translations since, would clearly break step with the surrounding text to read them that way, unless he or she linked them together as more normal sentences. But the latter is surely what Paul would have desired, if in fact he had added lines to an existing composition, disturbing its original structure and rhythm, since it would be more likely then that he clearly no longer intended the passage to be read or heard as the alleged original ‘hymn,’ but rather meant it to be heard and interpreted only in accord with his own rhetorical purposes, as a piece of his own rhetorical argumentation. Thus, in such a case, for Paul, an original structure is not even something he would want others to identify. These suppositions do not prove that there could not have been an original ‘hymn,’ but they do require a higher level of proof for its existence, since our presenting text does in fact appear as a piece of Pauline rhetorical argumentation that is readily divisible into two prose sentences.

Charles Robbins’ alternative analysis of the passage appears to confirm exactly this. Mentioning that the function served by verse in poetry was performed by the colon in Greek (and Latin) prose, he examines the classical rhetorical theorists such as Demetrius (On Style), Aristotle (Rhetoric), Cicero (Orator) and Quintilian (Institutio Oratoria) on the cola of Greek periodic sentence structure, and finds that, in contrast to modern versification of the passage, a periodic arrangement of Phil 2:6-11 into two sentences ‘is also more in conformity with the kind of sentence structure found throughout the more eloquent parts of the NT, such as Hebrews, 1 Peter, or the speeches of Acts. It is also more compatible with the overall style of the rest of Philippians, and specifically with the context in which it is found.’ He thus suggests the passage consists simply of two sentences (vv. 6-8, 9-11), with each sentence divided into two units of four and two cola respectively:

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1 Thus C. S. ROBBINS, ‘Rhetorical Structure,’ 81.
2 C. S. ROBBINS, ‘Rhetorical Structure,’ 74-78.
3 C. S. ROBBINS, ‘Rhetorical Structure,’ 81.
4 C. S. ROBBINS, ‘Rhetorical Structure,’ 79-80, but using the same verse-part identifiers, that I have previously used (see p. 56 above).
In fairly literal English the same arrangement looks like this:1

v. 6 a who in the form of God being
bc not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage did he consider equality with God,
v. 7 ab but himself he emptied, the form of a slave taking,
c in the likeness of human beings becoming:

v. 8 d/a  and in appearance being found as a human being he humbled himself,
bcd becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

v. 9 a Therefore also God him has highly exalted
bc and has granted him the name that is above every name,
v. 10 ab so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
c in heaven and on earth and under the earth:
v. 11 a  and every tongue should acclaim
bc that [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.

For Robbins, this has the advantage of keeping the passage intact, without needing to eliminate any lines that do not fit a proposed hymnic structure, and also better fits the general rhetorical pattern of the letter as a whole. He adds that the reader of the passage thus would not need to break step with the surrounding text, observing, for example, that the very next sentence (vv. 12-13) divides in precisely the same way as vv. 6-11, with six cola arranged into a quatrain followed by a couplet.2 Robbins goes on to conclude that his arrangement shows that Phil 2:6-11 could have been written according to the principles of classical rhetoric, since it conforms to all the principles of periodic structure set forth by the classical authors themselves ... This presumption is strengthened by the further fact that an application of rhetorical principles to the text reveals ... a coherent, logical and symmetrical development of the thought [of the author]. That the rhetorical

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1 My own translation, rather than ROBBINS’.
2 C. S. ROBBINS, ‘Rhetorical Structure,’ 81-82.
structure and the thought so completely coincide, is not, we believe, the result of chance, but the
consequence of deliberate composition.¹

3.8 The Linguistic and Theological Arguments

The issues of the unique language and particular theology of the passage are significant not
only with respect to the genre of the passage, but also to the question of its authorship:
do they point away from Pauline authorship to a pre-existing composition that Paul uses?
The two concerns of genre and authorship start to become intertwined as we consider the
issues of the language, theology and, shortly, the contextual fit of our passage.

If the linguistic and theological evidence point towards non-Pauline authorship as more
probable, then a pre-existing hymnic composition of some sort becomes much more likely,
with the degree of certainty in direct proportion to our confidence about the passage’s
authorship as non-Pauline. But, conversely, if the data can on balance be explained
satisfactorily as Pauline, or without reasonable doubt likely to be Pauline, then the case for
seeing here a pre-existing, hymnic composition is significantly weakened.² Here we begin to
be confronted with details related to the issue of authorship.

Beginning with the vocabulary of the passage, we may note that the word μορφή (‘form’;
used twice in the passage – ‘form of God’, ‘form of a slave’) is found in the New Testament
only here and in the longer ending of Mark 16:12; ὑπερψωσεν (‘highly exalted’) and
καταιχθονιων (‘under the earth’) are hapax legomena in the New Testament; and ἀρπαγμόν
(‘to be used for one’s own advantage’) is a hapax in the entire Greek Bible. Additionally,
ἰσοθεότ (‘equality with God’) and δούλος (‘slave’) are not used elsewhere of Christ in Paul’s
writings; the verb κενοῦν (‘to empty [one’s self]’) is used with negative connotations in four
places in Paul (Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor 9:3), but in Phil 2:7 is instead used with a
positive sense for Christ’s actions;³ σχῆμα (‘appearance’) in v. 7 (in NA28 and UBSGNT⁴c;

¹ C. S. ROBBINS, ‘Rhetorical Structure,’ 82; he explains further that ‘the fact that the text was transmitted in
Greek for a Greek reading public in an age when Greek influence was all pervasive provides a reasonable
assumption that it was so composed.’

² The possibility would not be ruled out altogether, since a composition of some sort may then have come
from the hand of Paul himself prior to writing his letter to the Philippians; but we shall deal with the
implications of the authorship issue more in a later Section (see §3.13, from p. 124 below).

³ O’BRIEN, Philippians, 199 is both mistaken, and contradicts himself (cf. p. 217), when he asserts that the
four other Pauline uses of κενοῦν have a literal rather than metaphorical sense.
v. 8 in most English translations) is only found in one other place in Paul (1 Cor 7:31); ὑπήκοος (‘obedient’; v. 8) is likewise only found elsewhere in Paul once (2 Cor 2:9) plus one other time in the New Testament (Acts 7:39); χαριζομαι (‘to grant [someone something]’) is normally used of people as recipients, but in Phil 2:9 it unusually refers to Christ.1

In response to this, O’Brien correctly notes that linguistic arguments like this do not prove that Paul could not have been the author of this passage. He explains that we do not possess enough material of the apostle’s on a wide range of subjects to come to any definite conclusion here; linguistic experts claim that to make a reliable decision of this kind usually a 10,000 word sample is required,2 and while Philippians contains over 1,600 words (in the original language, comprising a vocabulary of 438 words),3 our passage comprises only seventy-six Greek words. Moreover, the occasional sprinkling of rare words is found in other texts that are indisputably Pauline, so Phil 2:6-11 is by no means a clear example of a non-Pauline text.4

Examining the specific ‘unusual’ vocabulary, O’Brien points out that Paul, of all the writers of the New Testament documents, is the only one to speak about Christ being ‘in the form of God’ (ἐν μορφή θεοῦ) or ‘the image of God’ (ἐικὼν τοῦ θεοῦ; 2 Cor 4:4; cf. Col 1:15) or the theme of Christians being conformed or transformed into the image of Christ (Phil 3:21 [συμμορφων τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης σώτοι]; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49 [cf. 15:52]; cf. Col 3:9, 10; Eph 4:24).5 While the phrases have their own nuances, their similar stock of meaning6 found in the New Testament only in Paul’s letters makes it appropriate to say that we have no reason to reject Pauline authorship on account of the phrase ἐν μορφή θεοῦ.

Although Christ is not elsewhere in Paul’s writings called a δούλος (‘slave’), he is mentioned as a διάκονος (‘servant’) in God’s service (Rom 15:8). But it is well known that Paul refers to himself as a δούλος of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1), and, with others, as δούλοι of the

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1 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 199; HANSEN, Philippians, 128-130.
2 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 199.
3 Thus FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 18; his word count of the Nax26 text of Philippians comes to 1633 words.
4 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 199.
5 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 200.
6 Cf., for example, R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxii-lxiii n. 38, who notes the important article of D. STEENBURG, ‘The Case Against the Synonymity of Morphe and Eikon,’ JSNT 34 (1988) 77-86, but writes, ‘while precise equivalence may not be proved, the terms μορφή, εἰκών, and δόξα overlap.’
churches (2 Cor 4:5; cf. Col 4:12). He also speaks of Christians as being either δούλοι of sin or righteousness and God (Rom 6:16-22). Further, the cognate verb is commonly used of the Christian life for service to God, Christ, or others (e.g. Rom 7:6, 25; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Gal 5:18; Phil 2:22; 1 Thess 1:9; cf. Col 3:24). Although the διάκονος word group can be distinguished from the δούλος word group, Paul also uses the former word group to describe himself and others in their work of service among the churches (e.g. Rom 16:1; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 1 Thess 3:2; cf. Col 1:7, 23, 25), and, as we saw, Christ himself in his service of God (Rom 15:8). Thus, argues Larry Hurtado, the two words groups are used in such close association in Paul’s writings that it is legitimate to cite the use of the διάκονος word group as background for the mention of δούλος for Christ in Phil 2:7.1 If Hurtado is correct in this, as I believe he is, then Paul’s *hapax legomenon* in Phil 2:7 is actually very understandable against the wider background of Pauline paraenesis, to the point that we can effectively rule it out as evidence for non-Pauline authorship.2

Regarding the other words designated as ‘unusual’ for Paul, none of them seem outside the range of vocabulary that Paul could have used. This would include the words used to describe the exaltation of Jesus by the Father (ὑπερψωσεν and χαρίζωσα; 2:9), the *hapax legomenon* of v. 6, ἀρπαγμόν, and the metaphorical use of κενόω (2:7). For example, while ὑπερψωσεν (‘highly exalted’) is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, Paul is extremely fond of forming compound words with prepositions, including σών (of particular significance to his ‘with-Christ’ motif;3 note Phil 3:10c) and (here) ὑπέρ, and 20 out of 28 New Testament ὑπερ–compounds (71%) are found in his writings.4 It would be quite like him to use such a word in this passage.

Similarly, while ἀρπαγμός is found in the New Testament only in Phil 2:6, Brown is almost certainly correct to see a later echo of the phrase in chapter 3 of Philippians. He notes that

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2 Cf. further HURTADO, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 122; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 200.


4 Thus O’BRIEN, Philippians, 235. FEE’s take on this data is that ‘Paul virtually holds the copyright on hyper compounds in the NT’ (Philippians [NICNT], 221); cf. CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 101-102.
this suggestion is strengthened by the fact that some of the characteristic vocabulary of chapter 2 reappears transposed in chapter 3, where Paul reviews his life story.¹

O’Brien is thus right to urge that the relevant questions we should be asking are: Could Paul have employed these terms of his own accord? And do the ideas represented draw upon his own or someone else’s inspiration? While the counter-suggestions to the alleged ‘non-Pauline’ language do not prove Pauline authorship, they do cast enough doubt upon the case for alleged non-Pauline authorship, so that the linguistic arguments are, in the end, not decisive by themselves.²

What is more, we may also note that the accepted Greek text of Philippians actually contains a total of 42 New Testament *hapax legomena* and 34 additional Pauline *hapaxes*. If one eliminates proper names, some compound and cognate words, and quotations from the LXX, then a more meaningful list for Philippians contains about 30 New Testament and 20 additional Pauline *hapaxes*.³ The spread across chapters 2, 3 and 4 is fairly even (slightly less in chapter 1),⁴ but we may observe that Phil 4:8, 10-15 contain more than double the number of New Testament and Pauline *hapaxes* found in 2:6-11, and that Phil 2:1-4 contains four New Testament *hapaxes* plus a rhythmic, poetical style.⁵ It is thus a *non sequitur* to argue that the presence of unusual vocabulary or atypical word usage in our passage implies it is non-Pauline, and much less a pre-Pauline ‘hymn’ or ‘hymnic’ fragment.

More significant than the linguistic arguments against Pauline authorship of the passage, are certain theological arguments.⁶ Three main claims may be identified among several others that have been cited⁷: (i) given the identification of v. 8d (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ) as disrupting

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¹ C. Brown, ‘Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus,*’ 29 & n. 149: the conceptual echo appears in this way: as Christ did not consider his status as something to be taken advantage of (Phil 2:6), so now Paul no longer considers an advantage the status that he formerly prized (3:5-6), but as he has now instead gained Christ (3:9-11) he is able to appraise all of his previous gains in a completely new light (3:7-8); for the linguistic echoes of chapter 2 in chapter 3, see also my Table 3.1.b on pp. 99-100 below.


³ See Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT), 18-19 & nn. 53-55 for a full listing of these *hapaxes*.


⁵ On the latter, see p. 71 above.


⁷ Some of the alleged theological differences that I will not discuss here include the three-fold description of those bowing before the lordship of Christ as being ἑπταγάνδων καὶ ἑπιγείων καὶ καταρχθείσων (‘in heaven
the alleged structure of the original, and being an alleged Pauline gloss, the alleged original therefore omitted any reference to the cross of Christ, but even if it was part of an alleged original ‘hymn’ then no redemptive significance was attributed to that death, which is said to be very unlike Paul; (ii) related to that, the passage contains no mention of Paul’s particular soteriological emphasis upon Christ’s death as being redemptive or ‘for us’ (ὑπὲρ or περὶ ὑμῶν; e.g. Gal 1:4; 2 Cor 5:14-21; 1 Thess 5:10; cf. Eph 5:2); and (iii) while the resurrection is a central theme in Paul’s gospel (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15), no reference to it is found in the passage, which moves directly from Christ’s death on the cross to his exaltation by God.1

Regarding the alleged Pauline gloss on an alleged original ‘hymn’ in v. 8d (‘even death on a cross’), it must be said that circular argumentation is again at work if it is alleged that Paul added this line to a pre-existing composition, and that the pre-existing composition therefore did not contain mention of the cross. The omission-of-a-reference-to-the-cross argument can only be used once one has already pre-determined that the passage is part of an original, pre-existing ‘hymn’, but which excludes v. 8d as supposedly disrupting the original rhythm. If one could be certain on other grounds that the passage was pre-Pauline, comparing the theology of the so-called ‘hymn’ with Paul’s theology would be an interesting exercise, but without any such certainty – and, as we have been seeing, with very strong doubts about the case for the passage as being a pre-Pauline hymn – it is an exercise in pure speculation.

Furthermore, even among those who suggest a hymnic structure, there are still those who regard v. 8d as part of the original composition (whether by Paul himself or an earlier composer).2 We have already discussed Morna Hooker’s suggested structure above – which she herself was not convinced about – but which nevertheless treats the passage as a unified whole.3 Otfried Hofius has also argued on the basis of both form and content that the so-called Pauline gloss (of v. 8d) actually belonged originally to the ‘hymn’.4 Similarly, Caird reports that ‘Lohmeyer’s attempt to bracket the words even death on a cross as an

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3 See p. 64 above.
intrusive gloss, on the grounds that they do not fit the strophic scheme of his hymn, is the *reductio ad absurdum* of his theory, since the words in fact constitute the climax to which the last three verses have been pointing.'¹ Hengel further finds support for the unity of the passage in the direct connection between the phrase ‘he emptied himself, taking *the form of a slave*’ (v. 7ab) and the phrase ‘even death on the *cross*’ (which culminates the humiliation of Christ, v. 8), given that death on the cross was the penalty for slaves, as everyone who heard the letter well knew; thus, he writes, ‘θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ is the last bitter consequence of the μορφὴν δούλου λαβών and stands in the most abrupt contrast possible’ with the opening phrase of the passage (v. 6a).² If these scholars are correct in positing v. 8d as part of the original composition, then a significant argument against Pauline authorship of the passage collapses.³

However, if they are wrong, and θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ is Paul’s corrective addition to a pre-existing composition, his ‘re-working’ of the original, then one wonders, if inclusion of redemptive cross theology is a required mark of authentically Pauline thought, why Paul still decided not to include a reference to the cross as a redemptive act ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ('for us'). Even Martin correctly notes that the alleged, added-by-Paul phrase, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, still ‘contains no distinctively Pauline doctrine.’⁴ But, as O’Brien more helpfully observes, ‘instead of being a contributing factor to the authorship question the absence of such language probably implies something about the apostle’s purposes in the passage.’ He goes on to suggest, ‘the most natural inference is that his central concern in his mentioning Christ’s death was for something other than its saving significance.’⁵

Perhaps more significant, if not more puzzling, is the absence of an explicit reference to the resurrection in vv. 9-11. For Witherington, it is almost decisive: ‘not just the hymn’s unique vocabulary but the absence from it of the crucial Pauline emphasis on the resurrection of Christ must favor the view that it is pre-Pauline material which Paul adopts and adapts for his present rhetorical purposes.’⁶ Hansen is in agreement: ‘to many interpreters of Paul, the

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² H ENGEL, *Crucifixion*, 62.
³ Thus O’B R IEN, *Philippians*, 201.
⁵ O’B R IEN, *Philippians*, 201.
hymn does not sound like typical Pauline theology when it moves from death to exaltation with no mention of the resurrection from the dead.'¹ But the rejoinder applies here also: if Paul had felt free to add mention of the cross to a pre-existing piece, surely he would then have felt free also to add a reference to the resurrection.² But rather than being evidence for the presence of pre-existing material, or for non-Pauline authorship, the absence of an explicit mention of the resurrection probably tells us something instead about Paul’s purposes in dictating this passage as part of his letter to the Philippians, and that it may have even served his purposes not to mention it explicitly.³ He does however explicitly mention God’s exaltation of Christ in Phil 2:9. Bockmuehl is no doubt right when he asserts that here (in Philippians 2) Paul is more interested in the fact of Christ’s exaltation by God than in its process, which elsewhere would involve resurrection, ascension, or sitting at the right hand of God (e.g. Rom 8:34; cf. Eph 1:20).⁴

But O’Brien is pointedly on the mark when he further counters that ‘serious doubts … must be raised against the whole approach that makes the absence of certain ideas a determining criterion in matters of authorship.’⁵ Even Hansen, while pressing for the presence of a ‘hymn’ in the passage, admits ‘of course, no one hymn can be a compendium of all the major themes in Paul’s letters. Nor can new themes in the hymn mark it as non-Pauline, since the full extent of Paul’s theology is not necessarily limited to the content of his letters.’⁶ Similar omissions may be identified in other indisputably Pauline passages. As an obvious example, we may note that Rom 10:6-15 provides an extended treatment of proclamation of the kerygma, salvific faith and confession, referring both to God raising Jesus from the dead and to his lordship, but also lacks any mention of the cross or Christ’s death as redemptive or ‘for us’.⁷ And while the resurrection is indeed central to Paul’s gospel and theology, we may note even great soteriological passages in Paul that similarly omit reference to the resurrection, such as Rom 3:21-26, 1 Cor 1:18-2:5, or Gal 2:15-21.

¹ HANSEN, Philippians, 130; cf. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 50.
² Especially if he could have known how ‘improper’ (to authentic Pauline theology) such an omission would be regarded by scholars some 1,900 years later. It would have been very easy for Paul to add a line to read, ‘Therefore also God has highly exalted him, raising him from the dead, and has granted him the name …’ had that served his purposes in dictating this passage as part of his letter to the Philippians.
³ I discuss this matter more extensively in Chapter 7, §7.2.6 below (pp. 448-452).
⁴ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 141.
⁵ O’BRIEN, Philippians, 200.
⁶ HANSEN, Philippians, 130.
⁷ So also I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 120; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 201.
Actually, rather than Phil 2:6-11 evincing theological concepts unlike Paul’s (or, unlike him, omitting key Pauline themes), the passage shows strong theological similarities with some other indisputably Pauline texts. Martin, being convinced ultimately of the presence of a pre-Pauline (non-Pauline) hymn behind our vv. 6-11, can only point to ‘the compatibility of at least two ideas with the teaching of [Paul’s] undisputed letters.’¹ He mentions: (i) his concept of Jesus as the Lord of glory (Phil 2:11), tracing back to Paul’s Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ, as the controlling source of his theology; (ii) the theme of Christ’s obedience (Phil 2:8; cf. Romans 5), which, for Martin, lies at the heart of Paul’s Christology (citing Wilhelm Michaelis as saying of ‘this central feature of the hymn’ that ‘in all important particulars the hymn chimes in with the Pauline Christology’²); and, ancillary to these two emphases, (iii) the place given to the exaltation of Christ and the granting of a name (Phil 2:9-10; cf. Eph 1:20-23).³ Of the second theme – Christ’s obedience – we should note that if the passage is to be taken as an implicit contrast with Adam (as some commentators argue is the case),⁴ then Paul is the only New Testament author to make such a contrast (cf. especially Rom 5:12-21, but also 1 Cor 15:20-28); it is, as Caird writes, ‘quite

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¹ R. P. Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 59-60. Martin (p. 60) mentions the fact that Paul would certainly have the appropriate ‘qualification’ to have authored an original ‘hymn’ (mother tongue of Aramaic and equal facility in Greek), and goes on to state that the evidence for and against Pauline authorship is finely balanced (p. 61), but ultimately comes down on the side of pre-Pauline authorship, going as far as suggesting the author may be Stephen, the first martyr of the church (pp. 297-305).

² W. Michaelis, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philippier* (THKNT; Leipzig: Deichert, 1935), 39 (Martin’s words).


distinctively Pauline’.¹ This is a good starting place, but there are other significant theological similarities that remain unconsidered by Martin. Jean-François Collange briefly raises two more that are ‘also authentic Pauline themes’: the coming of Christ in the flesh (paralleled in Rom 1:3; 8:3; Gal 4:4); and the ‘rigorous theocentrism’ of vv. 9a, 11c.²

However, we may also note that there are striking correspondences in the first half of our text (vv. 6-8) with the theology of both Rom 15:3 and 2 Cor 8:9. A number of scholars now see in these two texts very close parallels with Phil 2:6-11 (and especially vv. 6-8).³ These correspondences are too detailed to be mentioned here, however, and for this reason I examine them in Appendix 1 below.⁴ Yet, as I argue there, they clearly point to the Christ-story as being fully compatible with Paul’s theology.

Similarly, there is a striking similarity in the intertextual use of Isaiah 45:23 by both Phil 2:10-11 and Rom 14:11, which is considered to be indisputably Pauline. However, again, the lengthy explanation required to demonstrate this similarity also necessitates its treatment in a separate Appendix. Thus here I refer the reader to Appendix 2 below.⁵

Concerning the passage’s second single sentence, Phil 2:9-11, Fee is right to wonder why it is still considered by some to be pre-Pauline, and thus not from Paul, given four key factors: (i) in form it is a thoroughly Pauline sentence; (ii) it employs Pauline idioms (the two main verbs used: despite being a New Testament hapax, one is an example of a typical Pauline ὑπερ–compound [ὑπερῴσωσεν], and the other the verbal form of a Pauline favourite, χάρις [ἐχάρισσατο]) and a very Pauline confession that ‘the Lord is Jesus Christ’ (cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3); (iii) the typical Pauline intertextuality which forms the heart of this sentence (especially in the citation of Isa 45:23); and (iv) the thoroughly Pauline outlook theoretically.⁶

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¹ Thus, CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 102.
² COLLANGE, Philippians, 93.
⁴ For Appendix 1, see pp. 490-495 below.
⁵ For Appendix 2, see pp. 497-502.
⁶ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 220 n. 9; Pauline Christology, 395; cf. I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 120.
We have somewhat laboured the theological similarities and affinities of Phil 2:6-11 with indisputably Pauline passages elsewhere. Hence, we may conclude that rather than the absence of certain theological themes in Phil 2:6-11 confirming the presence of a pre-Pauline composition which Paul has adapted and used, the narrative pattern (especially with respect to the action of Christ leading to his death), multiple theological ideas, and the intertextuality of the passage actually seem to point instead towards Pauline authorship. Thus, the presence or absence of certain theological ideas cannot convincingly be used as evidence that vv. 6-11 represent a pre-Pauline hymnic composition.

The foregoing has thus shown to be weak and unconvincing the argument that the language, theology and structure of Phil 2:6-11 appear to give these verses an internal coherence that separates them from the discourse of the epistle at this point.

### 3.9 The Contextual Fit of the Passage

Finally, we need to ask is the passage in fact so recognisably distinct contextually, and thus so easily separable from Paul’s discourse in the letter at this point, as to point towards the presence of a pre-Pauline, hymnic composition that Paul has used? We have seen that the structural, linguistic, and theological evidence do not compellingly point in this direction. But what of the question of the contextual ‘fit’ of vv. 6-11 within Paul’s letter to the Philippians, and especially of vv. 9-11?

For Martin, in the main body of his *Hymn of Christ*, the contextual evidence was one of the ‘clinching argument[s]’ that the passage ‘is detachable’ from its epistolary context.¹ He argued that Phil 1:27-2:18 forms a closely knit paraenetic section in Paul’s letter, and that Phil 2:5-11 clearly interrupts the hortatory theme, which points to the conclusion that Paul has inserted vv. 6-11, plus the introductory v. 5, to support his admonition to the Philippians.² Unfortunately, this is a case where Martin’s soteriological, and *non*-ethical, interpretation of the passage, like Käsemann’s before him, to some degree automatically separates the passage

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¹ R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 42; but note the apparent reversal of this opinion in his 1997 preface to the book (l [50] & n. 16): ‘One of the firmest conclusions in more recent studies of the letter is the way 2:5-11 fits into the wider context of the thematic unit 1:27-2:30.’

from its strongly hortatory context. But if other considerations do indeed show that the passage fits its epistolary context very well, this would raise early doubts about the appropriateness of the soteriological interpretation of the passage advocated most vigorously by Käsemann and Martin.

Martin then cited, but rejected, a further argument by Jacob Jervell: granting that vv. 6-8 do illustrate the exhortation of vv. 1-4, actually only vv. 6-8 illustrate this exhortation, and thus vv. 9-11, which apparently do not serve this purpose in context, were added for no other reason than that Paul was quoting in entirety a pre-existing composition that he had before him. In response to this, Martin rightly questioned Jervell’s premise that vv. 9-11 ‘serve no function’ in the immediate context, and reasonably suggests that it is not so incredible that Paul, having once begun to quote, should go on to complete the citation, even if the second half had no strict relevance to the preceding exhortation. Although I believe that vv. 9-11 do form an integral part of vv. 6-11 and are inseparable from vv. 6-8, the fact that they initially appear not to support the exhortation of vv. 1-4 could also be explained (without needing to posit a pre-existing composition) as Paul’s breaking forth in uncontainable praise (or doxology) in response to the amazing actions of Christ that he has just described in vv. 6-8 (which do exemplify vv. 1-4).

Martin admits the alternative possibility, that Paul could have composed these verses spontaneously as he dictated the letter, but regards this as an unlikely explanation for the apparent ‘interruption’ of vv. 5-11 to the flow of the hortatory theme of Phil 1:27-2:18, given the particular arrangement of phrases and ‘rhythmical cadence’ in the passage.

However, regarding this argument, it is worth re-citing Martin’s own opinion that ‘Paul is capable of an exalted and poetic style when the occasion serves … the conclusion is that we should hesitate before saying confidently that Paul was not capable of producing such a

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1 Cf. the criticism of COUSAR, Galatians, Philippians, 155; and see FEE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 36.
2 This subject will receive extensive consideration in Chapter 4 below.
4 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 43 n. 2.
5 Thus, G. D. FEE in unpublished lectures on Philippians, Bible College of New Zealand (Auckland, 1988).
composition as Philippians ii.¹ Such hesitation would seem appropriate here. Paul’s reflections upon the profound events described in vv. 6-11, and a particular focus upon the actions of both Christ and God could easily be responsible for the exalted nature of his prose, and the poetic, rhythmical features of the text at this point.² And dictation of the passage would appear to be a much more likely reason for the uneven poetic consistency across the two halves of vv. 6-11 than the alternative, that a pre-existing ‘hymn’ had been so unevenly composed before it came to Paul. But, further, we should not presume that Paul, if he did compose the passage, must have done so **currente calamo**, in a matter of only a few minutes, while he dictated this letter.³ The symmetrical narrative structure of the passage,⁴ and the exalted nature of at least some of his prose at this point no doubt took a little longer to compose, but that he could have done this is certainly well within his abilities as a theologian, rhetor, and letter writer.

Concerning the contextual fit of the passage, the evidence actually suggests that v. 5 and vv. 6-11 fit the context of Phil 1:27-2:18, indeed of the whole letter, extremely well. The vocabulary of vv. 6-11 (in particular vv. 6-8) clearly echoes⁵ that of the immediately preceding verses, vv. 1-4 in particular, and finds itself echoed later in the epistle, strikingly so in 3:20-21.

We may tabulate the linguistic affinities as such in two parts, referring to the letter context before and after our key passage:⁶

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¹ R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 57 & n. 3; see further p. 70 above.
² Cf. FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 41: ‘Paul is capable of especially exalted prose whenever he thinks on the work of Christ.’
⁴ Which I highlight in Chapter 7 below.
⁵ ‘Echoes’ is used deliberately, since the verbal parallels are not exact.
Similarly, we may note the verbal echoes which follow our passage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philippians 2:5-11</th>
<th>echoing ... Philippians 1:1-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>μορφήν δούλου λαβών</td>
<td>Πάυλος καὶ Τιμοθεός δούλοι Χριστοῦ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘the form of a slave/servant taking’</td>
<td>‘Paul and Timothy, slaves/servants of Christ Jesus’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός</td>
<td>εἰς δόξαν ... θεοῦ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to the glory of God the Father’</td>
<td>‘to the glory ... of God’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐχορίσατο</td>
<td>ἐχορίσθη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘has granted’</td>
<td>‘it has been granted’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φρονίτε</td>
<td>ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε ... τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘think [have-a-mindset]’</td>
<td>‘in order that you may think the same [be of the same mind] ... of one thinking of one mind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ</td>
<td>ἐν Χριστῷ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘in Christ Jesus’</td>
<td>‘in Christ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σοῦ ἄρπαγμόν ἤγισατο</td>
<td>ἤγοιμενοι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘not for-his-own-advantage did he consider’</td>
<td>‘consider’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>έστιν ἐκνωσεν</td>
<td>κενοδεξιὰν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘himself he emptied’</td>
<td>‘empty glory’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐταπείνωσεν ιστόν</td>
<td>τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘he humbled himself’</td>
<td>‘in humility’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1a, Philippians Linguistic Affinities with 2:5-11: Echoes from the Preceding Context

A further conceptual link is between the suffering and death willingly embraced by Jesus (Phil 2:8) and the privilege granted (ἐχορίσθη) to the Philippians of suffering for Christ (1:27-30).
Table 3.1b, Philippians Linguistic Affinities with 2:5-11: Echoes in the Following Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Phrase</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>εὑρεθεὶς ὡς</td>
<td>‘being found as’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σύχ ἀρπαγμῶν ἵγηστο</td>
<td>‘not for his own advantage did he consider’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μορφή ... μορφήν</td>
<td>‘form ... form’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ</td>
<td>‘to the point of death, even death on a cross’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οὐκ ἀρκάζων</td>
<td>‘existing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σχήματι</td>
<td>‘in appearance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐταπείνωσεν οὐτὸν</td>
<td>‘he humbled himself’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πᾶν ... πᾶν ... πάσα ...</td>
<td>‘every ... every ... every ...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πᾶν γόνον κάμψη</td>
<td>‘every knee should bow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπουρανίων</td>
<td>‘of heaven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς [έστι]</td>
<td>‘the Lord [is] Jesus Christ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δόξα</td>
<td>‘[the] glory’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐταπείνωσεν οὐτὸν</td>
<td>‘he humbled himself’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Phrase</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>εὑρεθῶ</td>
<td>‘be found’ [of Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἰγνώμια ... ἵγιαν ...</td>
<td>‘consider ... as loss ... consider all things to be loss ... all things I suffered loss and consider dung’ [of Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μορφήζομαι</td>
<td>‘becoming conformed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ</td>
<td>‘to his death’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Phrase</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὑπάρχων</td>
<td>‘existing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σχήματι</td>
<td>‘in appearance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐταπείνωσεν οὐτὸν</td>
<td>‘he humbled himself’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πᾶν ... πᾶν ... πάσα ...</td>
<td>‘every ... every ... every ...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ</td>
<td>‘to his death’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1b, Philippians Linguistic Affinities with 2:5-11: Echoes in the Following Context

Thus, in the immediate context of Phil 2:5-11, the most significant set of verbal similarities lies with 2:1-4. The command φονείτε (‘think [this way]’) in v. 5 makes little sense unless Paul remains concerned, in vv. 6-11, with the paraenetic issues of vv. 1-4, where φονεῖν has already been used twice (v. 2). What is said of Christ in vv. 6-8 are clearly the main points of vv. 3-4 – selflessness and humility – with several verbal echoes, as seen in the table above.

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1 This line represents more of a clear conceptual (rather than linguistic) echo: with ‘in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth’ (2:10), being echoed by the line, ‘by the power that enables him even to subject all things to Himself’ (3:21).
And the climactic action of Christ in v. 8 is described with the two key words found both before and after vv. 6-11: ταπεινόω (‘to be humble’; v. 3) and ὑπῆκοος (‘obedience’; v. 12).1

Furthermore, to reinforce these verbal parallels, there is also a close structural and conceptual similarity between Phil 2:3, 4 and 2:6-8.2 With Gorman we may observe the initial similarity between two sets of radically opposed imperative phrases in v. 3 and v. 4, each disjoined by ἀλλά (‘but’):

2:3
[Doing] nothing [μηδέν]
from selfish ambition
nor [μηδέ] from empty glory;

2:4
Each of you looking not [μή]
to your own interests,

but [ἀλλά] in humility consider others
as better than yourselves.

In each verse a selfish action is opposed by an action directed toward and for others. What the Philippians should not do is radically contrasted with what they should do. Structurally, each verse can be depicted by the arrangement, ‘not [y], but rather [z]’.4

If we may re-combine these two verses into one unit following the same pattern, a remarkable parallel of structure and meaning with the indicative phrases of Phil 2:6-8 results:

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2 For what follows here, see GORMAN, Cruciformity, 255-258.
3 The UBSGNT4c and NA28 text of v. 4b read, ἀλλά [καί] τά ἐτέρων ἑκαστοί. The bracketed καί finds strong external support in Ἱδο κ Α Β ΡΕ other manuscripts. It is omitted, however, in some Western manuscripts, D* F G it Tert, and by K ὅτα (cf. 1 Cor 10:24). At first glance, the more difficult reading seems to be that omitting the καί. The inclusion of καί could then be a softening of the contrast intended in v. 4; thus, it could be translated as ‘let each of you look not to your own interests, but also to the interests of others,’ implying that it is appropriate to look after one’s own interests as well as the interests of others. So, WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 131, who supports the Western reading; cf. NRSV, which omits an ‘also’. Nevertheless, the presence of the καί actually creates its own problems, since the text then expects a μόνον (‘only’) in v. 4a (‘… look not only to your interests, but also …’; as translated in the ESV; NIV1996; cf. NASB), but which is missing from all Greek texts. It is thus preferable to see the omission as the secondary process here, and the καί as being most likely original. So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 175 & n. 8; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 113; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 164. However, as BOCKMUEHL (pp. 113-114) explains (citing J. P. LOUW & E. A. NIDA, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains [2nd ed.; New York: UBS, 1989] 91.11 and some LXX texts), in the absence of μόνον, ἀλλά καί properly serves to denote ‘contrastive emphasis’, meaning ‘but actually’ or ‘but rather’ and not ‘but also’. Thus, in fact, in either reading, an absolute contrast in v. 4, matching the absolute contrast of v. 3 can be maintained appropriately. So also HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 500; FLEMMING, Philippians, 101-102.
4 GORMAN, Cruciformity, 255-256, and following his designations here; the ‘not … but …’ structural contrast is noted by a few other commentators: for example, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 186; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 109; FLEMMING, Philippians, 99-100.
2:3, 4 (rearranged)

[Doing] nothing [μηδέν]
from selfish ambition
nor [μηδεί] from empty glory [κενοδοξίαν],
[and] each of you looking
not [μὴ] to your own interests [τὰ ἐαυτῶν],

but [ἀλλὰ]

in humility [ταπεινοφροσύνη]
considering [ἡγούμενοι] others
as better than yourselves
[ὑπερέχουσας ἐαυτῶν]
[and] [looking]
to the interests of others [τὰ ἐτέρων].

2:6-8

who, being in the form of God,

not [οὐχ] to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage
did he consider [ἡγήσατο] equality with God,

but [ἀλλά]

himself he emptied [ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν],
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness;
and being found in human form
he humbled himself [ἐταπεινώσεν ἐαυτὸν]
becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

In Phil 2:6-8, Christ’s self-emptying and self-humbling are described using the same pattern, ‘not [y], but rather [z]’. The similarity of this pattern across both Phil 2:3, 4 and 2:6-8 shows a very close integration of the Christ-story with its context, not its ‘detachability’.

As a side note, although we noted earlier the lack of an explicit soteriological emphasis upon Christ’s death as being redemptive or ‘for us’ in the Christ-story,1 the close parallel seen above almost begs for an implicit understanding, on the right hand side, that in some sense Christ’s death was indeed ‘for others’.2 Whatever may be said of that suggestion, Bockmuehl concludes that the two paragraphs of 2:1-4 and 2:5-11, despite their seam at 2:5, ‘are intricately woven in terms of language, logic and subject matter … the first relates to the second as the Christian mind to the mind of Christ. Both rhetorically and theologically, 2:5-11 shapes and illustrates 2:1-4.’3

As mentioned above, the verbal and conceptual links between Phil 2:6-11 and 3:20-21 are very striking. Here, David Black has made an important observation: what is especially

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1 See above, p. 91.
2 Among those who also admit an implicit soteriology, see GORMAN, Apostle of the Crucified, 105; and his Cruciformity, 164-169; N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83-84, 87; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 211, 217; and his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 44; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 231-232; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 140; HANSEN, Philippians, 158.
3 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 104; cf. WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 117; FLEMMING, Philippians, 109.
significant about these parallels is that so many of them belong to the supposed ‘non-Pauline’
language of the hymn.\(^1\) Paul deliberately recalls the language of Phil 2:6-11 in 3:20-21.\(^2\)
The parallels indicate clearly that Paul has carefully reflected upon what happened to Christ
in 2:6-11 and in 3:20-21 has drawn its paradigmatic implications for the future of believers.
They show that 2:6-11 belongs in the overall discourse of the letter, and provide us with
some clues as to how Paul has interpreted the events recounted in this passage.\(^3\) N. T. Wright
is able to comment, further, that ‘the very close linguistic and thematic links between 2:5-11
and 3:20-21, and the way the latter builds so naturally on the former, constitute one of the
many good reasons for seeing Philippians … as a single letter.’\(^4\)

In addition, significant and multiple narrative similarities abound between the story of Christ
in 2:6-11, the intermediary stories of Timothy and Epaphroditus in 2:19-31, and Paul’s story
in 3:3-21 and 4:10-20. They establish the centrality of Christ’s story for the various
intersecting stories of this letter,\(^5\) and in particular for Paul’s telling of his own story. And,
thus, they highlight for us the centrality of 2:6-11 in the letter as a whole.

Further, Paul has closely tied the passage to the argument of its immediate context. Verse 5
functions as both a conclusion to the exhortations of 1:27-2:4 and an introduction to the story
of Christ in vv. 6-11. It has, as Collange puts it, ‘essentially a transitional nature,’ forming
a link between the two sections.\(^6\) The first part of the verse, he argues, is a fresh appeal
‘to *phronein*’ (φρόνειν, ‘to think’ or ‘to-have-a-mindset’, repeated twice in v. 2), rounding off
what has gone before, with τοῦτο consequently referring, not to what lies ahead (the mindset
of Christ, about to be described), but to what precedes it (the mindset already described in

\(^1\) D. A. BLACK, ‘The Authorship of Philippians 2:6-11: Some Literary-Critical Observations,’ *CTR* 2 no. 2

\(^2\) Thus, D. A. BLACK, ‘Authorship of Philippians 2:6-11,’ 278-279; GARLAND, ‘Composition and Unity,’
158-159.

\(^3\) See further below, pp. 232-234.

\(^4\) N. T. WRIGHT, ‘Paul’s Gospel,’ 174; cf. his *Climax of the Covenant*, 57-58, 97-98; interestingly, OAKES,
*Philippians*, 147 & n. 64, also noting ‘strong’ verbal and conceptual links between the two passages,
observes that BORMANN, *Philippi*, 218-219), who takes Philippians 3 as a separate letter, ‘still feels the
links between 3.20-1 and 2.10-11 are so strong that he can build a composite argument from the two
passages.’

\(^5\) See again Section 2.2.3 in Chapter 2 above.

inextricable link’; see also O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 203-205, 262; HAWTHORNE, *Philippians*, 80; MARTIN &
WITHERINGTON, *Letter to the Philippians*, 118, 137; FLEMMING, *Philippians*, 109; and THATE, ‘Paul,
Φρόνησις,’ 312-314 & n. 243.
vv. 1-4),\(^1\) as it does in other parts of the epistle (thus Phil 1:7; 3:15, where τοῦτο is similarly used with Φρονεῖν) and, indeed, usually in Paul’s writing.\(^2\) The second part of the verse, ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, is elliptical, needing a verb to be supplied. The antecedent of ὁ is τοῦτο at the beginning of v. 5, which as mentioned is best regarded as looking back to the frame of mind described in vv. 2-4. However, the καὶ (‘also’) now begins to point forward to the story of Christ in vv. 6-11, forming a point of comparison,\(^3\) with Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ becoming the antecedent of the ὁς (‘who’), which introduces our story in v. 6. The precise translation and interpretation of this critical transitional verse (2:5) will be discussed in some depth in Chapter 4;\(^4\) for us here, the important point is to note the evidence showing the integration of the Christ-story of vv. 6-11 into its context.

Paul also transitions from the Christ-story to vv. 12-18 with a logical connector, ὅστε (‘so then’; v. 12a), usually indicating that an inference is to be made from what has just been said (in this case Phil 1:27-2:5, via 2:6-11), and especially used by Paul in contexts where he is applying an argument to the local situation. The imperatives of vv. 14-16 confirm that he is doing precisely that here with regard to the Philippian church.\(^5\) In particular, Paul picks up on the example of the obedience of Jesus Christ, who came in the form of a slave, and whose obedience (to God) led him to die a slave’s death on the cross (γενόμενοι ὑπῆκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ; 2:7-8), and reminds the Philippians, who now must themselves bow as a servant does, before Jesus Christ as Lord of all (2:10-11), that their own

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\(^1\) COLLANGE, Philippians, 95; and so most commentators, e.g. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 199 & n. 25; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 122; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 203-205; FLEMMING, Philippians, 111; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137; N. T. WRIGHT, Faithfulness of God, 687; but contra R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xiv, lxxi, 84-85; KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83-84; L. A. LOSIE, ‘A Note on the Interpretation of Phil 2:5,’ ExpTim 90 no. 2 (1978) 53; and I.-J. LOH & E. A. NIDA, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (UBS Helps for Translators; New York: United Bible Societies, 1977) 54, each of whom, FEE (Philippians [NICNT], 199 n. 25) believes, has not adequately come to terms with the significance of the τοῦτο introducing v. 5. FEE (197 n. 17) also notes that the later manuscript tradition apparently has sought to make the connection between this verse and what precedes it clearer by inserting either γὰρ (‘for’; thus Ψ 33 81 1241 2464 2495 pc) after the τοῦτο (but the asyndetic text is both better supported and more likely; contra SILVA, Philippians [2nd ed.], 112).

\(^2\) See the discussions of O’BRIEN, Philippians, 203-205 & n. 7, and FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 199 n. 25, who also lists all other instances of τοῦτο in the letter; cf. WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137; FLEMMING, Philippians, 111.

\(^3\) Thus, WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137; cf. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 199-200 & n. 33.

\(^4\) See pp. 181-206 below.

\(^5\) FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 231-232 & n. 7, citing similar examples for the use of ὅστε followed by imperatives, as here, in Phil 4:18; 1 Thess 4:18; 1 Cor 3:21; 4:5, 10; 12; 11:33; 14:39; 15:58, and other cases where an indicative verb follows, but still introducing an inferred conclusion to an argument (1 Cor 3:7; 7:38; 11:27; 14:22; 2 Cor 4:12; 5:16, 17; Gal 4:3; Rom 7:4, 12); cf. HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 89-90.
obedience must continue and lead to them (as a community) working out their own salvation (ʔόστε ... καθώς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε ... τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε), with fear and trembling (2:12), as God enables them (2:13). Thus, the hortatory theme of obedience clearly unites both parts of the Christ-story with its surrounding context.

Hence, Paul’s main concern for the Philippian community, that they ‘conduct [themselves] as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ’ (Phil 1:27), necessitates that they live together in harmony and unity (the explicit concern of 1:27, 2:1-4, and 2:14-15) and to do that will require their selflessness and humility (2:3-4), and obedience (2:12), which are each exemplified in, and also demanded by, the story of Christ (2:6-11, especially in vv. 6-8, but also in vv. 9-11). Additionally, we may note that vv. 5-11, especially in referring to Christ’s obedience to death on a cross (which was certainly a death of indescribable suffering), are also framed by references to the apostle’s sufferings and pouring out of his life and his exhortation to the Philippians to share similar sufferings in a hostile world (1:27-30; 2:12-18), and so the Christ-story also fits very well within the overall background and hortatory context of Phil 1:27-2:18, that is, within the intersecting stories of Paul and the Philippian church, which lie underneath this letter.¹ Common threads thus run through the passage and its surrounding context, both preceding and following.

Therefore, the structural and semantic similarities with the immediately preceding verses, the multiple linguistic and conceptual echoes within the letter both backward and forward from Phil 2:5-11, some very significant narrative parallels with the Christ-story in the preceding context, in the second half of chapter 2 (Timothy and Epaphroditus’ stories), in chapter 3 (Paul’s narrated autobiography), and in the background stories of the letter, plus clear logical and grammatical connectors, and thematic links to the surrounding context of the passage, demonstrate fairly clearly that the passage fits the letter as a whole exceedingly well, and that therefore the passage is hardly ‘detachable’ from its context and place in the letter. It belongs there integrally, and forms a highly significant section in the overall argument of the whole letter, and within Phil 1:27-2:18 in particular.

¹ An observation also noted by R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 58 n. 2 (himself citing W. Maurer, Bekenntnis und Sakrament, I [Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939] 10 n. 4).
Many scholars now come to a similar conclusion.¹ Thus, for Peter Wick, the passage is the ‘exact thematic centre of the letter’ and closely linked to every other section.² And Flemming is able to conclude that ‘plainly, the “master story” of Christ in Phil 2:5-11 … significantly shapes Paul’s entire argument in the letter.’³ He goes on to note that ‘pivotal to Paul’s strategy for moral transformation in Philippians … is his retelling of the story of Jesus.’⁴

The evidence of the excellent contextual fit of our passage thus clearly undermines Martin’s original claim that the contextual evidence is one of the clinching arguments that it ‘is detachable’ from its epistolary and rhetorical context. Rather, the opposite has been confirmed, and more recently Martin himself appeared to concede this.⁵

Although it makes it much more credible, what the good contextual fit of vv. 6-11 does not prove is original Pauline authorship of the passage. Carolyn Osiek, although appearing guilty of circular argumentation concerning the identification of a ‘hymn’ in the passage,⁶ is right to identify the alternatively plausible theory, namely that the passage fits so well in its context might be due to Paul’s compositional skill, or that of his secretary, in text-embedding.⁷

Thus, Paul may have composed vv. 1-4, for example, with the ‘hymn’ he had in his hands in

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¹ Beyond those cited below, see also O’BRIEN, Philippians, 202, 251-253; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 44-46; HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 89-90; BASEVI & CHAPA, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 345-349.
³ FLEMMING, Philippians, 110 (citing GORMAN, Apostle of the Crucified, 102-105); cf. COLLANGE, Philippians, 93, who fully agrees: ‘this passage comes to us only interwoven within a Pauline context – and how fully interwoven it is with the thread of the argument!’
⁵ See p. 96 n. 1 above.
⁶ See above p. 83 n. 2.
⁷ OSIEK, Philippians, 56.
mind,\(^1\) and his choice of terms in vv. 1-4 dictated by what he knew was about to follow.\(^2\) This, indeed, is a possibility. Of course, conversely, he may have composed vv. 6-11 deliberately, both to reinforce what he had said in vv. 1-4 and to introduce themes that he will pick up again in vv. 12-18 and in chapter 3. Absolute proof is not possible either way; we can only deal with the likelihood of plausible scenarios.

But where does the balance of probability lie? Oakes’ 2001 study led him ‘to think that the most likely view about the nature of the passage is that it was composed especially for the people at Philippi and, more specifically, for the letter written to their church.’\(^3\) His study sought to show that Phil 2:5-11 ‘closely fits the requirements of the Philippians’ situation,’ namely ‘a suffering church with difficulties over unity’.\(^4\) I believe Oakes’ overall study and main arguments are well founded. If that is the case, as he himself concludes, ‘then it looks rather likely that the passage is a piece of rhetoric, constructed by Paul from his Christological beliefs specifically to fit the argument he wishes to make,’ to which he then adds, ‘this would be a far more typical Pauline move than would be the incorporation of a long, almost unedited, piece of prior Christian tradition.’\(^5\) The issue is also appropriately and aptly addressed by N. T. Wright, at the conclusion of his momentous essay on Phil 2:5-11:

> The passage fits its present context so well that it is very hard to see it in any way as a detached, or even detachable, hymn about Christ. It belongs exactly where it is. It is of course possible that Paul, realizing that it was going to be appropriate to quote the hymn (assuming that there was one) worded 2.1-5 accordingly, and then continued to echo the same themes later on in the letter. But if someone were to take it upon themselves to argue, on the basis of my conclusions, that the ‘hymn’ was originally written by Paul himself precisely in order to give christological and above all theological underpinning to the rest of Philippians, especially chs. 2 and 3, I for one should find it hard to produce convincing counter-arguments.\(^6\)

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6. N. T. WRIGHT, *Climax of the Covenant*, 97-98 (emphasis his; this represents the revised 1991 version [pp. 56-98] of his earlier 1986 article, ‘ἀρπαγμός’ [there, see pp. 351-352]).
Some years later, in fact, he states it still more decisively: ‘I … hold the view that Paul wrote this poem himself, quite possibly for use at this point in the letter, and he certainly used it here in a way that integrates closely with the thrust of the letter as a whole.’

3.10 Moving Away from the Hymnic Identification

Thus far we have examined each of the suggested reasons for identifying a hymn or hymnic fragment in Phil 2:6-11, and none of them have been found to be very compelling arguments, not even when taken collectively. Upon investigation, the case for seeing a hymn in Phil 2:6-11, or the fragment of a hymn, whether Pauline or pre-Pauline, has in fact been shown to be very weak.

The strongest lines of evidence against the hymnic hypothesis are the lack of any explicit evidence that Paul is quoting a pre-existing composition, recent literary studies that show the passage cannot be considered as an example of ancient hymnody, whether Greek or Semitic, the lack of an obvious hymnic structure, the various weaknesses inherent in each of the many suggested hymnic structures, the very uneven poetic consistency between the two halves of the passage (vv. 6-8 and 9-11), the lack of any recognition of the poetic or hymnic character of the passage in the early centuries of the church, and the lack of any evidence for liturgical use of the passage in that period.

In addition, reasonable counter-arguments can be put up as alternative explanations for the textual phenomena commonly used to ‘detect’ a hymn (or hymnic fragment) in the passage. We saw that the linguistic and theological arguments for a ‘hymn’, as commonly put, were methodologically flawed and have shown evidence that the elevated style, poetic rhythm, alleged unusual language, and even the theology of the passage are actually compatible with various parts of Paul’s other writings, and importantly even with the remainder of Philippians as a whole. Additionally, we highlighted some clear positive theological indicators, which have been largely overlooked in the debate, that the passage is more likely to be Paul’s own work. Finally, the sentence structure, apparent prose writing, and syntactical argumentation

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1 N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 72.
of Phil 2:6-11 appear to be typically Pauline, and its perfect contextual fit in the letter, while not proving Pauline authorship, tends to support it.

On balance, the evidence taken as a whole more strongly supports Pauline authorship of the passage than points away from it. The burden of proof, then, is higher for those who would maintain otherwise, and fresh substantive evidence would be necessary to point compellingly away from apostolic authorship. If indeed that is so, then a pre-existing composition behind Phil 2:6-11, if one existed at all, must have come from Paul’s own hand. If accepted, then this conclusion necessarily rules out the theory that Paul has taken over (and perhaps modified) a hymn of the early Christian church.

An even greater burden of proof remains, therefore, for those who would continue to maintain the theory that the passage is a ‘hymn’ or hymn (without inverted commas). Compelling new evidence would need to be found for the case to become viable again. Fowl’s summary of the state of recent scholarship on the matter is telling: ‘The primary piece of evidence for the claim that Phil 2:6-11 is a quotation drawn from preexisting material seems to be the scholarly consensus that this is so.’ Until recently, few have been willing to challenge this modern ‘chorus’ of views. But under closer scrutiny the foundations for this consensus theory have been shown to be decidedly weak. Fowl is right, I believe, to add, somewhat brusquely, ‘In the absence of further evidence, however, I suggest that scholars simply drop this claim.’

A major reason for the continuing consensus on the matter, despite the growing stand against it, is that scholars appear unwilling to give up what they claim to be a unique specimen of an early Christian hymn, giving insight into the worship life of the early Christian communities. Martin explains this motivation well enough:

The literary form of the passage gives a window of access into the worshipping life of early Christians … it becomes feasible to gain entrée to the earliest Pauline (or pre-Pauline …) congregations, where the exalted Lord was being hailed as worthy of liturgical praise on a par with Israel’s covenant God. Interest in early Christian worship is stimulated by this text. Modern liturgy

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2 Fowl, Philippians, 112.
3 Fowl, Philippians, 112 n. 69 writes that M. Reße (‘Formeln und Lieder im Neuen Testament: einige notwendige Anmerkungen,’ Verkündigung und Forschung 2 [1970] 75-95) has shown this to be one of the primary motives for the earliest research into New Testament ‘hymns’.
makers and hymnists are encouraged to know how the first hymns in the New Testament period reflected an experience and practice of veneration offered to the enthroned (but once crucified) head of the church and Lord of creation.¹

We may thus wish the passage to be an early Christian hymn, for very noble reasons, but the evidence is strongly against such a designation as being either accurate or appropriate.²

I believe, therefore, it is time for New Testament scholars and expositors to cease referring to it as the ‘Christ-hymn’ and to look for a designation of form that more closely matches the content of the passage. As a passage of exalted prose, containing doxology and encomium-like praise, and possibly incorporating pre-Pauline credal elements, we may wholeheartedly affirm its unique character, but as an alleged early Christian hymn, I believe we must say, ‘no, it is not!’

Moving away from a hymnic identification in this passage, may not, then, increase our insights into the corporate worship life of the first Christians, but it does free us to begin considering the story contained within vv. 6-11 in full harmony with its external literary form (that is, I believe, a carefully composed, prose narrative), and then to seeing more powerfully its function within Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Scholarly focus upon a supposed ‘hymn’ in vv. 6-11 has often partly obscured or distorted the narrative character of the passage, and it is this concern that most needs redress.

3.11 The Prose Argumentation of the Passage

If, then, we may remove the presupposition of a hymn and the constraints of hymnic strophes, and instead begin from the observation that the passage in its entirety makes perfectly good sense as two complex sentences (indeed, very Pauline ones), written in order to support the hortatory context of which it is part, this will allow us to re-read it freshly. Not only does Phil 2:5-11 read very well as two Pauline prose sentences, but it can be arranged in a way that clearly highlights both the syntactical and logical connectors used in the argumentation of the passage and its narrative structure.³ In fact, and unsurprisingly,

²  FOWL, *Philippians*, 112-113,
³  So FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 194-197 & n. 6; cf. his similar arrangement in literal English (pp. 194-195), which inspired my own arrangement here; it is interesting to note OAKES, *Philippians*, 197, who offers an
these syntactical connectors help to give the narrative of these verses its overall structure, and one or two key micro-structures. These aspects will be explored further in Chapter 6.

The text below is adapted structurally from *UBSGNT4c*, which, significantly, and unlike *NA28*, displays the text as prose rather than poetry. I have divided the passage into its two main narrative parts (identified in the left hand column by I and II), and the two key stages within each part (I.1 and I.2; II.1 and II.2), which, as noted, I shall explain more fully in Chapter 6 below.¹

I therefore invite the reader to consider this central section of Philippians with fresh eyes …

¹ There, I will also add further markers that highlight particular narrative patterns; however, here the focus is not upon narrative patterns within the story, but upon the prose sentence structure of the passage.
The prose, narrative structure of Phil 2:5-11:

5 τοῦτο φρονεῖτε
   ἐν ὑμῖν
   οὐ καὶ
   ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Part I
I.1 6 οὖν
   ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
   οὐχ ἄρπασαν ὦν ἤγιστο τὸ εἶναι Ἰσα θεό, 7 ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσαν
   μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν,
   ἐν ὁμοιομάτια ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος.
I.2 καὶ
   σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἀνθρώπος
   ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
   γενόμενος υπέκοις
   μέχρι θανάτου,
   θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

Part II
II.1 9 διὸ καὶ
   οὗ θεοῦ
   αὐτὸν υπερύψωσεν
   καὶ
   ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
   τὸ υπὲρ πάν ὄνομα,
II.2 10 ἵνα
   ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ
   πᾶν γόνυ καμψῆ
   ἐπουρανίων
   καὶ
   ἐπιγείων
   καὶ
   καταχθονίων
   καὶ
   πάσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται
   ὦτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
   εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

In a fairly literal English rendering this becomes:

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1 As mentioned earlier (see p. 56 n. 7), I am here (and in the following English translation) reluctantly following the versification of UBSGNT4c and NA28 (cf. NRSV), which begin v. 8 with ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν. Most English versions, however, begin v. 8 with a translation of καὶ σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἀνθρώπος. But, as with FEE (Philippians [NICNT], 195, 214 & n. 2), the latter is far more preferable here in that it more accurately corresponds to the narrative structure of these verses.

2 In the English translation below, I seek to follow closely the structural arrangement of the Greek seen above, using italics for Greek participles, boldface to show main Greek verbs, and underlining to identify important logical connectors. [Bracketed words] are interpretative. NB: In the course of my exegesis in subsequent chapters I will not attempt to defend every exegetical conclusion that this translation is based upon, but rather only those that are crucial to the arguments of this study.
5 This mindset have among yourselves which also [is] in Christ Jesus:

Part I

I.1 who in the form of God being, not harpagmon did he consider equality with God, [not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage did he consider equality with God,]

7 but himself he emptied, [by] the form of a slave taking, [that is, by] in the likeness of human beings being born;

I.2 and in appearance being found as a human being he humbled himself, [by] becoming obedient to the extremity of death, [by ultimately dying] even death on a cross.

Part II

II.1 Therefore also God him has highly exalted and has granted him the name that is above every name,

II.2 so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should acclaim that [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.

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1 ‘Have-a-mindset’ translates the Greek imperative φονείτε and attempts to render it more effectively than merely ‘think’. However, one must remember that this is a verb, not a noun, and be careful to retain τοῦτο as both its object (‘this mindset have’) and the antecedent of the relative pronoun introducing v. 5b (ὁ, ‘which’). Cf. the discussion of Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 199-200 & n. 26, who rightly reminds us not to assume that the relative pronoun refers to ‘mindset’ as though it was actually present as a Greek noun. On the interpretation of τοῦτο as looking back to vv. 2-4, see above, p. 103.

2 This phrase is elliptical, meaning the verb must be supplied from either the first half of the sentence (i.e. ‘you think’) or from the sense of the context (i.e. ‘you have,’ or ‘you find’, or ‘was,’ or ‘is’). I will defend supplying the present tense of the verb ‘to be’ (‘is’) later – see pp. 198-206 below.

3 I have transliterated the Greek word in the English translation to help convey the full strength of its emphatic negation (‘not harpagmon did he …’). ἀρπαγμός, following Wright (Climax of the Covenant, 56-98, esp. 82-83), is idiomatically rendered together with the phrase ‘consider equality with God’ to form the translation within the square brackets on the next line. See further Section 5.2 in Chapter 5 below (pp. 248-313).
It is clear from displaying the text as we have, that indeed it does read well as two prose sentences. Further, the argumentation also appears to be typically Pauline.

Part I, then, is divided into two stages headed by parallel participial clauses, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (‘in the form of God being’; beginning stage I.1) and σχήματι εὑρέθης ὡς ἄνθρωπος (in appearance being found as a human being’; commencing stage I.2) and doubly linked by (i) a paratactic καὶ (‘and’), and (ii) a significant, very emphatic contrast in Christ’s actions, which spans the two stages of Part I using three main verb clauses: οὐχ ἄρπαγμον ἦγοςατο τὸ ἐίναι ἵνα θεῶ, ἄλλα ἑαυτόν ἐκένωσεν … [καὶ] … ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν (‘not harpagonmon did he consider equality with God, but himself he emptied … [and] … he humbled himself’). Each stage in Part I follows an almost identical sentence structure, with the introductory participial clause, leading to a main clause, followed by a modifying participial clause and then a modifying participial or prepositional clause. I will explain this further in Chapter 6.¹

It needs to be noted that most of the suggested hymnic structures for this passage (Morna Hooker’s is one exception) do not do justice to these sentence structures. There is a marked difference between reading and interpreting the passage as prose sentences and doing the same with hymnic strophes.

Part II of the story follows a striking inferential διὸ καὶ (‘therefore also’), and shifts in vv. 9-11 from the direct actions of Christ to those of God in response to Christ’s actions. As we have noted before, vv. 9-11 have a very different style to vv. 6-8 and are not as balanced in structure. The participial phrases of the first half are now completely absent, having been replaced by main verb and prepositional clauses. We may also discern two stages in Part II. The first (II.1) describes the two direct actions (main verbs) by God in response to what Christ has done (ὁ θεὸς σὺτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο σὺτῷ τὸ ὄνομα …; literally, ‘God him has highly exalted and has granted him the name …’; v. 9ab), which dramatically reverse in chiastic fashion the two positive actions of Christ in vv. 7a and 8a (‘himself he emptied … he humbled himself’). The second stage (II.2) describes the purpose or result of God’s actions, using a ἵνα (‘so that’) clause, including two main verb

¹ See in particular Table 6.2, p. 370 below.
actions that should result, πᾶ
v γόνυ κάμψη … καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται (‘every
knee should bow … and every tongue acclaim’; vv. 10b, 11a). The content of what should
be acclaimed is presented with a subordinate ὅτι (‘that’) clause: ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός
(‘that [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ’; v. 11b). Fee appears to be quite correct that the
combination, διὸ καὶ … ἵνα … ὅτι … (‘therefore also … so that … that …’) in vv. 9-11, is
simply ‘not the stuff of hymns but of argumentation.’

It is obvious that the various components of each part of the narrative structure are not
symmetrical in length, though they are nevertheless carefully arranged. Prose narrative,
unlike hymnic material, rarely follows exact formal symmetry.

That the passage can be displayed as prose sentences, which highlight its logical connective
and syntactical structure, while simultaneously depicting its narrative structure exceptionally
well, fitting its surrounding prose context almost perfectly, and avoiding all the flaws of the
hymnic structures variously proposed by others, appears to confirm that these verses were
indeed probably dictated by Paul as prose sentences in his letter to the Philippians.

3.12 An Alternative Proposal: Prose Encomium?

But, if Phil 2:6-11 is not to be seen as an early Christian hymn, nor a fragment of one, what
then may we call it? What then best describes its genre? It appears to be prose writing, albeit
with a poetic lilt in vv. 6-8 (the first half of the passage), but may we say more than that?

One of the better alternative suggestions is that this passage represents an encomium of
Christ. An encomium is a lyric piece, whether in poetry or prose, that is written in praise of
either an abstract quality or a general character type. Berger appears to be one of the first

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1 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 193 n. 4.
2 See again, p. 81 above.
3 So also Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 194 & n. 6.
4 To avoid confusion over the spelling, we will primarily use the Latin form, encomium (plural encomia); however, citations may refer to the Greek form enkomion, or German plural form, enkomien.
5 ‘Encomium,’ DBI, 230 (the author is not mentioned, but is probably L. Ryken).
exponents of this view in recent times, but has been followed by a few others since, most notably by Reumann in his commentary on Philippians.

Generally speaking encomia fit the rhetorical genus of *epideictic* rhetoric, which aims to praise or blame someone or something in order to encourage agreement with or rejection of some value, and usually focuses on the present, rather than the future. However, to the extent that Philippians represents rhetorical speech offered within an epistolary framework, I am in broad agreement with Witherington that the larger part of Philippians, and especially the central paraenetic section of 1:27-4:3, is basically a *deliberative* speech with some epideictic features.

A few scholars therefore do see Phil 2:6-11 as epideictic in character, and the rhythmic, poetic nature of the text could also support that. However, a further comment needs to be born in mind: while Witherington regards the passage as an example of epideictic rhetoric, ‘the rhetoric of effusive praise,’ Paul has chosen to use it ‘for a deliberative purpose and in a deliberative argument calling for mimesis and like-mindedness.’ Basevi and Chapa, then, do admit the passage is an *exemplum* (normally seen in *deliberative* rhetoric), but argue it is more than that, and also praises ‘the real cause of Christian unity,’ namely Christ’s nature and actions that are described in vv. 6-11. While noting that the issue of the place of paraenetic speech in rhetoric generally, but specifically in the epideictic genus, is ‘an old debate,’ they insist ‘that paraenesis is perfectly compatible with and suited to epideictic

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4 WITHERINGTON, *Letter to the Philippians*, 25; see also the large number of supporting scholars cited in p. 37 n. 2 above.


8 BASEVI & CHAPA, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 349-350; the comment of H. D. BETZ (‘The Literary Composition and Function of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,’ *NTS* 21 no. 3 [1975] 375) is significant here: ‘It is rather
rhetoric.'¹ It is beyond the scope of the present work to resolve this key issue here, but I will offer a brief comment or two in summing up this discussion of Phil 2:6-11 as an encomium.

Berger and Reumann both suggest the passage is an example of *prose* encomium (‘prosa Enkomion’), as opposed to *poetic* – or *hymnic* – encomium, a ‘Christus-Enkomion’ rather than a ‘Christ-hymn.’² Berger also states that this type of encomium is closely related to the genre of biography, and finds its closest parallels in inscriptional encomia, which unfold ‘the great name’ of ‘great persons.’³

According to Ryken, practitioners of encomia followed a set of five main elements with almost technical precision:

(i) An introduction to the subject of praise, sometimes including a definition of the subject;
(ii) The distinguished ancestry of the subject, often the birth and upbringing of the subject;
(iii) A catalog of the praiseworthy acts and qualities of the subject;
(iv) The indispensable or superior nature of the subject, sometimes accompanied by comparison to lesser subjects and/or a listing of the rewards that accompany the object of praise; and
(v) An epilogue or conclusion urging the reader to emulate the subject.⁴

Berger’s own outline of the structure of Greek prose encomia combines the elements from two different encomium designs, the chronological ordering of events and actions (*encomium narrativum*) and the systematic description of virtues (*encomium descriptivum*):⁵

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¹ BASEVI & CHAPA, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 351; cf. also 349-356.
² K. BERGER, ‘HellenistischeGattungen,’ 1173, 1232; REUMANN, *Philippians*, 333, 364-366 (though the German is BERGER’s); cf. BASEVI & CHAPA, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 343, 355. Of course, ancient hymns are often regarded as examples of poetic encomia, or as encomia in verse (as opposed to prose), but I submit that the frequent designation of New Testament encomia as ‘Christ-hymns’ (e.g. ‘Encomium,’ *DBI*, 230) is misleading, and wrongly excludes the category of *prose* encomia.
³ See K. BERGER, ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1173-1194, 1231-1245.
⁴ ‘Encomium,’ *DBI*, 230; RYKEN, *Words of Life*, 293.
⁵ K. BERGER, ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1173-1175.
(i) προοίμιον: A prooimion or introduction to the subject;
(ii) γένος: The genos or origins and ancestry of the subject, including race, homeland, city, birth, parents, ancestors, and other matters concerning the lineage and nature of the subject;
(iii) ἀναστροφὴ: the anastrophē or manner of life in the training and vocation of the person, including their accomplishments, arts and skills, and grasp of laws;
(iv) πρᾶξις: the praxeis or deeds of the subject, used to clarify virtues of the soul (such as courage, wisdom), body (including beauty, swiftness, strength) and fate (or fortune, including ruling power, wealth, and friends); and
(v) συγκρισις: A synkrisis or comparison of the whole life and work of the subject with that of other great persons.¹

Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey offer a fairly similar outline for Greek encomia, drawn from common sources, but place accomplishments in the same division as acts or deeds:
(i) An introduction (prooimion); (ii) Origin and birth (eugeneia); (iii) Nurture and training (anastrophē) or manner of life; (iv) Accomplishments (ēpitēdeumata) and deeds (praxeis);
(v) Comparison (synkrisis) with others; and they also add, (vi) An epilogue or conclusion (epilogos).²

However, when Berger comes to describe encomia within Judaism and the New Testament, he narrows his outline to three core elements, answering three basic questions: (i) Who is it? (the honorific titles and fundamental relationship to God); (ii) What did he do? (the works and deeds of the person, including their virtues, and obedience to God); and (iii) What fame or name did he earn? (in consequence of the totality of the acts of the person). He goes on to apply this outline to Phil 2:5-11, Heb 1:3 and other passages from Judaism.³

Reumann, expressing dependence upon Berger, also demarcates the passage within a three-fold encomiastic structure: (i) Origins of One, Godlike, who emptied himself and appeared like a slave (2:6-7b); (ii) Actions of this Man amid humanity: birth, humiliation, obedience,

¹ Note the difference between Berger’s comparison of the subject with other great persons (‘mit anderen Großen’) and Ryken’s comparison with ‘lesser subjects’.
³ K. Berger, ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1179-1187 (the male pronouns are his).
death (2:7c-8c); (iii) Fame: God exalts this figure, Jesus, to lordship over all, to God's glory (2:9-11).\(^1\) Regarding vv. 6-11 as a pre-existing encomium, he suggests that v. 5 functions as Paul’s introduction to it, and that v. 8d (‘even death on a cross’) is a Pauline addition.\(^2\)

Under each of these comparable outlines it is obvious to see that the various elements of prose encomia can easily embrace the genre of narrative, especially of course those encomia that focus on a chronological ordering of events (encomium narrativum). Unsurprisingly, Reumann himself repeatedly refers to the content of the ‘encomium’ of vv. 6-11 as either ‘story’ or ‘narrative,’\(^3\) and, as we saw above, Berger closely associates the prose encomium with ancient biography.

It is instructive to arrange the text of Phil 2:6-11 (in a moderately literal translation) alongside these five structural outlines of encomia, as I do in the following table;\(^4\) however, it seems necessary to include vv. 5 and 12-13 together with vv. 6-11.

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2. Reumann, Philippians, 365, 374-377 (on v. 8d as an insertion), 375-376 (on v. 5 as an introduction).
3. For example, Reumann, Philippians, 340, 341, 353, 372, 376.
4. Except for Reumann’s outline (taken from his Philippians, 364-376), the arrangement of the text according to encomiastic divisions in the following table is mostly mine, but for Malina & Neyrey’s outline, as applied to Philippians 2, see their Portraits of Paul, 52, 55; similarly, for Berger’s application to Philippians 2 (second last column), see his ‘Hellenistische Gattungen,’ 1183.
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<td>8 Therefore also God has highly exalted him and has granted him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should acclaim that the Lord is Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.</td>
<td>(i) Introduction (?)</td>
<td>(v) Comparison (implicit; with whom?)</td>
<td>(v) Comparison (implicit; with whom?)</td>
<td>(vi) Conclusion (?)</td>
<td>(iii) Fame: God exalts this figure, Jesus, to lordship over all,- to God's glory (2:9-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed … work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you …</td>
<td>(ii) Birth</td>
<td>(ii) Manner of life</td>
<td>(iv) Accomplishments &amp; deeds (of soul and body)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should acclaim that the Lord is Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.</td>
<td>(iii) Birth</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11 and every tongue should acclaim that the Lord is Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.</td>
<td>(iii) Birth</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed … work out your salvation with fear and trembling so it is God who is at work in you …</td>
<td>(iii) Birth</td>
<td>(iv) Accomplishments &amp; deeds (of soul and body)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13 for it is God who is at work in you …</td>
<td>(iii) Birth</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Table 3.2, Philippians 2:5-13 According to Various Encomiastic Structures
It is apparent that the text of Phil 2:5-12 (but including vv. 5, 12) can be made to fit these encomiastic outlines, but not perfectly (since certain parts of the narrative seem to fit more than one of the encomiastic categories), nor in an entirely balanced way. In particular, the introduction appears very brief, the ancestry of Jesus Christ receives only one line, plus v. 5 must be included to supply an exhortation to emulation for Ryken’s outline to succeed, and vv. 12-13 also, if one insists on a conclusion. Of course, it is possible, if Paul had made use of a pre-existing prose encomium, that vv. 6-11 could represent a (major) fragment of the original, and thus we may not possess, say, the original introduction or conclusion.

Here Reumann posits an additional theory that vv. 6-11 not only represent an encomium, but one first ‘worked out’ by the Philippians themselves. Citing Wolfgang Schenk as a key developer of the idea,¹ he argues that the encomium of 2:6-11 is in fact not a pre-Pauline composition, but a ‘para-Pauline’² composition, written by the Philippians themselves, under influence from Paul’s gospel (thus still ‘Pauline,’ but ‘fitting for Philippi’), for evangelistic and anti-imperial purposes, and which he then cites back to them.³ Reumann thus heads his commentary section on Phil 2:5-11 as ‘The Philippians’ Encomium, applied by Paul to Christian Life in Philippi’.⁴ As mentioned before, he sees v. 8d (‘even death on a cross’) as Paul’s sole addition to the supposed Philippian composition, though with v. 5 also functioning as a carefully composed introduction to it.⁵

Reumann’s scenario for the earlier composition of vv. 6-11 as an encomium of Christ by the Philippians appears more plausible than the various pre-Pauline early church ‘hymn’ theories that continue to circulate in modern scholarship, but it is not wholly convincing itself. What is attractive about the hypothesis is that it acknowledges the Pauline features of the text,

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¹ W. SCHENK, Der Philippbrief (1984), 173-75, 192-93, 195, 202, 209, 336. However, earlier, D. M. STANLEY had already argued, though without positing Philippian authorship, ‘It seems clear that in a letter, whose tenor, for the most part is that of a friendly “thank you” note, the presence of such a deeply theological passage as Phil 2:6-11 is best explained as a citation already familiar to the Philippians’ (Christ’s Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology [AnBib 13; Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, [1961] 102); and, similarly, BEARE had claimed that ‘what we have before us, then, seems to be not a “pre-Pauline” hymn, but a hymn composed in Pauline circles, under Pauline influence …’ (Philippians, 78).


³ REUMANN, Philippians, 333, 362-365, 365-377. REUMANN suggests that Epaphroditus first brought it to Paul when he came with aid from Philippi (p. 365).

⁴ REUMANN, Philippians, 333.

⁵ REUMANN, Philippians, 365, 374-377 (on v. 8d as an insertion), 375-376 (on v. 5 as an introduction).
which we have seen to be more predominant than are widely acknowledged and it also posits a background to the text which is more immediately relevant to the situation of the Philippian believers than any *Sitz im Leben* in the worship life of the early church. However, as Reumann basically admits himself, the data could just as easily be read as Paul writing relevantly to the situation of a congregation of believers that he is familiar with and dearly loves.¹

A Philippian-composed encomium remains speculative, and without any concrete evidence to support it. Paul does not explicitly acknowledge the text as a citation, let alone as coming from Philippi (or anywhere else). While it might be argued that he does not need to, since the Philippians would obviously recognize their own composition upon hearing its first few words, it seems unlikely in so friendly a letter that Paul would totally refrain from mentioning such a precious piece of writing (or oral encomium which had been memorized by Epaphroditus) that he had received from them, since we know he explicitly responded to a letter written to him by the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1, 4; 12:1; 16:1, 12), and he would apparently have greater reason to do so here, beyond his mention of the Philippians’ gift to him (Phil 4:10-20). I would suggest that the balance of evidence still tips more strongly in favour of apostolic Pauline authorship than it does for ‘para-Pauline’ authorship by the Philippians.

Another factor concerning identification of this passage as an encomium is that the key element of comparison with others (that is signalled by the phrase ‘not *harpagmos*’) is only implicit, and the object of comparison with Christ is not explicitly identified in the text or its context. This point is a critical issue, and I will discuss it more fully in Chapter 5 below when we consider the meaning of the phrase οὐχ ἄρσαγμόν in v. 6b (Section 5.2), and the narrative-theological background of Phil 2:6-11 (Section 5.3). Suffice it to say here, the main contenders for implicit comparison (or contrast, given the absolutely crucial ‘not *harpagmos*’ phrase) are Adam,² or ancient oriental despots, and possibly Caesar himself.³ Nevertheless, we should also note that Paul will later offer the stories of Timothy

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² For a sample of commentators who identify an implicit Adam-Christ contrast in the text, see p. 94 n. 4 above.
and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:19-30) and his own life (3:2-21) in explicit comparison looking back to the Christ-story, and, in addition, implicitly throughout the letter, he invites the Philippians to compare themselves to Christ and the other Christ-like figures.

One of the notable strengths of the prose encomium theory (Philippian composition or not) is that it highlights the biographical-narrative elements of Phil 2:6-11, respects the apparent logical-connective sentence structures of the text, and thus allows literary form to closely match content. The proposal, at least, is promising for New Testament scholarship on this passage. It does also help to confirm, I suggest, that we are right to move away from the various hymnic theories and designations for the passage.\(^1\)

However, aside from lack of any explicit comparison with anyone, what we are told about Christ in these five verses lacks not only the balance, but also the details, of what the Greek rhetorical handbooks specify for the various sections of prose encomia.\(^2\) Brucker, while accepting the passage as containing epideictic elements and being comparable to prose encomia, thus prefers to use the term ‘\(\text{\textit{Epainos}}\)’ (Greek, \(\text{\textepsilon\iota\pi\alpha\iota\nu\sigma}\); ‘praise’) because of the single focus and brevity of the passage, rather than \textit{encomium}, which more typically celebrated numerous deeds and virtues.\(^3\) Similarly, and more recently, Samuel Vollenweider opts for the ‘neutral’ term, ‘\textit{Christuslob}’ (‘Christ-Praise’) over against the more specific terms of hymn or encomium.\(^4\)

Furthermore, I am not convinced of the primacy of the genus of epideictic rhetoric for this passage. As mentioned before, the passage appears to be used for deliberative purposes, and within a deliberative rhetorical context. Thus, the more explicit sense in the passage of Christ being an exemplar appears to dominate any implicit sense of praise for Christ (or God). If the passage was seen as primarily epideictic its exemplary aspects would necessarily be minimized in importance. However, while Phil 2:6-11 clearly focuses on the praise-worthy

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\(^{\text{1}}\) FLEMMING, \textit{Philippians}, 114. Other lesser contenders include: Alexander the Great, and Satan; on these see R. P. MARTIN, \textit{Hymn of Christ}, 151-161.

\(^{\text{2}}\) Again, I believe, it is time for scholars to cease referring to the passage as a ‘Christ-hymn,’ whether this is seen within or outside the genre of hymnic or poetic encomia.

\(^{\text{3}}\) On these, see K. BERGER, ‘\textit{Hellenistische Gattungen},’ 1173-1175; MALINA & NEYREY, \textit{Portraits of Paul}, 23-33.

\(^{\text{4}}\) BRUCKER, ‘\textit{Christushymnen}?’, 304-320, 350.

\(^{\text{4}}\) VOLLENWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”’, 415; and his ‘\textit{Hymnus, Enkomion},’ 225.
attributes and actions of Christ (and God), there is no actual explicit praise for, or commendation of, Christ (or God) in the text.\(^1\)

In conclusion, I believe the passage to be Pauline, and neither pre-Pauline nor ‘para-Pauline,’ and thus not a pre-existing composition. I consider the evidence for it being a prose encomium of Christ is not compelling enough to be adopted at this stage, as attractive as that proposition may be. I do think, however, that one might reasonably say that what we have here is ‘encomium-like,’ and that this phrase is perhaps the most precise we can be within this genre.

We are left, I believe, with one major alternative, one that perfectly fits the content of these six verses in Philippians 2 – the genre of prose narrative. However, before we briefly discuss that, let us wrap up our discussion of the issue of the authorship of the passage, and its significance for interpreting it and Philippians as a whole.

### 3.13 The Importance of the Issue of Authorship

In the course of examining in depth the case for seeing in Phil 2:6-11 a pre-Pauline hymn, which we have seen to be neither compelling nor persuasive, we have already encountered the primary pieces of evidence that need to be considered in coming to a judgment about the authorship of the passage. In part the case for non-Pauline authorship has often been decided almost automatically by the assumption, regularly depicted as a modern scholarly consensus, that our passage is an early Christian hymn. But we have seen that assumption to be an unfounded one along multiple lines of evidence (see Section 3.10 above for my summary). Brucker’s summary description of the passage seems appropriate: ‘weder “Hymnus” noch “vorpaulinisch.”’\(^2\)

Indeed, the issue of the authorship of Phil 2:6-11 is a critical one and is, as we have seen, very closely tied to the issue of the genre and supposed origin of the passage. If it is a formal hymn or prose encomium then Pauline authorship is possible, but less likely. But, conversely, if such a composition was not from Paul, we are still not justified, necessarily, to call it

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\(^1\) Cf. above, p. 75.

\(^2\) ‘Neither “hymn” nor “pre-Pauline”’ (affirming Pauline authorship); BRUCKER, ‘Christushymnen’?, 351.
‘pre-Pauline’, for ‘para-Pauline’ or ‘Pauline circle’ authorship would be just as likely, or perhaps more so, if we were to think of, say, a Philippian-originating composition (as does Reumann, for example) and were to highlight the passage’s various Pauline features. However, if it is regarded as neither hymn nor prose encomium, and thus not likely to be a pre-existing composition of any sort, then Pauline authorship of the passage becomes almost certain.

Irrespective of that conclusion, examination of the evidence seems anyway to confirm it. We saw that the linguistic and theological arguments pertaining to the issue of authorship, not only did not persuasively point away from Pauline authorship, for the negative case was flawed in various ways, but, positively speaking, pointed toward Pauline authorship as being more likely. The excellent contextual fit of Phil 2:6-11 does not prove Pauline authorship, but does tend to support or confirm it. Further, once the assumption of a hymnic composition has been removed, akin to removing blinkers from the eyes of a horse, we are able to see the passage for what it otherwise readily appears to be, namely two complex prose sentences, which then can be recognized as fairly typical Pauline sentences, and as very typical Pauline argumentation. The exalted nature of the rhythmic prose of vv. 6-8 in particular is not denied, and seems not only possible for Paul, given similar passages elsewhere in his letters, but especially, given the poetic rhythm in the immediately preceding verses (vv. 1-4), is not even unexpected. Hence we come to an overall conclusion that in fact Paul most likely did write the passage, with the possible exception of small credal elements that he has incorporated into it.

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2 See Section 3.8 above (pp. 87-96).
3 For this, see Section 3.9 above (pp. 96-107).
4 Here, see pp. 71-72 and Section 3.11 (pp. 110-115) above.
5 On the latter, see above, pp. 70-73 & nn. (Section 3.5), and also pp. 83-71 (within Section 3.7).
6 For my previous overall summary of the authorship issue, see pp. 106-109 above; BOCKMUEHL’s final evaluation of the case for pre-Pauline authorship is worth noting here: ‘After all is said and done the evidence for pre-Pauline authorship in whole or in part remains specious and unconvincing. Although not impossible, an outright quotation is neither stated nor implicitly required in the context: the irregularities of style and theology are just as readily explained by the weightiness of the subject matter and the affirmation of shared credal presuppositions’ (‘Form of God,’ 2); cf. BASEVI & CHAPA, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 343, who on the positive side, conclude summatively, ‘all in all, we think that the strong peculiarity of the text, its relations with the Old Testament, its profound christology, its use of Greek and its coherence with the rest of the letter, are elements supportive of Pauline literary originality.’
In fact a growing number of scholars are now beginning to challenge the accepted modern consensus and reverse the trend begun with Lohmeyer’s *Kyrios Jesus* in 1928 by accepting, or being inclined to accept, Pauline authorship of Phil 2:6-11.¹

It is important to understand the implications of our authorship choice regarding this passage. Which authorship option is deemed most likely obviously has a great impact upon the interpretative process as we engage with the text in its present context: (i) if the passage is *Pauline*, then its interpretation should be strictly guided by its epistolary context; (ii) if the passage is *’para-Pauline’*, and especially if it is from Philippi, then we must involve the supposed life-context of this Pauline circle or Philippian church in our considerations.² But, (iii) if the passage is truly deemed to be a *pre-Pauline (or non-Pauline)* composition, this then has still more significant ramifications for its interpretation, both of itself as a supposed ‘detachable unit’ and as it is found within its present epistolary context. However, the hermeneutical problem is this: the further we move away from Pauline authorship, the more speculative the interpretative process becomes.

Examining this third alternative, Robert Morgan describes how the identification of a pre-Pauline ‘hymn of Christ’ by Lohmeyer on grounds of ‘its un-Pauline language and balanced rhythmic structure’ was particularly significant for Käsemann’s ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘non-ethical’ interpretation of the passage. He puts the issue into stark perspective:

> It is crucial for the interpretation of the passage because it allows and even encourages exegetes to interpret the hymn on its own terms without regard to its context in Philippians, or to Paul’s intentions in quoting it … Lohmeyer’s hypothesis, once accepted, refocuses the reading of this passage. Separate it from its Pauline context, and the natural assumption that it presents Christ Jesus as a model of humility to imitate is no longer compelling. Talk of his incarnation, the form of a

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² For example, Reumann, *Philippians*, 365.
servant, and obedience unto death may imply an example of humility, but this is no longer the natural reading of the hymn, especially in view of its second half. This will prove important for Käsemann.¹

We should also note that this principle was very significant, too, for Martin, who essentially followed Käsemann’s interpretative lead here, both in methodology and in some key conclusions.² In fact Martin insists on isolating the text from its context:

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. The text of the hymn must be taken on its own, irrespective of the application which is made in the neighbouring verses. Once this is done, it becomes increasingly difficult to follow the ‘ethical interpretation’.³

But that is not all; later, he adds, ‘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.’⁴ In consequence, writes Robert Strimple, ‘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.’⁵

Morgan, rightly, I believe, dissociates himself somewhat from this position of both Käsemann and Martin: ‘Whether this [interpretative move] is legitimate for Christian reading of Scripture, or whether that should be tied to a more contextual and canonical reading is debatable.’⁶ In principle, Käsemann and Martin’s argumentation is possible, but their

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² Cf. for example, R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 76-78, 82-84, 85-88, 89-93, 287-311, and xlvi-l. We shall discuss the key question of the interpretation of Phil 2:6-11 in the following Chapter below (Ch 4), but here we remain focussed on the authorship issue and its implications.
⁴ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 287. In his 1997 preface to Hymn of Christ, MARTIN reaffirmed his commitment to exactly this approach: ‘we should begin by asking two questions: (a) What does the hymn mean on its own? (b) How does Paul use it by working it into the fabric of his letter-writing prose?’ (p. xlvii). We may also compare STRIMPLE’s summary (‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 250-251) of MURPHY-O’CONNOR’s hermeneutics in his 1976 article (‘Christological Anthropology’): ‘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.”’ [p. 26] He then proves to his satisfaction that nothing in the immediate context, the hymn itself, demands the pre-existence or deity of Christ, and reminds us that the general Pauline context cannot be appealed to because Paul did not write the hymn.’ On this, see also FEE’s comments (‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 35).
⁵ STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 250.
conclusions have effectively been built on what Fowl describes as ‘unwarranted assumption’ and ‘unfounded speculation’.\(^1\) As we saw before, reconstructing a text that has been drawn from the life of the early church requires arbitrary and speculative choices to be made.\(^2\) But the meaning and role of this text for the early church depend upon how we actually reconstruct this text. While we could theoretically reconstruct an early ‘hymn’ in the form-critical sense of that term by adding elements that are missing from our present passage (e.g. an introductory expression of praise, and a call and motivation to praise), and then seek to adduce the meaning of such a text for the early church, Fowl points out that we could also just as plausibly reconstruct an assertion of belief or a piece of catechetical material by adding the missing elements of those forms. He notes ‘it is really only on the basis of this arbitrary choice that one might be able to say anything substantial (though completely speculative) about the earliest church.’\(^3\)

David Black argues that ‘the case for the non-Paulinity of the hymn is weakened further by the glaring failure of its proponents to reach a consensus about the source of the original hymn.’\(^4\) Thus Hawthorne describes a ‘multitude of suggestions’ about background sources for the passage, which ‘only serve to send one off in pursuit of a question impossible to answer.’\(^5\) After noting these Black concludes, ‘but the fact is that none of these approaches has yet won universal acceptance. This alone should raise a question about the credibility of the hypothesis.’\(^6\) Fee is more dismissive: ‘It should not surprise us, given the assumptions of the methodology, that scholars found [the original “life setting”] that they were looking for. Nor should it surprise one that, as with form, every imaginable background has been argued for.’\(^7\)

Of course, we need to put this alongside the observation made earlier that the lack of an obvious hymnic structure also significantly weakens the claim that the passage is an early hymn. With no obvious hymnic structure and no obvious background, the hymn theory has

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1. Fowl, Philippians, 113.
2. See above, pp. 76-78.
3. Fowl, Philippians, 112-113; see also p. 78 above.
5. Hawthorne, Philippians, 79; I discuss very briefly some of these backgrounds in Chapter 5 (§5.3) below.
7. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 43.
become highly speculative, to say the least. Bockmuehl thus notes that ‘statements about the supposed setting and background of such “pre-Pauline” texts are, with very few exceptions, doubly speculative.’\(^1\) On such speculation, he correctly asserts, ‘what else a quotation may or may not have meant in its own supposed original setting is in strictly exegetical terms irrelevant for the interpretative task at hand.’\(^2\)

Hence, even if one grants all four of the following, ultimately speculative, steps, that (i) Phil 2:6-11 is a quotation, and (ii) one could reconstruct an original text and literary form, and (iii) one could describe a credible interpretative background or \textit{Sitz-im-Leben} for this text, and then (iv) convincingly identify a specific role that this text played in the early church, Fowl appropriately asks, ‘would that be relevant to discussing this passage as it occurs in Philippians?’ His response: ‘at a general theoretical level, the answer must be no,’ for as literary commentators and philosophers generally now agree, ‘the function of an utterance is determined by the specific context in which it is used … and is independent of other contexts in which the utterance or text might have been used.’\(^3\) An obvious exception to this, if accepted, might be, say, Reumann’s suggestion that the passage represent an encomium written by the Philippians themselves, and quoted back to them with one small addition. In that case our knowledge of their situation might help us in interpreting the passage and its common meaning for them and Paul. However, as we saw in the previous Section (3.12), a Philippian-composed encomium remains speculative, without any concrete evidence to support it, and we concluded that Pauline authorship was more probable than ‘para-Pauline’ authorship.

As Fee helpfully explains, our only access to the passage is ‘in its present form and present position, and … we must begin any legitimate exegesis by assuming that all the present words are included because they contribute in some way to Paul’s own concerns.’\(^4\) Similarly,
Hooker offers both a diagnosis and a remedy for the highly speculative endeavours of some commentators:

If the passage is pre-Pauline, then we have no guidelines 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 inquire about possible parallels within Paul’s own writings.¹

Concerning Hooker’s diagnosis, Strimple adds that the hermeneutical method which decides that the hymn is non-Pauline and must therefore be interpreted without appealing to a general Pauline context, ‘is not to find ourselves newly open to the understanding of the passage but is to find ourselves at a hermeneutical dead-end.’²

Regarding her remedy, in fact we have already adduced multiple theological parallels to the passage within the Pauline corpus.³ On the present epistolary context, Hooker very reasonably posits, ‘even if the material is non-Pauline, we may expect Paul himself to have interpreted it and used it in a Pauline manner.’⁴ In further agreement with these principles, Bockmuehl suggests the direction toward which our hermeneutical efforts should be made: ‘responsible interpretation will focus its efforts on the meaning of the text within its present context.’⁵

Very recently, N. T. Wright has asserted, similarly, that we must treat vv. 6-11 as ‘a deliberate statement of exactly what Paul wanted to say at this point’ in the epistle.⁶ Therefore, even if our conclusion concerning the authorship of Phil 2:6-11 is incorrect and the passage was a (modified) fragment of some pre-Pauline composition, then methodologically we must interpret the Christ-story primarily in its present Pauline context, rather than speculatively enquiring into its background and pre-Pauline meaning.

¹ Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 89.
³ See Section 3.8 above (pp. 87-96).
⁴ Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 89; cf. Hansen, Philippians, 132-133, who accepts pre-Pauline authorship of what he regards as a hymn, but is careful to promote a canonical interpretation of the passage, in essential agreement with Hooker: ‘since Paul sets forth this hymn in his letter, he puts his stamp of approval on every word and incorporates all its points into his theology and his ethics. Whether or not he was the original author of the hymn, he in effect becomes its author by using it for his purposes. By quoting this hymn, he confirms all that it says. In fact, he conforms to all that it says.’
⁵ Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 2-3; cf. his Philippians, 119.
⁶ N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 680.
Obviously, if one assumes Pauline authorship, based on arguments that convincingly point in that direction, then as a consequence the problem of an original *Sitz im Leben* disappears, and one’s efforts can then be geared toward better understanding the conceptual background to Paul’s thought in the passage.\(^1\) It is this present writer’s reasoned conclusion that the passage is most likely authentically Pauline, and thus we can move toward seeing this passage as the Pauline narrative of Philippians 2:6-11.

### 3.14 The Pauline Narrative of Philippians 2:6-11

As Bockmuehl has observed, the best approach for accurate interpretation of the passage is surely one that acknowledges ‘a contingency of form on content.’\(^2\) We accept, then, the passage as two prose sentences, and while yet recognizing the poetic lilt, rhythmic or exalted prose within vv. 6-8 especially, this frees us to consider its genre and interpret its content in perfect harmony.

O’Brien was surely right to say that ‘formal considerations, though possibly helpful for interpreting the paragraph, are secondary to material factors.’\(^3\) However, I believe that the scholarly focus upon an alleged ‘hymnic’ form to the passage has seriously distracted from the content of the passage, which is, very simply, a story. These scholarly efforts, while well intentioned, have concentrated attention on an ultimately speculative form, speculative origin, and speculative background to our passage. Whereas each of these is theoretically possible, under scrutiny they seem to have been unnecessary sideshows to the main event, and to understanding this passage in Paul’s letter, and the letter as a whole.

To give a few examples, mentioned in earlier discussion, it is difficult to convey the full power and strength of the οὐχ ... ἀλλὰ ... ('not ... but ...') contrast of v. 6bc with vv. 7-8 when these verses are divided across three separate hymnic strophes, as in Lohmeyer’s hymnic structure. However, viewing the text as a single prose sentence allows this significant narrative structure its full impact. Similarly, in Lohmeyer’s structure, what appears to be the first half (vv. 6a-7c) of Paul’s first sentence (vv. 6-8) is split across the first two strophes,

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1 Thus, rightly, BOCKMUEHL, *Philiippians*, 121.
while the second half (vv. 7d-8d) occupies only one strophe; this is corrected in Hooker’s structure, but completely obscured in Martin’s structure, which disturbs a clear division between the two halves of the first sentence, marked by a paratactic καί (‘and’), and thus neglects structurally a further major contrast between Christ ‘being in the form of God’ (v. 7b) and ‘being found in appearance as a human being’ (v. 7d), simply in order to create the parallel pairs demanded by his hymnic structure. Also, several of the main suggested hymnic structures (Hooker’s is again an exception) require the excision of certain lines that otherwise make perfect sense, when viewed as part of prose sentences. Furthermore, as we will soon see, other very significant narrative structures and features within the passage are also often obscured.

Therefore, it is encouraging to see commentators like Käsemann and Martin, despite views which we are clearly rejecting, nevertheless recognizing and highlighting the story of vv. 6-11.

So, for example, Käsemann sees the passage as a ‘drama of salvation,’ rather than an ethical model to be imitated. ¹ While disagreeing with his rejection of ‘the ethical interpretation’ of the passage, he is surely correct to see it as a narrative: he describes it as a “‘drama,’ in which various phases follow one another,’ where ‘christology is viewed … within the framework of soteriology,’ focusing ‘primarily on what Christ did, rather than what he was’ - his divine ‘nature.’²

We may note that Martin also used this language repeatedly. In 1967 he observed that ‘these verses, cast in lyrical and liturgical form, portray a soteriological drama. … the record of a series of events of saving significance … As befits a drama, the language is picturesque and set in the form of a story. … The “plot” is told in spatial terms and by the use of kinetic imagery.’³ More recently he continued to regard Phil 2:6-11 as ‘a dramatic story of the odyssey of Christ whose “way” led from one eternity to His ultimate glory by acts of obedience, exaltation and acclamation,’⁴ as epitomizing the ‘way of the redeemer’, which

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¹ KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 76; cf. also pp. 52, ‘mythical story.’
⁴ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xv (summarizing KÄSEMANN’s position on the passage).
‘traces the saga of salvation,’ and even as ‘a story of Christ’ and ‘the Pauline christological story.’ In fact he even refers to the ‘primary meaning’ of the passage as narrative: ‘the story of salvation centered on the via crucis.’

A particularly interesting and creative approach to the passage, acknowledging it as a story, or rather in this case, ‘drama,’ appears in a very recent article by Eastman, in which she conceives of the passage along the lines of a ‘theatrical performance’ or even ‘libretto’, and compares it to a modern Passion Play. However, it is one in which human actors do not perform the role of Christ, but rather in a ‘reverse-mimetic movement’ Christ ‘plays the role of enslaved and condemned humanity on the stage of human history,’ and this provokes from the listening audience ‘a corresponding mimetic response.’ For her the vocabulary of mimetic representation that describes Christ’s incarnation suggests a strong link between ‘imitation’ and ‘participation’ in Paul’s proclamation of the gospel, which respectively offers support for both the ‘ethical’ interpretation of the passage, ‘presenting Christ as an exemplar for the Philippians to follow,’ and the ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation, ‘portraying the drama of salvation.’ While I affirm with her the desire to bridge the two competing interpretations of the Christ-story, and appreciate the fresh and stimulating interpretation of the passage provided by her creative ‘theatrical’ reading, I am not convinced that it

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1 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xli, xlvi.
2 R. P. MARTIN, ‘Carmen Christi Revisited,’ 3-4.
3 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxii. It is worth a smile that, at the conclusion of his 1997 preface to A Hymn of Christ (p. lxxiv & n. 76), MARTIN has a laugh at FEE’s remark that ‘the passage obviously sings, even if it was not originally a hymn!’ (FEE, Philippians [NICNT], 226 n. 42), while himself so frequently using such ‘story’ language to describe the passage! Cf. his remark in MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 100, but there FEE’s comment that the passage ‘sings’ is not quite the ‘give away’ MARTIN makes of it. Francis Bland TUCKER’s hymn (which FEE cites), while largely based on the passage, does not in fact sing all its words; it both eliminates some lines (and not those which MARTIN would excise from Phil 2:6-11) and adds others. And further, in the ‘Scripture in Song’ movement many uncontestably prose passages are put into song; thus, MARTIN’s comment proves nothing. Of course, my wry humour here does not negate my own comments in the paragraph immediately below. It does, however, highlight the content of the passage, MARTIN’s ‘primary meaning,’ as being a narrative – and not a hymn – of Christ!
9 See EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 2-3 & n. 7; thus she posits reading Phil 2:6–11 ‘kerygmatically as the drama of Christ’s redemptive participation in human existence, which in turn empowers transformed behavior among the Philippians’ (p. 3), though appears to give priority to the ‘kerygmatic’ view.
substantially represents a reading which Paul would have conceived of or that his Philippians hearers would have perceived.¹

Of course, as we mentioned at the outset of this chapter, this ‘story’ was already ‘there’ in the passage, since one literary genre potentially can be contained within the form of another literary genre, and thus, to state the obvious, even a hymn or poem or encomium might possibly contain a story.² The problem is that this story as a story has been neglected and pushed to the side in the bulldozing efforts of hymn-focussed literary studies and other theological, interpretative and exegetical endeavours related to the passage. Thus, although many recognize the presence of a story in the passage, fewer interpret it as such. This is my concern and where we will focus our efforts in Chapters 5-7 below.

We will see in Chapter 7, though, that our simple story has in fact been elaborately constructed (as a story), and that paying attention to its narrative features will help us to understand and unlock its meaning, and to perceive its depth and profundity in a new light. In so doing, we will not be denying its christological profundity, but rather affirming it within the appropriate limits that the narrative genre sets for itself.

By recognizing that the literary form of the passage and its central content or primary meaning are of a unity, we actually do ourselves a service in interpreting the passage. We can eliminate unnecessary side issues and focus on what is most important, the story of Christ.

¹ For instance, EASTMAN makes much of the term σχήμα (v. 7d), describing how the term was used in ancient theatrical performance (see ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5-6, 7-12, 16); however, while the term may be well suited for use in that context, it is also well suited to describe visual or outward appearance in non-theatrical contexts (as she herself recognizes, it may be used in ‘a variety of settings,’ p. 7). Her argument that ‘in Phil 2:7, the link with εὐρισκόμενα supports this context for interpreting σχήματι by requiring the presence of an audience that recognizes Christ’s human identity through his σχήματα’ (p. 7) appears strained, as also does her claim that ‘the pervasive theatricality of daily life in the Roman Empire’ suggests that the Philippians would have heard ‘a performative reference in σχήματι ὡς ἐνθρωποσ’ (also p. 7). Given that she largely builds her case from this one reference in the passage (her rationale for this, p. 7, that v. 7d functions as a transitional clause, which should therefore guide ‘the interpretation of the passage as a whole’ places far too much weight upon a subordinate participial phrase), and in the absence of any clear ‘theatrical’ allusions, it does not appear strong enough a foundation to support all her conclusions. That said, her article does offer many valuable exegetical insights into the passage and provides a meaningful and creative metaphorical interpretation of the passage as whole; while valuable in itself, that and what Paul and his hearers would have understood are not necessarily the same thing.

² See p. 53 above.
And if indeed both literary form and content are in agreement, that very agreement inspires confidence in a narrative approach for seeking to understand vv. 6-11. Perhaps we could put it stronger still: does not the recognition that in Phil 2:6-11 we are dealing with a story, the Christ-story, actually compel us toward using a narrative approach as an interpretative key to unlocking the treasures of this beloved passage, including its significance for Paul, for the Philippians, and indeed for all Christ-followers? I believe it does.

A narrative approach will also, I suggest, begin to help us to understand Philippians better by presenting fresh answers to the questions of why Paul uses this story and of how he uses it in the context of his letter to Philippi. A narrative approach will thus require us to engage in plot analysis and to identify narrative structures in the passage, while also examining their functions, in order to explicate better the meaning of the story. In doing this, we will also be more attuned to recognizing the functions of the other intersecting narratives in this epistle and thereby better able to appreciate the wider message of Philippians.

Thus, unshackled by the constraints imposed by hymnic strophes, I hope to demonstrate that a fresh literary approach to the passage will yield fresh interpretative insights into the meaning, function and significance of this central passage.

There is, therefore, a strong case to call for a re-naming of this passage from ‘the Christ-hymn’ or ‘a Hymn of Christ’ to a title that more accurately, naturally, and soundly depicts both its content and, I believe, literary genre or form: ‘the Christ-Story.’

As we shall see in Chapters 6-7 below, we may also begin to recognize certain narrative patterns in the text, including those that embrace the whole passage (i.e. including vv. 9-11, not merely vv. 6-8), which is both exemplary, as a model for believers, and paradigmatic for the structure of the Christian life.1

But, let us not hasten too far ahead at this stage – for one further controversial matter has dominated discussion of the passage and requires our attention, as it directly concerns the overall interpretation of the passage. This issue is also related to the literary form and

1 I will define these terms on p. 145 below.
provenance of our passage, and logically arises from our conclusions thus far – what is the primary function of 2:6-11 in its context: is it to be interpreted essentially as *kerygmatic* or *ethical* or, as I prefer, *exemplary-paradigmatic*? We turn now to this key issue.
CHAPTER 4
INTERPRETATION LINES II: PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11
AS KERYGMATIC OR EXEMPLARY STORY?

4.1 The Role of the Christ-Story: Conflicting Interpretations?

Given that our passage can reasonably be regarded as Pauline, we can then approach it, as indeed it should be approached, as a passage both designed to support its paraenetic context and intended to be interpreted in its paraenetic context.

We have already shown above how Phil 2:6-11, with its introduction in v. 5, fits its context exceedingly well and belongs integrally in both the overall context of the letter and within the specific context of Phil 1:27-2:18. Without repeating what was said in the previous chapter, we can begin to draw some more interpretative conclusions here. The interpretative questions we need to ask of our text now revolve around two integrally related issues: how should we interpret the Christ-story of 2:5-11 and how should we regard its function in its epistolary and rhetorical context?

Should the passage be interpreted as primarily ‘ethical’ or ‘hortatory’ in nature and function, or ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological,’ as it has been variously labelled by modern scholars? Or might another description be more fitting? We may perhaps begin by defining these labels and briefly noting what they stand for.

The ‘hortatory’ interpretation refers to the tenor of the broader context of vv. 6-11 as being one of exhortation or paraenesis, and argues that vv. 6-11 are intended, supportively, to fulfil the same function. Although variations of interpretation exist, essentially the ‘ethical’ label is just that, another label for the ‘hortatory’ interpretation. It adds the dimension, though, that the actions of Christ, in vv. 6-8 particularly, are intended to stand (in one way or another) as an example to motivate Christian ethical behaviour. With varying emphases, this was the traditional and dominant interpretation of the nature and function of the passage fairly much

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1 See Section 3.9 above.
until it began to be challenged significantly in the mid-twentieth century in the work of scholars such as Ernst Käsemann and Ralph Martin. Since then, the majority scholarly viewpoint has swung to what has been termed the ‘soteriological’ or ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation. The label ‘soteriological’ refers to the essential nature of vv. 6-11 as a ‘drama of salvation’, where the focus is on what Christ did, rather than on what he was (either his character or ‘mindset’ or ‘way of life’), thus denying that the nature of the passage is ethical. Related to this, the term ‘kerygmatic’ emphasizes more the function of the passage as being to do with doctrine, confession, witness, and proclamation (kerygma) of indicative truths (rather than imperatival exhortations).

For Käsemann and Martin, this ‘kerygmatic’ function chiefly arose from the supposed original context of vv. 6-11, which, we have already seen, was for them a pre-Pauline hymn used by the early church. By taking the passage in isolation from its present epistolary context, their assumption was that it clearly must have had a doctrinal (and hence ‘kerygmatic’) function within the early church, and content that would best be described not as ethical, but as soteriological and eschatological. The argument continues that Paul has thus made use of an early soteriological ‘hymn’ in order to show believers that they belong to Christ as Lord of all, are now ‘in Christ,’ and must therefore live and behave appropriately within the realm of Christ established by the events narrated in vv. 6-11 (the incarnation, death, and exaltation of Jesus Christ) and under his lordship. Only in this way (for proponents of this position) does the passage in its present context serve paraenetic ends – not by providing an ethical example to follow, but by reminding believers how they came to be ‘in Christ’ (v. 5), and summoning them, under Christ’s lordship, to obedience (v. 12), in which Paul’s exhortations to the Philippian community in vv. 2-4 then play a role.

1 KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11’ (1968) 45-88 (ET of 1950 original: ‘Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2, 5-11,’ ZTK 47 [1950] 313-360); R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ (3rd edition of 1967 original). KÄSEMANN’s highly influential reading, however, drew upon ideas advanced earlier by scholars such as J. KÖGEL and K. BARTH (pp. 50-51); even LOHMEYER, who adopted an ‘ethical’ interpretation of the passage, provided KÄSEMANN with a foundation for his new interpretation by making the case for seeing vv. 6-11 as a pre-Pauline composition, which could thereby be separated from its present epistolary context (p. 46; cf. 46-50). On this see further, R. MORGAN’s commentary on KÄSEMANN (‘Incarnation, Myth,’ 50-51), cited in part on p. 126 above.

2 According to O’BRIEN, Philippians, 256.


6 So KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83-88; cf. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 92; and his Philippians (NCB), 92-93.
However, as Chapter 3 has shown, the notion that the passage represents a pre-Pauline hymn is likely to be mistaken. But that it could then be detached from its epistolary context and interpreted accordingly, when at best we would have only a fragment of the original composition and without an original introduction, adds unwarranted assumption to unfounded speculation, not to mention a flawed exegetical method. Even if the passage is not from Paul, although more likely it is from the Apostle, we must interpret it in the form in which it has come to us, and in its epistolary context. Given our conclusions regarding the authorship of this passage in the previous chapter, the case for a ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ interpretation of vv. 6-11 as presented by Käsemann and Martin is severely weakened. Yet it remains a possible interpretation, and our task in this chapter will be to examine it alongside the textual data to determine what interpretation of the passage is more probable and best fits the epistolary evidence.

It is worth examining the key arguments used by Martin in support of Käsemann’s ‘soteriological’ or ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation. As we noted in the introduction to Chapter 3 Martin spent more than forty years studying Phil 2:5-11. His 1967 monograph and interpretation of the passage remain essentially unchanged. The second edition in 1983 added a new preface, providing Martin’s first major response to those who objected to his original 1967 interpretation of the passage. We may note, though, that in 1983 Martin’s desire was ‘to define more circumspectly what is implied in the so-called “soteriological interpretation” as over against the equally ambiguous “ethical interpretation.”’ The third edition in 1997, retitled as *A Hymn of Christ*, kept the 1983 edition unchanged, but with a new, lengthier preface, also responding to recent challenges. While largely upholding the ‘soteriological’ interpretation, it contained some significant concessions toward the ‘ethical’

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1 As R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 215, 287 insisted must be done; see further pp. 126-128 above.
2 For a fuller discussion of this, including my rejection of the exegetical methodology inherent in this approach, see above, pp. 128-131.
3 Cf. my earlier comments on p. 96 above.
interpretation.\textsuperscript{1} What is said to be Martin’s ‘last contribution’\textsuperscript{2} to the _carmen Christi_ debate is found in his 2004 revisions to Hawthorne’s WBC volume on Philippians. It is not possible to discuss every aspect of Martin’s extensive work on the passage, though indeed the discussion has moved on and in fact considerably away from his primary conclusions. But since his monograph on ‘the hymn of Christ’ remains the most substantive defence of the ‘soteriological interpretation’ of the passage, it is important that we engage with him, even if somewhat briefly.

In the second edition of his _Carmen Christi_ (1983) Martin expressed the desire ‘to define more circumspectly what is implied in the so-called “soteriological interpretation” as over against the equally ambiguous “ethical interpretation.”’\textsuperscript{3} He repeated this desire again in the third edition (1997) of his work, _Hymn of Christ_: while believing there remain several grounds upon which the popular ‘ethical’ interpretation may be challenged, he noted, of such challenges, that ‘some expressions should probably be more circumspectly put.’\textsuperscript{4} On this, two comments need to be made. Firstly, indeed there is some ambiguity in the terminology of the various labels used to describe the function and purpose of vv. 6-11. I will explain that next. Secondly, Martin’s 1997 preface to _Hymn of Christ_ represents a significant, concessive move on Martin’s part towards some form of the ‘ethical’ interpretation, while remaining critical of several aspects of its usual expression. Or perhaps, we might say, he had moved towards a more intermediary position.\textsuperscript{5}

On the issue of the ambiguity of the interpretative labels, it needs to be noted that vv. 6-11 apparently do not contain any ‘soteriology’ as such, or at least explicitly. That is, as Käsemann himself recognizes, ‘the text does not mention the believers and the congregation’, the ones whom Christ has lived and died for.\textsuperscript{6} To some, such as Erich Haupt, this ‘embarrassing’ absence confirms that vv. 6-11 do not speak of the soteriological significance

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} R. P. MARTIN, _Hymn of Christ_, xl-xxiv.
\item \textsuperscript{2} MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, _Philippians_, lxxii.
\item \textsuperscript{3} R. P. MARTIN, _Hymn of Christ_, xii (in the 1983 preface; _Hymn of Christ_ is the title given to the 1997 edition, with the body of the original 1967 _Carmen Christi_ being reproduced in the two subsequent editions largely unchanged).
\item \textsuperscript{4} R. P. MARTIN, _Hymn of Christ_, xlviii (in the 1997 preface).
\item \textsuperscript{5} See in particular R. P. MARTIN, _Hymn of Christ_, xlvi-lv.
\item \textsuperscript{6} KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 71 (also 52, 53, 87).
\end{itemize}
of the events described.\(^1\) Käsemann’s retort to this was that the absence is just as embarrassing for the ‘ethical’ interpretation of the passage.\(^2\) However, it is important to note that Käsemann was not using ‘soteriological’ in a ‘narrow sense’ of the ‘salvation … of the individual and … congregation’ but, more broadly, to emphasize an ‘eschatologically determined’ ‘cosmic dimension of the work of salvation,’ and which does not thereby need to refer directly to salvific activity concerning believers.\(^3\) Interestingly, the absence of any mention of Christ’s death as ‘for us’ or for believers has already been encountered by us as one of the alleged theological criteria pointing to non-Pauline authorship of the passage. And that, despite the fact that the majority of scholars who regard vv. 6-11 as a pre-Pauline ‘hymn’ acknowledge that Paul had probably edited the alleged original composition, feeling free to add a corrective line (or two, or three) of his own, yet apparently, according to these scholars, Paul still did not make its ‘soteriology’ typically Pauline.\(^4\) Nevertheless, as I have suggested previously, the structural parallel we have noted between Phil 2:3-4 and 2:6-8 begs for an understanding that Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8, which culminate in his death, are implicitly ‘for others’. That is, although the ‘soteriological’ interpretation prefers to emphasize vv. 6-11 as not being linked to the paraenetic exhortations of vv. 2-4, in fact structural parallels between the two passages do implicitly suggest a soteriological understanding of the meaning of Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8.\(^5\) We can return to this issue later; for now it is enough to highlight some of the ambiguities and ironies of the interpretative labels used to describe the Christ-story.

To add to these, and to shatter any notion that determining the function of vv. 6-11 might be a fairly simple and straightforward matter, Martin most recently claimed that the interpretation designated as ‘hortatory’ (otherwise the ‘ethical’ interpretation) is actually misleading, since there is an ethical appeal in the kerygmatic interpretation: the point of debate is the ground of Paul’s paraenesis.\(^6\) For Martin this ground is not in Christ’s actions as an example to be followed or imitated, but in Christ’s actions as being the salvific events which place believers


\(^{2}\) Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 71.

\(^{3}\) Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 71; note Fowl’s criticism of this usage in Story of Christ, 60 n. 6.

\(^{4}\) See above, pp. 91-92.

\(^{5}\) See pp. 101-102 above.

in the eschatological realm of Christ, in his body, the church, and thus under his authority and lordship with an obligation to live accordingly in relationship to others in this body.\(^1\) Thus, for him, the passage as a whole serves a paraenetic purpose, without vv. 6-11 itself being ethical or paraenetic.

Similarly, though making quite a different point by focusing on aspects of the text itself, Käsemann accepted that the interpretation of the phrases in v. 8, \(\epsilon\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\omega\sigma\eta\nu \epsilon\omega\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu \gamma\varepsilon\nu\omicron\mu\epsilon\omega\omicron\nu\varsigma \upsilon\pi\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\omicron\omicron\varsigma\) (‘he humbled himself, becoming obedient’), are ‘decisively important … for it is here that the attempt at an ethical interpretation seems to find its strongest support.’\(^2\) He went on to acknowledge, in the willing obedience of Christ in vv. 6-8, wherein ‘it is obvious that the aspect of humility is constitutive for this obedience,’ that ‘for the first time in our text a concept emerges which is unequivocally ethical’, though he continues, ‘and now everything depends upon the context into which the exegete places this term.’\(^3\) For Käsemann, though, the ethical concept lies not in something Christ has demonstrated and which is then to be imitated by his followers, but rather in the moral action (i.e. ‘voluntary, resolute obedience’) of Christ, ‘the humiliated and obedient one’, which is revealed by the subsequent exaltation by God to be a ‘truly eschatological event.’ Christ, as the one who was and remains the heavenly \(\textit{Anthropos,}^4\) ‘therefore can never become an example,’ for as the obedient one at the centre of this eschatological event he can only be ‘\(\textit{Urbild,}^5\) not \(\textit{Vorbild,}^6\) archetype, not model.’\(^7\) Thus for him, even ethical actions within the passage are not meant to be interpreted as exemplary for believers, but only as components that help to shape a decisive eschatological, soteriological event. This very brief summary of a complex argument highlights just a few of the exegetical difficulties in the task of interpreting the Christ-story.

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2. KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 70.
3. KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 72 (but see pp. 70-75 for his fuller discussion of this).
4. KÄSEMANN’s mention of the ‘\(\textit{Anthropos}\)’ refers to his adoption of ‘the gnostic scheme of the Urmensch-Savior myth’ as the background to Phil 2:6-11, albeit including specifically Christian elements, such as regarding Christ as ‘the new Adam’ (with comparison to Rom 5:12-21) and his being acclaimed as the \(\textit{kyrios}\) (Philippians 2:5-11, 73; cf. 63-64). However, as R. MORGAN, ‘Incarnation, Myth,’ 62 notes, while this Gnostic background ‘reinforced [KÄSEMANN’S] view that the hymn was essentially soteriological’ it is now a ‘generally discarded theory.’ Similar is the critical assessment of O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 193: ‘KÄSEMANN’s appeal to a pre-Christian Gnostic redeemer myth has been rejected by contemporary NT scholarship.’
5. KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 73-74; but contrast this with his later view on Phil 2:5-11 in his Romans commentary (*Romans*, 380-382), cited on p. 493 n. 1 in Appendix 1 below, where Christ is said to be both \(\textit{Vorbild}^7\) (‘model’) and \(\textit{Urbild}^8\) (‘prototype’).
but also cautions us regarding the subtleties of language that we might use in order to describe its nature and function.

The matter of interpreting an already difficult passage such as vv. 6-11 in its context is indeed a complex one. As we move forward, we must seek to balance the complementary perspectives of (i) examining the exegetical details of both text and context and suggesting what overall interpretation they best support, while (ii) also re-examining the exegetical details in the light of the major overall interpretations which make good sense of the passage. Morgan insightfully alludes to these two approaches when he describes Käsemann’s ‘soteriological’ or ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation of Phil 2:5-11:

He [Käsemann] makes several exegetical proposals, some of which are more persuasive than others. His interpretation of the whole is built up of these, and if enough of them fail to persuade then the whole construction will collapse. But the whole construction is what gives some of his exegetical proposals the weight that they possess.¹

My approach will be to balance these two approaches with a careful, patient, and detailed analysis of both the text and its context.

Given that there are identifiable weaknesses in the ‘soteriological’ or ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation, it is not surprising, then, that it has more recently been critiqued and re-examined, leading to fresh interest in more nuanced versions of the ‘ethical’ interpretation.²

A number of scholars also are now arguing that critical bridging interpretations may also be possible, which depolarize the debate by acknowledging certain insights or exegetical conclusions from both sides of the interpretative conversations.³ As Hansen notes, ‘setting

¹ R. Morgan, ‘Incarnation, Myth,’ 47.
² More significant critiques have come from Larsson, Christus als Vorbild, 230-275; Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 113-126; Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 89-93; Fowl, Story of Christ, 77-101; O’Brien, Philippians, 256-262; Oakes, Philippians, 188-207; Horrell, Solidarity and Difference, 206-214; and (sympathetically) R. Morgan, ‘Incarnation, Myth,’ 43-73. However, see also broad positive support for a reading of the passage which emphasizes the ‘ethical’ interpretation in the following selection from recent critical scholarship: Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 191, 196, 199-201, 226-229; Fowl, ‘Christology and Ethics,’ 140-141, 145-149; Meeks, ‘Man from Heaven,’ 329-336; N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 56-98 (esp. 87, 97); J. R. Wagner, ‘Working Out Salvation,’ 257-259, 266-269; Hawthorne, Philippians, 79-81; Hansen, Philippians, 118-122, 155-156; Flemming, Philippians, 105-112, 125-126.
³ Note again what appears to be a significant concessive move on Martin’s part in the 1997 preface to his Hymn of Christ – see p. 140 above; and see also Käsemann’s own later concessive comments in his
up these two interpretations as antithetical interpretations presents a false dichotomy,”¹ which is surely foreign to Paul’s thought.² Thus, for example, David Horrell concludes that Phil 2:5-11 ‘is about soteriology, eschatology and – pace Käsemann³ – ethics.’⁴ Nevertheless, in practice, scholars tend to emphasize either the ‘ethical’ or the ‘kerygmatic’ side of the equation.

Notable among those suggesting a conciliatory or bridging interpretation is Bockmuehl,⁵ although others might be mentioned as well.⁶ He speaks explicitly of ‘the kerygmatic and exemplary reality of the work of Christ’ in the passage, which ‘embraces both past and present.’⁷ We will return to Bockmuehl’s interpretative suggestion later in Section 4.4 below, for he offers a solution based on supplying a particular verb (and a particular tense) in the elliptical Phil 2:5b that I support and will build upon.⁸

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³ Cf. KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 87, who himself had concluded, ‘the hymn is concerned with eschatology and soteriology, and not with ethics.’
⁵ Thus, BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 123-125; and notably, though with more brevity, in his ‘Form of God,’ 5 n. 11. However, he gives priority to the ‘ethical’ side of the debate, in a carefully nuanced way, by affirming vv. 5-8 as an ‘explicit appeal to the example of Christ’, while not denying the ‘kerygmatic significance of being in Christ’ (p. 123).
⁶ For example, mediatory or bridging positions, with varying emphases, are offered by EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 2-3 (emphasizing, however, the ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation); HOOKER, ‘PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11,’ 89-93 (esp. p. 93) and her ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 506-507; FOWL, *Philippians*, 106-108 and *Story of Christ*, 89-92; HANSEN, *Philippians*, 118-122 (each of these scholars emphasizing a nuanced version of the ‘ethical’ interpretation, while essentially affirming KÄSEMANN’S understanding of Phil 2:5b; though cf. also FOWL, ‘Christology and Ethics,’ 140-141); STRECKER, ‘Redaktion und Tradition,’ 66-68 (who sees the elliptical v. 5b as simultaneously including both interpretations); KRAFTCHICK, ‘Necessary Detour,’ 1-9, 22-32 (who builds upon KÄSEMANN’S legacy, with a ‘metaphorical appropriation’ of the passage for ethical purposes); B. J. DODD, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’*, 171-195 (esp. 187-195); and his ‘Story of Christ,’ 154-161 (who prioritizes a soteriological understanding of vv. 5-11, while acknowledging an ‘analogue’ usage of the Christ-story in Philippians for ethical purposes); OAKES, *Philippians*, 188-207 (esp. 188, 204-207) (who adopts KÄSEMANN’S understanding of Phil 2:9-11 as declaring a change of authority, while reading vv. 5-8 as paradigmatic); and, though difficult to pin down (in part due to the complicated history of both the passage and letter suggested by him), REUMANN, *Philippians*, 340-341, 374-377 (who ultimately argues that Paul uses the passage ‘to help house churches in Philippi on internal relations, without forgetting connections to the polis and cosmos’ [p. 376]; i.e. for paraenetic purposes).
⁷ BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 5 n. 11.
⁸ See pp. 235-240 above.
My interpretative proposal, in its own way, will seek similarly to critique previous approaches to the passage, identify strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge insights and concerns on both ‘sides’ of the conversation, and thereby advance a robust and comprehensive understanding of the elusive text of Phil 2:5-11. I will in this chapter suggest that each of the aforementioned interpretative labels is either inadequate or inappropriate in one way or another, and will venture to demonstrate that a more accurate summary characterization may be that the function of the Christ-story can be regarded as ‘exemplary-paradigmatic’. By ‘exemplary’ I refer both to the passage as a whole functioning as an exemplar,¹ and in which Christ is portrayed – at least, in the first half of the story – as an example or model for the Philippians (though not in the narrow sense of simple imitative copying, which the ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation most strongly, and rightly, rejects). Although, ‘paradigmatic’ might be seen as synonymous with ‘exemplary’ I will venture a more nuanced definition of the former; I see the passage as providing both an example for believers and also a structured, formative pattern (hence ‘paradigm’)² for the Christian life, which goes beyond mere exemplification, and which embraces, for believers, past, present and future. Thus, I see two complementary and interrelated facets to the function of this passage, which might be seen to match aspects of both the ‘ethical’ and ‘kerygmatic’ interpretations, without coinciding fully with either one. In this chapter, my summary definition will receive further explication, but the suggested proposal will be most fully fleshed out as we later examine the Christ-story as a story in Chapters 6-7.

4.2 The ‘Kerygmatic’ Interpretation: A Reactive Rival

The previous section has given a substantial introduction to what has been a complex debate in the interpretation of Phil 2:5-11, and in particular concerning the function of vv. 6-11 for

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¹ On the notion of an ‘exemplar’, see FOWL’s discussion in his Story of Christ, 92-95, citing Thomas S. KUHN’s explication of the analogical role of exemplars in the field of science (see The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996] 175, 186-191; though FOWL cited KUHN’s 1970, 2nd edition, pp. 187-191). Worthy of comparison to this notion is the theory of ‘metaphorical mapping’ adduced by KRAFTCHICK, ‘Necessary Detour,’ 1-37, building on modifications to ARISTOTLE’s philosophical theory of metaphor. Although with two very different approaches, the outcomes of FOWL’s and KRAFTCHICK’s application to the function of Philippians 2:6-11 are quite similar, and are reasonably compatible with my own understanding of, and approach to, the passage.

² Here KUHN’s sociological definition of a ‘paradigm’ is valuable: it stands for the entire constellation of symbols, beliefs, values, techniques, commitments, and examples shared by members of a given community (T. S. KUHN, Scientific Revolutions, 175, 181-187). For him, the subset of ‘shared examples’ constitutes what he calls ‘exemplars’ (see pp. 187-191).
Paul’s letter to the Philippians. In this section I merely want to summarize the two main issues raised by the two leading proponents of the ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ positions, Ernst Käsemann, and Ralph Martin, and to suggest a basic response to these two arguments. Then in the following Section (§4.3) I intend to engage with the many, technical details of exegesis related to the overall debate. Necessarily, then, this present section will seek to avoid beginning to discuss these many smaller details that make up the overall conflicting interpretations. For example, the interpretation of the introductory verse 5 is absolutely crucial, but to discuss it will require significant detail; that will be saved for the following section, and omitted here. Thus here I will seek to simplify this complex debate somewhat, though hopefully without compromising the positions of either Käsemann and Martin.

4.2.1 Opposition to the ‘Ethical’ Interpretation

It is worth examining briefly how the rival ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation arose, its critique of the ‘ethical’ approach (in summary), and its overall understanding of the nature and function of the passage (including how it supports the paraenesis of Paul’s letter, without itself being ethical).

It needs to be acknowledged that Käsemann’s opposition to the ‘ethical’ interpretation represented opposition to a naïve ethical idealism; it was a reactionary attack on an ‘ethical idealism,’ which seemed to be his label for the moralizing theology of Old Liberalism.1 That is, explains Larry Hurtado, the ‘ethical interpretation’ seemed to him to reduce the work of Christ merely to being a generally valid norm of conduct, an example that humility and service will be rewarded; and for Käsemann that meant denying the soteriological nature of Christ’s work on the cross.2 Hurtado seems to be correct that Käsemann’s influential analysis of the passage ‘was an overreaction against particular examples of “ethical idealism”’ to the extent that he ‘was unable to do justice to the evidence of Paul’s paraenetic purposes in including this passage in his letter.’3 This seems all the more true given what appears to be a significant turnaround in Käsemann’s viewpoint when he wrote his (also) influential commentary on Romans, to the point that he basically accepted Christ as both model

1 Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 114.
2 Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 114.
3 Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 126.
[Vorbild] and prototype [Urbild] for believers in Phil 2:6-11. Yet his original 1950 work (ET: 1968) became extremely influential, persuading R. P. Martin, who also became a leading advocate of the so-called kerygmatic or soteriological interpretation.

Yet, it needs to be noted that one does not need to succumb to this ‘ethical idealism’ by asserting that the Christ-story functions in part as an example for believers to follow. Christ’s story and actions hold far more significance than that. And Paul’s soteriology of the cross is not being given up in the claim that his death on the cross is also exemplary.

While both scholars presented various technical and exegetical arguments for their positions, in general terms their case could be summarized with two main objections; thus, Martin presented two main arguments against the ‘ethical interpretation,’ which rendered it for him as unacceptable, and which may be summarized as follows:

(i) firstly, based in part on the assumption that ‘imitation’ refers to slavish, imitative copying, it is clearly not possible to imitate a divine being becoming human, which is by definition ‘unique’ and therefore inimitable; and

(ii) secondly, the ethical interpretation cannot adequately explain the inclusion and presence of vv. 9-11, for if in fact vv. 9-11 are being made applicable to Christians, the situation of the first argument is worsened, for how could they similarly receive the heavenly accolade granted to the ‘Lord’ (Kúrioj)?

1 Thus, in his Commentary on Romans (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), KÄSEMANN’s discussion of Rom 15:1-6 was under the heading ‘The Model of Christ’, and concerning Rom 15:3 in particular (Romans, 380-382) he cited Phil 2:5-8 as follows: ‘As in Phil 2:5f. Christ is presented as a model [Vorbild], and it should be noted that according to [Rom] 8:29 this model remains simultaneously the prototype [Urbild]. What goes for him must go for his disciples too, and it is necessary and possible only through him … As in Phil 2:5ff. only one thing is emphasized … But this is not … the unselfish and humble mind of Jesus; it is the bearing of enmity against God … [in] the passion [of Christ] … Christ … “did not please himself.” He was the most despised of men, and he had to be this for God’s sake. To this extent he is the model [Vorbild] and prototype [Urbild] of our behaviour … [this demands] not imitation but conformity with the Christ who is characterized thus.’ Given KÄSEMANN’s staunch rejection of the ‘ethical’ interpretation of Phil 2:6-11 evident in his earlier essay (of 1950; ET 1968), ‘A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5-11,’ this appears to be a significant, albeit somewhat nuanced, later concession. Also noting KÄSEMANN’s apparent change of mind by the time of his Romans commentary is VOLLWEISER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 414 & n. 9, who argues that KÄSEMANN’s dictum (Christ ‘ist Urbild, nicht Vorbild’; ‘Kritisch Analyse,’ 345; ET, 74) needs to be corrected: ‘Weil er Urbild ist, ist er Vorbild’ (Because he is prototype, he is model’; emphasis VOLLWEISER’s).

2 So relates HURTADO, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 114; for other discussions of the history of this particular debate, see O’BRIEN, Philippians, 193-194, 253-262; Kraftchick, ‘Necessary Detour,’ 1-9; and the sympathetic appraisal by Robert MORGAN, ‘Incarnation, Myth,’ 43-73 (on the background to KÄSEMANN’s interpretation, see pp. 50-51).

3 See R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xii-xix, 1-lv, 68-74, 84-8,287-292, 294-297 for these two main arguments; the debate is of course much more complex and nuanced than this.
In a way, the second objection, concerning vv. 9-11, was the most decisive for Martin; and to him only the kerygmatic interpretation offered a satisfactory solution. There, while noting the formal similarity with the sequence ‘we suffer now … we shall be exalted then’ (citing the parallel with Rom 8:17), Martin argued that Paul does not invoke that principle in 2:12 – his paraenetic appeal (ὡστε, ἀγαπητοί μου …) on the basis of vv. 6-11 – but rather he reverts to Christ’s authority as Kyrios as requiring human obedience.1

He believed Paul could not be holding out (in vv. 9-11) the prospect of reward for following Jesus in an exemplary way, since 2:3-4 rebukes such ‘self-interest’. Similarly, believers cannot receive the status Jesus receives, for there is only one Kyrios. Thus, according to Martin, each aspect of the story of Christ is unique – the decision of the heavenly Christ (v. 6), his subsequent incarnation (vv. 7-8), and the resultant bestowal of the title Kyrios (vv. 9-11) – and could not therefore be the object for believers to imitate.2 Hence, Martin concluded that vv 6-11, and especially vv. 9-11, do not and cannot function paraenetically in terms of an example to be followed. For him, the ‘ethical interpretation’ cannot satisfactorily explain why vv. 9-11 have been included by Paul.3

On the place of vv. 9-11, the sentence in vv. 9-11 has been portrayed as ‘an awkward paragraph which might be described as the Achilles’ heel of the ethical interpretation’ of the passage.4 Larry Kreitzer well explains the difficulty: ‘there is no immediately obvious connection between the exaltation theme contained in these verses and the exhortation based upon the ethical example of Jesus that clearly underlies vv. 6-8.’5 The ethical interpretation of the passage appears upon first glance unable to account for the presence of vv. 9-11. Collange is absolutely right to assert that ‘any interpretation of one part of the hymn which fails to do justice to the other is misleading.’6 For Käsemann and Martin the ethical interpretation fell into that category.

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1 R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, xiii-xix, esp. xiii, xv; see also l-lv (and l n. 16).
3 R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, xv, xviii; cf. 288-289, where he notes that vv. 9-11 have ‘no relevance to Paul’s ethical admonition.’
6 COLLANGE, *Philippians*, 83.
4.2.2 Critiquing the Reaction of the ‘Kerygmatic’ Interpretation

In response to these two main objections to the ‘ethical interpretation’ several points may be made. Firstly, it is important to note that the two halves of the passage each need to be interpreted somewhat differently. In vv. 6-8 Christ is the protagonist and subject of the main verbs of action, but in vv. 9-11 God becomes the protagonist and in v. 9 is the subject of the main verbs acting upon Christ in response to the latter’s actions in vv. 6-8. Thus, if Christ’s actions are to be regarded as exemplary or ‘ethical’ in any way, it can only be his actions in vv. 6-8 that can be so regarded, and not what is ‘done’ to him in vv. 9-11. Verses 9-11 are not to be regarded as exemplary in any way, though might, I suggest, be paradigmatic, in that they give an eschatological structure to the Christian life (cf. 3:20-21) and offer the hope of vindication (not merely reward) for those who follow the way of life portrayed in vv. 6-8, especially in the face of suffering.

Secondly, as I will demonstrate more decisively in the next section, verse 5 asks the Philippian believers to adopt a way of thinking and behaving, a mindset or attitude which results in a particular manner and way of life. It is therefore not the specific actions of Christ that need to be imitated, but rather his attitude or mindset, his character. Thus, while v. 5 introduces all of vv. 6-11, the ὅ καί ('which also') of v. 5b alludes only the mindset or attitude described in vv. 6-8.1

Related to that, thirdly, the often-repeated arguments, following Käsemann, about the so-called ‘inimitability’ of Christ’s actions are in fact an overreaction to the idea of Christ as an example.2 These arguments are well answered by Frank Stagg: ‘the protest that one cannot imitate Christ by becoming incarnate, dying on the cross, and being exalted to heaven is caricature, not exegesis.’3 As Witherington explains further, an analogy involves points of similarity in the midst of obvious differences; in this case a similar attitude and similarly self-sacrificial behaviour are being commended to produce unity in the Philippian congregation.4 Furthermore, as Hooker rightly points out, it is inadequate to describe what is being

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1 OAKES, Philippians, 192.
2 WITHERINGTON, Friendship and Finances, 64.
4 WITHERINGTON, Friendship and Finances, 64-65.
suggested as simply *imitatio Christi*, and ‘conformity’ to Christ and Christ’s character is a better term.1

Fourthly, when we see the passage as a narrative unity, then we see vv. 9-11 as integral to the story of Christ, and not as either an excursus or appendix to vv. 6-8, which are seen as primary. As I will show in Chapter 7 below there are several ways of understanding the passage as an integrated narrative which highlight the unity and indivisibility of the whole, while maintaining an exemplary understanding of vv. 6-8.

Fifthly, if the main function of vv. 6-11 is soteriological in explaining the necessity for the Philippians’ acting upon Paul’s exhortations, namely that they are ‘in Christ’, the one whose life and actions are responsible for them being in his body, then vv. 6-11 are rather much an ‘overkill’ for this purpose. Paul could have said these things much more simply … and could have done so using much clearer salvific language. However, a key weakness of the soteriological position (admitted by Käsemann) is that the passage does not explicitly mention any salvific activity, nor does it mention the believers affected salvifically by Christ’s actions.2

Sixthly, the kerygmatic/soteriological interpretation tends to isolate the passage from its paraenetic context,3 which I will argue in the next section strongly suggests the function of the passage in its epistolary context is to support paraenetic exhortations, especially those in 2:1-4, but also those in 2:12-18. Martin’s response to this is that the issue is not whether the story of Christ supports its paraenetic context, but how, and he and Käsemann argue that the passage shows how believers come to be ‘in Christ’ and under his lordship and that, not the actions of the story itself, carries ethical implications. My approach will seek to demonstrate why that is not entirely correct.

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1 Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 90-93.
2 Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 52, 53, 71, 87; however, he retorted on p. 71 that believers are not mentioned in vv. 6-11 is also ‘embarrassing’ for the ethical interpretation; and further on p. 87 – ‘it is the Christian community which pronounces and hears’ this passage (as kerygma); thus they are in fact implicitly in view.’
3 Cf. the critique of Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 114-119.
This, then, is an overview of the main issues of debate and the basic outline of a response to them. For the immediate chapter, though, gaining a thorough understanding of the epistolary context of the Christ-story is particularly crucial, and a precise translation of v. 5 will be most critical. The best answer to the objections to an ‘exemplary-paradigmatic’ understanding of the passage will be to demonstrate it in some significant detail. To these tasks, seeking to balance both the big picture and the minutiae, then, we now turn.

4.3 A Context-Based Interpretative Approach to the Passage

It would seem, then, given our conclusions thus far, that we should begin to understand the nature and function of the Christ-story by beginning with the surrounding context as an interpretative guide, and then examining its content to see how the story itself supports both its immediate and wider epistolary-rhetorical context, and while keeping the ‘big picture’ interpretations of the passage in mind as we do these two things. To do justice to this multi-faceted task some detail will be necessary as we examine carefully the text and context of this celebrated but challenging Christ-story.

4.3.1 A Paraenetically-Driven Context (Phil 1:27-30)

We have also seen in Chapter 2 above the centrality of Phil 1:27-30 for understanding Paul’s purposes in writing the letter to the Philippians, and in particular the paraenetic section from 1:27 to 2:18. We may recall in 1:27-30 Paul’s chief concern for the Philippians’ steadfastness and unity in the context of the opposition and suffering they are facing. What does this key paragraph in the letter contribute to understanding better the purpose and function of Phil 2:5-11?

First, we should note that Paul’s primary concern for the Philippian community is that they ‘conduct [themselves] as citizens (πολίτεύομαι) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ’ (Phil 1:27). We saw in Chapter 2 that πολίτεύομαι in its Philippian context carries the sense of the Christian congregation belonging to a heavenly, eschatological colony within that of the Roman colony in Philippi, and necessarily brings with it a mutual and corporate

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1 See Section 2.2 above.
responsibility in behaviour that should be appropriate to and worthy of the gospel of Christ. The implication is that their conduct is expected to be set somewhat in opposition to the prevailing Roman culture and society, which we previously described as a kind of ‘counter-citizenship’ to their Roman citizenship.

If the Philippians’ dual citizenship is in mind, the gospel is akin to the ‘constitution’ of the heavenly kingdom, to which they ultimately owe their allegiance.¹ As we saw in Chapter 2, Paul asserts that the gospel of Christ (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ; v. 27) is what must establish the norms of their conduct. It is in relation to and from this gospel that they must live out their citizenship worthily. The adverb ἀξιόως (‘worthily’ or ‘in a manner worthy’) presupposes that this gospel about Christ had known ethical content. It suggests that the later mentions of behaving by way of ‘selfish ambition [or] vain glory’ (Phil 2:3) and ‘grumbling and disputing’ (2:14), illustrate negatively what would not be in keeping with the Philippians’ heavenly citizenship, since those traits do not reflect the ethical character of the gospel.²

It is this gospel, with its intrinsic ethical content, that they must contend for and strive side by side for. Bockmuehl has rightly detected the presence of Paul’s ethical indicative-imperative relationship in Phil 1:27.³ Their status and dignity as citizens must result in appropriate behaviour and conduct. The ethical logic here is typically Pauline: being must precede and entail doing; and their doing will in turn confirm their being. Thus, ‘[Paul’s] ethics is that of an eschatological noblesse oblige; “live what in Christ you already are” … “You are citizens of heaven; therefore live accordingly, in a manner that is worthy of your king.”’⁴ I have described elsewhere how Paul uses this type of logic in an ethics of dying and rising with Christ in Romans 6 (cf. especially Rom 6:1-11 with 6:12-14).⁵

Furthermore, and related to this indicative-imperative relationship, Paul is actually doing more here. He is engaging in the formation of their identity as a community, though with a

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¹ Bockmuehl, Philippians, 98.
² Thus Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 162-163.
³ Bockmuehl, Philippians, 98. On the indicative-imperative structure of Paul’s ethics, see further Weymouth, ‘Participation with Christ,’ 120-129.
⁴ Bockmuehl, Philippians, 98.
⁵ Weymouth, ‘Participation with Christ,’ 113-131; cf. Bockmuehl, Philippians, 98, who also cites as comparable the ethical logic of Galatians 5 and Colossians 3.
clearly ethical edge. Not only does the verb πολιτεύομαι have specific corporate implications, since the idea of citizenship inherently carries communal responsibilities, but, as Flemming very aptly notes, Paul’s use of this political language in Phil 1:27, with its special significance to the Philippians, appears intended to help ‘reconstruct their identity and conduct.’ The Philippians have been proud of their Roman citizenship and the privileges associated with that. Paul now begins to give them a new sense of identity with their ultimate heavenly citizenship and the privileges and responsibilities that necessarily accompany that. As Timothy Geoffrion puts it, ‘the Gospel defined for them who they were, i.e., citizens of a heavenly community (cf. 3:20), and it set the standard for how they were to think, act, and react to others in and outside of their Christian community.’

If political language has been used in 1:27, then one or two other sets of metaphors for the Christian life also dominate 1:27-30. Paul writes that he wishes to hear, of the Philippians, ὅτι στάκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλούντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (literally, ‘that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together for the faith of the gospel; v. 27cd). The first metaphor, in the call ‘to stand firm’ or ‘remain steadfast’ (στάκετε) ‘in one Spirit’ (v. 27c) appears drawn from the military world. It describes the position of soldiers staying in their formation, not breaking rank in the face of either attacking or retreating opposition. The call ‘to strive together’ or ‘strive side by side’ (συναθλούντες) ‘with one soul’ for the ‘faith of the gospel’ (v. 27d), taken together with the athletic metaphor of ‘struggle’ (ἀγώνα) in v. 30, suggest to most commentators an allusion to an athletic contest, or perhaps to gladiatorial fighting in the arena. Some prefer to see even in this language the extended military metaphor, in which case, συναθλεῖ (v. 27d) and ἀγών (v. 30a) refer to ‘fighting together’ and being engaged in a ‘battle’ respectively.

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2. Geoffrion, Rhetorical Purpose, 25.
5. Thus comments O’Brien, Philippians, 150-151; see in particular the discussion of V. C. Pfitzner, Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature (NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 109-129; see Feke, Philippians (NICNT), 166; Beare, Philippians, 67-68; Hawthorne, Philippians, 57; Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, 71.
has noted that in Hellenistic-Jewish literature military images often accompany and complement athletic images, leading in many cases to ‘a mingling of the two metaphors’ in which, in some authors, ‘they almost appear interchangeable.’\(^1\) Thus, a number of commentators refuse to be drawn as to whether one or two additional metaphors are present in 1:27-28,\(^2\) seeing them as complementary and both metaphors as making essentially the same point in Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians, each of which would have been readily understood by them.\(^3\) This point is that strenuous joint, team efforts are needed as they ‘conduct [themselves] as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel’ and for ‘the faith of the gospel’.

Paul adds two further related, but critical things that he wants the Philippians to do: (i) they must be united; and (ii) they must not be intimidated by their opponents. Although it is possible that the phrase ἐν ἕνι πνεύματι (‘in one spirit’) could be a parallel phrase to μιαὶ ψυχῆ (‘with one soul’)\(^4\) and refer to the ‘human spirit’,\(^5\) such a usage is unparalleled in Paul and in Greek literature, and the phrase more probably refers to the Holy Spirit. The latter is more likely, given that the divine Spirit is clearly referred to in the phrase, κοινωνία πνεύματος (‘fellowship of the Spirit’) in Phil 2:1-2, which also uses the phrase σύμψυχοι (‘united in soul’; v. 2), and in 1 Cor 12:13 (cf. Eph 2:18), where the verbal parallel is exact: ἐν ἕνι πνεύματι and in context refers to the believers’ common experience of the one Spirit as the basis for their unity; and further, the parallel phrase στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ (‘stand firm in the Lord’) in Phil 4:1 suggests a divine referent for the ‘one Spirit’ who will help the believers to stand firm in 1:27.\(^6\) What should result from the work of the Spirit helping the Philippians to stand firm is their unity in striving for the faith of the gospel, which is expressed in the phrase μιαὶ ψυχῆ. That is, they should be of ‘one soul’ together in their conduct. This phrase

\(^2\) That is, beyond the political metaphor of ‘citizenship conduct’.
\(^4\) In fact a formal chiasm is present: A (στήκετε), B (ἐν ἕνι πνεύματι), B’ (μιαὶ ψυχῆ), A’ (συμσυναγωγεῖς).
also draws upon the language of friendship; thus, notably, to be depicted as being of ‘one soul’ meant those so described were indeed friends and equals, having all things in common. In particular, at the heart of their unity and oneness is to be their striving for the faith of the gospel.

The second related concern builds upon the exhortation to stand firm – that the Philippians should not be intimidated by the opposition facing them (Phil 1:28a), which is causing their present sufferings (1:29) and which they have in common with their apostle, both when he was with them (‘which you saw in me’) and now as he is imprisoned (‘and now hear [to be] in me’) (1:30). The antidote for intimidation in the face of adversity lies in the eschatological confidence that the source of their ultimate salvation and vindication is God himself (καὶ τὸῦ τὸ ἀπὸ θεοῦ; ‘and that from God’; 1:28c), while instead their opponents are destined for destruction (1:28b). Thus, in unity and in the sufferings shared with their apostle, the Philippians are to stand firm, striving together, as they conduct themselves as citizens in a world which does not acknowledge their Lord and Saviour.

They are thus to have some other priorities than themselves as they live out their Christian lives. Paul wants to see four key responses from them: (i) their obedience to his various exhortations (‘so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm … ’; 1:27b); in the context of opposition and suffering, (ii) their putting the needs of the whole community above any individual needs or interests (‘… in one Spirit; with one soul … ’; 1:27cd); (iii) their commitment to the work of the gospel of Christ (1:27a,d), in which they are participants together with Paul (1:5); and (iv) their commitment, also in common with Paul (1:30), to Christ himself (… τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ … τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ …; ‘… for Christ’s sake … on behalf of him … ’; 1:29).

4.3.2 An Example Rich Context

These ethical concerns of Paul’s introduced in Phil 1:27-30 now find their outworking in the hortatory section of the epistle from 1:27-2:18, but which is further supported in 2:19-30 by two exemplary persons, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Again, as we have seen before, arising

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1 So Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 167-168.
from Paul’s overall concern that they conduct themselves as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ are two main issues: (i) Paul’s concern for the Philippians’ steadfastness, communal harmony and unity; and (ii) the necessity of these for their present situation of opposition and suffering. The former is the explicit concern of Phil 1:27; 2:1-4 and 2:14-15; the latter is the explicit focus of 1:27-30; 2:15 and appears implicit in 2:8, 10-11, 12, 15, 16-17. For them to live out their lives in harmony and unity, and to continue striving for the faith of the gospel (1:27) will require their selflessness and humility (2:3-4) and also their obedience (2:12). These significant ethical concerns are the very ones which frame the Christ-story of 2:6-11. As we will see below, they appear to be exemplified in, and indeed also demanded by, the story of Christ Jesus in vv. 6-11 as a whole (though particularly in 2:6-8).

In fact, if Paul expects all this of the Philippians as they live out their heavenly citizenship in Philippi, in a manner worthy of the gospel, it would appear to be very relevant and natural that he goes on to provide them in Philippians 2 and 3 with several prominent positive examples of such conduct and behaviour, namely the examples of himself, Christ, Timothy and Epaphroditus. To these, we may also add the fellow-workers in the gospel, whom Paul names in Phil 4:2-3, two of whom in particular (i.e. Euodia and Syntyche) need to be exhorted to remedy a failure in Christian unity. The exhortations made of the Philippians in this key paragraph of the letter (1:27-30) demand some illustrations as to how they can and should be worked out in practice; positive examples that will encourage and motivate them to do likewise. Alongside some practical concerns, the stories of Timothy and Epaphroditus in 2:19-24 and 2:25-30, and Paul’s interpretation of his suffering in 2:17 appear to be designed to provide such positive exemplification. But Paul will also include some negative examples or contrasts as to what behaviour needs to be shunned as well (thus, 2:3a, 14, 15b, 21; 3:2, 18-19).1 Bonnie Thurston’s summary appears apposite: ‘every reference Paul makes to individuals in this letter is made in connection with that person’s partnership in the Gospel and either his or her help or hindrance of koinōnia, common life.’2


2 THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 105.
Within chapter 2 negative exemplification, alluded to in vv. 14-15, is found in the allusion to the story of the people of Israel, who grumbled in the wilderness (Exod 15:24; 16:2, 7-12 [x 6]; 17:3; Num 14:27-29 [x 3]; 16:41; 17:5 [x 2], 10) and were not blameless children (Deut 32:5). This stands as a prominent foil to both Paul’s life (vv. 16-17) and to the way he wishes the Philippians to live (vv. 14-15), and which in turn sharply heightens the selfless obedience of Christ in the central contrasting story of vv. 6-11, and by doing so points to it as having an ethical character for the Philippians.1

According to Aristotle and later rhetoricians, positive examples in deliberative rhetoric are a primary means to present arguments to support a particular propositio, so that an audience will act upon it: ‘examples (παράδειγμα) are most suitable for deliberative speakers, for it is by examination of the past that we divine and judge the future.’2 Further, a deliberative argument will be more convincing when it is followed by even a single trustworthy example.3 Paul clearly follows this pattern in making his primary hortatory appeals first (Phil 1:27-2:4), and following with a powerful example (2:5-8), confirmed as such by God himself (2:9-11). For Aristotle, examples serve the purpose of providing witnesses in support of a proposition or even as living proofs that a proposition is true.4 They were the main means for inductive argument in deliberative oratory,5 because people deliberately choose to do ‘all things that those whom they admire deliberately choose to do.’6 Similarly, Quintilian agrees that ‘examples are of greatest value in deliberative speeches, because reference to historical parallels is the quickest method of securing assent,’ adding that ‘it matters a great deal whose authority is adduced and to whom it is commended.’7 Witherington explains thus that the most effective appeals in ancient deliberative discourse are appeals to examples from the historical past in which both the orator and audience are likely to agree concerning their

1 On this, see further my fuller discussion of Phil 2:12-18 on pp. 206-230 below.
3 ARISTOTLE, Rhetoric 2.20.9 (Aristotle XXII, 278-279).
4 ARISTOTLE, Rhetoric 2.20 (Aristotle XXII, 272-279).
5 Thus, D. E. AUNE, WDNTECLR, 173, 419.
6 ARISTOTLE, Rhetoric 1.6.29 (Aristotle XXII, 68-69).
7 QUINTILIAN, Institutio Oratoria 3.8.36 (Quintilian Vol. II, translated by H. E. Butler; Loeb 125. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920; N.B. the new 2001 Loeb translation by D. A. RUSSELL is not as clear, at least on this text; note also that WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 111, to whom I am indebted for this source, has incorrectly cited this text as 3.8.26).
relevance and importance, thus appealing to a person or persons whom the audience greatly respects.

For Paul and the Philippian believers no historical example would be more obvious and fitting than the example of Christ himself, and hence following the *propositio* of 1:27-30, Paul’s first presented example is indeed that of Jesus Christ (2:5-11). But, while probably none of the Philippians had ever seen Jesus themselves, they indeed knew Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus very well, having close relational links to each. Thus, for them, after the Christ-story, the following three examples used by Paul to support his call for them to ‘live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ’ would have been very relevant, contemporary and significant. The function of each of the examples used is to serve as a visible living proof that Paul’s exhortation to them – his *propositio* – is true and worth acting upon and living out for the sake and unity of the heavenly colony to which they belong. Thus, in receiving and honouring people like Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:29), they will be accepting Paul’s living proofs. Witherington is right to note that the Philippians’ shared evaluation with Paul of the ‘proven worth’ (δοκιμήν ὁτού) of Timothy in Phil 2:22 is probably mentioned for this reason. And given the largely pagan background of the Philippian believers, Paul’s use of known examples would have been far more effective as supporting ‘arguments’ than using citations and allusions to the Old Testament might have been.

What is especially significant about the four main examples provided by Paul is that they all closely link in to the adverse situation of the Philippians that has been described in 1:27-30 and to what is being asked of them in these circumstances: each illustrates some aspect of suffering, selflessness, sacrifice or servanthood. Thus, not only is Paul imprisoned ‘for Christ,’ as a follower of Christ (τοῦ δεσμού μου θανερώς ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι; literally, ‘my bonds have become manifest in Christ’; 1:13) and ‘put there for the defence of the

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1 WITHERINGTON, *Letter to the Philippians*, 111.
2 Thus, MITCHELL, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 41 & nn. 99, 100, who refers to an extensive body of Latin literature in which proofs by appeal to personal example appear, and offers a selection of references to what are ‘literally hundreds of examples’ of deliberative texts in which this theoretical mandate to use examples is present.
6 Here ἐν Χριστῷ is not to be taken with τοῦ δεσμοῦ μου (‘my bonds-in-Christ have become manifest’; so KJV), but rather, as the Greek word order indicates, with θανέρως ... γενέσθαι (‘my bonds have become
gospel’ (ἐν Χριστῷ ἐν Χριστῷ ἐν Χριστῷ ἐν Χριστῷ ἐν Χριστῷ ἐν Χριστῷ ἐν Χριστῷ), as his personal narrative of 1:12-26 shows, but he suffers for Christ’s sake as the Philippians have been doing (1:30) and is being ‘poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of [their] faith’ (2:17), with a much fuller explication of this provided in Philippians 3. More strikingly, Jesus Christ did not regard equality with God as ‘something to be used for his own advantage … but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant … and … humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross’ (2:6-8).

Timothy, who has ‘served with Paul in the gospel’ (2:22) and is like Paul (‘I have no one [else] of kindred spirit’; 2:20a), but unlike many others who seek after their own interests (2:21a), is genuinely concerned for both the interests and welfare of others – here, for the Philippians (τὰ περὶ ύπον ἔργων ἔργων ἔργων ἔργων ἔργων ἔργων ἔργων ἔργων; ‘he will care for the things concerning you’; 2:20) – and ‘those [interests] of Christ Jesus’ (τὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ; implied in 2:21b). Similarly Epaphroditus ‘came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life’ (2:30a) in order to serve as the Philippians’ messenger and minister to Paul (2:25), and ‘to complete what was lacking in [their] service to [him]’ (2:30b). Further, as we have seen in Table 3.1b above, Paul’s narration of the examples of Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself, in each case, echoes the language of the Christ-story.¹ Thus the Christ-story appears significantly to serve in some respects as a pattern for the following examples of Paul and his two co-workers; conversely each of the three appears to have successfully modelled their lives in various ways on the example of Christ.² Even Martin seemed to have conceded as much after revisiting the data of Phil 2:19-30 in his 1997 preface to A Hymn of Christ:

Clearly Paul’s language in this section (2:19-24) is designed to portray his colleague [Timothy] as one who lived out the Christ model … [and of Epaphroditus] On every count Epaphroditus was a choice person in Paul’s eyes. … [He] is suggested as a role model when Paul notes that his illness brought him ‘close to death’ (verse 30 NRSV), rendering μέχρι θανάτου, a phrase that is the same as ‘to the point of death’ (NRSV) in the hymn [sic] in 2:8. Once more, as with Paul’s own life story (3:13), the parallel is not precise … The point, however, is that Epaphroditus exhibited the same spirit

manifest-in-Christ’). The intended meaning of ἐν Χριστῷ probably embraces two ideas: (i) that Paul’s imprisonment has become clearly shown to be ‘for Christ’ (so NIV); and (ii) that it has to do with his being ‘in Christ’ (i.e. being a follower of Christ), and thus his imprisonment is revealed as being a participation in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Phil 3:10). So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 112-113; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 91-92; SILVA, Philippians, 67-68; FOWL, Philippians, 39; FLEMMING, Philippians, 66; cf. HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 34-35.

¹ See p. 99 above.

² WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 119, 170; cf. FLEMMING, Philippians, 144; FOWL, Philippians, 131.
of sacrifice in his loyalty to the Pauline mission, as one whose life ‘in Christ Jesus’ (2:5) arises from the greater sacrifice of a unique obedience to death. … The essence of Christ’s paradigmatic actions stands out in the lineaments of the hymn [sic], and they are exemplified in his servants like Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, whose lives are made conformable to his pattern of service, sacrifice and above all obedience (3:17; spelled out in 4:9 as a call to do as Paul did).1

Furthermore, while Paul’s own life clearly serves as an example to his Philippian friends, he implicitly or explicitly praises each of the three other examples. Hence, Christ’s actions in 2:6-8 are approved and vindicated by God in the highest terms in 2:9-11,2 and thus implicitly also by Paul; Timothy’s ‘proven worth’ is highlighted by Paul as being known to the Philippians (2:22); and Epaphroditus is praised with five titles (‘my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier and your messenger and minister to my need’; 2:25), while both he and Timothy are commended as being worthy of ‘honour’ (2:29).

These elements of praise suggest to some the presence of epideictic rhetoric in the letter, even though, as we have seen, most rhetorical commentators see Philippians as predominantly deliberative rhetoric.3 Indeed mentions of praise or blame, and the appeals to stand firm and embrace what Paul’s readers already value, are indeed epideictic elements that make the letter to the Philippians as a whole a species of mixed rhetoric. But the overall tenor is to convince them to act upon Paul’s exhortations in the immediate and ongoing future, which is a deliberative concern.4 As Aristotle states, examples (παραδείγματα) are ‘best suited to deliberative oratory … [which] is concerned with the future, so that its examples must be derived from the past.’5

1 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, liv-lv. Given MARTIN’s strong objections to an ethical or exemplary interpretation of the Christ-story, this concession is significant and worth citing in extenso.

2 Note especially HURTADO, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 125.

3 Thus, D. F. WATSON, ‘Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians,’ 60, 71-72, sees Philippians as belonging to the deliberative species of rhetoric, but Phil 2:19-30 as an epideictic digressio; cf. BRUCKER, ‘Christushymnen’?, 321-325, 349-350. WITHERINGTON, while recognizing the presence of epideictic rhetoric in the letter (Letter to the Philippians, 25, 97), correctly, I believe, disputes both Phil 2:19-30 as epideictic and as a rhetorical digression (pp. 27, 97-98, 169-170); cf. also (in agreement with WITHERINGTON) D. K. WILLIAMS, Enemies of the Cross, 140-141. See above my discussion of epideictic rhetoric on pp. 116-117, 123.

4 So WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 99.

The praise given or implied is thus rather to draw attention to Christ, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as examples which can and should be followed by the Philippians, and to underscore the particular sacrificial and selfless character of these three individuals. Paul goes out of his way to stress that his two companions share a like mindset with both him and Christ, and similar goals and behaviours. His close relationship with Timothy and Epaphroditus thus models how things should be in practice among and between the Philippians. But because Paul and the Philippians share such a close relationship, he does not need to argue with them about whether they ought to follow the examples of Christ, himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus. His praise of these servant-like people has the effect of displaying them under a spotlight, as it were, and in particular the chief exemplar, Jesus Christ. Then, in urging the Philippians to have the same mindset as Christ (2:5), with all the behavioural implications of that, he knows that his Philippian friends will be more than positively disposed towards accepting his various central exhortations to them.

Thus, in the hortatory context of Phil 2:5-11, there are several intersecting, interwoven narratives, each of which is designed to support the contention of 1:27, whose ethical implications we have been exploring. We have already seen how chapter 1 of Philippians introduced the intersecting stories of Paul and the Philippians. In the key passage of 1:27-30, their shared stories find common ground in the opposition and suffering each has been experiencing recently.

However, just as Paul’s exemplary story in 1:12-26 was closely entwined with the life of Jesus Christ, so the Philippians’ story comes to be indissolubly linked to Christ twice in vv. 27-30. The gospel they are to strive for is the gospel τοῦ Χριστοῦ (‘of Christ’; i.e. about Christ; v. 27) and the Philippians’ faith and suffering has been granted to them τὸ ύπὲρ Χριστοῦ … τὸ ύπὲρ σὺτοῦ (‘for the sake of Christ … for the sake of him’; v. 29). Paul’s first supporting argument for the propositio of 1:27-30, that is 2:1-11, begins with Paul referring to the encouragement that is available to them ἐν Χριστῷ (‘in Christ’; v. 1), thus through their shared life in Christ.

1 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 170.
2 Thus, WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 112-113.
3 So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 162 & n. 29.
The two smaller exemplary narratives of Timothy and Epaphroditus also find themselves linked to the person of Christ (vv. 21, 30 respectively), and with two striking echoes of the Christ-story (of vv. 6-11) in vv. 22, 30, which we saw summarized in Table 3.1b above. At the same time these two smaller stories also represent extensions of the intersecting stories of Paul and the Philippians. Timothy is shortly to be sent to Philippi as Paul’s messenger to them and Epaphroditus has been the Philippians’ envoy and representative to Paul, and is now being sent back to Philippi by Paul, probably with Paul’s letter to them in hand.

Fee is probably correct to note that the reason Paul reverses the chronology of the future events referred to in 2:19-30 – Epaphroditus’ return to Philippi bearing Paul’s letter (2:25-30), and the later intended visit to Philippi by Timothy (2:19-24) – is that Timothy’s visit is the most important, for two reasons. Sending Timothy will be part of Paul’s reciprocation of friendship to the Philippians: (i) on the side of Paul’s friendship to them, Timothy will be able to let them know the outcome of his imminent trial (2:23); and (ii) on the side of their friendship with him, Timothy will be available to strengthen them (2:20), and crucially help them to work on the exhortations that Paul is making to them in 1:27-2:18 (2:19-20) before Paul himself can visit them (2:24). Here Fee is also right, I believe, to read that Paul’s desire to be encouraged when he learns τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν (‘of your affairs’) (2:19; also v. 20) is a specific reference to the Philippians’ working on all the issues he has raised in 1:27-2:18, as it directly echoes the τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν of 1:27, rather than to further desired knowledge about how they are doing in general, although we should add also Paul’s very probable desire to find out (from Timothy) about the resolution of his later exhortation to Euodia and Syntyche (4:1-3; cf. 2:14). Thus, Paul expects to hear from Timothy a positive report (2:19) about their conduct as heavenly citizens in Philippi, and in particular about their unity as a heavenly colony and steadfastness for the sake of the gospel amidst opposition.

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1 See pp. 99-100 above.
2 Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 25, 35, 330, 339; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 38-39, 259, 261; and most commentators.
3 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 261.
4 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 163-164, 261, 265; followed also by WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 173; FLEMMING, Philippians, 145.
5 Thus, BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 165 (otherwise in agreement with FEE).
6 FLEMMING, Philippians, 145.
Hence, intersecting stories link together the example stories of Paul (in chapter 1), Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30), and the Christ-story in 2:5-11, with the exhortations begun in 1:27-30 and which dominate 1:27-2:18. These intersecting stories, each of which appears to be exemplary in various respects, and are part of Paul’s rhetorical argumentation and strategy, seem to indicate very strongly that the story of Christ in 2:5-11 must itself also be an exemplary story in some respects.

4.3.3 Pre-Narrative Exhortation in Philippians 2:1-4

More obvious clues about how we should interpret Phil 2:6-11 are found in the way that it clearly echoes the immediately preceding vv. 1-4 (discussed in this present Section, §4.3.3), in the transitional v. 5 (§4.3.4), and in vv. 12-18 (though particularly v. 12) following the Christ-story (§4.3.5 and §4.3.6). Verse 5 is especially critical, and we will need to give it particular attention. With respect to v. 5 my approach will be somewhat cyclical – we shall examine it in some depth in §4.3.4, though not exhaustively, before looking at the ‘big picture’ interpretative approaches regarding the function of the Christ-story (§4.4 and §4.5), first returning to consider a fresh way of reading and understanding v. 5 (§4.4), and then offering my own nuanced interpretative approach in Section §4.5.

We saw in Table 3.1a above that Phil 2:5-11 contains no less than five specific linguistic echoes of the text of 2:1-4.¹ Even though both passages are rightly regarded as being prose sentences, the poetic rhythm and flavour of the two passages and the structural similarities between 2:3-4 and 2:6-8 confirm that they belong closely together and, as we have concluded, have been composed together by Paul.² It is worth repeating Bockmuehl’s summary of this: ‘Despite the seam at 2:5, the two [paragraphs] are intricately interwoven in terms of language, logic and subject matter … both rhetorically and theologically, 2:5-11 shapes and illustrates 2:1-4.’³ Verses 1-4 point forward and anticipate vv. 5-11 linguistically and conceptually, and function as more than simply an ‘overture’⁴ to the celebrated passage of vv. 6-11.⁵ Witherington rightly laments the tendency of the enormous attention given to

¹ See p. 99 above.
² See above, pp. 70-73, 83, 101-102.
³ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 104.
⁴ COLLANGE, Philippians, 77.
⁵ SO FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 175-176 & n. 12.
vv. 5-11 (or vv. 6-11) in scholarly and popular discussion to gloss over vv. 1-4. He describes this as ‘an enormous mistake, not least because vv. 1-4 set up what follows and make clear that here Paul is mainly interested in the ethical implications of Christ’s example.’ Thus, vv. 1-4 and vv. 5-11 together depict the mindset and lifestyle needed among the Philippians for Christian living that is worthy of the gospel. The inferential οὖν (‘therefore’) of 2:1 links what Paul says in vv. 1-4 (and probably vv. 1-11) with most likely the whole of the previous paragraph (1:27-30); vv. 1-4 thus relate consequences and implications of what Paul has already said. The content of vv. 1-4 shows that the main exhortation of 1:27-28a is being attested to, rather than the theological explanation of suffering provided in 1:29-30. Certainly, the appeal to the ‘encouragement’ (παρακλησίας) available to them in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) in the first of the four conditional clauses of 2:1 seems to respond to the context of their suffering (cf. 2 Cor 1:5), which is mentioned in 1:29-30, but the urgent appeals of the three (or four) synonymous phrases of

1 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 117 (emphasis his).
2 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 117.
3 Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 175, 177-178.
4 There is some debate among scholars about the meaning of παρακλησίας in v. 1a, and lexical meanings range from ‘encouragement, exhortation’ to ‘appeal, request,’ to ‘comfort, consolation’ (BDAG, 766; cf. O. SCHMITZ & G. STÄHLIN, ‘παρακλήσεως, παρακλησίας,’ TDNT V, 773-799; LSJ, 1313). In ordinary Greek usage, the word usually means ‘exhortation,’ and a majority of commentators render it this way, in the sense of Heb 13:22, regarding it as an ‘urgent appeal’ in the name of Christ (cf. the use of the cognate verb in Phil 4:2). Thus the opening clause of v. 1 would then refer to the Philippians’ being ‘in Christ’ as the grounds for the following exhortations of vv. 2-16. However, by far the most frequent meaning in Paul is ‘consolation’ or ‘comfort,’ and, with FEE (Philippians [NICNT], 179-180), in context, it could be more likely that Paul’s usage here is parallel to that of 2 Cor 1:5: ‘just as the “sufferings” (τα φθοράς; cf. πάσχειν in Phil 1:29) of Christ have overflowed unto us, so “through Christ” (διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ) our comfort (παρακλησίας) likewise overflows’. So also O’BRIEN, Philippians, 167-171, who offers the most thorough discussion of the two main suggested translations (note his lists of supporters for each position), and prefers the meaning, ‘comfort/consolation.’ Accepting this meaning, FEE prefers the translation, ‘encouragement’ (Philippians [NICNT], 174, 176, 179); likewise, BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 106, who points out that the translation ‘encouragement’, contrary to how it is often understood today, contains notions of both consolation and strengthening, but he suggests that the two meanings, ‘exhortation’ and ‘comfort,’ may both be present and that it is a ‘false alternative’ to choose between them. With him, I prefer to use the translation, ‘encouragement’ (cf. παρακλησίας in Rom 15:4-5), due to its utility in embracing both meanings (note also BDAG, 766, who also suggests Phil 2:1 fits under both meanings: an ‘act of emboldening another in belief or course of action’ [1] and a ‘lifting of another’s spirits’ [3]). To my mind the context supports both meanings together, and this seems to be confirmed from structural relationship between the two ‘in Christ’ references in v. 1a and v. 5b (see Table 4.1 below, p. 171), the second of which refers to the Christ-story, which functionally, I would argue, serves both as an exemplar of that which Paul is exhorting the Philippians in vv. 2-4 and as an encouragement in their situation of suffering (among other purposes in its context).

5 I concur here with FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 183 & n. 47, 185; COLLANGE, Philippians, 79 (against O’BRIEN, Philippians, 178 and others) that the adjective σύμφροσυ (‘united in soul’; v. 2d), should be taken as modifying the final participial phrase, rather than standing by itself as the third of four phrases making up the οὖν clause of v. 2 (as the punctuation of NA28 suggests). It is missing either of the participles οὖν or
Phil 2:2bed point to one key concern, ‘that you have the same mindset,’ that is their need for unity and harmony together in their ‘striving together for the faith of the gospel’ amidst the opposition they are facing.¹ Thus, if 1:27-30 embraces a call to stand firm together against external opposition to the progress of the gospel, vv. 1-4 of chapter 2 envisage a steadfast resistance to all kinds of internal division, which would hinder their main task. So vv. 1-4 function within the wider paraenesis of 1:27-2:18 as a call to unity, love, and humility, in particular by maintaining a common mindset among the believing community.²

O’Brien makes a detailed case for seeing each of the four conditional ἐὰν τίς (‘if any’) clauses in Phil 2:1, upon which Paul bases his appeal to the Philippians in v. 2, as referring to four elements of divine grace that had been experienced by the Philippians.³ However, I am not convinced that Paul has in mind their past reception of these blessings at the time when the gospel was first preached to them.⁴ Nor am I persuaded that the four clauses refer only to gracious divine activity.⁵ I believe Paul is referring primarily to temporally present experiences (for the Philippians and himself), but which we could say had always been true for them in their participation (κοινωνία) in the gospel ‘from the first day until now’ (Phil 1:5), and since God began his ‘good work’ in them until the future ‘day’ of completion (1:6) and in their present ongoing experience (note the present participle, ὁστὸς) of being partakers with Paul (συγκοινωνώνυσι) of God’s grace (1:7).⁶ Thus their past experiences of salvation could be included in the clauses of 2:1, but Paul’s focus is on the Philippians’ present situation and experience.⁷

This seems to be implied by the οὖν (‘therefore’) of v. 1a, which clearly links vv. 1-4 to Paul’s and their own present situation, explicitly described as such in 1:30.⁸ The repeated use

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¹ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 175.
² O’BRIEN, Philippians, 166.
³ See O’BRIEN, Philippians, 167-176.
⁴ For example, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 171, 176.
⁵ O’BRIEN, Philippians, 167, 176.
⁶ Cf. FEE’s discussion of Phil 1:5, 6 (Philippians [NICNT], 84-85, 88).
⁷ Supporting this contention (at least implicitly) appear to be: FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 178-180; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 104-108; FOWL, Philippians, 79, 81; FLEMMING, Philippians, 97-98; HANSEN, Philippians, 106-110; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 119-121.
⁸ Note the two present tense verbs in v. 30, ἐξοντες and ἀκούετε, and the explicit οὖν (‘now’).
of παρόκλησις and its cognates in 2 Cor 1:3-7 alongside a similar situation of suffering seems to suggest that Phil 2:1a is a reference to present ‘encouragement’ in Christ for the Philippians and not to their past salvation. Further, the present tense imperative, to stand firm ‘in the one Spirit’ of 1:27 strongly suggests that the spiritual experiences alluded to in 2:1 are also experiences of the present. It also appears to be confirmed by the absence of any temporal referent to the past in 2:1, and the rhetorical effect of the four compressed and emotionally passionate clauses of v. 1, as the basis for Paul’s appeal in vv. 2-4, which is dominated by five present tense verbs that modify an aorist imperative (‘complete [my joy]’; v. 2a). This suggests that the translation adopted by many commentators and versions, supplying the present ἔστιν in Greek, and in English the words ‘there is’ to v. 1a, which gives a strong sense of present experience, is indeed appropriate: ‘If therefore [there is] any encouragement in Christ …’

As well as being present experiences of divine grace (in at least two of the conditional clauses of v.1), I suggest that Paul’s reason for referring to the four experiences in the clauses of v. 1 is that they are common experiences both to the Philippians and to him. Paul’s impassioned appeal builds on not only their common bond in situations of suffering (1:29-30), but their common bonds of friendship or family through their common union with Christ. As Bockmuehl points out Paul’s appeal ‘is deliberately emotional, both in terms of the rhetorical effect and in much of its vocabulary as well – words like “encouragement”, “consolation”, “love”, “fellowship”, “compassion”, “mercy” … all these terms relate not to the life of the individual but to the corporate life of the church.’

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2 On this phrase as being a reference to the divine Spirit, see above, p. 154.
3 Cf. Silva, Philippians, 99.
4 Silva, Philippians, 102.
5 So O’Brien, Philippians, 163, 165; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 178, 179; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 104; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 119; Fowl, Philippians, 77; Flemming, Philippians, 95; cf. Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, 80, 82; ‘there is’ is supplied by ESV, LEB, CEB, RSV, NRSV, NASB; cf. NIV, ‘if you have …’; KJV, ‘if there be …’.
6 As Hansen, Philippians, 111-112, emphasizes.
7 As Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 121 7 n. 32 prefers instead to see (rather than bonds of friendship).
8 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 105; cf. Fowl, Philippians, 79.
Thus, while ‘encouragement’ is available in Christ, they jointly ‘share’ in the Spirit,¹ and possibly their experience of the ‘consolation of love’ and ‘affection and compassion’ may also be experiences drawn from God,² Paul’s emphasis is upon what he and they together have experienced and may experience. It is a strongly relational emphasis,³ that provides motivational support for what Paul wants to urge them to do.⁴

I believe Fee is correct to note that each of the phrases of v. 1 may have both a primary and secondary direction, with inversely varying emphasis, as Paul moves from the connecting ‘therefore’ at the beginning of v. 1 (emphasizing the experience of divine grace) to the exhortation at the beginning of v. 2 (emphasizing communal experience and relationality): the initial focus is upon Christ and what is theirs by being ‘in Christ’, but Christ’s encouragement is shared by him and them together (v. 1a); similarly v. 1b (‘consolation of love’) and 1c (‘participation in the Spirit’), while from God, are also jointly shared by them all; the fourth clause, however, is noticeably lacking a genitive modifier and seems to shift toward the Philippians’ relationship with him (‘affection and compassion’; v. 1d); thus, leading directly to the imperative, ‘complete my joy’ in v. 2a, in which his relationship with the Philippians is implicitly paramount.⁵

We need to make one more comment about v. 1 here. What is the significance of the four conditional ‘if’ statements? It should not be seen as indicating any doubt about the bonds which Paul shares with the Philippians, as the grammatically parallel passage in 2 Cor 5:17 shows: εἰ τις ἐν Χριστῷ is not conditional (‘should anyone be in Christ’) but rather inclusive and indefinite (‘whoever is in Christ’).⁶ Thus, rightly, O’Brien suggests the fourfold εἰ should

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¹ I am in agreement with those commentators who see κοινωνία πνευματός as probably an objective genitive, meaning ‘participation’ or ‘sharing in the Spirit’ (cf. 1 Cor 1:9, of Christ), rather than a subjective genitive, ‘the Spirit’s fellowship’ (cf. 2 Cor 13:13); so, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 173-174; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 181 & n. 40; HANSEN, Philippians, 109-110; FLEMMING, Philippians, 97-98; and most interpreters; against HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 66. FEE is on the mark, though, when he suggests that κοινωνία primarily means ‘participation in’ and explains that as ‘first “sharing in the Spirit” himself; second, by that fact “sharing in the same Spirit” with one another’ (p. 181 n. 40).

² Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 171-172, 174-176. With BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 107, however, I am not convinced that a Trinitarian reference is to be seen in the first three clauses of Phil 2:1 (against FEE, Philippians [NICNT], 179-182; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 120-121).

³ FOWL, Philippians, 79.

⁴ OAKES, Philippians, 180; FLEMMING, Philippians, 96.

⁵ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 178-179; cf. BEARE, Philippians, 70-72.

⁶ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 104.
be rendered as ‘since’ or ‘if, as indeed is the case’ – and thus as statements of certainty.\(^1\) Bockmuehl adds that if the conditional sense is in any way to be retained here, ‘this could be in terms of ironic understatement: “if Christ means any encouragement at all … [as of course he does].’”\(^2\) I believe the intended sense in context is thus, ‘if [these things] are indeed true among you …’\(^3\) The formal apodosis (Paul’s ‘… then’ clause) to these four statements begins with the imperative of v. 2.

We should observe that in fact the only imperative in vv. 1-4 is πληρώσατε (‘complete [my joy]’; v. 2a) and that the other verbal clauses in vv. 2-4, which Paul literally piles one on top of another, function to modify this. But, while technically πληρώσατε is the only main verb in the one long sentence of vv. 1-4, Hawthorne is right to note that in reality this imperative is ‘simply prefatory to the main idea expressed through the many subordinate constructions’ which follow in vv. 2b-4.\(^4\) O’Brien is correct, I believe, to identify the first of these subordinate clauses, ἵνα … φρονῆτε (v. 2b), as being ‘virtually equivalent’ to an imperative.\(^5\) As we will see, the verb φρονεῖν is particularly important, twice mentioned in v. 2, and then reappearing in v. 5 as part of a significant introduction to the story of Christ in vv. 6-11.

Thus, in v. 2 Paul exhorts the Philippians to ‘complete his joy’ by ‘having the same mindset (ἵνα το αὐτὸ φρονήτε),’\(^6\) having the same love (τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἐχοντες), united in soul having the one mindset (σῴζωσι τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες).’ The emphasis on unity in these three largely synonymous phrases is repeated in four ways: τὸ αὐτὸ … τὴν αὐτὴν … [the] σῶμ-[compound] … τὸ ἐν.\(^7\)

However, the key verb for us to understand is the twice-repeated φρονεῖν from the first and third clauses. Significantly, this verb appears ten times in this letter (1:7; 2:2 [x2], 5; 3:15 [x2], 19; 4:2, 10 [x2]), a further 13 times in Paul outside Philippians, and in three other places in the New Testament. O’Brien explains that it is a rather neutral term that acquires its proper

\(^1\) O’BRIEN, Philippians, 163, 165.

\(^2\) BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 104.

\(^3\) Cf. here REUMANN, Philippians, 321: ‘in all four instances [in v. 1], “among you” is to be assumed’.

\(^4\) HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 67; so also FLEMMING, Philippians, 98-99.

\(^5\) O’BRIEN, Philippians, 165.

\(^6\) The ἵνα clause either expresses result or is epexegetical of the content of Paul’s completed joy. Thus FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 185 n. 54.

\(^7\) So O’BRIEN, Philippians, 177.
meaning from its immediate context, but in the New Testament often signifies, to ‘think’, ‘judge’, and ‘give one’s mind to [something]’. Yet it is not merely an activity of the intellect, but also a movement of the will.\(^1\) Thus, in 1:7 it refers to Paul’s disposition (‘being minded’) towards the Philippians and in 4:10 to theirs toward him. Yet, in between these two instances, as Fee notes, it ‘dominates the imperatival moments in this letter,’ namely the paraenetic sections of Philippians.\(^2\) In the Pauline corpus the verb also appears seven times in the paraenetic section of Romans (chapters 12-15), which begins with the appeal to ‘be transformed by the renewing of the mind’ (Rom 12:2).

Several commentators point to the use of the cognate noun φρόνημα, which appears three times in Rom 8:6-7, following an instance of φρονεῖν in Rom 8:5, as being a key to the nuance of meaning for the verb in Philippians.\(^3\) This noun takes the sense in that context of ‘mindset,’\(^4\) and refers to more than merely ‘thinking’ but also to the way one behaves. Thus, writes O’Brien, ‘a person’s thinking and striving cannot be seen in isolation from the overall direction of his or her life.’\(^5\) Concerning the use of φρονεῖν in v. 5, therefore, Martin also agreed that it is a call for

[Paul’s] readers to ‘adopt a way of life’ (φρονεῖν is more than ‘to think’; it signifies a combination of intellectual and affective activity which touches both head and heart, and leads to a positive course of action) in their mutual relations (ἐν ἀμιᾷ), which is indeed (καὶ) how they should live ‘in Christ Jesus’.\(^6\)

Thus, his 1967 paraphrase of v. 5 was ‘act as befits those who are in Christ Jesus.’\(^7\) One could be forgiven for thinking that there Martin was beginning to advocate for the ‘ethical interpretation’; there was clearly an ethical edge to his ‘soteriological interpretation.’

Similarly, acknowledging that the translation of the verb φρονεῖν as ‘to think,’ while not incorrect, is insufficient, Fowl also urges that ‘when Paul uses this word in Philippians he is not simply referring to an intellectual activity. Rather, he is talking about a more

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2. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 184.
3. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 89 n. 90; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 67.
4. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 89 n. 90.
comprehensive pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting.'¹ He admits that the phrase ‘pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting’ is an inelegant translation.² My preference, therefore, is to translate φρονεῖν more concisely as ‘to-have-a-mindset’,³ while understanding that it involves a way of thinking and living, the orientation of one’s mind and behaviour. In Phil 2:2bd, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε ... σύμφωνοι τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες should thus be rendered as ‘that you have the same mindset … united in soul having the one mindset.’⁴ When we come to Phil 2:5, the command τοῦτο φρονεῖτε, rather than being simply ‘this, think’, is I believe better translated literally as ‘this, have as your mindset,’ or more freely, ‘have this mindset’, but also (and very importantly) remembering that it is a verb being translated, not a noun.⁵

Verses 3 and 4 seek to put some flesh on the exhortations to unity, one-mindedness, and having the same love, all of which is necessary to live worthy lives as believers. Most translations of v. 3 add a verb of action, not present in the Greek, recognizing that the verse has the force of a moral imperative: thus, ‘do nothing from …’.⁶ But, although punctuated as separate sentences in most English versions, vv. 3-4 continue the extended sentence begun in v. 1, with v. 3 functioning to modify the preceding participle φρονοῦντες, and thus the main clause of v. 2, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε (‘that you may have the same mindset’), while v. 4 directly modifies the participle ηγούμενοι (‘considering’) in v. 3b, and thus clarifies the preceding clause of v. 3.⁷ As we saw in Section 3.9 above, the structural and linguistic similarities between vv. 3-4 and vv. 6-8 are very striking.⁸ Significantly, v. 3, v. 4, and vv. 6-8 each have a strongly contrasting ‘not … but …’ structure.⁹ Not only, as we saw

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¹ Fowl, Philippians, 6.
² Fowl, Philippians, 6.
³ For recognition of the appropriateness of this translation in Phil 2:2 and 2:5, see: Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 89 n. 90, 184-185; Reumann, Philippians, 324; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 62-63, 108-109; Flemming, Philippians, 54, 99, 111; F. B. Craddock, Philippians (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1984) 35-37.
⁴ ‘By being like-minded’ is a reasonable alternative translation for v. 2b (thus NIV; O’Brien, Philippians, 163, 177-178; Hansen, Philippians, 105, 111-112; Silva, Philippians, 103; cf. KJV), but I am less happy with the subtle meaning-shift to ‘united in spirit, intent on one purpose’ for v. 2d in the NASB (also O’Brien, Philippians, 163, 179; cf. NIV ‘being one in spirit and purpose’).
⁵ See again, p. 113 n. 1 above.
⁶ Hansen, Philippians, 113 & n. 36.
⁷ Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 176 & n. 13, 186, 189, 190; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 109, 112-113; in fact, most interpreters are in agreement that vv. 1-4 represent a single sentence.
⁸ See pp. 99-102 above.
⁹ See p. 101 n. 3 above regarding a textual variant which potentially softens this contrast in v. 4. As I conclude there, even with the likelihood of καὶ following ὀλλὰ in v. 4b as being the original reading, an absolute contrast can still be maintained in v. 4, with the sense, ‘not …, but rather …’. 
previously, does this help to confirm that the passage of vv. 6-11 fits its context exceedingly well, but it tends to suggest that the ethical content of vv. 3-4, explaining the ‘mindset’ Paul desires among the Philippians (v. 2), also continues into vv. 6-8 at least, if not all of vv. 6-11, and that Paul’s portrayal of the ‘mindset’ of Jesus Christ (v. 5) in vv. 6-8 should be interpreted in an ethical, exemplary way.

Re-tabulating vv. 1-4 and 5-8 and highlighting the linguistic parallels allows us to draw some valuable insights into the ethical content of these two paragraphs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:1-2</th>
<th>2:5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td><strong>B’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If therefore [there is] any encouragement in Christ [ἐν Χριστῷ], if any consolation of love, if any participation in the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,</td>
<td>This have as a mindset [τοῦτο φρονεῖτε] among you [ἐν ὑμῖν]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><strong>A’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[you] make my joy complete by [you] having the same mindset [ινα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε], having the same love [τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες], united in soul having the one mindset [σύμψυχοι τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες]</td>
<td>which [is] also in Christ Jesus [ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῶ Ἰησοῦ],</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:3</th>
<th>2:4</th>
<th>2:6-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[doing] nothing [μηδὲν] from selfish ambition [κατ’ ἐριθείαν] nor [μηδὲ] from empty glory [κατὰ κενοδοξίαν].</td>
<td>not [μὴ] to your own interests [τὰ ἐαυτῶν] each of you looking,</td>
<td>who, being in the form of God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but [ἀλλὰ] in humility [τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ] considering one another [ἀλλίθως ἤγοιμοι] as better than yourselves [ὑπερέχοντας ἐαυτῶν].</td>
<td>but rather [ἀλλὰ καὶ] to the interests of others [τὰ ἐτέρων] each of you [looking]</td>
<td>not [οὐχ] to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage [ἀρπαγμὸν] did he consider [ἡγῆσατο] equality with God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>but</strong></td>
<td><strong>[ἀλλὰ]</strong></td>
<td><strong>himself he emptied</strong> [ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν]. taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness; and being found in human form he humbled himself [ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν] becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1, Structural Parallels between Philippians 2:1-4 and 2:5-8
As a further, significant structural link between the two passages, Table 4.1 above shows the presence of an A-B-B'-A' chiastic relationship between the two ἐν Χριστω references and the verb φρονεῖν in vv. 1-2 and v. 5 (which heads and introduces vv. 6-8, in particular). All four of the εἰ τίς (‘if any’) statements in v. 1, supported by the 2nd person plural verbs in vv. 2-4, refer both to experience (past and present) of Christ and the Spirit, and to the Philippians’ common experience (with Paul), namely their shared experience of various facets of God’s grace, which is the basis for their unity and a motivation for the actions Paul desires of them.1

As we saw above, the net effect of these four statements in context is ‘if [these things] are true among you …’; and Paul indeed assumes they are true, as he moves to his exhortation to them all ‘to have the same mindset’ in order to complete his joy. What is significant is that the four clauses are appropriately headed by the first reference to παράκλησις (‘encouragement’) ‘in Christ’.2 Indeed the three following ‘if’ clauses seem to be mainly appositional supplements to this first and most important one.3 Given the chiastic relationship (evident in Table 4.1 above) between the ἐν Χριστω of elements A (v. 1) and A’ (v. 5b), with the latter referring forwards to vv. 6-8 of the Christ-story, παράκλησις ἐν Χριστω may appropriately summarize an overall double function of Christ-story within the epistle: it is to be both an exemplar of what Paul is exhorting the Philippians to be and do; and also a basis for their encouragement in the midst of the external pressures they are facing as a community.4

Fee is right that, as one would expect, Paul grounds his appeals in Christ.5 Fowl’s summary is also worth citing:

Paul’s admonitions here [in 2:1-4] flow from his call to the Philippians in 1:27 to order their common life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. He is, therefore, speaking about how a community whose common life is founded and sustained by the crucified and risen Christ should live together. Paul’s discourse is both communal and chistocentric.6

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1 Cf. FLEMMING, Philippians, 96.
2 On this phrase, see p. 164 n. 4 above.
4 See further below; and cf. my comments in p. 164 n. 4 above.
5 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 179-180.
6 FOWL, Philippians, 79.
The chiastic correlation between the Philippians being ἐν Χριστῷ and the exhortation to have the same mindset (ἐν Χριστῷ) is particularly striking. Both v. 1 and v. 2 function rhetorically as equivalent to the ἐν ὑμῖν (‘among you’) of v. 5: in v. 1 the sense of the incomplete conditional statements is that Paul is implying the statements are true ‘among you’; but explicitly in v. 2 the two second person plural verbs (plus the subsequent participial modifiers in v. 2 and vv. 3-4), show that he desires this ‘way of thinking’ to be among them corporately.1 With Fee, I believe that what Paul means by having the ‘same’ (τὸ αὐτὸ) mindset (v. 2b) and having the ‘one’ (τὸ ἕν) mindset (v. 2d) points forward and is explained in the Christ-story of vv. 6-11 (which is introduced in v. 5),2 and similarly, though in reverse, that the imperative of v. 5a, ‘this think’ (or ‘this have as a mindset’, τοῦτο φρόνηστε), points backward to the two φρόνησις references in v. 2b,d in order to sum up the exhortations of vv. 2-4: ‘This mindset (i.e. that which I have just described) have among yourselves.’3 The chiastic linkage between the ‘in Christ’ references and the φρόνησις verbs in vv. 1-2 and v. 5 seems strongly to confirm these conclusions. The import of this is significant: as Fee writes, ‘this opening imperative [in v. 5], which functions as a transition from vv. 1-4 to 6-11, demonstrates that the narrative that follows is intentionally paradigmatic.’4 Put in other words, the exhortations of vv. 2-4 anticipate the example provided by Christ in vv. 6-8, and vv. 6-8 (rather than vv. 6-11 as a whole) illustrate how the exhortations of vv. 2-4 may become in action and community a lived-out ‘mindset’.

There is a further implicit link which is worth mentioning here, as it also adds a significant ethical and theological element to the bearing of the immediate context upon our interpretation of the Christ-story. In v. 2c we meet the second of what we saw as three largely synonymous phrases in v. 2: ‘having the same love’ (τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἐχουσίς). Initially

1 Note the formal A-B-B’-A’ chiasm identified by Reumann, Philippians, 324, between the respective elements: A – 2:1, four indicatives (in Christ, v. 1a); B – 2:2-4, imperatives, ‘you’ (pl.); B’ – 2:5a, imperative ‘among you’ (pl); A’ – 2:5-11, indicative, (in Christ Jesus, v. 5b). However, he also admits (rightly, I believe) that ‘among you’ is to be assumed in 2:1 (p. 321); thus, ‘among you’ can be paralleled in both v. 1 (implicitly) and vv. 2-4 (explicitly). Hence, I am not convinced that his suggested chiasm, in highlighting the ‘you’ plural references, actually works very well; the second person plural references are thus to be found in both his A and B elements (implicitly so in element A). Better, I suggest, is to focus not on an indicative/imperative contrast generally (though it is certainly present), but more specifically upon the key, repeated imperative φρόνησις (v. 5a; with v. 2b carrying the force of an imperative) and its special relationship to the two (indicative) ‘in Christ’ references.

2 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 175-176, 185.

3 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 199-200. On the emphatic τοῦτο (‘this’), which beings v. 5, and which also points backward, I believe, see above, p. 103.

4 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 199.
for Paul’s hearers this would first link back to v. 1b, the second of Paul’s four conditional clauses, ‘if any consolation of love’ (ἐὰν τι παραμένατον ἀγάπη) and their experience together of God’s or Christ’s love.¹ As Paul’s prayer, ‘that your love (ἀγάπη) may still abound more and more’ in Phil 1:9 shows, the Philippians are not lacking in love.² But if the two surrounding phrases in v. 2 (‘having the same mindset ... united in soul having the one mindset’) both point forward, via v. 5, to the example of Christ in vv. 6-8, it seems very likely that the implicit exhortation to ‘having the same love’ would also point forward to the same example.³ To be certain ‘love’ is neither mentioned in v. 5 nor in vv. 6-8 or 6-11. However, vv. 3-4 go on to remind the Philippians of behaviour that represents not only the ‘way of thinking’ which they need to exhibit in (or eliminate from) their communal life, but also the practical implications, positive and negative, of the type of love Paul is speaking of.

The negative implications – the ‘not’ part of our parallel structure in Table 4.1 above – are that they should do nothing from selfish ambition or empty glory (v. 3ab), nor looking to their own interests (v. 4a). On the positive side – the ‘but …’ (ἀλλὰ …) clauses – they need, in humility, to consider one another as better than themselves (v. 3c), and to be looking instead (of their own interests) to the interests of others (v. 4b). In each verse a selfish attitude and related action is opposed by an attitude and corresponding action directed toward and for others. What the Philippians should not do is radically contrasted with what they should do.

Each of these things to avoid or practice represents practical aspects of Christian love and will contribute to the unity Paul desires among them as they face external threats and guard against internal division, and ultimately will help them to live as citizens lives that are worthy of the gospel.

The first of the things to avoid in v. 3a, ἐπιθεία, is noteworthy in this context.⁴ While it could be translated as ‘personal advantage’, its sense within an appeal to unity is ‘party spirit’ or

¹ Almost all commentators draw this link backwards to v. 1b. Contrast this with n. 3 immediately below.
² FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 185.
³ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 109; FLEMMING, Philippians, 99; HANSEN, Philippians, 112 are among the somewhat surprising few who explicitly make this forward link from Phil 2:2c to 2:6-8.
⁴ Cf. also its mention in the vice lists of 2 Cor 12:20 and Gal 5:20.
‘divisiveness’ and is to be compared to a term like ἐρίς (‘rivalry’; 1 Cor 1:11; 3:3). Thus O’Brien’s suggestion of ‘selfish ambition which causes factions’ seems on the mark. The contrast between actions (in this case, preaching) motivated by love and those motivated by ‘selfish ambition’ had already been drawn by Paul in Phil 1:16-17 (using ἐρίθεία in v. 17a) and sheds light on his commands here to have ‘the same love’ and to do nothing out of ‘selfish ambition’ which would lead to disunity.

The second thing to be avoided in v. 3a, κενοδοξία (‘empty glory’), is probably more significant, but speaks to the same paraenetic concern for unity among the Philippians. A New Testament hapax, its cognate in Gal 5:26, κενοδοξίας, is well depicted: ‘Let us not seek an empty glory (μη γινώμεθα κενοδοξιάς) by provoking one another.’ In Hellenistic Greek, however, κενοδοξία was commonly used to describe those who think too highly of themselves, projecting an appearance while lacking the substance. For Christians, it came to be linked with arrogance and pride. Acting or thinking ‘from motives of empty glory’ (κατὰ κενοδοξίαν) thus sharply contrasts with the five positive references to glory (δόξα) in Philippians, namely the ‘glory of God’ (1:11; 2:11; 4:19, 20), and the ‘glory’ of Christ’s resurrection body, to which believers will ultimately be conformed (3:21), and would therefore be inconsistent behaviour from those whose citizenship is in heaven (3:20). While divine or resurrection glory does not yet pertain to believers, their present actions if motivated by κενοδοξία or ‘empty glory’ will necessarily be hurtful to their community relationships. Collange hits the target with his helpful summation of what the Philippians must here avoid: ‘a vain glory which destroys the whole communal spirit by the rivalry and jealousy it introduces’.

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1 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 122.
2 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 180; cf. HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 68: ‘party spirit generated by selfish ambition’.
3 HANSEN, Philippians, 112.
4 COLLANGE, Philippians, 79; followed by O’BRIEN, Philippians, 180.
5 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 109-110.
6 Κατὰ here probably has the sense of ‘from motives of’ or ‘on the principles of’ rather than merely ‘from’ or ‘out of’. Thus, LOH & NIDA, Handbook on Philippians, 51; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 180.
7 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 180.
8 Cf. the one negative δόξα reference in Philippians, which is found in the polemical text of 3:18-19 that disparages those who ‘glory’ in shameful and earthly things (3:18).
9 COLLANGE, Philippians, 79.
The second part of v. 3, with its ἀλλά ... clause, completes the first of the three strongly contrasting ‘not [y], but rather [z]’ structures in the text. What must be avoided is now followed by what must become part of the Philippians’ mindset and behaviour. It is well to remember that vv. 3-4 function as participial modifiers of ‘having the one mindset’ (τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες; v. 2d), and thus of the main clause of v. 2b, ‘that you may have the same mindset’ (ὃν τὸ σύντο φρονῆτε). Instead of actions motivated by selfish ambition or empty glory which will harm their community life, Paul exhorts them positively to a mindset of humility, considering each other as better than themselves. Collange has perceptively noted the assonance in vv. 2-3: φρονῆτε ... φρονοῦντες ... ταπεινοφροσύνη. He concludes that ‘it is a matter of “phasis” humbly (“tapeinos”),’ that is, of having the one specified mindset, humbly.

In the dative case, τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνη probably refers to the manner in which they must consider others, ‘in humility ...’, although it could refer to humility as a motivating cause. While ταπεινοφροσύνη positively signifies the uniquely Judaic-Christian grace of ‘lowliness’ or ‘humility’, in the Graeco-Roman world, however, the term usually occurs with the derogatory sense of servility, weakness, or a shameful lowliness, and was something to be despised. Humility, for the Greeks, was far from being a virtue; it was associated with a slave’s condition. Oakes is probably correct, therefore, to suggest that in Paul’s call for humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη) in Phil 2:3 and also in the subsequent story of Christ’s humbling himself in vv. 6-8 the Philippians would clearly have heard connotations of lowered social status. Thus, it would not have been lost on either Paul or the Philippians that Paul’s

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1 Cf. also vv. 4, 6-8; see pp. 101-102 and also Table 4.1 above. Here I am following Gorman’s [y]-[z] terminology (see Cruciformity, 255-258).
2 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 186, 189.
3 COLLANGE, Philippians, 79; cf. Hooker, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 499. Martin’s addition to Collange’s observation picks up on the word play in the Greek (R. P. Martin, Philippians [NCB], 89): Paul is exhorting the Philippians, ‘let your attitude to and regard for others (phasis) be humble (tapeinos), and that means a total lifestyle of tapeinophrosunē.’
4 With the definite article pointing generically to ‘the [well known quality] of humility’. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 187 n. 72; O’Brien, Philippians, 181.
5 So BDAG, 989.
6 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 180; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 187-188 & n. 75; HANSEN, Philippians, 115. However, it should be noted that Greek authors often used the word to describe a kind of servility that included obsequious grovelling, and that this is far removed from a New Testament understanding of humility; so Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 188 & n. 75.
7 W. GRUNDMANN, ‘ταπεινός ... κτλ.,’ TDNT VIII, 1-5; Fowl, Philippians, 84; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 129.
8 OAKES, Philippians, 185.
advocacy of humility was very much a countercultural message.\(^1\) However, Oakes is critical of those who suggest that social status exegetically explains all aspects of vv. 3-4 in our text, noting that the use of \(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\omega\) and related terms in early Christian paraenesis necessitates more caution.\(^2\)

For Paul, the Old Testament and contemporary Judaism had a more positive place for humility. There humility was viewed as a quality in relationship with God.\(^3\) Moses is singled out for his humility (Num 12:3), and lowliness and being humble before God are positively encouraged.\(^4\) More significant is the way the Old Testament highlights God’s actions in history to bring down the arrogant and proud and to exalt the humble and lowly.\(^5\) At Qumran, humility is also seen as a positive virtue essential for communal unity alongside truth, compassionate love and upright intent.\(^6\) Likewise, the New Testament also predominantly sees humility as a virtue.\(^7\) Thus, in contrast to the Graeco-Roman perspective, the biblical view of humility is not seen to be feigned or grovelling servility, but rather a mark of moral strength and integrity. It includes believers’ recognition and acceptance of themselves as created beings and correspondingly having a dependence upon and trust in God, wherein their case rests in God rather than relying upon their own strength and machinations. In relation to others, such a view of humility is non-hierarchical, and by seeing others as

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2. Oakes, *Philippians*, 183-186, critiquing, with respect to Phil 2:1-4, the studies of Klaus Wengst (*Humility: Solidarity of the Humiliated – The Transformation of an Attitude and its Social Relevance in Graeco-Roman, OT-Jewish and Early Christian Tradition* [tr. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1988]) and Otto Merk (*Handeln aus Glauben: Die Motivierung der Paulinischen Ethik* [Marburger Th. St. 5; Marburg: Elwert, 1968]), while mostly affirming their conclusions concerning the Graeco-Roman usage of \(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\omega\) and its cognates.
3. Grundmann, ‘\(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\omega\)’, 11-12; Collange, *Philippians*, 79.
4. For example, Pss 18:27; 25:9; 138:6; 149:4; cf. 2 Chron 7:14; Prov 3:34; 15:33; Isa 57:15; 66:2; Zeph 3:12. So Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 110. It should be noted that the noun \(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\phi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\eta\) is not found in the Old Testament, though \(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\) (‘lowly’, ‘humble’) and its cognates are found about 270 times (O’Brien, *Philippians*, 180).
7. In Acts \(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\phi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\eta\) signifies the ‘lowliness’ with which one serves Christ (Acts 20:19); in other places it signifies an attitude of ‘lowliness’ appropriate to relationships with other Christians (Phil 2:3; 1 Pet 5:5; cf. Eph 4:2-3; Col 3:12-15 where humility is also seen as helping to promote Christian unity). An exception is Col 2:18 where \(\tau\alpha\pi\varepsilon\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\phi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\eta\) refers to a false humility. So O’Brien, *Philippians*, 181.
being equals under the same God, it permits an other-centred orientation.\(^1\) It represents freely chosen service rather than enforced servility.

This, of course, becomes very important as Paul moves from exhortation (v. 3) to the apparent example of humility in the Christ-story (vv. 6-8) in Philippians 2.\(^2\) The shaping influence of the example of Jesus is well illustrated elsewhere in Paul’s writings, in 2 Cor 10:1, where he contrasts the Corinthians’ apparently negative (secular) view of his own humility (ταπεινός) with the ‘meekness and gentleness of Christ.’ It is thus the humility of Christ which sustains and enables Christian humility towards both God and other people.\(^3\)

Thus, Paul is an heir to these ideas, in particular paralleling the Qumran concept of humility and behaviour generated by the attitude of humility as indispensable for unity within the community. But his new and most significant contribution to the concept is in his linking of humility with Jesus Christ, the one who existed in the form of God and yet ‘humbled himself …’ (ἐνταπεινώσεν ἑαυτόν …; Phil 2:8).\(^4\) Similarly, in his penning of the Christ-story in vv. 6-11, the twin themes of humiliation and exaltation seen in the Old Testament material come to their clearest expression: after Christ humbled himself and ultimately died a slave’s death on the cross (2:8), God exalted him, and granted him the name above every name (2:9).\(^5\)

In the context of Philippians 2, Paul’s advocacy of humility in v. 3b is indeed defined more precisely by the expression which immediately follows: ἀλλήλους ἴγουμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν (‘considering one another as better than yourselves’).\(^6\) O’Brien’s summary is apposite: ‘If this Christian grace of “humility” denotes “other person-centredness” by those who have humbled themselves under God’s mighty hand, then it will come to expression in a true estimate of fellow believers, that is, by regarding them as better than oneself.’\(^7\)

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2. A Christian understanding of humility is probably also indebted to the attitude and example of Jesus, who in Matthew’s gospel describes himself as ‘gentle and humble (ταπεινός) in heart’ (Matt 11:29). So Flemming, *Philippians*, 101.
The participle ἰγκόωμενοι means to ‘consider’ or ‘regard’ and ‘implies a conscious sure judgment resting on carefully weighed facts … Here it points to a proper evaluation of others and of one’s self in light of the holiness of God, the Christian gospel and the example of Christ.’\(^1\) It recurs in v. 6 regarding Christ, who did not ‘consider’ (ἵγκϊςατο) equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage; in 2:25, where Paul ‘deemed’ (ἵγκρούμην) it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippians; and in 3:7-8 (x 3), referring to how Paul ‘considers’ (ἵγκῃσαι … ἰγκόωμαι … ἰγκόωμαι) his former advantages now that he has come to know Christ. At the foot of the cross of the one who effectively also ‘considered’ others before himself (Phil 2:6), took the form of a slave (2:7) and humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death (2:8), not only are believers made equals, they now all become ‘slaves of the same Master’ (2:10).\(^2\) Humility for the Philippians will thus mean considering others as better than themselves (v. 3b) and also, with v. 4 amplifying and clarifying this,\(^3\) looking not to their own interests, but rather each of them looking to the interests of others.\(^4\) Again, a parallel ‘not [x], but rather [y]’ structure dominates v. 4, as it did v. 3, with an absolute contrast maintained in each verse\(^5\) and, together, vv. 3-4 modify the main clause of v. 2, ‘that you have the same mindset’. With the participle σκοποῦντες (‘looking’; cf. 3:17) meaning here ‘to look out for’ in the sense of watching out for the needs of others, the emphasis in v. 4 is on the ‘each’ and ‘others’: ‘each of you (ἐκαστος) looking not to your own interests (τὰ ἐαυτῶν), but rather each of you (ἐκαστοι)\(^6\) [looking] to the interests of others (τὰ ἐτέρων).’\(^1\)

\(^1\) HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 70.

\(^2\) Cf. THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 75. On the concept in Phil 2:10 that believers are also there to be seen as ‘slaves’, see further below, pp. 458-465.

\(^3\) Verse 4 represents a participial clause, which modifies the preceding participle ἰγκόωμενοι (‘considering’) of v. 3.

\(^4\) Unfortunately, several English translations (e.g. RSV, NIV\(^{1996}\); ESV; NKJV; cf. NASB, ‘merely’) adopt the rendering (or similar): ‘let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also [look] to the interests of others’. This translation adopts a common rendering of καὶ in v. 4b as ‘also’, but supplies an ‘only’ (μόνον) in v. 4a, which is absent from the Greek text. The translation appears motivated by a desire to soften the contrast between looking out for one’s own needs, and doing so concerning others’ needs, making it appropriate to consider one’s own needs as well as that of others. But see 101 n. 3 above, where I discuss the original text of v. 4, (i) arguing that the καὶ is likely to be original, and (ii) suggesting that the meaning of ἀλλὰ [καὶ] should preferably here be taken as an absolute contrast, ‘but rather …’ (and not ‘but also’), thus matching the absolute contrast of v. 3. However, while translating the text as omitting the καὶ, the NRSV and NIV\(^{2011}\) also allow for an absolute, if slightly less emphatic contrast.

\(^5\) See further pp. 101-102 above and the previous note.

\(^6\) Normally in the New Testament, ‘each of you’ (ἐκαστοι) in the plural in v. 4b; cf. the singular in v. 4a) would be singular in a distributive appositional sense. But the plural is not infrequently found in classical
Unity among the Philippians and living lives that are worthy of the gospel, will require them to have a mindset of others-centredness. While Paul’s emphasis is on the community as a whole, his concern remains for each individual to play their part in caring for their fellow members. Fee is doubtless correct to note that this emphasis is probably to remind some within the community who seem to be out of step with some others (cf. 4:2-3), but Paul also later laments the lack of such minded people with him in Rome, where all but Timothy appear to be ‘seeking after their own interests’ (τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν) rather than ‘those of Christ Jesus’ (2:21).

With the clear and practical exhortations of Phil 2:1-4 in mind, and following the main exhortations of 1:27-30, what the Philippians would most need now is a positive example of the mindset that Paul is urging them to have within their community. Indeed in a deliberative discourse such as this, there would be an expectation on the part of Paul’s audience for him to provide some exemplification at this point. It is not surprising, then, that we find no less than four positive examples of the desired mindset within the remainder of chapter 2 and in chapter 3 of the letter, with Paul’s chief example, Christ Jesus, supplied immediately and pre-eminently in vv. 6-8. We have already discussed at some length the significance of the examples of Christ, Timothy, Epaphroditus and Paul within this deliberative discourse. What needs to be noted here is that some exemplification would indeed be expected by the Philippians following 2:1-4.

When we combine that expectation with the incredibly striking linguistic parallels that exist between vv. 1-4 and vv. 5-8, and the remarkable structural parallels we have observed between vv. 1-2 and v. 5 on the one hand, and vv. 3-4 and vv. 6-8 on the other, this very strongly suggests a close inter-relationship between the ethical content of vv. 1-4 (especially vv. 3-4) and the narrative content of vv. 6-8 (including the introductory v. 5), wherein the ethical content of vv. 1-4 is reflected, illustrated and implied in vv. 5-11. It seems most likely

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Greek in this sense, and it seems best to take it here as indicating emphasis: ‘all of you, each one’. Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 185; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 190 n. 86.  
1 [refer to the prev. page] FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 190 & n. 83.  
2 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 190.  
3 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 183.  
4 See above, pp. 155-163.  
5 Again, see Table 3.1a above.  
6 See Table 4.1 above.
then and even unavoidable that we interpret at least the first half of the Christ-story as an example of what Paul is asking of the Philippians, and that vv. 6-8 therefore represent positive exemplification of his earlier ethical concerns. To be sure, I believe the Christ-story is more than simply an ethical example for the Philippians – much more – but it is at least that. The alternative, that Paul would move away from strong exhortation to a story that bears no relation to the ethical content of the preceding verses, appears most implausible.

4.3.4 The Crux Interpretum of Philippians 2:5

What renders this conclusion drawn from the preceding context of the passage concerning the interpretation and function of vv. 6-11 (especially vv. 6-8) as almost certain is v. 5, Paul’s introduction to the Christ-story. We have already discussed v. 5 in part to show how tied vv. 6-11 are to their epistolary context. We saw that v. 5 functions as a transitional verse, inextricably linking vv. 1-4 to vv. 6-11, forming a conclusion to the former passage and an introduction to the latter.1 In Greek the verse is relatively short: τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, yet like much of vv. 6-11 that follow, it has occasioned some not inconsiderable scholarly debate. In literal English, the verse reads: ‘This think in you which also in Christ Jesus’. Here I am employing the simpler ‘think’ for the imperative φρονεῖτε, rather than my preferred and more nuanced, ‘have-a-mindset’, in order to emphasize that a verb is being used in v. 5a, and not a noun, such as ‘mindset’ or, variously, as in other common translations of v. 5, ‘attitude’ or ‘mind’.3 This verse, and especially its subordinate clause, ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, is a crux interpretum for vv. 6-11. Our task will be to see what sense of v. 5 seems most likely and does the most justice to the text and its context. For ease of later reference, it will help to display the verse in its two parts (retaining here our very literal translation):

| v. 5a | τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν This think in you |
| v. 5b | ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ which also in Christ Jesus |

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1 See above, p. 103.
2 The Majority Text, followed by the KJV (‘let this mind be in you’), and preferred by HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 80-81 (following LIGHTFOOT, Philippians, 108), replaces the second person plural active imperative φρονεῖτε with a third person singular passive φρονεῖτο. But this is rejected by almost all other authorities as a later attempt to tidy Paul’s Greek. Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 203; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 197 n. 18; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xiv, 70; SILVA, Philippians, 108 n. 18, 112.
3 See p. 113 n. 1 above.
The key issues for interpretation are: (i) Does the emphatic τοῦτο, ‘this’, which begins v. 5a, point forward or backward? (ii) How should we translate φρονεῖτε in τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν? (iii) What is the sense of ἐν ὑμῖν at the end of the main clause (v. 5a)? (iv) How should we understand the relative pronoun and adverbial modifier, ὃ καὶ, ‘which also’, which begins the subordinate clause (v. 5b)? (v) In relation to the ἐν ὑμῖν, what is the meaning of the seemingly parallel ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ‘in Christ Jesus’ at the end of v. 5b, and which sets up the relative pronoun, ὃς, beginning the Christ-story? (vi) Does a verb need to be supplied to complete the elliptical relative clause, ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, literally, ‘which also in Christ Jesus’ in v. 5b, and if so what verb? (vii) And, finally, what is the tense of this missing verb, and what significance does it have for the interpretation of the Christ-story? Our interest right now is on how v. 5 contributes to an understanding of the function of vv. 6-11.

Previously we saw that we would need to balance the complementary perspectives of (i) examining the exegetical details and suggesting what overall interpretation they best support, while (ii) also re-examining the exegetical details in the light of the major overall interpretations which make good sense of the passage. We are presently examining the exegetical details of the context of our passage to determine which hermeneutical direction they seem to be pointing toward. However, as we tackle v. 5 and the Christ-story itself (vv. 6-11), we start also to grapple with some of these ‘overall construction’ interpretative issues, and they in turn begin to bear upon our understanding of v. 5.

To move forward, I will therefore suggest here what appear to be the most likely exegetical conclusions concerning v. 5, and as we move forward will check that they are still reasonable in light of the major opposing or alternative viewpoints. Following that I will tackle the seventh interpretative issue for v. 5 (the tense of the missing verb in v. 5b) by discussing a fresh way to understand the Greek text (with an accompanying translation), which has been advanced by Bockmuehl.1

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1 See below, Section 4.4, p. 235 and following.
4.3.4.1 ‘This, Have-As-Your-Mindset’ (v. 5a)

If we might begin with the first issue, we have already argued that τοῦτο, emphatically appearing first in the sentence of v. 5, refers to what Paul has already described in vv. 2-4; that is, it points backwards, rather than forwards. This is the position of most commentators.\(^1\) As we have seen, typical Pauline usage and that found in Philippians (especially, the explicit usage of τοῦτο φρονεῖν in Phil 1:7 and 3:15a) support a backward reference as most likely.\(^2\) Further, it also appears supported by secondary emendations to the Greek text in the manuscript tradition, which apparently sought to make the link between v. 5 and vv. 1-4 clearer still by inserting a γὰρ (‘for’) after τοῦτο.\(^3\) That τοῦτο is immediately followed by the imperative φρονεῖτε, of which it is the object, and picking up on the two previous instances of φρονεῖν in v. 2, makes a backward reference virtually certain and suggests deliberate intentionality on Paul’s part as he moves from vv. 1-4 to the Christ-story.

The chiastic correlation between the ‘in Christ’ references and the φρον-verbs in vv. 1-2 and v. 5, which we saw in Table 4.1 above, seems to confirm this conclusion. Where τοῦτο does clearly point forward in Paul, it is followed by a noun clause which explains the content of the ‘this’. While that is theoretically possible here,\(^4\) if one takes vv. 6-11 as a complete unit, the context does not introduce a new train of thought here, but rather suggests continuity with the line of thought of the preceding passage.\(^5\) Thus, the literal translation of the demonstrative pronoun and imperative verb, ‘this, think!’ means in paraphrase, ‘this way of thinking – this mindset – that I have just been describing to you, think this way!’\(^6\)

This certainly seems the best supported way of reading the text of v. 5a. However, an alternative reading should be mentioned at this point. It is at least consistent with the major alternative, ‘big picture’ interpretation of vv. 5-11, even if exegesis of the text at this point appears to point away from it. Lynn Losie, while recognizing the backward pointing

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\(^1\) See above, p. 103 & nn. 1, 2.

\(^2\) Cf. also the other instances of τοῦτο (though not with φρονεῖν) in Phil 1:22 (a debated reference); 1:25; 3:7; 3:15b; 4:8; 4:9. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 199 n. 25; refer also to p. 103 & n. 2 above.

\(^3\) Though, in a few cases, οὐ is instead inserted after τοῦτο. However, the asyndetic text is better supported and more likely to be original; see p. 103 n. 1 above.

\(^4\) The possibility is noted by REUMANN, Philippians, 340, though he himself sees τοῦτο as pointing back to 1:27ff and especially 2:2-4. See further the following paragraph.

\(^5\) So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 199 n. 25.

\(^6\) Cf. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200.
examples of φρονεῖν in Phil 1:7 and 3:15, and seeing them as clearly transitive (taking an object), argues, on the basis of the supposed certainty that Phil 2:6-11 is a pre-Pauline hymn, that here in 2:5 τοῦτο must have as its technical antecedent the whole of the piece (vv. 6-11), which Paul has quoted (and modified) as a unit; thus he translates v. 5a as ‘set your mind on this confession’ (supplying τὸ ὠμολογήθην after the τοῦτο as understood).1 He is correct to note that φρονεῖν in v. 5 should be interpreted transitively, with τοῦτο as its object, but seems to miss the significance of its emphatic position in v. 5 in its context, which more likely makes it appear to be looking back. When the case for an inserted pre-Pauline hymn is shown to be unlikely, his case collapses. On the other hand, Martin barely dealt with the significance of the τοῦτο in the body of his Hymn of Christ,2 but in his 1997 preface suggested, although without any supporting evidence, that τοῦτο refers forward to the ‘obedience of faith’ (Rom 1:5; 16:26; cf. Rom 6:12, 16-17, 10:16; 15:18; 16:19) patterned in the life of Christ, the obedient one (v. 8), to whom obedience must now be rendered (v. 10), and which then leads on to Paul’s exhortation to obedience in v. 12.3

Käsemann also sees the revelation of the obedient one as central to vv. 6-11, comparing this passage to Rom 5:12-21.4 He rejects Lohmeyer’s argument that ‘grammatically the demonstrative pronoun never points ahead to a relative clause in Paul,’ implicitly arguing that sometimes it can.5 However, indeed it would seem odd that ὧ (‘which’; v. 5b) should be the antecedent of τοῦτο (v. 5a); the reading more likely to be understood by the Philippians listening to v. 5 being read to them, is that the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο is the antecedent of the relative pronoun, and hearing it placed emphatically before its verb φρονεῖτε, with two instances of the same verb already ringing in their ears from v. 2, they would thus readily

1 LOSIE, ‘Note,’ 53.
2 Though see R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 84-85, where he cited as evidence only a remark of KÄSEMANN’S that it is unlikely that v. 5 is a recapitulation of vv. 1-4.
3 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlix, lxxi. In the 1997 preface, he added the claim that LOSIE now supports his position (p. lxxi n. 66).
5 KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 84, citing only E. PERCY, Die Probleme der Kolossier- und Epheserbriefe (Gleerup: Lund, 1946) 120 n. 92, as evidence for this claim. However, PERCY’S footnote merely suggests that LOHMeyer had misunderstood BLASS & DEBRUNNER’S Greek Grammar on this point, and that there are indeed some instances in the New Testament (Luke 5:21; Heb 2:15) where τοῦτο (or its equivalents) might point forward to a relative clause, rather than backwards. However, in both cases cited the pronouns refer to a person or people, and the relative pronoun immediately follows the demonstrative pronoun, where the connection is obvious and unambiguous. It is not so clear and obvious in Phil 2:5, and Paul’s word order in v. 5, together with the use of the verb φρονεῖν (which takes τοῦτο as its object), recalling its use twice in v. 2, strongly suggests a backward pointing reference.
have regarded τῷ τὸ as pointing backwards. Conversely, it would seem unlikely that the
recipients of Paul’s letter would have instead heard the following chain of thought: the
demonstrative pronoun τῷ τὸ pointing forward to the relative pronoun ὁ, and that then
pointing forward to the Christ-story (let alone to a specific central theme within that story,
such as the ‘obedience of faith’). That chain of thought would not have been obvious without
the Philippians re-reading the letter again and perhaps more than once.¹

Fee’s judgment thus appears correct that Losie, Martin, Käsemann and others who regard the
demonstrative pronoun as pointing forward simply have not adequately come to terms with
its present context and emphatic position in v. 5.² Similarly, those adopting this position
effectively drive a wedge between vv. 1-4 and vv. 5-11, which appears both mistaken and
untenable,³ particularly if, as we have already concluded, the whole passage (vv. 1-11) is
indeed Pauline.

With regard to the verb φρονέων in v. 5a, we have already argued that it should carry the same
meaning as it does in v. 2, namely referring to a ‘pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting’⁴ or
to having-a-mindset, which is understood to include both thinking and behaving. As φρονέω
is a verb – and not a noun – which has τῷ τὸ as its object, an accurate translation would be
‘this, have-as-a-mindset’ or, using less nuanced English, ‘this, think’.⁵ Charles Moule has
suggested that we should supply the noun form of the verb φρονέων and understand the text as
follows: τῷ τὸ φρόνημα τῷ τῷ. Thus, τῷ τῷ would stand for τῷ τῷ φρόνημα (‘this frame of mind’, ‘this attitude’, or ‘this mindset’), and remain the direct object
of φρονέω, giving a rendering like ‘adopt this attitude’ or ‘adopt this mindset’.⁶ In this,

¹ Cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 33. Such a chain of thought would also seem to require that the
passage of vv. 6-11 was a pre-existing composition which the Philippians were already familiar with. Yet
we would then be basing speculation upon speculation, and we have already concluded in Chapter 3 above
that claims of pre-Pauline authorship of vv. 6-11 remain not only unproven, but are unlikely to be the case.
While Reumann, Philippians, 333, 362-365 argues for part of the above scenario (see again, pp. 121-122
above), he himself sees the τῶν as pointing backward (p. 340).

² Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 199 n. 25.


⁴ Fowl, Philippians, 6.

⁵ Cf. correctly, Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 199 n. 26; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 122; and see p. 113 n. 1
above.

⁶ C. F. D. Moule, ‘Further Reflexions on Philippians 2:5-11,’ Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and
Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday (W. W. Gasque & R. P. Martin, eds.;
Moule has been followed by most translators. Semantically, I have almost done the same, by rendering (‘this, think’) as ‘this, have-as-a-mindset’, though my translation retains the necessary sense of φρονεῖτε as a verb, and thus avoids the troubles caused by the common, but mistaken, notion which assumes that the relative pronoun ο in v. 5b refers back to a non-existent noun (‘mind’, ‘attitude’, or ‘mindset’) as its antecedent; rather, as mentioned above, τοῦτο (‘this’) is correctly the antecedent of the relative pronoun.

As we indicated previously, a close reading of the text in its context, drawing upon the striking linguistic affinities between vv. 2-4 and vv. 5-11, seems to interpret the use of τοῦτο φρονεῖν in v. 5 in light of the previous two φρονεῖν references in v. 2 (and vice versa). Thus, ‘having the same (τὸ αὐτὸ) mindset’ (v. 2b) and ‘having the one (τὸ ἕν) mindset’ (v. 2d) appear to look forward to ‘having this mindset’ (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε) in v. 5a, and which, via the relative clause of v. 5b (‘which also …’) [ὅ καὶ …], begins to point towards the Christ-story of vv. 6-11, while τοῦτο φρονεῖν in v. 5 looks backward to the ‘having a mindset’ that is explained practically in the exhortations of vv. 2-4. O’Brien’s summary of the significance of v. 5 is apposite: it ‘is an important transitional piece linking the [preceding] exhortations to [vv. 6-11]: the verse is “a typical example of the transitions St. Paul uses”, in which he “summarizes the preceding exposition by an imperative.”’

4.3.4.2 ‘In You’ and ‘In Christ’ in v. 5ab

The prepositional phase ἐν ὑμῖν ending the first clause of v. 5a literally means ‘in you (dative plural)’. Recognizing the parallel ἐν ὑμῖν ... ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (‘in you ... in Christ Jesus’) structure in v. 5, and the force of the καὶ (‘also’; v. 5b) as suggesting some kind of parallel,
a few scholars argue that each half of the verse must therefore be understood as exact parallels, in particular with the preposition ἐν (‘in’) being required to have the same force or meaning in both halves.¹ Thus if ‘Christ Jesus’ represents the individual person of Jesus Christ, they argue that ‘in you’ must refer to individuals, and thus should be understand as akin to ‘in your hearts’.² Others argue the reverse, that if ‘in you’ refers to the Philippian community, then ‘in Christ Jesus’ should also take a corporate meaning of some sort.³ However, as Fee notes, such arguments take the concept of ‘parallel’ much too rigidly.⁴

There is clearly at the surface level a grammatical parallel present with the repeated preposition, but that does not necessarily mean each element in v. 5a and v. 5b must be interpreted identically. The ‘you’ plural (ὑμῖν) should be interpreted by noting Paul’s earlier emphasis on ‘you all’ (Phil 1:7 [x 2], 8, 25), and the clear emphasis, which we saw in vv. 1-4 with the implied sense of the incomplete conditional statements of v. 1, that they are true among the Philippians corporately, supported by the explicit second person plural verbs of v. 2 (which then govern the modifying participles of vv. 3-4). Thus ἐν ὑμῖν more likely refers either to a sense of reciprocal social relationships among the Philippians, thus, ‘towards one another’,⁵ or to the corporate and communal sense of ‘among you’ or ‘among yourselves’.⁶ Although the practical meanings are similar, the latter seems preferable in light of the identical expression in Phil 1:6 and 2:13 employed in their respective contexts, and given that

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¹ For example, HAWTHORNE, *Philippians*, 80-81 (in his case, he believes ἐν should have an instrumental sense, ‘by’ in both halves); cf. SILVA, *Philippians*, 108.
⁴ FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 200 n. 28; cf. (in agreement) O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 255-256. Unfortunately, Hawthorne’s insistence on a rigid ‘parallelism’ leads him to adopt an inferior textual variant for ἐνοικίσατε in v. 5a, which MARTIN describes as ‘a heavy cost’ for his position (*Hymn of Christ*, xiv, 70). On this, see above, p. 181 n. 2.
generally speaking, in Pauline paraenesis, the phrase is used to express what must take place in the community.\(^1\)

The relative pronoun and adverbial modifier, \(\delta \kappa\alpha\iota\), which begin v. 5b, literally translate as ‘which, also’, and this is the ordinary sense of the idiom. The antecedent of the ‘which’ is clearly \(\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\) (‘this’) from v. 5a, and not, as we have mentioned above, a noun such as ‘mind’, ‘attitude’, or ‘mindset’, which does not appear in the Greek text, but is incorrectly suggested as doing so in many English translations. That, of course, has been influenced by translations such as Moule’s, supplying \(\tau\omicron\varphi\omicron\omicron\eta\omicron\mu\alpha\) after the \(\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\); and were Moule correct, then the \(\delta\) would readily be understood as referring to \(\tau\omicron\varphi\omicron\omicron\eta\omicron\mu\alpha\) ‘the mindset’. But while not wanting to split semantic hairs, again it is preferable to stay with the text of v. 5a by translating \(\varphi\omicron\omega\epsilon\iota\) \(\tau\iota\) as a verb. On our understanding so far, then the relative pronoun, with \(\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\) as its antecedent, would be referring to the ‘pattern of thinking, feeling and acting’ that Paul has urged the Philippians to live out in their communal life together in vv. 2-4. Upon that conclusion the interpretation of the remainder of v. 5b becomes more straightforward.

Firstly the relative pronoun \(\delta\) shows that both halves of the sentence of v. 5 are linked, and thereby connected, via the emphatic \(\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\), to the preceding exhortations of vv. 2-4. Secondly, the \(\kappa\alpha\iota\), ‘also’ in its ordinary sense as part of the idiom \(\delta \kappa\alpha\iota\), both suggests that a parallel of some kind exists between v. 5a and v. 5b and begins to point the text forward to the prepositional phrase mentioned at the end of v. 5 – \(\epsilon\omicron\\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\omega\ \iota\eta\sigma\omicron\omega\) (‘in Christ Jesus’) – and, via the introductory relative pronoun \(\delta\omicron\) (‘who’) of v. 6, to Christ Jesus’ story in vv. 6-11.\(^2\) This leads on to seeing the Christ-story (of vv. 6-11), introduced by v. 5b, and Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8 as in some way exemplary, and clearly as being related to the ethical content of vv. 2-4.

Yet, again, an alternative interpretation is possible, if one instead sees \(\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\) as somehow pointing forward to vv. 6-11, and if, as the proponents of that position also hold, \(\epsilon\omicron\\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\omega\ \iota\eta\sigma\omicron\omega\) is to be understood in a different, technical sense (which we shall come to shortly). However, under this interpretation, the adverbial modifier \(\kappa\alpha\iota\) is not given its full force, and

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1 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 200.
2 Cf. the similar argumentation by O’Brien, Philippians, 204, 258; and Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 200.
is seen as ‘colourless’ or ‘otiose’.¹ It is argued that if one goes on to supply the present indicative φρονεῖτε after the relative pronoun in v. 5b, then the καί is rendered virtually meaningless, and one wonders then why Paul included it.² Martin sought to counter this (in 1983) by asserting that the καί might have an ascensive (‘indeed’), or an explicative meaning,³ though later (in 1997) added that he preferred the RSV translation of v. 5b, ‘which is yours in Christ Jesus’, which again renders the καί as redundant.⁴ But Deichgräber notes that the usage of καί in 2:5 is typical of that in other places where paraenesis is strengthened by making reference to Christ.⁵ Of these other references, especially Rom 15:7 (‘accept one another, just as Christ also [καθὼς καί ὁ Χριστός] accepted us’), though also 15:2-3 (‘let each of us please our neighbour ... for Christ too⁶ [καί γὰρ ὁ Χριστός] did not please himself’) are noteworthy as they occur in a paraenetic context – Rom 15:1-13 – with distinct verbal, structural and conceptual parallels and comparable ethical concerns to Phil 1:27-2:11, and especially to 2:5. These numerous parallels have been documented in Appendix 1 below.⁷ As is evident there, in no less than four places in Romans 15 (vv. 3, 5, 7, 8), Paul seems to depict actions of Jesus Christ as providing a paradigm or exemplification for what he desires to see among the Roman believers.⁸ Quite significantly, nearly identical language is used in Paul’s prayer for the Romans in 15:5 as is found in Phil 2:5:⁹

¹ So notes FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200 & 201 n. 33, citing a view which is not his own.
² DEICHGRÄBER, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus, 192; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 258.
³ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xiii n. 3, xiv citing BDF, 228 §442 (12) (but which does not mention Phil 2:5); cf. SILVA’s translation (Philippians, 107): ‘which, indeed’.
⁴ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlviii.
⁵ DEICHGRÄBER, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus, 192, citing Rom 15:7 (cf. 15:3); and the Ignatian epistles, Eph 21:2; Phil 7:2; 11:1; cf. Mark 10:45. A. SCHULZ, Nachfolgen und Nachahmen: Studien über das Verhältnis der neutestamentlichen Jüngerschaft zur urchristlichen Vorbildethik (SANT 6; Munich: Kösel, 1962) 288, also compares the καί of Phil 2:5 with the γὰρ of 2 Cor 5:14; 8:9 where Christ is similarly presented as a moral example.
⁶ J. D. G. DUNN, Romans 9-16 (WBC 38b; Dallas, TX: Word, 1988) 838 translates the καί as ‘too’; however, others prefer to use ‘even’ in this context, thus ‘for even Christ did not please himself’; so MOO, Romans, 868 & n. 22; and also KJV, NIV, NASB.
⁷ For the multiple parallels adduced between Rom 15:1-13 and Phil 1:27-2:11, including to 2:5-11, see Appendix 1 below, pp. 490-495; the material has been placed in the Appendix so as not to disturb the flow of the argument here.
⁸ See pp. 490–495 in Appendix 1 below, and also p. 493 n. 3 on Rom 15:3, p. 493 n. 4 on Rom 15:5, n. 5 on Rom 15:7, and n. 1 on Rom 15:8 (both on p. 494).
⁹ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 36; C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266.
Rom 15:5  τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν
Phil 2:5  τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Literally, Rom 15:5 reads, ‘to think the same thing among one another according to Christ Jesus’ or we might render τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν as ‘to-have-the-same-mindset’ (cf. Phil 2:2). The prepositional phrase κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, appears to have a deliberately ambiguous, dual sense of referring to the Romans’ need for ‘same-mindedness’ as being ‘according to’ both the will and example of Christ, hence by them being obedient to Christ, and also in following the model provided by him. The desired mindset is then spelled out in vv. 7-8, where Paul appeals to Christ’s assuming the role of a servant (διάκονος) on behalf of both Jews and Gentiles.

The passage as a whole thus confirms that the usage of καὶ in vv. 3, 7 is intended as introducing a comparative clause, in which Christ is presented as an example for Christian behaviour. Concerning the relationship of Rom 15:5-8 to Phil 2:5-8, Fee can comment that now in the latter text, Paul, writing ‘a few years later and from Rome … makes a similar appeal, which is like the former in all of its particulars: the appeal itself, the setting, Christ as a paradigm, and the servant nature of the paradigm.’ The extensive parallels that we have noted between Rom 15:1-13 and Phil 1:27-2:11, both here and previously, very strongly suggest therefore that the function of the καὶ in Phil 2:5b should be interpreted as similar to its function in Rom 15:7 and 15:3, as functionally introducing Christ Jesus as an example or paradigm to the Philippian believers.

The next interpretative task concerning Phil 2:5 is to ask, in relation to the ἐν ὑμῖν (of v. 5a), what is the meaning of the seemingly parallel ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ‘in Christ Jesus’ at the end of v. 5b, which becomes the antecedent for the relative pronoun in v. 6, ὃς, that begins the Christ-story? As noted above, we should be careful not to insist on a rigid interpretative parallelism here, even though clearly the prepositional phrases are formally similar. It will

1 Thus, DUNN, Romans 9-16, 840, 843; MOO, Romans, 871-872; cf. C. G. KRUSE, Paul’s Letter to the Romans (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 530; for further detail, please refer to p. 491 and p. 493 n. 4 in Appendix 1.
2 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 36.
3 See above, pp. 186-187.
become obvious that our next interpretative task, supplying an appropriate verb in the elliptical v. 5b, also has significant bearing on our understanding of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

But let us make some general comments about the main options before tackling that issue.

A straightforward reading of the two phrases in Paul’s sentence suggests that the first, ἐν ὑμῖν (literally, ‘in you [plural]’), should be translated as ‘among yourselves’, while the second naturally translates as ‘in Christ Jesus,’ referring to the historical person, Jesus Christ. A majority of translators interpret it this way.¹

However, proponents of a non-ethical interpretation of vv. 5-11, and most notably Käsemann, argue that the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ should be understood in the sense of ‘the frequent technical Pauline formula, meaning “within the realm of Christ”’ or as meaning ‘in union with Christ’ or ‘in your communal life in Christ’.² Although Käsemann argues that the ‘in Christ’ formula has its roots in Hellenistic mysticism, he believes Paul had left behind the mystical sense of the phrase, and instead used the ‘in Christ’ formula to ‘describe Christian existence … as existence in the body of Christ, and therefore in the church.’³ With such a corporate understanding of the phrase, for him, Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 51, 83-88 (here, p. 51, following K. BARTH, and before him, J. C. K. VON HOFMANN and J. KÖGEL). G. A. DEISSMANN, Die neustamentliche Formel ‘in Christo Jesu’ (Marburg: Elwert’sche, 1892) 113-117, was, however, one of the first critical scholars to identify v. 5b as referring to a Pauline ‘in Christ’ formula (understood mystically, rather than ecclesiologically), though KäSEMANN does not refer to this particular work. Those following KÄSEMANN’s lead include: R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlviii, 71-72, 84-86, 92, 282, 289-290 & nn.; and his Philippians (NCB), 92-93; BORNKAMM, ‘Understanding the Christ-Hymn,’ 112; and cf. the varying, but supporting, translations or interpretations of REUMANN, Philippians, 340-341; COLLANGE, Philippians, 95; BEARE, Philippians, 75-76; CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 118-119; R. C. H. LENSKI, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961) 770-771; CRADDOCK, Philippians, 38-39; R. R. MELICK, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (NAC 32; Nashville: Broadman, 1991) 100; SILVA, Philippians, 109; HANSEN, Philippians, 120-122, 133, who sees the phrase as referring to ‘union with Christ’ (p. 121; but appears to contradict his conclusion by thrice affirming the translation, ‘have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had’ (pp. 118, 122)); F. NEUGEBAUER, ‘Das paulinische “in Christo,”’ NTS 4 no. 2 (1958) 131; and cf. ESV, RSV, and the marginal reading of the NRSV, which are probably intended to represent KÄSEMANN’S ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ interpretation, though could be taken ambiguously (see p. 195 n. 4 below).

¹ For example, with some variations, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200-201; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 205, 258, 262; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 123; FOWL, Philippians, 90, 105; FLEMMING, Philippians, 110-111; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137-138; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 81; LOH & NIDA, Handbook on Philippians, 54-55; THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 80, 90; OSIK, Philippians, 59-60; F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 64, 66-67; COUSAR, Galatians, Philippians, 155-157; THIELMAN, Philippians, 113-115; I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 48-49; and his ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 118; LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus, 11-13; C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflections on Phil 2:5-11,’ 265-266; STIMPHEL, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 253-254; MEEKS, ‘Man from Heaven,’ 332; OAKES, Philippians, 191; SCHULZ, Nachfolgen und Nachahmen, 273-274; and cf. NIV, NRSV, NASB, KJV, NCV, NLT, CEV.

² Thus, KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 51, 83-88 (here, p. 51, following K. BARTH, and before him, J. C. K. VON HOFMANN and J. KÖGEL). G. A. DEISSMANN, Die neustamentliche Formel ‘in Christo Jesu’ (Marburg: Elwert’sche, 1892) 113-117, was, however, one of the first critical scholars to identify v. 5b as referring to a Pauline ‘in Christ’ formula (understood mystically, rather than ecclesiologically), though KÄSEMANN does not refer to this particular work. Those following KÄSEMANN’S lead include: R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlviii, 71-72, 84-86, 92, 282, 289-290 & nn.; and his Philippians (NCB), 92-93; BORNKAMM, ‘Understanding the Christ-Hymn,’ 112; and cf. the varying, but supporting, translations or interpretations of REUMANN, Philippians, 340-341; COLLANGE, Philippians, 95; BEARE, Philippians, 75-76; CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 118-119; R. C. H. LENSKI, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961) 770-771; CRADDOCK, Philippians, 38-39; R. R. MELICK, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (NAC 32; Nashville: Broadman, 1991) 100; SILVA, Philippians, 109; HANSEN, Philippians, 120-122, 133, who sees the phrase as referring to ‘union with Christ’ (p. 121; but appears to contradict his conclusion by thrice affirming the translation, ‘have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had’ (pp. 118, 122)); F. NEUGEBAUER, ‘Das paulinische “in Christo,”’ NTS 4 no. 2 (1958) 131; and cf. ESV, RSV, and the marginal reading of the NRSV, which are probably intended to represent KÄSEMANN’S ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ interpretation, though could be taken ambiguously (see p. 195 n. 4 below).

³ KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 85.
the technical formula ‘in Christ,’ whatever else might be said about it, unquestionably points to the salvation-event; it has soteriological character, just as, according to Paul, one comes to be ‘in Christ’ only through the sacrament [of baptism]. Paul himself then read [vv. 6-11] as a portrayal of the salvation-event.\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 84.}

In Käsemann’s understanding, as we saw above, Paul in vv. 6-11 is proclaiming the Christian kerygma,\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83, 87-88.} the content of which is a soteriological ‘drama,’ a ‘drama of salvation,’\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 65, 76.} and which describes how Christ has effected an eschatological ‘turn of the aeons,’ an ‘end to the history of the old world’ and the inauguration of ‘the new world’. As the Lord of the new world, Christ then brings people into his realm where they now ‘belong to him’ and may be said to be in him, that is, ‘in Christ.’\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 87-88.} The focus of vv. 6-11 is on the salvific acts of Christ rather than on what he was, thus on a description of the acts of the salvation-event rather than on paraenetic exhortation.\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 65.}

As the Christian community proclaims the acts of vv. 6-11, it takes up responsively what Christ has already effected and ‘is thus drawn into the eschatological event.’\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 87.} So, for Käsemann, Paul’s reference in v. 5b to believers being ‘in Christ’ is a circumlocution for the eschatological and soteriological acts which now constitute them as the Christian community. In such a description, we can see clearly how Käsemann’s powerful interpretation has become known as the ‘soteriological’ or ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation of the Christ-story of vv. 6-11, with the former term alluding to the character of the passage, and the latter to its function or purpose. Thus, for him, Paul’s ἐν Χριστῷ in v. 5 inexorably directs hearers of the passage to a ‘soteriological’ understanding, and therefore makes an ethical or exemplary reading of vv. 6-11 ‘impossible’.\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 88.} Thus, he concludes bluntly that in vv. 6-11 ‘no ethical model is posited.’\footnote{KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83.}
However, it is not at all clear that Paul’s readers would have made the same interpretative decisions about Paul’s sentence in v. 5 as Käsemann and others have done. Another less proscribed understanding of the ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ phrase is what has been referred to as the ‘mystical’ interpretation of v. 5, which introduces the Christ-story, advocated by Adolf Deissmann and C. H. Dodd.¹ The NEB paraphrase picks it up well: ‘Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus.’ The so-called ‘mystical’ interpretation does not take ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ecclesiologically, as does Käsemann, but rather in a spiritual sense of the believer’s union with Christ. In the immediate context the ἐν Χριστῷ reference in Phil 2:1 suggests a similar understanding. However, the ‘mystical’ interpretation may be classified as a subset of the broader ‘ethical’ interpretation.² Thus, for Dodd, Phil 2:5-11 represents an example of ‘ethics developing directly out of “Christ-mysticism”’.³

It is important to remember that most of the Philippians would have heard Paul’s letter being read to them, rather than studying it as a written document. Several important observations and conclusions follow from this datum. Firstly, we may note that the semantic sense of the ἐν Χριστῷ reference does not finally dictate the meaning of v. 5 as a whole, especially as the Philippians would have heard it, nor the function of vv. 6-11 which follow it. This is true whether we are speaking of Käsemann’s understanding of the phrase or Deissmann’s.

More critical is our next interpretative task concerning the elliptical clause of v. 5b, and asking which, if any, verb needs to be supplied there to understand Paul’s text. Käsemann believes that the choice in supplying the missing predicate is determined by his understanding of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ as a technical Pauline formula, essentially referring to the Christian community, and it must therefore be a verb taken from the first clause (v. 5a), namely a variant of φρονεῖν.⁴ However, his conclusion does not necessarily follow, for several verbs remain possibilities, even if a technical ‘in Christ’ formula (of some type) is to

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² Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 254; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 70-71.
⁴ KÄSEMMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83-84, supplying himself, φρονεῖν δὲι (‘as it is necessary to think’).
be accepted as intended. Furthermore, even allowing Käsemann’s interpretation of the ‘in Christ Jesus’ reference to stand, as Hurtado explains, ‘a personal reference to Jesus cannot be excluded, for the next words take up events directly connected with Jesus, and the church is in Paul’s writings always the circle grounded upon the personal work of Christ.’2 Similarly, Hooker has rightly drawn attention to the fact that Paul does not actually introduce vv. 6-11 with his usual ἐν Χριστῷ, but rather with ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (‘in Christ Jesus’).3 While she herself argues that the same sense is intended, she is right to raise the issue about the significance of Paul’s addition of the personal name, ‘Jesus’. Contrarily, this does appear to suggest a reference to the individual person, Jesus Christ, rather than to a technical formula delineating the church.4

Nevertheless, accepting Käsemann’s notion that ‘Paul has a very profound understanding of the relationship between the saving events of the gospel and the conduct appropriate to those who are in Christ,’ Hooker discusses Käsemann’s dictum that Christ ‘is Urbild, not Vorbild; archetype, not model,’5 and asks what is the character of this new humanity ‘in Christ’?6 She suggests it is ‘nonsense’ to do other than accept that it must be the character of Jesus himself:

> 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 … The life which should be demonstrated in the lives of those who are ἐν Χριστῷ, which is possible only because of the salvation events, is precisely the kind of life seen in Jesus Christ. If the Christians in Philippi fail to live in accordance with this pattern, then they are denying the validity of the events which made them Christian.7

From the point of view of Paul’s first hearers Oakes notes that even if Käsemann’s technical understanding of the phrase is adopted, and Käsemann’s own paraphrase employed (‘conduct yourselves toward one another as is fitting in the realm of Christ Jesus who …’),8 it is still

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1 O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 204-205.
2 HURTADO, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 121.
4 So also O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 258.
5 KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 74 (ET); the original German read, Christ ‘ist Urbild, nicht Vorbild.’
8 KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 84.
not clear that the Philippians hearing that would regard vv. 6-11 purely kerygmatically or soteriologically (i.e. non-ethically). As Oakes explains,

A Philippian hears this and then hears a story of Christ’s self-emptying, his self-lowering, his obedience through to death and his subsequent exaltation. As soon as the story starts, the hearer is thinking, ‘What is this “conducting ourselves” that Paul is calling for?’ They are bound to hear Christ’s acts in verses 6-8 as exemplary. They are trying to think as someone in Christ’s realm. Christ is their king. Christ lowers himself. They must be willing to lower themselves. Christ is obedient right through to death. They will be obedient in this way if it is necessary.

Thus, an ethical interpretation of the Christ-story is not dependent upon a particular interpretation of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, and nor does Käsemann’s specific ‘technical’ interpretation rule it out. This is an important conclusion. Not inappropriately, then, some translations of v. 5b prefer to leave the phrase ambiguous and thus open to either meaning (i.e. ethical or soteriological), or as even including both meanings.

But there are further grounds for questioning the assertion that Paul is intending in v. 5 for his ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ to be understood as a circumlocution for the Christian community. The distinctive ‘in Christ’ expression (and its equivalents) in Paul is in fact less of a fixed expression and much more of a fluid, versatile concept, taking on a variety of meanings in different contexts. We noted above Deissmann’s ‘mystical’ interpretation of the phrase as

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1 OAKES, Philippians, 189.
2 OAKES, Philippians, 189; cf. FOWL, ‘Some Uses of Story,’ 301 (repeated in his Story of Christ, 91-92), who offers similar reasoning: if to be in Christ is to be in a realm determined by Christ, we must note that ‘this realm only receives definition from the stories that describe its founder and its founding. To be in the realm of Christ is, in part, to accept this particular story about Christ. To apply this particular story to the communal life of the Philippian Church is the fitting way to live within the realm of Christ.’ Thus, Paul is ‘reiterating the sentiments of 1:27,’ and uses the account of Christ ‘to support the sort of behaviour [he] has been urging in the previous verses’; so also STRECKER, ‘Redaktion und Tradition,’ 67.
3 So also I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Theology of Philippians,’ 143.
4 The ESV, RSV, and NRSV marginal note translations might perhaps be said to retain the ambiguity of the Greek text; so HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 507; cf. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlviii.
one alternative possibility. But grammatical discussions cannot show that the phrase refers to 
one single concept; for if they seem to do so they will not in fact be doing justice to the 
variety of usage of the phrase.1 Among those who recognize the versatility of the phrase, Udo 
Schnelle, for example, observes the ‘variety and complexity of the ἐν Χριστῷ statements’ and 
notes that such statements ‘with different levels of meaning’ can be found alongside one 
another in the Pauline corpus.2 It is used some 165 times in the Pauline epistles to express 
broadly, and in varying ways, the relationship of believers to Christ, and in Philippians it 
features prominently, occurring twenty-one times. I. H. Marshall, after examining each of the 
uses of ‘in Christ’ (or its equivalents) in Philippians, concludes that at least four distinct 
categories are needed to convey Paul’s varied usage of the phrase and its equivalents within 
the letter.3

Hence, to assume that the phrase would have carried a specific ‘technical’ sense in most of its 
appearances is quite unwarranted. Still less certain is that Paul’s Philippian hearers would 
have been aware of such a specific technical, ‘formulaic’ usage, identified it as such upon 
hearing v. 5 read to them, and then interpreted it as Käsemann does.4 Oakes rightly concludes 
that Käsemann ‘assumes an implausible level of conceptual sophistication among the 
hearers.’5

Two grammatical parallels in Philippians in fact point toward a more ordinary usage of the 
preposition ἐν in our v. 5b, where the following dative appears to be a ‘marker denoting the 

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1 W EDDERBURN, “In Christ” and “With Christ,” 83 (and see also pp. 84-88); C. R. CAMPBELL, Union With 
Christ, 198-199 (see also 67-199).
2 U. SCHNELLE, Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology (trans. M. E. Boring; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 
2005) 482.
3 I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Theology of Philippians,’ 138-144. His four categories (modifying earlier work on this 
by BEST, One Body in Christ, 1-33) are: (i) an ordinary usage, where the ‘in’ phrase is part of a normal 
expansion of a verbal idea, expressing the notion that the basis and foundation of Christian experience lies 
in Jesus (Phil 1:26; 2:19, 24; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10, 13); (ii) an instrumental or causal sense with verbs of divine 
action, expressing the idea that Jesus is the means by which divine blessings come to people (2:1; 3:14; 4:7, 
19); (iii) a more circumstantial sense with verbs of human action, expressing Christ-determined parameters 
which affect the behaviour of people (2:29; 4:2); and (iv) a metaphorical, adjectival usage indicating a close 
union between Christ and the believer, so that what is true of him becomes true of them (1:1, 14; 3:9; 4:21). 
He regards Phil 1:13 and 2:5 as more ‘uncertain’ uses, and equivocates between placing the latter in his 
first or fourth categories (p. 143); cf. also the recent conclusions of C. R. CAMPBELL, Union With Christ, 
198-199.
4 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200 n. 32, 201 n. 33; OAKES, Philippians, 190-191.
5 OAKES, Philippians, 190-191.
object in which something happens or in which something shows itself,' and the \textit{in} could be said to mean ‘in the case of’ or ‘to be in’: \textit{to be in me}; Phil 1:30) and \ldots these things consider; which also you learned and received and heard and saw \textit{in me}; 4:9). The first of these would have been fresh in the minds of Paul’s hearers, and appears to have a clearly paradigmatic sense, with the apostle being an example to them.

Oakes cites a further close parallel to v. 5 in the writings of Justin Martyr, wherein an \textit{in} meaning ‘among’ is followed by a paradigmatic \textit{in} which is attached to Christ.

\begin{quote}
\textit{You cannot prove that such a thing ever happened to anyone among the Jews. But we are able to prove that it happened in the case of our Christ.}
\end{quote}

The individual-focused story of Jesus Christ in vv. 6-11 following v. 5 seems to point toward interpreting the \textit{in Christ} \textit{with} in a similar way.

In particular, the personal relative pronoun, \textit{who}, introducing vv. 6-11, appears to support this non-formulaic reading of \textit{in Christ}. As Richard Lenski noted, instead of continuing with the neuter: \textit{this [mindset] \ldots \ who \ldots \ namely \ldots \ One who}, something great and weighty then following about this person \textit{who}. Here it is Christ

1 BDAG, 329 (\textit{in}, #8).
2 OAKES, \textit{Philippians}, 191-192 (cf. LENSKI, \textit{Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles}, 771), notes that if both instances of \textit{in} in Phil 2:5 are taken to mean ‘in the case of,’ then an exact parallel results, but it leads to the possible redundancy of the \textit{in you} after \textit{froneite}, since ‘you’ are bound to think ‘in your case.’ This is alleviated if the first occurrence is a marker that another case is about to be cited. However, as argued above, it is not necessary to see both occurrences of the preposition as exactly parallel grammatically.
Jesus, he is the One who is supreme in the thing Paul is urging upon his readers. Paul fixes our eyes upon this person as a person.1

After having heard all of vv. 6-11 with its exalted prose, this appears likely to be the way Paul’s hearers would have understood Paul in v. 5 as his letter was read or re-read to them.

4.3.4.3 Translating the Elliptical v. 5b

Although the Greek text does not strictly require a verb to complete the elliptical relative clause, ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (literally, ‘which also in Christ Jesus’) in v. 5b,2 a verb of some sort would be understood, and is necessary for English translation. The question is, what verb (or its equivalent) should be supplied? Indeed this is more than a translational issue; as noted above, it is a critical issue for the interpretation of v. 5 and thus for determining the function of vv. 6-11 in Paul’s letter. It may help to mention some of the translational possibilities before discussing them. They may be grouped into three broad categories: (i) those suggesting the ‘ethical’ or, as I prefer, ‘exemplary-paradigmatic’ reading of vv. 6-11; (ii) an arguably neutral reading; and (iii) those suggesting the ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ reading.3

Thus, v. 5 will be heard to say, ‘this think among you …’ or ‘this have-as-a-mindset among you …’ (using the 2nd person plural imperative προφητεία):

(i) ‘Ethical’ or ‘exemplary-paradigmatic’ readings:

‘… which was also in Christ Jesus’ (the traditional reading, supplying the imperfect tense ἦν);4

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1 LENSKI, Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles, 771 (emphasis his).
2 Cf. the comments of LENSKI, Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles, 771: ‘Note that the balance and the emphasis are not on the verb, for then Paul would at least have a verb in the relative clause. … What we supply in the relative clause in order to obtain a smooth English translation, whether “is,” “was,” “appears,” makes little difference, for we can in no way stress what is absent in the Greek.’ However, LENSKI’s interpretation (pp. 770-771), translating the ἐν of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ as ‘in the case of’, implicitly assumed a form of LIGHTFOOT’s reading (see below) as understood and takes Christ as ‘our model or example’.
3 In some of the following examples simplifications have been made in order to focus on the specific verbs (and other particles) being supplied in v. 5b. Further, for comparative consistency, fairly literal renderings have been given, and paraphrastic translations avoided. Thus, among those cited as adopting particular renderings, variations might be noted in the translation of other words in v. 5 and I will not attempt to identify such variations here.
‘… as also Christ Jesus was thinking (= having-a-mindset)’ or ‘… as also Christ Jesus thought’ (Lightfoot’s reading, supplying, respectively, the imperfect ἔφορεῖτο or aorist ἔφορωθη);¹

‘… which was found also in Christ Jesus’ or ‘… which you find …’ (Moule’s reading, supplying, respectively, the aorist ἐφανε or εἰς ἔρισκετε);²

‘… which you see also in Christ Jesus’ (Lohmeyer’s reading, supplying βλέπετε or εἶδετε);³

‘… which you know also in Christ Jesus’ (Lohmeyer’s alternate reading, supplying ἐπελευθέρως or οἴδετε);⁴

‘… which is also in Christ Jesus’ (Bockmuehl’s reading, supplying the present tense ἔστιν);⁵

(ii) Arguably neutral reading:

‘… which you have in Christ Jesus’ or ‘… which is yours in Christ Jesus’

(RSV rendering, supplying ἔχετε; leaving the καὶ untranslated);⁶

(iii) ‘Kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’ readings:

‘… which [indeed] you think in Christ Jesus’

(Deissmann, Martin and Grayston’s reading, supplying the indicative, φρονεῖτε);¹

¹ LIGHTFOOT, Philippians, 108; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 80 (but note the rejection by almost all scholars of LIGHTFOOT and HAWTHORNE’s adoption of the inferior text variant φρονείθη in v. 5a; see p. 181 n. 2 above); MELICK, Philippians, 95, 100; BANKER, Analysis of Philippians, 85; H. A. W. MEYER, Philippians and Colossians, 77; cf. CEV, and implicitly the NIV and NLT.

² C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 265; cf. I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 48-49; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 205, 254-255; F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 64, 66-67; and his ‘Paul in Macedonia,’ 268.

³ LOHMEYER, An die Philippier, 90, 91 (v. 5: ‘… also seid gesinnt; das [sehet ihr] auch an Christus Jesus,’ p. 90); and his Kyrios Jesus, 12-13 & 13 nn. 1, 3; cf. I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 118; MEEKS, ‘Man from Heaven,’ 332; and note the comment by SILVA, Philippians (2nd ed.), 96 n. 5 that supplying βλέπετε is the ‘least objectionable’ of the various ‘traditional’ interpretations. LOHMEYER’s reading is supported by the use of the very similar construction (εἰδετε + ἐν) in both Phil 1:30 and 4:9 (see above, p. 196).

⁴ LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus, 13 & n. 3 (citing the example of Rom 11:2); cf. I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 118.

⁵ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 114, 123-124; so also THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 80; EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 2; cf. YLT; and, although undecided between supplying the imperfect tense ‘was’ or present tense ‘is’, note also the positive comments of FEE, Philippians (IVPNTC), 92.

⁶ RSV; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlviii (in 1997, contrasting with his 1967 and 1983 preference; on his earlier view see the next note); HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 507; J. L. HOULDEN, Paul’s Letters from Prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians (WPC; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 67, 69, 83; J. A. MOYER, Message of Philippians, 108-109, 124; cf. ESV, NRSV marginal note. It should be noted that, potentially, this reading could be taken as a neutral reading: i.e. ‘which is yours’ could be read either as ‘which is your example’ (‘ethical’) (so J. A. MOYER, Message of Philippians, 108-109, 124 & n. 12) or as ‘which is your mindset’ determined by your being ‘in Christ Jesus’ (‘kerygmatic’) (so R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xlviii; cf. HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ [2000], 507; see further p. 195 & n. 4 above), however, in practice it is intended to support the ‘kerygmatic’ reading, especially when combined with a ‘technical’ or ‘formulaic’ sense for ἐν Χριστῷ ὁ πατὴρ. In the latter case, this reading would be best listed under group (iii) below. One exception to this appears to be HOULDEN, who, although he regards the passage of vv. 6-11 as not having any ‘moral message’ of its own, nevertheless considers its place in its context as providing ‘theological warrant for ethical exhortation’ and that Christ’s behaviour in vv. 6-8 is presented as the ultimate standard for the Philippians’ ‘manner of life’ (Paul’s Letters, 69, 81-82).
‘… which *is necessary for you to think* in Christ Jesus’
(Käsemann’s reading, supplying φρονεῖν δὲ; leaving the καὶ untranslated);²

‘… as it is *fitting for you to think* in Christ Jesus’
(Gnilka’s reading, supplying φρονεῖν πρέπει; leaving the καὶ untranslated).³

There are clearly multiple translational options. By grouping some of the alternatives together, we can make some general observations and evaluative comments.

In an elliptical Greek clause, one might normally expect a form of the main verb from (in this case, the first clause of) the same sentence. In v. 5a the 2nd person plural present active imperative φρονεῖτε has been used. Thus, one might expect a form of φρονεῖν in v. 5b.⁴ The first such reading, from group (i), was Lightfoot’s reading, followed more recently by Hawthorne. However, here, the imperfect middle/passive ἐφρονεῖτο or aorist passive ἐφρόνηθη was supplied to balance the Majority Text reading of v. 5a (cf. KJV), which had replaced φρονεῖτε with the 3rd person singular aorist passive φρονεῖσθο, and thereby required ἐν ὑμῖν to mean ‘in each of you’ or ‘in your hearts.’ Although doing this created two evenly matched phrases in v. 5,⁵ most scholars now reject the adoption of the inferior Majority Text reading.⁶ Without doing this, as Lightfoot himself recognized, an ‘irregularity of construction’ remains,⁷ and the desired parallelism between ἐν ὑμῖν and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἡσυχίᾳ

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² KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83-84; cf. also K. BARTH, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (London: SCM, 1962) 59; R. P. MARTIN, *Philippians* (NCB; 1976), 92. It is also possible on this reading to supply the impersonal verb δὲ on its own (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἡσυχίᾳ), but φρονεῖν would of course have been understood alongside it in meaning (‘this think among you, which is necessary [for those who are] in Christ Jesus [to think]’).
³ GNILKA, *Der Philippерbrief*, 109; cf. SILVA, *Philippians*, 107-109, expanded slightly in his *Philippians* (2nd ed.), 94-97; BEARE, *Philippians*, 73, 76. As in the previous note, it is possible also on this reading to supply the impersonal verb πρέπει on its own (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ πρέπει ἐν Χριστῷ Ἡσυχίᾳ), but φρονεῖν would similarly have been understood with it: ‘this think among you, as is fitting [for those who are] in Christ Jesus [to think]’.
⁴ SILVA, *Philippians*, 108 goes as far as saying, ‘there is nothing in the first clause to suggest that a verb other than phroneῖ should be supplied in the second clause.’
⁵ See HAWTHORNE, *Philippians*, 80-81.
⁶ See again p. 181 n. 2 above.
cannot be maintained.\textsuperscript{1} Bockmuehl also dismisses Lightfoot’s rendering as ‘somewhat too periphrastic.’\textsuperscript{2}

The alternative to this, then, in group (iii), is to supply a second person plural present indicative, \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\tau\epsilon \), as in Deissmann, Martin and Grayston’s reading, or a present infinitive, \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\nu \), together with an impersonal verb, as in Käsemann’s or Gnilda’s readings. Each of these leads to a greater parallelism and symmetry between the two halves of v. 5.\textsuperscript{3} However, Käsemann’s phrase, \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\nu \delta\epsilon \iota \) (‘as it is necessary to think’), and Gnilda’s \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\nu \pi\rho\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota \) (‘as is proper/fitting to think’) are both difficult phrases and it is questionable that Paul’s hearers would have supplied one of the two complex phrases to complete the ellipsis.\textsuperscript{4} As Fee writes concerning the sequence of interpretative decisions necessary for a ‘kerygmatic’ understanding of v. 5, ‘for the majority in Philippi the letter was a matter of hearing, not reading; it seems nearly impossible that they could have “heard” the subtleties demanded by this alternative … [It] seems much too subtle for a basically oral culture.’\textsuperscript{5} The former indicative addition, \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\tau \) (‘as you think’), is simpler, but also creates its own problems, as Moule argued, and much earlier, Lohmeyer also, in that it renders the verse tautologous: ‘this think among yourselves, which you think in the Christian community.’\textsuperscript{6} This suggests the implausible notion ‘that Christians could be conceived of … as adopting one attitude in their mutual relations with one another, and another attitude as incorporated in Christ’ and that ‘the outlook we have “in Christ Jesus” must be matched by the outlook we have in relation to each other,’ as though there was a distinction between ‘these two concentric (or, perhaps, even identical) spheres,’ which would be ‘most unlike

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} O’BRIEN, Philippians, 255-256; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 81.
\item \textsuperscript{2} BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 123.
\item That is, greater than that provided by most of the traditional interpretations of the text. Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 256 & n. 4.
\item OAKES, Philippians, 191; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200-201 nn. 29, 33; cf. DEICHGRÄBER, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus, 192.
\item FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 33. The other two improbabilties he notes in this sequence are that the Philippians would have ‘heard’: (i) that ‘in Christ Jesus’ is intended to be understood in a specific, formulaic sense; and (ii) that the \( \kappa\alpha\iota \) should therefore be dropped from v. 5b.
\item C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266; LOHMEYER, An die Philipper, 91 n. 3; so also DEICHGRÄBER, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus, 192; LARSSON, Christus als Vorbild, 232 n. 2; STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 253-254; CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 118; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 33; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 257-258; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137-138; OAKES, Philippians, 191; cf. I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Christ-Hymn,’ 118, who adds that ‘the tautology would be eased if we could supply \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\nu \delta\epsilon \iota \) rather than \( \phi\rho\omega\nu\epsilon\tau \) in the second clause, but we are bound to wonder why Paul did not express himself more explicitly if this was what he meant.’
\end{itemize}
New Testament thinking. Strimple adds further, citing Moule, ‘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 (Käsemann) but between an already given condition on the one hand, and the implementing of it, on the other.” Hence, Witherington asks rhetorically, ‘Is Paul really saying “become what you already are in Christ” (that is, “have this mind in yourselves which you already have in Christ” – a very redundant way of putting things) or is he more simply and straight-forwardly asking the Philippian Christians to strive to emulate Christ?’

What makes much better sense of the passage, I would suggest, is that for Paul the Philippians were in need of knowing the content of what they must ‘think’, or what ‘pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting’, what ‘mindset’ they must have, which Paul has described in vv. 2-4 (the significance of the τοῦτο in v. 5a) and then begins to illustrate supremely in the Christ-story of vv. 6-11 (the significance of the ὁ καί in v. 5b), though also in the subsequent stories of Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself. Furthermore, in virtually each reading of group (iii), the καί of v. 5b is rendered redundant or meaningless; Moule himself concluded that such exegesis has ‘fatally ignor[ed] the ὁ καί’ of v. 5b. Thus, the ‘kerygmatic’ interpretation, in order to support a non-ethical understanding of vv. 5-11, has adopted a reading of v. 5b that is grammatically plausible, although I would say not compelling, but in fact appears to be problematic in several respects: it is either overly complex and subtle, and unlikely to have been heard as such by Paul’s letter listeners, or it creates a somewhat bewildering tautology that seems at odds with Paul’s paraenetic purposes in the context, or causes a key word in Paul’s sentence to have no or little meaning, and one then wonders why he included it, if that was the case.

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1 C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 265-266; cf. STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11’ 253-254. Thus, on this reading, somehow the Philippians could think one thing ‘among themselves’ and another thing ‘in the church’ or ‘as members of Christ’s body’, but at Paul’s command they must now align the former to the latter. As STRIMPLE concludes, ‘this yields literally non-sense’ (‘Philippians 2:5-11’ 254).
3 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 138.
4 C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266; cf. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 33; DEICHGRÄBER, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus, 192; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137; contra R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xiii n. 3, xiv (cf. SILVA, Philippians, 107), whose counter-suggestions were cited in our preceding discussion of the καί of v. 5b (see pp. 188-190).
If, therefore, supplying a form of \( \phi ρον\)\( \iota \nu \) in v. 5b does not seem likely, then each of the suggested ‘kerygmatic’ readings also seems unlikely – possible, but improbable. Might one then opt for a version of the (arguably) neutral reading of the text (e.g. RSV)? Perhaps one may choose this for the reason that it preserves an ambiguity in the text, allowing the possibility of understanding the text in either of the two major ways (avoiding making such an interpretative decision in the text and leaving that to readers and hearers of the text),\(^1\) or perhaps even with both ways together – if one assumed that Paul intended the ambiguity or a dual meaning.\(^2\) For translators of the text, this may be a satisfactory and desirable option, but it is less than satisfactory for most interpreters, particularly when the other elements of the text and its context seem to point in a specific interpretative direction. Osiek, for example, concludes that the insertion of ‘you have’ rather than ‘was’ represents ‘a minority interpretation that undermines the exemplary nature of the passage and would thus force a different understanding of the whole structure of the letter.’\(^3\) Similarly, but more strongly, Witherington writes, ‘the attempt to supply a verb such as “you have” rather than “was” is an example of exegetical gymnastics to avoid the conclusion that Paul is drawing an analogy between … Christian behaviour and that of Christ, with Christ providing the leading example.’\(^4\)

For this reason, I prefer to look away from the group (ii) reading, to the remaining group (i) readings to supply a solution to the ellipsis of v. 5b, which does mean adopting some version of the ‘ethical’ interpretation, but which, we should note, by itself still allows freedom to interpret the phrase \( \iota \nu Χριστων\) \( Ἰησοῦ \) ‘mystically,’ ‘soteriologically,’ or ‘ethically.’\(^5\)

From the surrounding text of Philippians, we may observe support for Lohmeyer’s first reading (‘… which [you see] also in Christ Jesus’) in the use of the very similar construction (\( \varepsilonι\varepsilonι\varepsilonτε + \iota \nu \)) in both Phil 1:30 and 4:9.\(^6\) This contextual support is suggestive but not compelling as far as v. 5b is concerned. We may observe that this reading, Lohmeyer’s

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3 OSIEK, *Philippians*, 60.
5 Cf. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 123, who concludes in a similar fashion ‘without wishing to deny the kerygmatic significance of being in Christ.’
6 For these verses, see above, p. 196, and p. 199 n. 3.
alternative reading (supplying ‘you know’), and Moule’s reading (supplying ‘you find’) each allow for an almost identical way of interpreting the final phrase, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, namely that the ἐν signifies some paradigmatic or exemplary sense, that is, ‘in the case of’ or ‘in the life of’ or ‘in the person of’ Jesus Christ, which then forms the basis for an ethical appeal (in some way) to the example of Christ in (at least part of) vv. 6-11. Yet, the traditional rendering (‘which was also in Christ Jesus’) and Bockmuehl’s reading (‘which is also in Christ Jesus’) additionally present exactly the same possibilities of interpretation. This leaves us, then, with several possible options to make the best sense of v. 5 for both understanding and translation, and perhaps allowing for interpretative and translational preference to decide the case.

Thus, the vast majority of interpreters, who see some form of ethical appeal to the example of Jesus in some or all of the Christ-story of vv. 6-11, supply in v. 5b a form of the verb ‘to be’.

Bockmuehl adds that such an ethical appeal ‘probably requires’ this. As supplying a form of φρονεῖν seems fraught with problems, it would appear that supplying a form of ἐίναι is the next most obvious alternative. Witherington concurs here, adding, ‘the only really natural verb to insert here is some form of “to be” for the very good reason that a comparison is being made, which the kai indicates.’

Given the string of past (aorist) tenses in the narrative that follows, most interpreters of an ‘ethical’ persuasion have opted for what Bockmuehl calls ‘a straightforward historical reference to “the mind-set … which was also in Christ Jesus,”’ thus supplying the imperfect tense ἦν (‘was’). Although in disagreement, even Martin admits that supplying the imperfect verb ἦν, ‘which was in Christ Jesus,’ in v. 5 ‘makes it natural that Paul’s subsequent citation of the noble passage will be seen as calling to some kind of “imitation of Christ.”’

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1 FOWL, Philippians, 90; cf. OSIEK, Philippians, 60.
3 Among those demurring on this, see SILVA, Philippians, 108; and H. A. A. KENNEDY, ‘The Epistle to the Philippians,’ in EGT 3 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897) 434; however, note FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200 n. 29, who adequately answers KENNEDY’s objection to the supposed ‘harshness’ of an implied ἦν.
4 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137 (WITHERINGTON apparently wrongly cites SUMNEY here).
5 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 123.
6 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xii.
the traditional translation, and one which most interpreters and English translations have opted for.¹

However, grammatically, the present tense ἐστίν, ‘is’ has excellent grounds for its acceptance, as Bockmuehl points out,² and I believe it fits the context better theologically, too.³ Bockmuehl notes that in New Testament Greek, verbless subordinate clauses normally reflect the tense of the main clause (e.g. 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 2:10). Grammatically, therefore, the simplest reading is to supply the present ἐστίν, matching the tense of φρονεῖτε (present), and giving the literal translation, ‘this think among yourselves, which is also in Christ Jesus’ or more freely, ‘have this mindset among yourselves, which is also in Christ Jesus’.⁴

A related consideration strengthens the case at this point for supplying ἐστίν rather than the imperfect ἦν. Given that Paul himself did not supply a verb in v. 5b, the original recipients must have supplied it in their minds as this sentence of the letter was first read to them. As listeners to an oral reading of the letter, perhaps by Epaphroditus,⁵ rather than readers or students of a printed text, initially, as v. 5 was being read to them, the Philippians could not have anticipated the following aorist tenses of vv. 6-11.⁶ With a present tense verb in v. 5a, it seems very probable, therefore, that they would have mentally supplied a present tense verb in v. 5b, before even hearing v. 6.

Bockmuehl goes on further to marshal four substantive arguments from the context and interpretation of the text that support the case for reading the present tense ἐστίν in the

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¹ See those cited in p. 198 n. 4 above.
² BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 123-124; cf. his ‘Form of God,’ 5 n. 11. This is admitted as a possibility by FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 200 & n. 29 and 201 n. 33, though there he himself adopts the past tense ‘was’; likewise, WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 137-138; and HORRELL, Solidarity and Difference, 210; however, see also FEE, Philippians (IVPNTC), 92, where he affirms either ‘is’ or ‘was’ as possibilities of equal merit, and very briefly explains the significance of each. REUMANN, Philippians, 340, notes the possibility, as well, though he himself prefers to supply a form of φρονεῖν in v. 5b. EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 2 and THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 80 are among those few who have actually translated v. 5 using the present tense, ‘is’; and also one English version, YLT. However, of the scholars I am aware of, only BOCKMUEHL and FEE actually discuss the significance of supplying the present tense ἐστίν. Unfortunately, most commentators overlook this translational alternative altogether.
³ On this, see further Section 4.4 below.
⁴ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 123-124.
⁵ See FEE’s carefully reasoned account of ‘how Philippians “works”’ – his suggested chronological scheme concerning the various ‘affairs’ of the letter (Philippians [NICNT], 37-39).
⁶ Of course, hypothetically, a second reading of the letter potentially might change their opinion; but I think that unlikely, given the other factors supporting the present tense ἐστίν as being the one to be supplied.
subordinate clause of v. 5b, which I shall discuss below in Section 4.4, and to which I will add two more. Provisionally, therefore, I will adopt the present tense ἐστιν as representing the most likely verb that should be supplied in the elliptical v. 5b, yet the case for this choice will be strengthened by the considerations to be mentioned in §4.4. Unfortunately it is overlooked as an option by most commentators.

Bockmuehl notes a key implication of this decision, that while supplying ἐστιν leaves intact the moral or ethical analogy with the narrative that follows in vv. 6-11 (giving the same result as if ἦν, ‘was’ had been supplied), the present tense reading has a further advantage ‘that the indicated attitudes of the mind of Christ are seen to be not just a past fact of history but a present reality.’ This significant comment needs some explanation, which I will save until Section 4.4 below, where I will seek to elucidate the ‘theology’ of this important translational possibility.

Thus, while multiple translational possibilities for v. 5b exist, and indeed for v. 5 as a whole, those which seem to be the most likely point more compellingly toward an ‘ethical’ or ‘exemplary/paradigmatic’ reading of this introduction to the Christ-story of vv. 6-11. However, we must now turn to the paraenetic exhortations that Paul makes immediately following his exalted account of Christ, in vv. 12-18, where we may see the ‘other side’ of the immediate context of our passage.

4.3.5 Post-Narrative Application in Philippians 2:12-18

It is important to note the close linkage between vv. 5-11 and the verses which immediately follow it (2:12-18). Lohmeyer described the latter passage as ‘a practical commentary’ on the former passage. Similarly, O’Brien describes vv. 5-11 as providing the ‘christological basis’ for the ‘single, lengthy eschatological paraenesis’ of the latter passage, while Reumann

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1 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 124.
2 See below, pp. 235-240.
3 For the notable exceptions, see n. 2 on the previous page.
4 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 124 (emphasis his); cf. his ‘Form of God,’ 5 n. 11.
5 See pp. 235-240 below.
6 Lohmeyer, An die Philipp, 99.
notes that ‘vv. 12-18 see God at work (not Christology), God who vindicated the crucified Jesus continues to act among the Philippians.’¹ The inferential conjunction, ὅστε (‘so then’), shows a clear linkage between the Christ-story and the new set of exhortations, which Paul goes on to make in 2:12-18. The ὅστε introduces a resumption of the imperatives found in 2:2-4 but now reinforced by the contents of the preceding Christ-story.² Phil 2:12-18 thus represent hortatory consequences from the Christ-story.³

4.3.5.1 Philippians 2:12-18 and the Preceding Paraenetic Context

Before we examine the specific significant links between the Christ-story and Phil 2:12-18, we should note that the passage also contains noteworthy connections to the two passages preceding the Christ-story, namely 1:27-30 and 2:1-4.

Links between 2:12-18 and 1:27-30 include the following: (i) the need to live out the gospel of Christ or work out their salvation in obedience, whether Paul is present with them or absent (1:27; 2:12); (ii) the assurance that their salvation is from God (1:28; 2:13); (iii) the call to unity of mind and purpose (1:27; 2:14; but see also 2:2-4); (iv) the call to witness to the faith of the gospel with godly behaviour in an unbelieving and hostile world (1:27-28; 2:15-16); (v) the reality of suffering for Christ or the gospel, in which both Paul and the Philippians share (1:29-30; 2:17); and (vi) a common eschatological perspective on their situation concerning salvation and the day of Christ (1:28; 2:12, 16).⁴

However, there are also clear connections between 2:12-18 and 2:1-4, which need to be noted: (i) firstly, the concern for unity of both 1:27 and 2:2-4 is re-addressed in 2:14 with the practical, relational application that the Philippians should ‘do all things without grumbling or disputing.’ Such things would demonstrate that the ‘mindset’ of selflessness and humility spoken of in 2:3-4 was lacking in their mutual relationships,⁵ and, further, Paul’s caution in v. 14 may well point forward to the specific problem between Euodia and Syntyche

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¹ REUMANN, Philippians, 407.
² Cf. F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 81.
³ WARE, Mission of the Church, 238.
⁴ Cf. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 272 & n. 2; FLEMMING, Philippians, 127-128; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 157; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 231.
⁵ As K. BARTH, Philippians, 75 points out; see also his comments regarding the phrase ‘with fear and trembling’ (2:12) as indicating the disposition of genuine humility (pp. 71-75).
addressed in his later admonition that they ‘be of the same mind’ (4:2-3). Unity in the believing community cannot be maintained if grumbling and disputing are present, though Paul’s preventative medicine, in the imperatives of 2:3-4, will diminish the likelihood of such an infection; (ii) secondly, like Christ in vv. 6-8, Paul himself provides an example of selfless actions which put the interests of others ahead of his own (vv. 3-4), as he reveals his willingness to have his own life become a libation poured out upon the sacrifice of the Philippians (v. 17); (iii) in such a context, the exhortation to make Paul’s joy complete (2:2) is echoed by his call for mutual rejoicing in vv. 17-18; (iv) related to this, the strongly communal discourse of both 1:27-30 and 2:1-4, including two of Paul’s numerous συν-compounds (συναθλούντες, 1:27; σύμψυχοι, 2:2), finds a further echo in the repetition of words for sharing and togetherness in joy (συγχαίρω … συγχαίρετε) in vv. 17-18.

In addition Schenk has pointed out that the sequence of argument in vv. 12-13 exactly follows the sequence found in vv. 1-11: 2:1-11 2:12-13

Assumption 2:1 2:12bcd: ‘just as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence,’

Imperatives 2:2-5a 2:12e: ‘with fear and trembling, keep on working out your salvation’

Warrant 2:5b-11 2:13: ‘for God is working in and among you …’

It is evident that 2:12-18 is well integrated into this first paraenetic section of Paul’s letter. The clear and strong links between 1:27-30 and 2:12-18 suggest to some the presence of inclusio within 1:27-2:18. Some have supported this with suggested macro-chiastic structures for the whole section, which, though interesting, are not finally compelling. But as

1 So HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 97; FLEMMING, Philippians, 94-95.
2 Also noted by HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 106.
3 W. SCHENK, Der Philippberbrief, 217; cf. REUMANN, Philippians, 407-408.
4 For example, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 156-157 (cf. the similar outline of A. H. SNYMAN, ‘A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians 1:27-2:18,’ Verbum et Ecclesia 26 no. 3 [2005] 786); D. A. BLACK, ‘Discourse Structure,’ 31, 35; P. F. ASPEN (cited by REUMANN, Philippians, 10 n. 3, 276). The problem with FEE’s more detailed chiastic outline, although at first glance appearing persuasive, is that cross-links between the various sections are more varied and complex than his arrangement suggests; while BLACK’s and ASPEN’s, with larger blocks of material, are too general, adding little of interpretative value; cf. REUMANN’S comments that the various chiastic analyses ‘vary and often contradict each other’ and are ‘unconvincing’
we have seen, Paul’s writing is more complex, and the evidence points to close links between vv. 12-18 and all three of the preceding passages (1:27-30; 2:1-4; and 2:5-11). This strongly supports the unity of the entire passage, including the Christ-story of vv. 6-11, but without needing either chiasm or inclusio to demonstrate that. More convincing is Witherington who suggests that 2:12-18 more simply represent the conclusion of the first argument in the letter, which applies the propositio of 1:27-1:30. With him, we might then describe the movement of this argument from imperatives (2:1-4) to indicatives (2:5-11) and back to imperatives (2:12-18). Clearly each section is intended to support each other section as well as the whole thrust of Paul’s argument in developing and applying the central proposition of 1:27 in particular. In consequence, while v. 5 has been most important for our quest to determine the function of the Christ-story within the Philippian letter, 2:12-18 has as much bearing upon the matter as had 1:27-30 and 2:1-4. The closely-knit nature of Paul’s overall argument tells us that what we find in 2:12-18 will complement and not contradict what we have seen thus far.

4.3.5.2 Links between Philippians 2:12-18 and the Christ-Story (2:6-11)

The logical connection for the Philippian hearers is that Christ has emptied and humbled himself and has been exalted by God so that now ‘you might work out your salvation’, as the main clause of v. 12 indicates. Particularly striking is the immediate echo of the obedience of Christ (v. 8), which, at the beginning of v. 12, introduces how they are to work out their salvation: ὄστε … καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε … ; ‘so then ... just as you have always obeyed ...’.

Paul’s expectation is not that the Philippians will now move from disobedience to obedience, but rather that they will continue the obedience they have always shown. He does not specify to whom the continuing obedience should be rendered (ὑπηκούσατε is used absolutely), just as in v. 8 the object of Christ’s obedience is not specified. On the one hand,
since God is the one who acts upon the obedient ones in each case (Phil 2:9; 2:13), obedience is ultimately to be rendered to God (cf. Rom 5:19). Yet elsewhere Paul can write of obedience to Christ (2 Cor 10:5), and implicitly he does the same in Philippians in the opening description of himself and Timothy as slaves of Christ (δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ; Phil 1:1). Similarly, his highlighting of the lordship of Jesus Christ (Phil 2:9-11) would likely suggest a continuing obedience to Christ as an appropriate response to the Christ-story. However, in other places Paul also refers to obedience as a response to apostolic ministry, including his own (Rom 1:5; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:9; Phlm 21; 2 Thess 3:14) or the gospel (Rom 10:16-17; 2 Cor 9:13; 2 Thess 1:8).

Hence, in light of the subsequent qualifier in v. 12 about the Philippians’ obedience (whether Paul is present or absent), and Paul’s concern throughout 1:27-2:18 to explain and illustrate the nature and shape of the obedience required in both his admonitions and narration of the Christ-story, it is hard to escape the notion on the other hand that obedience to Paul, to his exhortations and gospel, must also be an implicit expectation. Perhaps the issue of the object of the Philippians’ obedience is superfluous, since in any case they ‘have always obeyed’, and Paul’s mention of this immediately after an affectionate address to them (‘so then, my beloved …’) is ‘an affirming vote of confidence’ in them. Yet it is probably wise that we not attempt to drive a wedge between the various options of obedience to God, Christ, Paul, or the gospel, for Paul’s authority and admonitions as an apostle, and indeed his gospel, arise from his own ultimate submission to God and Christ.

Yet there is another clear, and related, echo of the Christ-story in the way Paul moves from the expectation of continued obedience in v. 12 to notions of suffering and sacrifice in his and the Philippians’ lives in v. 17. We will look further at that verse shortly. Christ’s obedience had similarly led him to the ultimate suffering, ‘even death on a cross’ (v. 8).

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1 So FLEMMING, Philippians, 129; FOWL, Philippians, 118-119.
2 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 233 & n. 15.
3 FOWL, Philippians, 119; cf. also FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 233 & n. 15; the NRSV (probably unhelpfully) removes the ambiguity by adding ‘me’ as the object of the Philippians’ obedience in v. 12.
4 So VINCENT, Philippians, 64.
5 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 150. Rhetorically, Paul’s flattering praise of the Philippians works to encourage them to do more. So, OSIEK, Philippians, 69.
6 Thus FLEMMING, Philippians, 129; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 150; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 232-233 & n. 15; FOWL, Philippians, 119; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 275; I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 60.
One might even see an additional correlating echo of God’s subsequent exaltation of Christ (v. 9) in Paul’s call for the Philippians to rejoice as he does, with their mutual suffering in full view, in vv. 17-18 (cf. 1:29-30). God’s decisive vindication of Christ’s obedience unto death would surely also supply a motivating rationale for mutual joy in the midst of shared experiences of suffering for Christ, all the more so when Paul goes on later in the letter to speak of the destiny matching Christ’s exaltation (2:9-11) for followers of Jesus Christ in Phil 3:20-21.1

Further continuity between the Christ-story and vv. 12-18 may be seen in the way vv. 9-11 emphasize God’s actions in vindicating Christ, with vv. 12-13 focussing on his [God’s] ongoing work now among the Philippians (note the emphatic place of θεός in v. 13 and the present tense participle, θεός γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν …).2 And yet another echo may be noted in the mention of God working through their obedience for ‘[his]3 good pleasure’ (v. 13), recalling the outcome of those who bow (in obedient submission) before Christ as Lord, as being ‘to the glory of God the father’ (2:11).4

4.3.5.3 Textual Units within Philippians 2:12-18

The passage divides into three sentences: vv. 12-13, 14-16, and 17-18, which together form a single appeal to the Philippians, with three main concerns: (i) first to continue in obedience in working out their common salvation (vv. 12-13); in part (ii) by avoiding internal dissension for the sake of their common witness of the gospel in the world (vv. 14-16a); and

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1 C. F. Bockmuehl, Philippians, 162-163.
3 The Greek of v. 13 is, however, without a possessive pronoun, simply, but ambiguously, stating that God’s working in and through the Philippians is ὑπὲρ τὶς εὐδοκίας, literally ‘for (the sake of) the good pleasure’. While some have suggested plausibly that the reference is to human ‘goodwill’ within the Philippian community, given the use of the same word in Phil 1:15, and the community concern in v. 14 which immediately follows (so Hawthorne, Philippians, 100-101; Collange, Philippians, 110-111; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 161, Sumney, Philippians, 51, 53-54; and note R. E. Riemann, Philippians, 407, 410-411 who suggests a translation that God works in the Philippians ‘above and beyond goodwill’), a majority of commentators believe the word should be given its usual biblical meaning of ‘God’s good pleasure’ (so, for example, Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 239 & n. 39; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 154; Silva, Philippians, 142; Hansen, Philippians, 178-179; O’Brien, Philippians, 288-289; G. Schrenk, ‘εὐδοκία, εὐδοκία,’ TDNT II, 746-747; and note the plainly secondary variant in manuscript C, which resolves the ambiguity by adding the word ‘his’). Grammatically, the subject of the sentence is θεός, and the most plausible reference must be to him, with the article τὶς followed by an abstract noun functioning reflexively (thus Silva, Philippians, 142). Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 239 n. 42, notes that the preposition followed by the genitive almost certainly means that God acts ‘on behalf of’ someone’s ‘good pleasure,’ most likely his own.
4 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 231; Silva, Philippians, 142.
also (iii) so that they and Paul may rejoice together in their shared suffering, arising from their faith in Christ (vv. 16b-18). This appeal following the Christ-story is ‘emotionally charged,’ employing the rhetorical mode of pathos, beginning with familial language, ‘my beloved’ (v. 12a; cf. 4:1), referring to Paul’s presence and absence from them, to ‘fear and trembling’ needed as they work out their salvation (v. 12), to Paul’s hope that his work among them would not be ‘in vain’ (v. 16), and especially as Paul raises the relationship of his own suffering to that of the Philippians, perhaps referring to the possibility of his own martyrdom (v. 17).

In a moment, then, we will look more closely at the ethical content of vv. 12-18 to consider both how they further Paul’s overall argument and also, remembering the connection drawn between vv. 5-11 and this passage by the ωστε of v. 12, how they affect our understanding of the Christ-story. But two other prominent features of Phil 2:12-18 need to be mentioned briefly here as well. The first is the predominance of resonances to the story of Israel in the Old Testament, and the second is the mention of positive and negative examples in these verses.

4.3.5.4 Echoes of Israel’s Story in Philippians 2:14-16

Given the various intersecting narratives of both Paul and the Philippians in the letter, and the crucial narrative of Christ in 2:6-11, it is noteworthy that Paul now, in vv. 14-16a, intentionally and consciously echoes or alludes to Israel’s story. What is less clear is

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1 Cf. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 229; FLEMMING, Philippians, 128.
2 FLEMMING, Philippians, 128.
3 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 158 & n. 173, notes that this is not the language of mere friendship.
4 WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 158; FLEMMING, Philippians, 128. The latter issue of Paul’s possible martyrdom being implicit in v. 17 will be discussed further below.
5 So most commentators, for example, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 229, 241-247, 258; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 290-296; BOCKmueHL, Philippians, 155-158; FLEMMING, Philippians, 132-134, 135, 140-141; FOWL, Philippians, 121-126; GNILKA, Der Philipperbrief, 151-153; OSIEK, Philippians, 71-72; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 161-164; HANSEN, Philippians, 179-183; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 101-102; SILVA, Philippians, 143-144; F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 84-85; I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 63-64; WARE, Mission of the Church, 251-256, 283.
6 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 242, notes that a ‘maximal view would see it as intentional intertextuality, with distinct language from a series of LXX texts that recall the story of Israel from its origins, through the desert, to its eschatological hope. A minimal view would see it as the outflow of a mind steeped in Scripture and Israel’s story as it has been regularly applied to the new people of God.’ With a majority of interpreters (see previous note), I am assuming that Paul is here deliberately echoing these LXX texts. For such a judgment we implicitly keep in mind the seven criteria proposed by Richard HAYS (see his Echoes of
whether or not the Philippians would have heard these echoes on a first reading of the letter to them.\textsuperscript{1} We will discuss that issue further in Chapter 5 below.\textsuperscript{2} However, the sudden profusion of allusive language not found elsewhere in Paul strongly suggests a deliberate echoing on Paul’s part,\textsuperscript{3} and at this point we are most interested in his purposes in making these allusions, and the bearing it may have upon our understanding of the function of the Christ-story in its context.

The data includes the following five major allusive pieces: (i) First, in v. 14 the Philippians are urged to do all things ‘without grumbling [γογγυσμόν] or disputing,’ echoing the word used a number of times in the LXX for Israel’s ‘grumbling’ in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses (Exod 15:24; 16:2, 7-12 \textsuperscript{x 6}; 17:3; Num 14:27-29 \textsuperscript{x 3}; 16:41; 17:5 \textsuperscript{x 2}, 10) as well as the accompanying ‘foolish reasoning’ (cf. the Pauline usage in Rom 1:21; 14:1; 1 Cor 3:20; 1 Tim 2:8), suggesting a negative pattern of reasoning, a doubting that God was the one working among his people, and thus a misreading of the economy of salvation, leading to unfaithful actions.\textsuperscript{4}

(ii) Second, the reason for the prohibition (of v. 14) is stated in v. 15 (note the ἵνα clause), ‘so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless [ἀμεμπτοί] and innocent children of God [τέκνα θεοῦ]\textsuperscript{5} without blemish [ἀμώμα],\textsuperscript{6} in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation [μέσον γενεάς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης],’ which looks back, firstly to Gen 17:1, where Abraham, the recipient of God’s covenant (intended also for his offspring)\textsuperscript{7}, was

\textsuperscript{1} A question discussed by only a few, such as FLEMING, Philippians, 135; FOWL, Philippians, 125-126; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 163-164; OSIEK, Philippians, 71; cf. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 241-243, 258.

\textsuperscript{2} See Section 5.3 below.

\textsuperscript{3} FOWL, Philippians (NICNT), 122-123, 127 noting correctly, I believe, that this conclusion is reinforced by the allusion to Deut 32:5 in the next verse (v. 15; see point [ii]).

\textsuperscript{4} The exact phrase ‘children of God’ is only found elsewhere in Paul in Romans (8:16, 21; 9:8). As FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 245 n. 18, notes, the latter reference is instructive, since there also Paul deliberately transfers this Abrahamic terminology to believers.

\textsuperscript{5} This phrase can either mean ‘unblemished’ in the sense of sacrificial animals being without defect (e.g. Exod 29:1) or ‘blameless’ as a righteous person is described in the Psalms (e.g. Ps 15:2 [LXX 14:2]). So O’BRIEN, Philippians, 294.

\textsuperscript{6} As Gen 17:7 makes clear.
commanded by God to ‘walk before me and be blameless’ [LXX: γίνου ἄμεμπτος],”¹ and then significantly repeats the language of Deut 32:5, with a striking reversal in application, where Israel in the Song of Moses is judged to be ‘not his children [LXX: οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνα], blameworthy [LXX: μαντά],² a crooked and perverse generation [LXX: γενέα σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη].’ In Paul’s letter, ‘the crooked and perverse generation’ now becomes not ‘blameworthy’ Israel, but rather the pagan society of Philippi (cf. ‘your opponents’ in 1:28) that the Philippians are ‘in the midst of.’³ The dual implication of the Old Testament echoes is clear, and confirms the previous echo, that the Philippians paradoxically are to be both: as Abraham and his offspring were called to be, blameless before God; and yet at the same time unlike God’s people of old, as they were in the wilderness.

(iii) Third, as the Philippians live their lives in the midst of their largely pagan city, Paul encourages them with this description, ‘among whom you are shining [present tense, φαίνεσθε]⁴ as luminaries [ὁς φωστήρες]⁵ in the world [ἐν κόσμῳ], as you are holding firm [present tense, ἐπέχοντες]⁶ the word of life [λόγον ζωῆς]’ (vv. 15d-16a), which appears to recall the apocalyptic vision of the resurrection age in Daniel (12:1-4), and draws on the language of Dan 12:3 (LXX) in particular (‘those who are wise will shine [LXX: future tense, φανοῦσιν] as luminaries [LXX: ὁς φωστήρες] of heaven, and those who strengthen [LXX:

¹ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 242, 244; though FOWL, Philippians, 123 n. 8 expresses some reservations about this as being an intended allusion to the renewal of the Abrahamic covenant; cf. also REUMANN, Philippians, 412.
² An addition to the Hebrew text in the LXX. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 245.
³ It is by adding the phrase ‘in the midst of’ (v. 15), that Paul transforms the following words in Deut 32:5 (‘a crooked and perverse generation’) into their opposite: not ‘blameworthy’ Israel, but rather pagan Philippi. So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 245.
⁴ The translation of φαίνεσθε as ‘you are shining’ (or ‘you shine’, present tense) is supported by most modern interpreters: FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 246; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 158; REUMANN, Philippians, 413; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 272, 295-296; HANSEN, Philippians, 183-184; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 102-103; FLEMMING, Philippians, 134; cf. KJV, ESV, RSV, NRSV, NLT, NIV (though the NIV wrongly uses the future tense, ‘will shine’). While in a middle or passive voice, the verb has been attested to have an active sense of ‘shine’ or ‘flash’ (e.g. Matt 2:7; 24:27); thus BDAG, 1046-1047. Some older commentators, appearing to miss the echo of Dan 12:3, focus on the middle or passive translation, ‘you appear’, following that sense in Rom 7:13 and 2 Cor 13:7 (thus LIGHTFOOT, Philippians, 115; VINCENT, Philippians, 69; R. P. MARTIN, Philippians [NCB], 105). It also seems mistaken to regard φαίνεσθε as an imperative (as do HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 103 and BEARE, Philippians, 92; cf. CEV, GNT) since it occurs in a relative clause, which is already dependent upon the imperative, ‘do all things,’ at the beginning of v. 14. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 246 n. 27; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 296; SILVA, Philippians, 147.
⁵ Understanding ‘luminaries’ as ‘light-bearers’, rather than ‘stars’.
⁶ On the debate about the meaning of ἐπέχοντες, see FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 247-248; HANSEN, Philippians, 184; KEOWN, Congregational Evangelism, 135-140, 146; and the detailed discussion of WARE, Mission of the Church, 256-270, 289 (most strongly ‘hold forth …’ and not ‘hold fast …’).
κατηχεύοντεσ] my words [LXX: τοὺς λόγους μου]¹ as the stars² of heaven for ever and ever').³ On the significance of the present tense φαίνεσθε, in echo of Dan 12:3, F. F. Bruce notes that ‘now those who share in Christ’s risen life anticipate the ministry of the resurrection age and bear their shining witness already,’⁴ while Fee adds that the eschatological context of Daniel in turn probably accounts for Paul’s concluding with a reference to the ‘not yet’ side of things at ‘the day of Christ’ in Phil 2:16b.⁵ A further link to the passage is suggested by Bockmuehl: Paul’s phrase ‘in the world’ (ἐν κόσμῳ) ‘could be due to an alternative translation of the Hebrew word ʻālām in Dan 12:3, in its post-biblical sense of “the world.”’⁶ Furthermore, given the likelihood of this allusion it is plausible that the phrase ‘holding firm to the word of life’ is Paul’s explication of Dan 12:3b LXX, ‘strengthening the words’ of God, and substituting ἐπέχουνες for the not so clear κατηχεύοντες.⁷ If we take this allusion to Daniel 12 seriously, urges Fowl, it further supports Paul’s claims ‘that those who manifest the proper understanding of God’s saving activity will be brought to their proper end.’⁸

To these significant Old Testament echoes can be added two more. (iv) A fourth echo is found in v. 16b, where Paul expresses the ultimate goal for his exhortation (‘do all things …’; vv. 14-16a) and completes the purpose clause (‘so that …’; ἵνα …), which began at v. 15,⁹ as being ‘for his boasting [εἰς καύχημα ἐμοί], for the day of Christ [εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ],’¹⁰

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¹ In place of the LXX ‘and those who strengthen my words’, the Hebrew (MT) of Dan 12:3b read, rather differently, ‘and those who lead many to righteousness …’ As FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 242, 247 n. 33 notes, it is hard to know where the LXX version came from, although it appears to be the one alluded to by Paul here.

² LXX: τα ἀστρα.

³ Those affirming a conscious echo of Dan 12:3 in Phil 2:15 include, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 242, 246 & n. 26; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 158; Fowl, Philippians, 124-125; Ware, Mission of the Church, 254-256; I. H. Marshall, Philippians, 64; Gnilka, Der Philippbrief, 152-153; Osiek, Philippians, 71-72; O’Brien, Philippians, 296; Reumann, Philippians, 402, 413; Thurston (& Ryan), Philippians, 96; F. F. Bruce, Philippians, 87; N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, 228; and Hooker, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 513 (more cautiously).

⁴ F. F. Bruce, Philippians, 87.

⁵ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 242, 248.

⁶ Bockmuehl, Philippians, 158.

⁷ Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 247 & n. 33, followed by Fowl, Philippians, 124-125.

⁸ Fowl, Philippians, 124.

⁹ Thus, the construction of v. 16b expresses purpose, not only for what has immediately been mentioned, ‘holding firm the word of life,’ but for all of what has preceded (i.e. from v. 14 onwards). So, O’Brien, Philippians, 298; Hansen, Philippians, 185 & n. 359; Vincent, Philippians, 70.

¹⁰ The double εἰς … εἶς… construction of v. 16b should be interpreted consistently (and also, one might add, in the two εἰς … phrases of the final ὅτι clause in v. 16c), rather than giving a different sense to each preposition, as does BDAG, 289, 290; O’Brien, Philippians, 298-299. Both correctly see the first εἰς as
which will reveal that’ (ὅτι)¹ he ‘did not run in vain [οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον], nor labour in 
vain [οὕδε εἰς κενὸν έκοπίασα]; some have suggested that the final phrase echoes a reference 
to the Isaianic Servant of the Lord in Isa 49:4, who is concerned that he may have ‘laboured 
in vain [LXX: κενὸς έκοπίασα]’ and that his ‘toil [LXX: οὐ τόνος μου]’ is before God; 
increasing the potential relevance is Isa 49:6 LXX, where the Servant’s task is stated as 
bringing ‘light’ and ‘salvation’ to the Gentiles (cf. the theme of witness in Isa 55:4-5); and 
Isa 53:12 (Hebr.), where the Servant ‘pours out his soul to death’ (cf. Phil 2:17).² This would 
be more significant if we could be confident that the Isaianic righteous Servant provides a 
partial narrative background to the Christ-story of Phil 2:6-11.³ On this Bockmuehl 
comments, ‘one intriguing possibility is that [Paul, in vv. 16-17] may see his own apostolic 
work and suffering in partial analogy to the same Old Testament antecedents.’⁴ Nevertheless, 
a closer verbal parallel to Phil 2:16c is actually found in Isa 65:23 LXX, which reads ‘my 
chosen ones will not labour in vain [LXX: σὺ κοπίσασοιν εἰς κενὸν]’.⁵ This later passage is 
part of a vision of the new heavens and new earth, including the New Jerusalem 
(Isa 65:17-25), and this eschatological context suggests that an allusion in v. 16 to Isaiah 65 
is more probable than to the Isaianic Servant narratives. On the day of Christ the Philippians 
will be both Paul’s reason for boasting and the primary evidence that he had ‘not run in vain 
nor laboured in vain.’⁶

¹  Verse 16c begins with ὅτι, and expresses not the ground of Paul’s boasting, for that has already been 
mentioned (vv. 15-16a), but rather is explicative of that basis, and may be rendered by ‘indicating that’ or 
‘as the proof that’ or as I prefer, ‘which will reveal that’; thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 299; LOH & NIDA, 
Handbook on Philippians, 72 (cf. NEB, GNT).

²  BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 159-160; cf. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 300; FLEMMING, Philippians, 136; MARTIN 
& HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 148; WARE, Mission of the Church, 274-282; and those acknowledging a 
possible echo of Isa 49:4, though admitting uncertainty, I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 64; HOOKER, ‘Letter 
to the Philippians’ (2000), 513.

³  On this issue, see Section 5.3.2 in Chapter 5 below; but see also BOCKMUEHL’s discussion of the matter in 
Philippians, 135-136, 159-160; cf. WARE, Mission of the Church, 224-236, 277-278, 291.

⁴  BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 159 (emphasis his); see also WARE’s discussion of this (Mission of the Church, 
274-282).

⁵  Noted by FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 242, 249 & n. 42; cf. THIELMAN, Philippians, 141; and GNILKA, Der 
Philipperbrief, 153 n. 47 who find a dual echo of both Isa 49:4 and Isa 65:23.

⁶  FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 249.
(v) A fifth and final Old Testament echo is to be found in the way Paul’s ministry and suffering, and the Philippians’ faith and suffering, are imaged (v. 17), though with no specific text in view, in terms of the levitical sacrifices.1

The impressive foregoing cluster of Old Testament echoes in the space of merely four verses seems to have a common thread in the motif of the pilgrim people of God.2 The story of God’s people behind the echoes moves from Abraham as the father of God’s covenant people, through the wilderness generation, where some failures are evident, to their eschatological destiny in the resurrection age, and the New Jerusalem.

For the Philippians a parallel progression is clear in their own narrative journey, albeit with some differences: they have started well, participating in the gospel (cf. the Abrahamic covenant), with God beginning his work among them, and confident that God will bring them to perfection at the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:5-6; cf. the promise of an everlasting possession and relationship with God for Abraham and his offspring in Gen 17:7-8), and, with Paul, being partakers of grace (1:7), now facing a situation of common suffering (1:28-30; 2:17), they are reminded that God continues to be at work among them (1:28; 2:13), helping them to work out their salvation, through their continued obedience (2:12), but are warned not to be like the blameworthy generation in the wilderness, in the context of a difficult and sometimes hostile environment; rather if they follow Paul’s exhortations they will prove themselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God (2:14-15) thereby being a shining witness to the community around them, in anticipation of ultimate vindication for both them and Paul at the day of Christ (2:16-17; cf. references to the resurrection age, the new heavens and earth, and New Jerusalem).3

4.3.5.5 The Story of Israel and the Positive and Negative Examples of the Letter

In the midst of these echoes to the story of Israel, it is clear that Paul is continuing to provide positive and negative examples for the Philippians to consider and then to follow or avoid.

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1 Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 242, 251-252.
2 So Fowl, Philippians, 121-127; Caird, Paul’s Letters, 124; Gnilka, Der Philipperbrief, 151; R. P. Martin, Philippians (NCB), 104; cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 243 n. 11; O’Brien, Philippians, 290-291; Flemming, Philippians, 140-141.
3 On the above, see also the worthwhile insights of Fowl, Philippians, 126-127.
Although the major candidates for consideration as exemplars in the letter are Christ, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, this important passage (vv. 12-18) following the Christ-story has revealed some lesser examples: the implicit negative example of the people of God in the wilderness; and two positive examples in smaller, though not insignificant ways, namely, Paul and the Philippians themselves. As Paul commends the Philippians in vv. 12, 15c-16a, 17, he implicitly holds up their past and present behaviour as a model to guide future behaviour. His own ‘running’, ‘labouring’, and ‘being poured out’ (vv. 16-17) function similarly.

The story of Israel in its wilderness generation, therefore, serves as a warning to the Philippians of behaviour that clearly must be avoided, while the wider story of Israel, notably in its beginning and end, functions as an encouragement to them, providing assurance of God’s work among them from start to finish, affirming the importance of putting Paul’s exhortations into practice in their present and future communal life, while validating the expected actions in light of the expected future vindication to come (for Paul and them) in the new age from the day of Christ. The call for mutual rejoicing and sharing of joy with which the passage concludes (vv. 17b-18) then functions as a present anticipation and hope of such an ultimate vindication.

Hence, the implicit story of Israel’s wilderness generation serves as contrasting foil for both the stories of Paul and the Philippians, alongside which the Christ-story of 2:6-11 stands tallest, and in marked relief. Strikingly, the narrative of Christ in these verses follows a similar pattern from a clear beginning in relationship to God, in a journey with humanity, through a period of emptying, humbling, and (implied) suffering in which selfless obedience plays a prominent part, to a climactic end (death on a cross), and then a dramatic reversal, with God’s exaltation of Christ, and granting of the name and status of Lord, providing both a

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1 Thus, the story of Israel behind the echoes of Paul’s epistle is not entirely a negative story. In one key part it is negative and serves as a warning to the Philippians (as it does elsewhere to the Corinthians; see 1 Cor 10:1-13). But the fact that it is not altogether negative perhaps provides a sufficient response to those who see here an indication of the Church as replacing Israel in God’s purposes (e.g. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 294; COLLANGE, Philippians, 112; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 102; SILVA, Philippians, 144-145; THIELMAN, Philippians, 139-140; WARE, Mission of the Church, 251-256, 283, 288); the matter is more complex than that, and would appear not to be Paul’s point in this passage; thus, HANSEN, Philippians, 182-183; BOCKmuehl, Philippians, 156-157; FOWL, Philippians, 124 & n.11; FLEMMING, Philippians, 133; REUMANN, Philippians, 403-404, 407, 412.
vindication of Christ’s preceding actions and a final place (for Christ) of exalted resurrection life and glory.

Given the presence of negative and positive examples in vv. 12-18, entwined in narratives which somewhat parallel the Christ-story, it strongly suggests that the Christ-story itself should be understood, at least partly, in exemplary terms also. This seems to be confirmed when we examine the specific ethical content of vv. 12-18, knowing that Paul’s paraenesis arises as a logical development from the Christ-story (recalling the ωστε of v. 12a).

4.3.6 The Crucial ‘Obedience’ Link between Philippians 2:8 and 2:12

The most significant and obvious ethical link between the Christ-story and the following passage is clearly found in the theme of obedience. Yet, here the interpretative division surfaces once more with kerygmatic advocates asserting an understanding of this link which excludes any notion of the Christ-story being exemplary. Thus, Käsemann’s interpretation of v. 5 and vv. 6-11 is as a drama which narrates how the ‘obedient one’ became the ‘Lord of the new world’ and thus ‘the author of the obedient ones.’1 For Käsemann, the content of v. 8 was of central significance, and he argued that, ‘if the hymn forms a meaningful unity at all … [then] the manifestation of the humiliated and obedient one … must be its center.’2 In vv. 6-11 we have a ‘witness that the world belongs to the obedient one, and that he became lord that we might become obedient,’3 and, for Käsemann, this implicitly led well into Paul’s specific exhortation to obedience in v. 12. He recognized that in the humbling and obedience of Christ, in v. 8, the ‘ethical interpretation seems to find its strongest support,’4 even noting that here ‘an ethical interpretation may suggest itself,’ though he hastened to say it is ‘by no means necessary as a matter of course.’5 He went on to note, referring to Christ’s ύπακοή (‘obedience’), that ‘for the first time in our text a concept emerges which is

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1  KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 87; cf. p. 83 and his detailed and profound discussion of Christ’s ‘becoming obedient’ in Phil 2:8 in pp. 70-75.
2  KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 73. For him, this is confirmed by comparison to the revelation of ‘the obedient one’ in Rom 5:12-21.
4  KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 70.
5  KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 71-72.
unequivocally ethical, and now everything depends upon the context into which the exegete places this term.\(^1\)

For him, ‘we do not become obedient through an example, but through the word which witnesses to the fact that we belong to him’\(^2\) and ‘no ethical model is posited’ in the obedience of Christ (v. 8).\(^3\) In Käsemann’s understanding, the humiliation and obedience of Christ primarily serve as a ‘truly eschatological event’, which leads to him becoming the Kyrios (Lord), and marks believers as ‘belonging to him’, and then in consequence, since we belong to him (and for no other reason), we are called to obedience.\(^4\)

In such an understanding Käsemann was followed closely by Martin.\(^5\) Thus, while also emphasizing a soteriological, kerygmatic approach and focussing on the lordship of Christ as the centre of the passage, Martin highlighted obedience as ‘the linchpin of the human response to the kerygma in the ordo salutis,’ and as the only moral trait that the passage is concerned with.\(^6\) For him, if Christ’s obedience holds the key to the passage, ‘the nexus between soteriology and paraenesis (in verses 1-4, 12) is clear. In the “obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5; 16:26; cf. Rom 6:12, 16-17; 10:16; 15:18; 16:19) believers identify with Christ and his obedience to death (exactly as at Phil 2:12).’\(^7\) Similarly, affirming Käsemann, and alluding respectively to the relationship of vv. 5 and 12 with vv. 6-11, Martin summed it up this way: the passage ‘tells how [the Philippians] came to be “in Christ”’ (v. 5) [‘the indicative of divine action’]; ‘now they must let their lives be controlled as those who are truly His’ (v. 12) [‘the imperative of paraenesis’].\(^8\) Adopting the ‘same mind’ (\(\tau\o\upsilon\tau\o\varphi\rho\omicron\omicron\nu\varepsilon\iota\tau\epsilon\)) in v. 5a, then, ‘may refer to the response of the “obedience of faith,” after the pattern established by Christ, by which believers come to be “in Christ.”’\(^9\) Thus, Martin

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\(^1\) KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 72.

\(^2\) R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 86 notes the play on words in KÄSEMANN’S German here: ‘Gehorsam werden wir …, das uns als ihm gehörig bezeuge.’

\(^3\) KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 88.

\(^4\) KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 73, 87-88.


\(^6\) R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxi; in what follows, MARTIN was responding to a specific criticism by WRIGHT, but misunderstood WRIGHT’S question of his position, and used the occasion for a further defense (in 1997) of his non-ethical, ‘soteriological’ understanding of the passage. On this see further, pp. 276 n. 2 and 285-286 in Chapter 5 [§5.2.5] below.

\(^7\) R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxi.

\(^8\) R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 86.

\(^9\) R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxi.
concluded, the passage, on this showing, ‘is soteriological in both its primary (as the story of salvation centred on the *via crucis*) and its secondary (as the pattern for believers …) meanings.’ Hence, for both Martin and Käsemann, the basic paraenetic function of the Christ-story runs like this: since the Philippians are in the realm of Christ, in which Christ, the Lord of the cosmos, is their Lord, they must be obedient to Christ, and must live as those who are ‘in Christ’.

However, it must be said, Martin’s linkage of the expected Philippian response (to the Christ-story) in v. 12 with the concept of the ‘obedience of faith’ represents a rather strained interpretation, reading this phrase from Romans into the Philippian text, where it has no explicit contextual support. Further, while Christ’s obedience is clearly very important in the Christ-story, it is not especially highlighted by Paul’s narration of the events: the phrase relating to Christ’s obedience (v. 8b) is a subordinate participial clause to one of the main verbs of the drama, ‘he humbled himself’ (v. 8a), and thus is used to explain some of the content of Christ’s humiliation, alongside the ultimate end of this humiliation – his death on a cross. Additionally, we must remember, Paul in v. 12 does not actually make obedience the main response to the Christ-story; his primary exhortation to the Philippians is to ‘continue working out your salvation’ (v. 12d), and in this he assumes their ongoing obedience (‘just as you have always obeyed,’ v. 12a). The latter in no way needs to be argued for.

Therefore, Fowl is on the mark when he concludes that Käsemann’s interpretation of the text in its paraenetic context (and, we may add, Martin’s) does not really raise any issues of concern to the Philippians. Unlike a text like Romans 6 (which Käsemann relates to Phil 2:54), the issue here is not whether the Philippians should be obedient or not, nor whether they should live in Christ or in sin. ‘Rather, Paul is anxious to impart to the Philippians an understanding of what would constitute an obedient life in their situation (cf. 1:27).’ Similarly, we might add, in vv. 6-11 Paul’s concern is not whether or not Christ obeyed, but upon the character and content of his obedience. Thus, Fowl’s judgment is

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3 One senses that Martin realized this when he wrote somewhat uncommittedly, ‘adopter the same mind … may refer to the response of the “obedience of faith”’ (*Hymn of Christ*, lxxi).
4 Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 84.
severe, ‘Käsemann has made a naive ethical example reading of 2:5-11 untenable, but his own formulation is also an inadequate explanation of the way in which this hymnic passage functions to support Paul’s paraenesis because it does not deal with the concerns of the epistle.’¹

Käsemann also cited Barth with approval, who affirmed that the important thing for the passage is not a relationship of Christ with the Father but rather the fact that He is obedient.² However, Barth had gone on to add that Paul was interested in the attitude of submission and dependence which Christ adopts,³ pointing to attributes of Christ’s obedience that others might regard as important or even exemplary for followers of Christ. Käsemann’s own non-exemplary explanation of the nuance of the word ὑπακοή (‘obedience’) was that it ‘designates voluntary, resolute obedience, and not compulsory, obligatory obedience.’ ‘Jesus has entered the sphere of δουλεία … as one who is willingly obedient.’⁴ The sphere of δουλεία, of course, is that of slavery, servanthood. But Käsemann was adamant that Christ ‘remains a heavenly being and therefore can never become an example. He reveals obedience but he does not demonstrate it as something to be imitated. To put it succinctly, he is Urbild, not Vorbild; archetype, not model.’⁵

If we can get beyond Käsemann’s objections to the term ‘ethical,’ or beyond, what was to him, the objectionable philosophy of ‘ethical idealism’, and his reasons for proposing what he considered an antithetic alternative in the kerygmatic interpretation of the Christ-story,⁶ his argument can still be used to proffer partial support for an ‘ethical’ or, as I prefer, ‘exemplary’ interpretation of the passage. Such support lies in Käsemann’s recognition of the centrality of the ‘obedience’ of Christ (v. 8) in the passage – the drama of ‘the obedient one’.⁷ If we can move beyond his polemics, two key paragraphs in Käsemann’s argument point in a direction that is not so diametrically opposed to an ‘ethical’ or ‘exemplary/paradigmatic’ interpretation of 2:6-11.

¹ FOWL, Story of Christ, 82.
³ K. BARTH, Philippians, 65.
⁴ KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 72.
⁵ KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 74.
⁶ On these issues, see above, Section 4.2.
In the first, Käsemann states that,

At the final judgment the sole issue will be the question of whether we were obedient or not. … Jesus is the cosmic ruler: He is steering the world through the many decisions of its earthly course to the one decision of the last day when the question asked will be that of our obedience. … Our destiny flows out of confrontation with the obedient one, and the history of the world as well as the life story of every individual, receives its signum from that confrontation. To be kyrios means to impress upon the cosmos and each of its members that final, decisive signum, it means to determine our existence with all its possibilities, its responsibilities, and its necessity. … the obedient one, and only he, determines the cosmos and its history in this manner. The meaning of obedience has become clear from the interpretation of vss. 7-8: namely, that humiliation is grasped as a possibility for the freedom of service.¹

We can see clearly how ethics and paraenesis might be said to arise from the Christ-story. In a later passage, Käsemann was more explicit. Though the Christian community is not mentioned in vv. 6-11, he wrote, with this passage

The Christian community on earth takes up responsively, as it were, what is effected by the homage of the powers before the divine throne. It is thus drawn into the eschatological event and witnesses the enthronement of the obedient one on earth. By proclaiming Christ as cosmocrator, the new world is already manifest in the community itself, and it becomes evident that the obedient one is himself the author of the obedient ones. … the proclamation of the obedient one as cosmocrator establishes the boundary which separates the old world from the new, and it therefore calls the Christian community again into the realm where it must stand, act and suffer, i.e. into the realm “in Christ,” into ταπεινωσφροσινη and into obedience, into the freedom of the saved. … we have here the witness that the world belongs to the obedient one, and that he became lord that we might become obedient.²

Here, it must be said, Käsemann came very close to adopting a result very similar to that of the ‘ethical’ or ‘exemplary’ interpretation of the passage, except that for Käsemann, this outcome is not achieved through following the example of Christ, but through his salvific action and the new belonging of God’s people ‘in Christ’ to him.³

Thus, the obedience of Christ is at the centre of an eschatological and soteriological event, the revelation of the obedient one, which when proclaimed by the Church demarcates the old world from the new. For Käsemann, only Christ’s actions as eschatological and soteriological actions are able to bring us into the new world, in which freedom exists for our obedience;

¹ KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 83.
² KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 87-88.
³ Noting KÄSEMANN’s caveat in his conclusion on p. 88 (of his ‘Philippians 2:5-11’).
as merely an ethical model to follow, surmises Morgan, ‘they would not get us out of the old world.’

But the question remains, was Käsemann being overly exclusive in his limitation of the import of Christ’s obedience in v. 8? Can we not, within Käsemann’s thought world, posit both (i) that our obedience (v. 12) is made possible by Christ’s obedience; and (ii) at the same time, is also sought responsively to the example of his obedience? The two are not contradictory, nor are they incompatible interpretations of the same text. Käsemann was absolutely correct to note how paraenesis arises out of soteriology, but he appears mistaken to reject any dependence in v. 12 upon an example in v. 8, as though the matter was strictly an either ... or ... situation. To my mind, a both ... and ... analysis will do more justice to the text, Paul’s intentions, and to how the Philippians would have heard it. To that we will return in a moment.

While Käsemann focussed on the theological message and import of the Christ-story, Martin tended to focus more closely on the text itself. However, the following quotation from his 1967 Carmen Christi betrayed not only a flawed exegetical methodology, but also highlights the importance of context in determining function and meaning in a text. After, citing Käsemann’s concession that in giving ‘decisive importance to the interpretation of the words ἐταπένωσεν and γενόμενος ὑπήκοος’ in v. 8, the ‘ethical interpretation possesses here its stoutest bulwark,’ Martin responded,

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. The text of the hymn must be taken on its own, irrespective of the application which is made in the neighbouring verses. Once this is done, it becomes increasingly difficult to follow the ‘ethical interpretation’. … A clear illustration of reading back into the hymn ideas which are in the surrounding verses or found elsewhere is seen in the exegesis of Christ’s obedience.

2 See my previous discussion of this issue in Chapter 3, pp. 127-130.
3 Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 70.
This may well have been one of the statements for which Martin expressed the desire in both 1983 and 1997 to be more ‘circumspect’ and ‘hesitant’ had he re-written his earlier monograph.¹

Thus, in 1983, he returned to the critical question, first asked by Käsemann,² about how the passage functions as a paraenesis in this pastoral letter?³ In answering the question Martin sought to explain how Paul moves from the Christ-story to the application beginning in v. 12. As we have seen, he affirmed Käsemann’s basic depiction of the passage as ‘a recital of soteriology, a dramatic story of the odyssey of Christ whose “way” led from one eternity to His ultimate glory by acts of obedience, exaltation and acclamation.’⁴ For him, then, vv. 9-11 provide ‘a picture of the world ruler to whom all parts of creation are submissive; and the church is summoned to live in that realm where Christ’s authority is paramount.’⁵ The paraenesis, thus, is a call to live appropriately ‘in Christ,’ meaning to live in the arena created by Christ’s obedient death under his supreme lordship. In Martin’s understanding, the lordship of Christ is the Mitte or centre of the passage, and Paul uses the ‘hymn’ for that very reason. He stated that

It is the only interpretation which can give a satisfactory reason for the inclusion of verses 9-11. These verses are not to be reckoned as an excursus (Dibelius) nor can they rightly be regarded as ‘exemplary’, given their unique character in proclaiming the lordship of the world ruler, a status of κυρίωτης that can never be shared. The hymn, celebrating the ‘way of Christ’ … moves to its climax in these latter verses, showing how the heavenly one (verse 6a) has returned to his Heimat where He has, after humiliation, abasement, obedience, death and vindication, received lordly power. The theological Sache of the entire passage is not, then, the atonement … nor strictly the incarnation … It is the exaltation of the once-humiliated one … who has received divine honors at the end of His itinerary that took Him from the presence of God via the becoming man and the obedience-unto-death back to that presence, where He now enjoys the right to rule.⁶

Thus the exaltation and authority of Christ the Lord is the basis of Paul’s paraenetic appeal to the Philippians: ‘they should submit to Christ’s divinely invested authority as Kyrios

¹ R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, xii (1983), xlviii (1997). Certainly in 1997 he admitted (p. 1 [Roman 50]) that ‘one of the firmest conclusions in more recent studies of the letter is the way 2:5-11 fits into the wider context of the thematic unit of 1:27-2:30.’
(clearly in verse 12: the obedient one must be obeyed).’¹ Elsewhere Martin explained, ‘the call is … to respond to life ‘in Christ’ as those who have entered the community of salvation by obedience to the incarnate, obedient, and now exalted Lord.’²

However, later, in his 1997 preface to A Hymn of Christ, a slight shift in position could be noted. Martin repeated his conclusion that the ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (‘being in Christ Jesus’) of v. 5b is ‘a capsule expression for being a Christian in the Pauline sense,’ which ‘entails living in obedience to the obedient one in a pattern of social behaviour that, to be sure, entails selfless regard for others and lowly demeanour. Such conformation to the pattern arising out of “life in Christ” receives the approbation of God.’³ Such a reference to a ‘pattern’ of behaviour strongly suggests an ethical interest in aspects of the Christ-story.

Similarly, while still upholding the kerygmatic or soteriological interpretation of the Christ-story and maintaining a similar link between v. 12 and v. 8, Martin admitted more explicitly to an ethical (‘moral’) character in aspects of Christ’s story, in part pointing back to vv. 1-4, and in part point forward to v. 12:

> Above all (in 2:1-4) there is to be [in the Philippians’ life together] humility, a moral quality that in this section is to be seen in Paul’s telling the story of the Lord of glory who became the servant of all (verses 6-11) by an act of self-humbling, which in turn is expressed in obedience to the point of death (verse 8). Interestingly, when Paul drives home the application, the moral incentive the Philippians are to find in the incarnational motif, it is Christ’s obedience that is the centerpiece (verse 12), not his humility. The admonition that flows directly from a recital of Christ’s path from highest honour to even higher exaltation (verse 9) is tersely expressed in the maxim ‘The obedient one is to be obeyed!’⁴

It is significant to note two things in these admissions by Martin: firstly the recognition that there is in fact an ethical character to at least vv. 6-8 of the Christ-story, and secondly, the important observation that the text, as far as its ethical character goes, points both forward and backward to the immediate epistolary context, and yet does so by highlighting different ethical attributes in each direction – humility (v. 8, pointing backward to vv. 1-4) and obedience (v. 8, pointing forward to v. 12). This is an important insight, to which we will

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¹ R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, xviii.
² R. P. Martin, Philippians (TNTC), 100.
return later. In focussing on the Christ-story in its epistolary context, Martin found it hard to escape the ethical implications of vv. 6-8 in particular, and thus, even if reluctantly, he eventually came to embrace a partial sense of the exemplary nature of Christ’s actions in the pattern of his obedient life.

Nevertheless, in his reluctance, Martin still wrote (near the end of his 1997 preface) that ‘the nub of the problem for all proposals that try to find in the hymn an ethical example to provide the basis for the paraenesis in 2:1-4, 12-13 is, in fact, that the hymn in all six Pauline verses does not speak of the action of Christ on behalf of others.’¹ However, firstly, this fact counts equally against any interpretation of this passage as ‘soteriological.’ Secondly, as we have seen before, the paraenetic context of vv. 2-4 and the similarity of syntactical patterns between vv. 2-4 and vv. 6-8, however, does lead to the conclusion that Christ’s actions can implicitly be regarded as ‘other-centred’ actions. Thirdly, Martin’s conclusions about the meaning of v. 5 have led here to a failure to recognize that it is not primarily Christ’s actions that are exemplary (though they are surely that; in vv. 6-8), but the attitude underlying and expressed through those actions. As we concluded above,² believers are explicitly called in v. 5 to ‘have-as-a-mindset among yourselves’ the attitudes and mindset towards others, described in vv. 2-4, ‘which is also found in Christ Jesus.’

Similarly, as we will see in the next chapter, one of the significant conclusions from Wright’s explication of Hoover’s understanding of ἄρπαγμος in v. 6, is that Christ’s actions in vv. 7-8 arise out of the way in which he regarded (ἡγησάτω) his ‘equality with God’ (v. 6bc): ‘not as something-to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage (harpagmos) … but [instead] he emptied himself … he humbled himself …’³ Thus Christ’s actions spring precisely from his attitude or mindset, which believers via v. 5 are called ‘to have-as-a-mindset’ among themselves.⁴

Although Martin had moved toward a more mediat ory position at the end of his theological career, essentially the kerygmatic or soteriological interpretation has rejected seeing the Christ-story as being exemplary in character. But it appears to limit the obedience of the

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¹ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxiii (emphasis his).
² See Sections 4.3.4.3 and 4.4.
³ See Section 5.2 in the next chapter.
⁴ To be certain, ‘attitude’ is ‘a key term in the reconstruction [MARTIN is] opposing’ (Hymn of Christ, lxxii), but his opposition to this term is automatically overruled by our rejection of his interpretation of v. 5.
Philippians (2:12) to being simply a response, and certainly an appropriate response, for those who, by being ‘in Christ Jesus’ (2:5) are now under the lordship of Christ (vv. 9-11), and ignores the possibility, strongly suggested by the close verbal link between v. 12 and v. 8 that Christ may also serve as an example of obedience to the Philippians.

In verse 12, and building on the image of ‘every knee’ bowing ‘in the name of Jesus’ in v. 10, Paul could well have used the related idea of submission to Christ’s lordship as an appropriate response to the Christ-story,¹ but instead chose to use the specific concept of obedience, suggesting that the obedience of Christ was important and somehow related to the continuing obedience being asked of the Philippians. Thus, the call for continued obedience arises not solely because they are implicitly called to submit to Christ’s lordship (though that is certainly a valid expectation), but rather the verbal link to v. 8 suggests that the example of Christ’s obedience is also in mind.

Further, it seems most unlikely that the Philippians hearing Paul’s implicit call for continued obedience in v. 12 would not recall Christ’s obedience to the point of death in v. 8 as a model and example for their own obedience. Rather, v. 8 would have been reverberating loudly in their minds as they heard Paul begin to exhort them again in v. 12.

Hurtado seems to have the right balance between the strictly kerygmatic interpretation and the ethical interpretation in his 1984 response to Käsemann and Martin, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5-11.’² His title picks up the kerygmatic emphasis upon the lordship of the Christ and the need for obedience to him, while also admitting an ethical or exemplary emphasis in Christ’ actions of vv. 6-8, including his example of obedience. For Hurtado, the lordship of Christ is what makes Jesus’ example authoritative.³ This certainly seems more apposite.

J. Ross Wagner appropriately describes the importance of v. 8 in light of the introductory v. 5: ‘Paul’s strategy of moral formation in Philippians centers on the call to adopt a frame of

¹ As he does elsewhere, for example, in Rom 10:3-4; 8:3-8; cf. 2 Cor 9:13; Eph 5:21-24.
² Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 113-126.
³ Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 125; yet note Oakes’ criticism (Philippians, 205-207), while recognizing that Hurtado’s suggestion is ‘very important,’ that it is too narrow in one sense, and too broad in another.
mind, an outlook on the world, that leads to habits of living that conform to the pattern of Christ’s obedience to God in self-giving for others.” Applying this to v. 12, he writes, “the call to adopt a frame of mind and a pattern of living in conformity to Christ is … central to what Paul means by “working out your own salvation.”” Thus, Paul calls the Philippians to holiness; and they are to participate in God’s saving work in their community by striving together ‘to conform their frame of mind and thus their pattern of life to Christ’s own.’ Similarly, I believe Fowl is right that Paul not making obedience the main issue of the passage, but rather the shape and nature of their obedience – what living a life worthy of the gospel should look like. Likewise, for Bockmuehl, the content of the Philippians’ obedience is in ‘conforming oneself to the gospel’ – what Paul elsewhere calls ‘obeying the truth’ (Gal 5:7; cf. Rom 2:8).

Thus, the combination of various intersecting stories, in which positive and negative examples are prominent, and the strongly ethical content of 2:12-18, together with multiple links from this passage to the Christ-story, leads to the conclusion that the Christ-story cannot but be interpreted in similar terms (based on its own content) – as being in part exemplary and ethical in nature.

4.3.7 Interim Conclusion: The Christ-Story as Exemplary

Thus the broader paraenetic context of 2:6-11, including its rhetorical argumentation, seems to be so strongly ethical and exemplary in nature, that it effectively demands some kind of ethical and exemplary understanding of the Christ-story itself. In different words, the paraenetic context implies that the passage does indeed serve some kind of ethical function. Precisely what kind of ethical understanding or function and how it serves that function, is yet to be determined, but it seems that the passage, which fits its context so well, must also support that context and its accompanying ethical concerns, and must have been written by Paul in its present place in the letter for that very purpose.

4 Fowl, Philippians, 118-119.
5 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 151.
The context of especially 2:1-4, 2:5 and 2:12-18 has shown clearly that the content of vv. 6-11 (and particularly vv. 6-8, but not exclusively) must function in part as providing an ethical example for believers to follow. Yet, there are further indications in the epistolary context that the Christ story also serves a second, closely related purpose in providing a paradigm for the Christian life; and to this we turn in the next section.

4.3.8 Indications of Christ-Story Paradigms in the Letter

There are at least five places in the context of Philippians 2:1-3:21 which support an identification of the Christ-story as being not merely exemplary, but also as paradigmatic for the shape of the Christian life, as Paul sees it.¹

(i) Firstly, as we have noted, there is an identical syntactical structure between vv. 3-4 and vv. 6-8: what has so far been called, the ‘not [y], but rather [z]’ structure.² Although we will see a fuller explication of this structure later in Chapter 6 (and in Appendix 3), semantically it conveys the sense, ‘not selfishness, but humility and selflessness,’ ‘not self-centredness, but other-centredness.’ This represents a structure to the Christian life, and in the story of Christ it is part of a larger narrative structure, which as we will see in Chapter 6, when we add v. 6a into the equation, conveys a semantic structure of ‘although [status], not [selfishness] but [selflessness].’ In this way the story of Christ is not only exemplary, but also models a pattern and way of life, which the context suggests (2:3-4) is to be reproduced in the lives of believers.

(ii) Secondly, we may note that the Christ-story provides a paradigm of suffering and vindication for Christians. In the same way that Christ’s suffering servanthood and obedience all the way to death on a cross (understood by all as including immense suffering) was vindicated by God exalting Christ, so too suffering Christians can look to God for his vindication of their faithfulness to Christ and the gospel in the face of opposition. Oakes thus appropriately highlights, Jesus’ ‘obedient suffering’ and ‘obedience right through to death’ is

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¹ For my definitions of these terms, see p. 145 above.
² See above, pp. 101-102, and also see Appendix 3 below.
significant both to the situations and suffering of Paul and the Philippians. Both Fowl and Ware concur in seeing the exhortation to ‘work out your own salvation’ in v. 12 as summing up Paul’s call to them from 1:27 – follow the way of suffering, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

I mentioned before that Martin had noted the possibility that vv. 9-11 could be applicable to Christians in that ‘we suffer now / we shall be exalted then’ (cf. Rom 8:17), but argued that Paul does not make use of that principle in the immediate context of the passage, especially in v. 12. However, I think he is wrong in that judgment, given what Paul says in both 2:17-18 and 3:20-21. I will deal the latter passage next, though we should note that the paradigm of humiliation-exaltation does seem to be implicit in the eschatological vision of 3:20-21.

Fee makes a convincing case that 2:17, where Paul speaks of his ‘being poured out a drink offering’ upon ‘the sacrifice and service of your [= the Philippians’] faith’ that both his present suffering and the Philippians’ are in view in those two phrases, and that ‘both sides of the imagery recall 1:29-30, that God has “graced” them not only to “believe” in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.’ Paul’s present imprisonment serves as ‘the drink offering,’ which accompanies their own suffering in behalf of Christ. Others suggest that the imagery of a drink offering is more commonly a metaphor for sacrifice and death, and refer back to the possibility that Paul’s trial may result in death (1:20, 23). I would suggest that Fee is most likely correct here as the primary meaning of the terms in their context, but that the connotation of death in the imagery of the drink offering should not be lost. That would make Paul’s imprisonment, and correspondingly the sacrifice and service of the Philippians, as very much analogous to Christ’s ‘obedience unto death’ in 2:8.

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1 Cf. OAKES, Philippians, 200-201, on the impact for the Philippians of Christ’s ‘obedient suffering … obedience right through to death’ in Phil 2:8 as exemplifying the content of ‘stand firm under suffering’ in 1:27-30, and following Paul’s own example in 1:12-36. OAKES, however, does not go on to explicate the link between 2:8 and 2:12, which would have strengthened his argument further.
2 WARE, Mission of the Church, 242-247; FOWL, Story of Christ, 96
3 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xiii-xix, esp. xiii, xv.
4 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 250-255.
5 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 255.
6 Thus, LOH & NIDA, Handbook on Philippians, 73; H. A. W. MEYER, Philippians and Colossians, 120-122; BEARE, Philippians; A. PLUMMER, Philippians, 54-55; though note FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 252-254 rejecting that view in this context.
Yet in response to their shared suffering (indeed recalling 1:29-30) Paul goes on to speak of his rejoicing and sharing of joy with the Philippians (2:17) and urges the Philippians also to rejoice and share their joy with him (2:18). I would suggest that such joy in the face of suffering corresponds closely to God’s vindication and exaltation of the Christ who suffered and died. Thus, contrary to Martin, in fact the Christ-story in its paraenetic context is analogous to the paradigm and pattern of Rom 8:17.

Yet, I am also in agreement with Hellerman that vv. 9-11 of the Christ-story are not merely a vindication of suffering (which it is), thus encouraging the Philippians in their present circumstances, but additionally represent God’s vindication of the manner in which Jesus used his divine status and power (that is, for the benefit of others; cf. again the links between 2:3-4 and 2:6-8).

(iii) The third use of the Christ-story in a paradigmatic way is seen in Paul’s reference to the eschatological future in Phil 3:20-21. It is in 3:20-21 that Paul includes a most significant parallel to 2:9-11. It is here that the exalted Lord of all of 2:9-11 brings his lordly rule to bear upon the life of believers (3:20b, 21c), lifting them from their state of humiliation (3:21a) and completing their conformity to his resurrection glory (3:21b), a place where their true heavenly citizenship lies (3:20a). We may recall the abundance of linguistics echoes of the Christ-story in 3:20-21, plus one conceptual echo, which were tabulated in Table 3.1b above.

Phil 3:20-21 therefore provides a further way that we should interpret the function of 2:9-11, and to an understanding that the future action of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (3:20), will bring about conformity of the state of believers to that of his resurrected, exalted body (3:21). The paradigmatic implications of the Christ-story are very clear, but for believers, in this respect, God’s exaltation of Christ will correspond analogously with their eschatological future.

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1 Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 153-155, here 154.
2 ‘Echoes’ is used deliberately, since the verbal parallels are not exact.
3 Cf. Strimple, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 249.
4 See above, pp. 99-100 for Table 3.1b and p. 100 n. 1 (for the conceptual echo); cf. also Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 92; who is followed by O’Brien, Philippians, 261, and Eastman, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 22; and note also Oakes, Philippians, 147; and R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 58 n. 2.
Hence, vv. 6-8 are primarily exemplary for believers, calling them to a way of life, which focuses on servanthood, humility and obedience, the way of the cross, while vv. 9-11 (as developed in 3:20-21) point to an as yet unfilled paradigm referring to the eschatological future of believers. This is made clearer still in Hooker’s suggestion that Paul’s ‘interchange’ idea comes into play here. Simply put this means that ‘Christ becomes what we are, so enabling us to become what he is.’ Hooker sees a close parallel here between Phil 2:6-11 and 3:20-21, and other passages that employ the ‘interchange’ motif (namely, 2 Cor 8:9; 5:21; Gal 3:13; 4:4), whereby ‘Christ becomes what we are’ is described in Phil 2:6-8, vv. 9-11 describe ‘what he is’, and the final element, ‘enabling us to become what he is’ is delayed until 3:20-21. The latter passage describes the believer being transformed into conformity with the exalted Christ, so that ‘we shall become like him.’

The full context of the probatio in which we find Phil 2:6-11 thus demonstrates clearly how the Christ-story functions in a paradigmatic way.

(iv) However, we also see the Christ-story functioning paradigmatically in the narrated accounts of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30), and (v) in Paul’s autobiographical account (3:2-21, esp. 2-14). Table 3.1b highlights again some linguistic echoes of the Christ-story in the respective stories of Timothy, Epaphroditus and Paul. In Chapter 4 (§4.3.2) above, we saw how these three individuals functioned to provide additional positive examples for the Philippians following the Christ-story, and how their respective lives in different ways were patterned after the story of Christ. We do not need to repeat the details of that discussion now, but we may note that Paul appears to intend the Christ-story (and particularly vv. 6-8) to function as a model to which Christian life needs to be conformed. This again, is a paradigmatic function of that central story. Thus, there is both a model of mindset and behaviour to follow (analogously, not in slavish imitation) (an exemplary function) and a paradigm to be conformed to (a paradigmatic function) in the Christ-story.

2 Again, see pp. 99-100 above.
3 See above pp. 155-163, and esp. 158-163 on Timothy and Epaphroditus.
(v) With respect of the fifth place in the paraenetic context of 2:6-11 where we may see the Christ-story functioning paradigmatically, in Paul’s story of Philippians 3, we should note also the explicit dying and rising with Christ motif found in 3:4-11 (esp. vv. 10-11) and 3:20-21. In 3:10-11 death and resurrection function as a patterning structure defining Paul’s present (and future) Christian life. The present Christian experience is described as knowing Christ (3:10a) by knowing the of his sufferings (3:10c) and becoming conformed (συμμορφωμένος) to the death of Christ (3:10d; clearly linking back to 2:6-8, which culminates in the cross of Christ), but empowered by the resurrection of Christ (3:10b), while also looking forward to future conformity to the resurrection of Christ in the resurrection from the dead (3:11, 21), corresponding analogously to the exaltation of Christ in 2:9-11 (which implicitly includes his resurrection).¹

Thus conformity to the resurrection of Christ, or to the pattern of his exaltation, is partially realised now (as resurrection power), but essentially is a future event awaiting the believer. Paul confirms this event as still future, and expresses his present eschatological tension – between the now and not-yet – in his expressed hopes of 3:12-14, which look forward to, and bridge towards, 3:20-21 as the ultimate conformity to Christ’s resurrection glory.

The overall narrative shape of the Christ-story is very closely matched, therefore, by the overall narrative shape of Paul’s story and life, but with one key aspect remaining to be fulfilled in the future.² Fowl observes here that Paul is ‘narrating himself into the story of salvation that begins, climaxes, and will end with Christ, particularly as related in 2:6-11.’³

Hence the paraenetic context of the Christ-story offers five distinct places which demonstrate in differing ways my conclusion that this story of Jesus Christ is intended to function as paradigmatic of the shape, structure and pattern of the Christian life.

¹ On the resurrection as being included implicitly in God’s exaltation of Christ, see p. 382 & n. 3 below, and on the issue of the explicit absence of mention of the resurrection in the Christ-story, see Section 7.2.6 in Chapter 7 below (pp. 448-452). We may note here, as an aside, that Paul in Philippians 3 makes further use of the paradigmatic principle, ‘we suffer now / we shall be exalted then’.
³ Fowl, Philippians, 153; cf. 155-157.
Thus, the Christ-story may be described as paradigmatic, as well as exemplary, in terms of its function in the letter. But there is one further element I would like to introduce here, which demands that we revisit Phil 2:5 once more.

4.4 A Participatory Understanding of Philippians 2:5

As we saw in Section 4.3.4.3 above, a better option, I have argued (following Markus Bockmuehl’s lead), for translating the elliptical Phil 2:5b, is to supply there a present tense ἐστὶν.1 I mentioned that this reading has a further advantage in that the commended mindset of Christ is not just a past fact of history but is also a present reality.2 Thus, Bockmuehl writes, ‘Paul commends the attitude “which is also in Christ Jesus” (ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ῥῆμα): the one who was in heavenly form is the same one who took the form of a slave; and this in turn is the same one who is now Lord of all.’3

To explain the significance of this further, we will now discuss Bockmuehl’s four substantive arguments to support the case for reading the present tense ἐστὶν in the subordinate clause of v. 5b.4 As mentioned before, I will go on to add two further arguments in support of this reading. As we do this we will consider the theology of this important translational option.

(i) First, it seems strongly implied in the way Paul grounds the Christ-like attitudes that he is encouraging the Philippians to have in ‘the present accessibility of life “in Christ”’ in Phil 2:1 (cf. 4:1-2). I. H. Marshall concurs that the ‘in Christ’ reference in Phil 2:1 appears to mean something like, ‘if there is any comfort ... to be found in Christ and your experience of him as a living person who communicates God’s comfort to you.’5 The proximity of these two ‘in Christ’ references in the same hortatory context is thus strongly suggestive of a present experience of Christ being implied in v. 5b and the verses which follow it (6-11). I would add that the chiastic relationship seen between vv. 1-2 and v. 5 appears to confirm this (see Table 4.1 above);6 as does also the conclusion of most interpreters that a present tense

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1 Please refer back to Section 4.3.4.3 above, pp. 198-206 and esp. 205-206.
2 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 124.
3 BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 21 (emphasis his).
4 For the following four points, which I have actually expanded slightly, see BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 124.
5 I. H. MARSHALL, ‘Theology of Philippians,’ 140.
6 Table 4.1 may be found on p. 171 above.
'is' (ἐστίν) should in fact be supplied as well, earlier in Phil 2:1, and in particular in the first clause of v. 1a, which speaks of the presence of ‘encouragement’ ἐν Χριστῷ.¹

(ii) Secondly, the story of Christ in vv. 6-11 appears to describe both the time before and after Christ’s incarnate life, which must be beyond and outside time. This corresponds to contemporary Jewish apocalyptic thought, which is shared by Paul, concerning God’s messianic plans that, while being realized in history, have a certain timeless existence in eternity. A good illustration of this, Bockmuehl explains, is found in 1 Cor 2:6-16 where Paul relates the heavenly mystery hidden for eternal ages to its historic manifestation in the life and crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Spirit of God (cf. Col 1:26-27). Thus, it is appropriate that ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16) – the thinking or attitude of Christ in Phil 2:5 can refer to both past history and present reality at the same time.

(iii) Thirdly, a number of Pauline and other New Testament texts seem to imply strongly an ongoing interest of Christ for the wellbeing of his followers. Thus, despite his exaltation to heaven, Paul affirms that Christ continues to intercede for believers even now (Rom 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25; John 17) and that Christ’s love for us is an ongoing and eternal fact (Rom 8:35-39; 2 Thess 2:16-17; 2 Cor 1:3-5; 5:14). Specifically, in Philippians, the ‘compassion of Christ’ is seen to be a present reality (Phil 1:8; cf. 2:1) and Christ himself is said to be ‘near’ as the ground of all joy and gentleness (Phil 4:4-5), in every aspect of life (1:21).

(iv) Fourthly, this translation may narrow the gap between the two most common options: ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ('in Christ Jesus') in v. 5b, while still referring to the agent (Christ) whose attitude the Philippians should emulate, can also refer to the relationship they may have with him, in which the reality of his example embraces both past and present.²

Grammatically and theologically, the most appropriate translation of verse 5 is, ‘Have this attitude among you, which is also in Christ Jesus’. The moral analogy with verses 6-11 is thus retained, while acknowledging that Christ’s own attitude of kenosis relates to realities that are of necessity beyond and outside time, and yet still present (1:8, 21; cf. 2:1; 3:20; also the ἰγγύς of 4:5). ... The kerygmatic and exemplary reality of the work of Christ embraces both past and present. The ‘mindset’ which Paul encourages in the Philippians ‘is present’ in Christ Jesus both historically and eternally. This belief could be said to follow from the continuity of the Jesus Christ of History with the Jesus Christ

¹ So, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 165; see further (in this study) pp. 165-166 above.
of Faith that is implied in the resurrection: for Paul, the one who ‘was buried’ (1 Cor. 15:4) is present as the one who was raised. This alone enables a present participation in, rather than mere remembrance of, past saving events (1 Cor. 10:16).¹

There are two further considerations, related to Bockmuehl’s four, which in my opinion make the case for supplying ἐστίν in v. 5b even stronger:

(v) As we will see later in Chapter 5, I believe that N. T. Wright is correct in saying that Phil 2:6-11 is ‘not simply a new view about Jesus … it is a new understanding of God.’² As he explains, ‘the pre-existent son regarded equality with God not as excusing him from the task of (redemptive) suffering and death, but actually as uniquely qualifying him for that vocation.’³ This is evident in the logical argumentation of vv. 6-7, stated as such, ‘although being in the form of God, not harpagmos [to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage] did he regard equality with God, but (instead) …’. Equality with God is precisely what leads Christ to his self-emptying, self-humbling and self-giving acts.⁴ Thus the story of Christ of vv. 6-11 may simultaneously be seen to be the story of God as well, and in these actions Christ demonstrates something of the very character and nature of divinity. Gorman describes it thus: ‘this pattern is theophanic, revelatory of the divine identity.’⁵ The significance of this is that the character and nature of God are for Paul a present, not a past, reality; vv. 6-11 thus describe the God Paul encounters in his present experience. This points to an understanding of the passage as describing the believer’s present relationship with God in connection to God’s and Christ’s own character (as exemplified in the past actions of Christ, especially in vv. 6-8), in which the latter is intended to shape the believer’s mindset now. In this way a

¹ Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 5 n. 11 (emphasis his).
² N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 84. For what follows here, see especially Section 5.2.5 below.
³ N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 83-84, 97.
⁴ Hence the translation of the participle ὑπάρχον in Phil 2:6a by some scholars as causative, ‘because …’ or ‘precisely because [he was in the form of God],’ rather than concessive (‘although …’); so C. F. D. Moule, ‘The Manhood of Jesus in the New Testament,’ in Christ, Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology (S. W. Sykes & J. P. Clayton, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 97; Hawthorne, Philippians, 75, 85; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 133-134; Fowl, Philippians, 94; N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 83-84 & n. 110; O’Brien, Philippians, 216; but see Gorman, Cruciform God, 9-39; and his ‘Paul’s Master Story,’ 147-169 (cf. his Cruciformity, 165 n. 19) for a compelling case that the participle ὑπάρχον (Phil 2:6a) may have two levels of meaning; while having a surface level concessive meaning, ‘although being [in the form of God],’ it also has a deeper causative meaning, ‘because he was [in the form of God].’ I discuss the translation of ὑπάρχον further in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.5) below.
⁵ Gorman, Cruciform God, 162, see also pp. 9-39; and cf. his Cruciformity, 9-18; R. Bauckham, God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament (Didsbury Lectures, 1996; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) 60-61; Crossan & Reed, In Search of Paul, 288-291, 334 for similar conclusions.
personal relationship with God through participation in Christ is intended to result in a shaping of the believer’s life now in accordance with the pattern and character of life seen in vv. 6-8 of the Christ-story.

(vi) The sixth and final reason for supplying a present tense ἐστιν in v. 5b is the participatory nature of the passage of vv. 6-11, and this leads us also to a discussion of the theology of this present tense reading of v. 5b.

Douglas Campbell speaks of Christian faith as being ‘isomorphic with Christ’s own “faith,” which he defines as a ‘metonymic motif that evokes the broader phenomenon of his passion and in particular the downward trajectory of his martyrdom,’¹ which he then specifies quite notably in relation to Phil 2:8: ‘Christ’s obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross.’² He goes on to say,

Christian faith, like Christ’s faith, functions within a story (a story, it should be recalled, attempting to narrate a reality that grips both Christ and the Christian). But given that these stories follow a trajectory through suffering, death, and resurrection, it ultimately makes little sense to speak of a comprehensive mimetic relationship (i.e., of a thin analogy between Christ and the Christian). More likely is a participatory relationship, the Christian being caught up into Christ’s story in the deeper sense of being caught up into Christ himself.³

This latter sense of a participatory relationship (what Campbell would call a ‘thick’ analogy) between Christ and the Christian is quite significant here, because I sense that, with a present tense ἐστιν supplied in v. 5b, the passage readily lends itself to a participatory reading of the Christ-story in its context to which Campbell is alluding.

Similarly, Richard Hays speaks of a ‘narrative participation’ of living ‘within the Christ story,’⁴ wherein believers ‘in their own lives … are called to recapitulate the self-giving

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² D. A. CAMPBELL, Deliverance of God, 756.
³ D. A. CAMPBELL, Deliverance of God, 756.
⁴ R. B. HAYS, ‘Real Participation,’ 336-351, esp. 345-347, (here p. 345); this article in part anticipated and prompted some of the essays in the recent compilation volume, THATE, VANHOOZER & CAMPBELL (eds.), In Christ’ in Paul, which explicate the Pauline motifs of union and participation in relation to the story of Christ (note pp. 7, 48-49, 127-128, 183, 252-253, 275, 331, 353-354); within this work, see especially K. J. VANHOOZER, ‘From “Blessed in Christ” to “Being in Christ”: The State of Union and the Place of Participation in Paul’s Discourse, New Testament Exegesis, and Systematic Theology Today,’ 3-33; D. A. CAMPBELL, ‘Participation and Faith in Paul,’ 37-60 (esp. 48-54); M. J. GORMAN, ‘Paul’s Corporate, Cruciform, Missional Theosis in 2 Corinthians,’ 181-208; and THATE, ‘Paul, Φρόνησις,’
pattern embodied in Jesus’ death and in Paul’s living out of the same pattern’ and are thus ‘drawn inescapably into participation in a life pattern whose *telos* is the conformity of the hearer’s life to the story of Jesus Christ.’

Eastman appears to agree, with her own perspective. In her work on Phil 2:6-11 she speaks of a ‘reverse-mimetic performance’ in the Christ-story, wherein rather than Christians imitating Christ, Christ (in Phil 2:7-8) instead imitates humankind, becoming one of us in downward movement, and ultimately dying on a Roman cross, but which movement stimulates a corresponding mimesis among the recipients of this narrated story of Christ. For Eastman this understanding offers a bridge between the two main competing interpretations of function of the Christ-story: ‘Christ’s participation in the human plight … in turn awakens and enlivens humanity’s participation in Christ, [and which] brings together the kerygmatic and ethical aspects of Phil 2:6–11.’ She goes on to add that ‘this theophany has mimetic effects among its recipients, so that they also show forth God’s redemptive incursion in the world.’

Hooker also attempts to provide a bridge between the competing positions on the function of this passage, arguing that an unnecessary antithesis has been set up by interpreters, when really we should be seeing the ‘typically Pauline fusion of these two themes,’ which she explains: ‘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 their being in Christ depends upon the saving acts proclaimed in the gospel.’ She also then argues, concerning the paradigmatic function of Phil 2:6-11 that the pattern of Christian obedience set out in

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3. EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 3-5, 20-22 (see my discussion of her article on pp. 133-133 above); her idea is not too dissimilar from HOOKER’s interchange concept, mentioned above; cf. also TANNEHILL, ‘Participation in Christ,’ 229, explaining that ‘participation is first of all divine participation in the human plight, which makes possible human participation in God’s Son.’
4. At this point BOCKMUEHL himself would appear to voice affirmation (cf. Philippians, 122-125).
Philippians 3 (in Paul’s story), among other places in his letters, ‘is conformity to the way of the cross,’ citing Phil 3:10-11, 21.¹

I would suggest that the Christ-story both evokes and enables the Christian’s dying and rising Christ, which Paul speaks of in Philippians 3, and which I believe forms the basic structure of Paul’s life and Christian experience generally, but which life and experience arise from our own participation in Christ. While I cannot here explain this in much detail (for it would represent another whole study in itself), clearly the believer’s death and resurrection with Christ is not explicit in the Christ-story, but I suggest, in light of what Paul narrates of his own story in Philippians 3, that it is implicit. Thus, Phil 2:5-11 lays the foundation for Paul’s explicit discussion of his dying and rising with Christ in Philippians 3. But it is the sense of Christ’s present mindset and attitude, which Phil 2:5 urges believers to adopt, which implies that we must now partake of or participate in Christ in order to do that. Thus, it is by our present participation in Christ that believers can think and live according to the mindset/attitude exemplified in and patterned by Christ in vv. 6-11. This may take place as they make Christ’s story their own, not only hearing this short account in Philippians 2, but entering into it and thereby allowing it to shape and transform their lives.²

I believe that Bockmuehl’s reading of v. 5b allows such a participatory understanding of Phil 2:6-11, which strongly links this passage with Paul’s story in chapter 3, and particularly with his dying and rising with Christ in 3:10-11, 21, clearly shaping his own life (cf. his account in 3:3-9), and which then invites a similar correspondence and reproduction in the lives of any readers of this story and this letter of Paul’s to Philippi.

4.5 Toward an Exemplary-Paradigmatic Interpretation

To conclude this chapter, then, it remains to briefly state where the foregoing discussion, exegesis and analysis of our passage in its paraenetic context has been pointing. I want to suggest that each of the traditional labels for the function of our passage in its context have

¹ Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 93.
² For complementary accounts of participation in the story of Christ, see also Vanhoozer, ‘Being in Christ,’ 3-33, who speaks of Paul identifying with Christ ‘to the point of viewing his own story as overlapping with that of Jesus,’ citing Gal 2:19, ‘I have been crucified with Christ’ (p. 3); and the preceding discussion of pp. 238-240 and those cited in p. 238 n. 4 above.
been inadequate in themselves to explain the purpose of the whole. My conclusion is that no single label can do justice to describing the passage, whether it is ‘ethical’ or ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological,’ or even ‘exemplary.’ For myself I would prefer to forgo the competing terms; firstly, they are too polarizing, and secondly, I continue to feel that the labels ‘kerygmatic’ and ‘soteriological’ are misleading and obscure, in particular, the exemplary function of the first half of the story, thus I would urge scholars also to eschew them. The first half of the story, as I have shown, is clearly exemplary, and the paraenetic context of the passage from 1:27-4:3 demands that it have that function. Yet, as I have shown in Section 4.3.8 above, the context of our passage in Philippians 2 and 3 suggests that it also functions paradigmatically in shaping a framework and structure for the Christian life in various respects. The Christ-story thus offers a pattern not only to be followed (as one consciously follows an example or a model, such as adopting the mindset of Christ in vv. 6-8), but one to be reproduced in one’s life, allowing it to transform and shape the very existence of the follower of Christ. As such I offer the suggestion that the function of the passage be understood in this complementary dual sense, as ‘exemplary-paradigmatic.’

The previous section (§4.4) added a further dimension to our understanding, not only is the passage paradigmatic, but hearers and readers of this story of Christ are invited to participate in the Christ of the story, allowing this story to mould and shape them in conformity to he who is revealed in it. Paul’s introduction to the story, we argued, invites this participation.

In this way the present chapter provides a nuanced bridge of its own kind between the competing positions of interpretation. While I have perhaps been more critical of the kerygmatic/soteriological position, and specifically rejected some of its exegetical claims of our passage in its context, I suggest my nuanced interpretation satisfactorily accounts for the passage as a whole, recognizing that its two halves do have somewhat differing functions, but also allowing the story as a unity to speak into its epistolary context and into the life contexts of all subsequent hearers and readers. While the ‘exemplary’ side of my ‘label’ addresses primarily only one half of the story, I have argued that the story itself demands that. The ‘paradigmatic’ half of the ‘label,’ however, does treat the passage as a whole, and suggests that this whole story offers a structure for interpreting and shaping Christian life in various ways, and which also embraces an eschatological future aspect of the Christian life.
I should perhaps point out what is and is not meant or implied by the term ‘exemplary.’ Clearly, as an exemplar, the passage does not give a ‘model to be copied’ in every detail. The narration of the unique events of the incarnation, crucifixion, exaltation, and universal worship of Christ does not provide a step-by-step pattern to be imitated by Christians.\footnote{So also HANSEN, Philippians, 155; HAWTHORNE, ‘Imitation of Christ,’ 168-169, 178.}

It is rather a way of thinking, feeling, and acting, of having a particular mindset, a way of life. It does however mean a pattern, not for slavish copying, but for analogously living-out the example of the cross, and, additionally, of paradigmatic conformity to and participation in the destiny of Christ.

It was quite appropriate, therefore, for Hooker to suggest that conformity is a better alternative to imitation in Phil 2:5-11, for believers are being urged ‘to be conformed to what they ought to be in Christ, because of what has happened through his life, death and resurrection.’ She rightly points out that we may not separate Christian character from the character of Christ, and equally we cannot separate what Christ did from his character, what he is.\footnote{HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 92; cf. HURTADO, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 125, citing N. A. DAHL, ‘Form-Critical Observations on Early Christian Preaching,’ Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976) 34 (who wrote in 1976, one year after HOOKER’s original article, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ but without obvious acknowledgment to HOOKER).}

Hurtado also explains this well: ‘it is not strict *imitatio* but rather *conformitas* that the passage promotes, by which the believers are called to see in Jesus’ actions not only the basis of their obedience but also its pattern and direction.’\footnote{HURTADO, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 125.}

Martin’s first key objection to the ‘ethical interpretation’ fails when it is realized that Paul is not calling for slavish ‘imitative copying’ of the actions of Christ. One of Käsemann’s and Martin’s arguments, we saw, was that it is not possible to ‘imitate’ a divine being becoming human. However, in an ‘exemplary interpretation’ it is far from necessary to see such ‘imitation’ being advocated here, though naturally it depends upon one’s definition of ‘imitation.’ Of course believers cannot copy Christ’s unique actions, and if that is what ‘imitation’ means, I am in full agreement with Käsemann and Martin. But if it means a pattern of thought and action, a way of life, which can be followed, albeit at a distance – never to the same degree, then such designation may be appropriate. A better explanation of the passage might be that it is exemplary and paradigmatic, that Christ provides an example...
to be followed, and a paradigm to be matched in one’s life in submission to Christ as Lord. Slavish imitation is not even in the picture, nor would it have been to Paul or his readers.

The interpretation advanced here thus keeps both the uniqueness of Christ’s actions and their exemplary-paradigmatic character in perspective; they are not mutually exclusive. Mikael Tellbe correctly notes, therefore, that ‘Phil 2:6-11 not only provides the Philippians with a basis for Christian behaviour (Christ as Urbild) but also with a paradigm to follow (Christ as Vorbild).’

Furthermore, the link between Christ’s obedient actions and the obedience required of believers is not to be diminished, nor limited only to soteriology. The former is both the salvific ground and the exemplar or paradigm set for the latter.

With respect to the soteriology of the passage, the foregoing analysis has pointed in fact to the presence of an implicit soteriology, not as Käsemann understood it, but by way of the divine motivation for a soteriology of the cross. The combination of the parallel structures found in v. 3, v. 4 and vv. 6-8 (seen in Table 4.1 above), together with the context of vv. 2-4, appear to suggest that vv. 6-8 should be interpreted as implying Christ’s actions, not being done for his own advantage, were in fact done for the advantage or benefit of others, that is, that they were other-centred actions.

This points to an implicit and underlying motivation for the actions of Christ in vv. 6-8, which the context in fact suggests could include divine love. Implicitly, this represents not a soteriological action as such, but the divine motivation for that. Conversely, Christ’s actions appear to exemplify both what agapē love (v. 2) and considering the interests of others above one’s own interests (vv. 3-4) mean in practice. The text of vv. 6-8 does not say this, but the

1 TELLBE, Between Synagogue and State, 254 (italics his), 277; cf. LARSSON, Vorbild, 230-275. Significantly, KÄSEMANN later admitted as much in his influential commentary on Romans, discussing Phil 2:6-11 in his treatment of Rom 15:3; see p. 147 n. 1 above for this significant concession and notable reversal from the opinion he had stated thirty years earlier.


3 For Table 4.1, see p. 171 above.

4 See also my earlier comments on the implicit significance of these parallel structures (p. 102 above).

5 On this suggestion, see above, pp. 173-174.
paraenetic context seems to suggest it is implied, and I believe it is highly likely that Paul’s first hearers may have noted this.

Later we will also see not only that vv. 9-11 function to grant authority to the example set by vv. 6-8, but that both halves of the story together act to reveal the character of God, which indeed underlies the exemplary actions of Christ in the first half.¹

Martin’s second key objection revolved around vv. 9-11, arguing that the exaltation of Jesus is even less imitable than his incarnation and earthly ministry, and that the ethical interpretation simply cannot explain why vv. 9-11 have been included by Paul, nor, thus, the function of those verses. Here, the same basic response applies – the issue is not one of copy-imitation, nor can it be (in full agreement with Martin). While vv 6-8 can be regarded as exemplary in the sense of urging conformity to Christ’s character and way of life, it is certainly harder to see vv. 9-11 in the same way.

Thus, the function of vv. 6-8 interpreted in its context is very different from its interpretation and function were vv. 6-8 (and 9-11) to be isolated from their epistolary (and canonical) context. In this we see one aspect of the huge significance for interpretation of the text of the issues of the genre and authorship of the Christ-story.

Yet, as we have seen, there are several key indicators in the text to suggest that the two halves of the passage are indeed not meant to be interpreted in the same manner. Bearing in mind that the passage is a narrative unity and that the two halves do belong together, we may note: (i) that the narrative clearly divides into two – in vv. 6-8 Christ is the protagonist or actor, but in vv. 9-11 God is the primary protagonist and his deeds happen with Christ as their object or recipient; (ii) stylistically vv. 6-8 are very different from vv. 9-11, with the first half representing more pronounced rhythm and exalted prose, and using participles and pronouns extensively, and the second half being less poetic, and utilizing main verbs and nouns more.

¹ See below, pp. 311-313.
Additionally, we may note with Hurtado that vv. 9-11, as the culmination of the whole passage, also function as a divine vindication and commendation of the actions of Christ in vv. 6-8. He writes,

These verses [2:9-11] show that the actions of 2:6-8 received divine vindication and approval, and that the one who took the role of slave is now kyrios, to whom all owe reverence. This means that 2:9-11 is not an epilogue to 2:6-8, but rather serves to evaluate Jesus’ obedience in the highest terms. Further, the fact that Jesus is now kyrios (2:9-11) means that his action of self-humbling and obedience has not just exemplary but also fully authoritative significance.1

This, for Hurtado, is summed up in his phrase, Jesus’ ‘Lordly example’.2 It is precisely Jesus’ lordship, then, that gives added authority to the exhortation in 2:12 to obey (note the ὄστε of v. 12), which itself recalls Christ’s own obedience (and example) in 2:8.

I am not convinced of Martin’s claim that the ‘lordship of Christ’ really provides the centre of the passage. In Chapter 7 below, I will argue instead that the narrative shape of the passage points clearly to the cross as being the centre of the passage. Interestingly, Martin came close to admitting as much in 1983:

This, we submit is the essence of the paraenetic appeal of the passage: it consists in giving a kerygmatic dimension to their life-in-Christ by anchoring what they understood as life under His lordly control in a ‘theology of the cross.’ The boundaries of Paul’s understanding of Christ’s achievement are set by His cross, which is not a station on the way to glory but of the esse of Christian existence, and by His humanity which is now elevated to share the throne of God.3

Finally, therefore, this present chapter and the preceding one have now laid a good foundation to begin examining Phil 2:6-11 as a narrative. In Chapter 3 we concluded that the passage was (i) a story, and not a hymn, and (ii) Pauline, not pre-Pauline; here in Chapter 4 we have seen that the function of the passage in its context is (iii) neither merely ‘ethical’, nor ‘kerygmatic’ or ‘soteriological’, but that a more nuanced, all-embracing description of the role of the passage could be ‘exemplary-paradigmatic.’ In the next chapter we look at (iv) the character and background of the Christ-story, which will then prepare us well for a detailed narrative analysis of the Christ-story in Chapters 6 and 7 which follow.

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1 Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example,’ 125.
2 Thus, his article, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example’; and cf. also his ‘Jesus’ Death as Paradigmatic in the New Testament,’ SJT 57 no. 4 (2004) 420.
CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION LINES III: IMPLICIT STORIES
WITHIN THE CHRIST-STORY

5.1 Setting the Scene for a Narrative of Character (Phil 2:5, 6)

We have seen that the introduction to the Christ-story (Phil 2:5) points to an understanding that vv. 6-8 represent the attitude or mindset of Christ, which motivated the specific actions he undertook in vv. 7-8. We have seen that these actions are intended to be exemplary (v. 5b) and that they therefore illustrate what Paul’s exhortations to the Philippians in 2:1-4 (v. 5a) might look like in practice. The finite verb of v. 6 (ηγύγγεστο) is a verb of the mental processes, ‘to regard’ or ‘consider’ something [as something else]. It also supports the notion that Christ had a disposition or mindset from which his actions flowed. This chapter seeks to explicate in some detail what that disposition, mindset or underlying motivation was. It focuses in particular upon the interpretation of v. 6bc, and a particularly elusive word found only here in the Greek Bible, that is the word ἀρπαγμός (in v. 6b). It is a much debated word. The following Section will discuss the interpretation of this word in its immediate context and its significance for the interpretation of the Christ-story as a whole. Thus, we turn to a particularly important contribution to the study of this passage in Philippians 2 by N. T. Wright. As I will show below (and as Wright himself had argued) a correct understanding of this word does indeed affect the overall interpretation of the passage, and has significant bearing upon not only the Christology of the passage, but also significantly, its theology proper. As we move forward we will see that this word rightly understood helps us to understand not only the character of Christ, but also the character of God himself. It is not just a narrative of Christ, but as we will see, in some respects it is what could be termed a narrative of divine character.

However, a nuanced interpretation and translation of ἀρπαγμός will also significantly help us to interpret the passage as a narrative, for, as we will see, it actually has great bearing upon the background to this passage. I will argue below that the emphatic negation of this word in v. 6b (οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν) indicates something that is predicated negatively (or denied) of Christ,
and is therefore intended to contrast implicitly the mindset and actions of Christ with someone else (or some others else); the question is exactly who is Christ being contrasted with? Unfortunately, the text does not tell us explicitly, so our conclusion will need to be deduced. But, as we will see, a proper understanding of this problematic word ἀρπαγμός will help us to answer that question, and will actually point us in a particular direction, very much away from some directions that have been suggested in the past and which have provided particular narrative backgrounds against which this passage should be understood. The interpretation and translation of this word in v. 6bc does in fact offer a narrative background that has not yet been widely recognized. This chapter, then, provides a further very important fourth component to the foundation needed for us in the following two chapters (6 and 7) to analyse Phil 2:6-11 as a narrative.

Before we begin, a caveat is needed. This passage has been regarded as a christological centrepiece in Philippians, if not in the entire Pauline corpus. However, it is not our task to discuss in depth the Christology of the passage, nor to focus on detailed exegesis of every word and phrase (which many others have done before in far more depth than this study has space for). Our task from this point onwards is to understand the passage as a narrative, for as I mentioned in the Introduction, in my opinion a satisfactory account of this passage as a narrative has not yet been offered. Undoubtedly this particular work will not itself become a definitive interpretation of the passage, but it is hoped it may offer insights that point others in a direction whereby the richness and beauty of this exalted passage may better be appreciated.

5.2 Οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ... Ἀλλά ...: N. T. Wright’s Decisive Contribution

5.2.1 An Emerging Consensus on Philippians 2:6

We may turn, then, to a particularly decisive contribution in the history of interpretation of Phil 2:6-11. I mentioned in the Introduction that one of the most significant contributions to study of Phil 2:6-11 has been N. T. Wright’s survey and analysis of previous work on ἀρπαγμός in v. 6b.¹ Wright implicitly makes the claim that a correct understanding of v. 6,

¹ Note above, pp. 7-8.
and in particular of the meaning of the word ἀρπαγμός (v. 6b) in its context, is fundamental to a comprehensive and coherent theological understanding of the passage, including understanding the relationship between its two halves (vv. 6-8 and vv. 9-11), and how the passage as a whole fits into its epistolary paraenetic context.1

Building on the philological study of Roy Hoover,2 and extending the theological emphasis of Charles Moule,3 Wright proposed a translation and understanding of v. 6 that cuts through an enormous amount of often confusing and very complex technical debate about the meaning, theology, and indeed christology, of v. 6 (and thus of the passage as a whole),4 and now appears to be winning wider agreement to the point that his view (in its primary details)5 is achieving what could be called an impressive modern scholarly consensus for the interpretation of the passage.6 In 1997 Martin referred to this understanding as the ‘proverbial

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1 See, for example, N. T. WRIGHT, *Climax of the Covenant*, 57, 62, 78, 83-84, 86, 87-88, 90, and 97.
2 HOOVER, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 95-119 (for full reference, see p. 7 n. 3 above).
3 C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 264-276; though note his subsequent, gracious concession, conveyed in private correspondence (and reported by HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 102), that ‘Hoover’s philological study had won the day … and … was the final answer to the enigmatic ἀρπαγμός.’
4 What WRIGHT calls a ‘scholarly battlefield’, with even the task of describing the different senses offered by scholars creating much ‘headache’ (*Climax of the Covenant*, 62), let alone that of evaluating them. See further what follows and p. 250 n. 3 below.
5 Less widely accepted is WRIGHT’s assertion that an ‘Adam-christology’ lies behind the Philippians passage (see *Climax of the Covenant*, 57-62, 90-97). Yet, very recently, even WRIGHT appears to downplay the significance of this; while he now believes there remains a ‘[discernable] echo’ of Adam in Genesis 1-3, that is, admittedly, for him, not to be ignored or ruled out, it is only one among the ‘many resonances’ of vv. 6-11, and clearly ‘not the main theme,’ for the passage is ‘about much more than this’ (*Faithfulness of God*, 686 & n. 212), and he can now see ‘a clear allusion’ to an imperial ideology that Paul counters in the Christ-story (*Faithfulness of God*, 687, 1292-1299; *Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume 3: The Resurrection of the Son of God* [London: SPCK, 2003] 228, 233), which he had not noticed in 1991, and which, I would add, arguably relates to his conclusions on ἀρπαγμός in v. 6 much more appropriately. On these matters, see further Section 5.3 below.
6 Those accepting HOOVER’s and/or WRIGHT’s conclusions concerning the meaning of ἀρπαγμός in its context now include: HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 507; O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 202-203, 205-206, 211-216; BOCKmueHL, *Philippians*, 114, 129-131; HANSEN, *Philippians*, 118, 133-134, 142-146; FOWL, *Philippians*, 88, 94-95 (‘it now appears that there is a consensus emerging …’ along the lines of N. T. WRIGHT’s interpretation, p. 94); his ‘Christology and Ethics,’ 142-143 (WRIGHT’s interpretation is ‘now the definitive word on this clause’); and his *Story of Christ*, 54-56; FLEMMING, *Philippians*, 113-115 (‘the careful linguistic research of Roy W. HOOVER [1971] has persuaded most recent commentators that the term harpagmos has the idiomatic sense of “something to be exploited”’, p. 114); SILVA, *Philippians*, 112-113, 116-118 (‘Hooover’s essay … must be regarded as having settled this particular question’, 118); WITHERINGTON, *Letter to the Philippians*, 114, 139, 141-144; FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 205-209 & 205 n. 52 (somewhat tentatively); and his *Philippians* (IVPNTC), 93-94; more conclusively in his later *Pauline Christology*, 380-383 & nn.; L. H. COHICK, *Philippians* (SGBC 11; EPub ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013) 114-115 (Kindle loc. 2638-2659); I. H. MARSHALL, *Philippians*, 51-53 (somewhat cautiously); W. SCHENK, *Der Philippierbrief*, 188, 212; U. B. MÜLLER, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philiffer* (THKNT 11.1; Leipzig: Evangelische, 1993) 94-96; THIELMAN, *Philippians*, 116; MELICK, *Philippians*, 102-103; HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 101-102 (and note also C. F. D. MOULE’s own ‘gracious bowing’ to HOOVER’s view, reported by HAWTHORNE, p. 102, and cited in n. 3 above); similarly
sense’ of the phrase ἀρπαγμόν ἤγείσθαι τι (lit. ‘to regard something as harpagmos’), and deemed it as ‘well grounded.’¹

The key word at the heart of this debate, ἀρπαγμός, occurs only here in the entire Greek Bible, and rarely in extra-biblical texts, with the majority of its available instances being patristic quotations of, or allusions to, Phil 2:6 itself.² Yet, Wright’s study surveys and evaluates no less than twenty distinguishable interpretations of ἀρπαγμός and v. 6.³ To complicate our understanding still further, interpretations of οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ... in v. 6 also depend to some extent upon how the phrases μορφή θεοῦ (‘the form of God’) and

¹ R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxvii n. 51; cf. p. xxii (1983) where he describes Hoover’s interpretation as ‘sound.’ However, as we will later see, Martin, while accepting this ‘proverbial sense,’ unhelpfully went on to merge it with his own previous understanding of v. 6. This is ironic, because while accepting the conclusion of Hoover’s research, Martin ignored the fact that Hoover himself had effectively claimed Martin’s earlier view to be philologically impossible (‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 101; cf. N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 68 & n. 48).

² N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 62. Yet, in one of the most recent studies of the word, G. M. Ellis, ‘Grammar as Theology: A Linguistic Rereading of Philippians 2:6-7a’ (Ph.D Thesis, University of Otago, 2013) 63, 162-166, 183-206, 209-210, has identified a further 27 instances of ἀρπαγμός in extant Greek literature, more than had been considered in previous philological studies. While this data (and other relevant and well documented philological data) and his analyses of it require further study, and given that, though his thesis was completed in 2011, no published work has yet come out of the research, I am not convinced that his ‘rereading’ of ἀρπαγμός in its Philippians context is likely to persuade others; on this, see further, p. 258 n. 6 below.

³ See his very helpful tabulation of eighteen* of these various positions (under ten main categories) in N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 81, together with his extended discussion of them (pp. 62-90). (* Note, he discusses at least two additional positions, which are not found in his table on p. 81.) For much shorter surveys of the main interpretative options, see O’Brien, Philippians, 211-216; Hansen, Philippians, 114-116; cf. the earlier survey, to 1967, in R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 134-153, 154-164.
The terminology used to describe the various interpretative options for ἀρπαγμὸς has often been perplexing and sometimes misused, though, as we will see, Wright’s approach appears to avoid most of the terminological and theological confusion.

5.2.2 The Philological Contributions of Jaeger and Hoover

To understand Wright’s contribution it is necessary to mention the earlier work of Hoover, Moule, and a couple of others. Very significant for Hoover was the 1915 study by Werner Jaeger. Jaeger had contended that οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ ἔναι ἴσα θεῷ belongs in both form and meaning to a cluster of idiomatic expressions, also featuring double accusative constructions with verbs like ἡγεῖσθαι (‘to consider, regard’), in which the literal notions of robbery or violent seizure (common translations for the term ἀρπαγμὸς) are not present, but rather carrying the meaning ‘to regard something as a stroke of luck, a windfall, a piece of

1 These are also shown in Wright’s tabulation of possible interpretative options; see the previous note. The key issues regarding the phrases are: (i) whether or not ῥοφή θεοῦ is to be taken as a pre-indication of Christ’s divinity; and (ii) whether or not τὸ ἔναι ἴσα θεῷ is taken to be more or less parallel in meaning to the former phrase. Related to these questions is the christological concern as to whether or not v. 6 implies the pre-existent divinity of Christ. The scholarly debate on these issues is unsurprisingly also enormous and space does not permit full discussion of them here, for each issue could well require a full thesis in itself; however, I will discuss some of the issues relatively briefly below in Sections 5.2.4, 5.2.6, and 7.2.1 (in Chapter 7).

2 To illustrate this complexity, before Hoover and Wright, the terminology often used to describe the noun ἀρπαγμὸς included: (i) whether or not it is used in an active or passive sense, (ii) whether it is an abstract or concrete noun, and consequently (iii) which Latin tag then best describes its meaning. The technical language employed to distinguish interpretations has broadly been as follows: (a) passive sense, with a concrete action: res rapta (‘something grasped’ = ‘robbery’) or res rapienda (‘something to be grasped’), both referring to something not previously possessed, or res retinenda (‘something to be clung onto’), referring to something already possessed; (b) an active sense, with an abstract action: rapina (the action of ‘robbing’ itself), or raptus (the action of ‘snatching’ itself; though it can also carry a passive sense as ‘rape’). See N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 81; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 206 n. 55; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 129-131; and cf. the discussions of O’Brien, Philippians, 211-216; Hansen, Philippians, 142-146; Reumann, Philippians, 345-347. Wright (Climax of the Covenant, 62-69), in particular, details how the two classical treatments of the problem, namely those by J. B. Lightfoot (see his Philippians, 109, 131-135) and R. P. Martin (see his Hymn of Christ, 143-153) have confused some of the terminology, leading to ‘seriously misleading’ descriptions (cf. Hoover’s description of the latter’s suggestion, while being ‘an imaginative proposal’ which sought to combine both res rapta and res rapienda senses of ἀρπαγμὸς, nevertheless as constituting a ‘theological obfuscation’; ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 101).

3 Jaeger, ‘Stilgeschichtliche Studie,’ 537-553. See Hoover’s discussion of Jaeger in ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 95-102. In the following summary, as my purpose here is to be descriptive in highlighting the significance of Jaeger’s contribution for Hoover, some simplifications will be made to a somewhat more complicated technical argument (and usage of relevant philological data). For the sake of space I want to maintain a view of the forest as a whole, and thus will not focus on the many details of the trees.

4 Both [οὐχ] ἄρπαγμὸς and τὸ ἔναι in v. 6 are in the accusative case, with the latter being the object of ἡγήσατο and the former its complement (or, alternatively, its predicate accusative).
good fortune.” He then translated vv. 5-7 as: ‘Let everyone be minded as Jesus Christ also was, who, although he was in the divine form of being, yet did not regard as something for his own advantage the fact that he was like God, but emptied himself (of the divine form) and assumed a servant’s form …’. Yet, while Jaeger’s conclusion about the translation of ἀρπαγμός in v. 6 as an idiomatic phrase was based on literary judgments about the assumed stylistic history of such idiomatic expressions and the supposed Gattung of the Philippian passage, he lacked persuasive philological proof for his claim. Similarly, he assumed, rather than demonstrated, the synonymity of idiomatic usage of the nouns ἀρπαγμα and ἀρπαγμός, on analogy with the many -μα and -μος terms which do carry similar meanings in Hellenistic Greek. Nevertheless, for Hoover, Jaeger had thus established the ground on which subsequent attempts to understand the meaning of ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6 should be made.

If Jaeger had then pointed in the right direction, Hoover’s important contribution was to supply the philological support for a specific idiomatic sense of ἀρπαγμός as part of a larger phrase, ἀρπαγμόν ἢμείσθαι τι (‘to regard something as harpagmos’), with the sense ‘to regard [an accusative object] as something-to-take-advantage-of’ and, more idiomatically, in the case of Phil 2:6 with the rendering, ‘he did not regard being equal with God as something to use for his own advantage.’ Significantly, he found that it needs to be interpreted as a complete phrase in its context, and not as a single word (ἀρπαγμός) in its context, as most

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1 Similarly, JAEGER found numerous uses of ἀρπαγμα and its cognates which also document an association with ideas of fortuity and good luck. See JAEGER, ‘Stilgeschichtliche Studie,’ 543-550.


3 Notably, the key passage upon which he based his interpretation of Phil 2:6, PLUTARCH’s De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Vitute 1.8 (330d) (in Moralia Vol. IV; Loeb 305; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), does not actually use ἀρπαγμα in a double accusative construction; thus, HOOVER, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 96-99, especially 98-99. Hence, in HOOVER’s estimation, JAEGER and some of those who were influenced by his work had ‘offered the right translation, but for the wrong reasons’ (p. 118 n. 34).

4 JAEGER, ‘Stilgeschichtliche Studie,’ 548 n. 1; cf. HOOVER’s criticism at this point (‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 98 & n. 6). Of course, it is not a rule that -μα and -μος terms are used synonymously in Greek; sometimes differences in meaning or connotation can be present, and which can also change over the history of usage of the terms. In classical Greek typically nouns with a -μος ending express the action of the verb, while those with a -μα suffix express the result of the action of the verb. ‘But,’ asks N. T. WRIGHT, ‘what would the “result” be in this case?’ (Climax of the Covenant, 76 n. 85); it is questionable in this case that the two could be distinguished, especially within the idiom identified by HOOVER (p. 79). Furthermore, as HOOVER notes (‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 107 & n. 17), it has been widely recognized in more recent interpretation that this characteristic distinction is not observed in the usage of many such nouns in the Hellenistic period.

5 HOOVER, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 118.
had sought to do in previous studies. Hoover first adduced evidence to show that in at least some instances ἀρπάγμα and ἀρπαγμός were used synonymously. He had also demonstrated that when ἀρπάγμα or ἀρπαγμός were used outside of a double accusative construction they conveyed meanings distinct from those which they connoted when they occur as predicate accusatives, thus ruling out as relevant for determining the meaning of Phil 2:6 any texts in which ἀρπάγμα or ἀρπαγμός occur outside double accusative formulations. Therefore Hoover was able to argue that uses of ἀρπάγμα in double accusative constructions (similar to that in Phil 2:6) can form a basis for determining the meaning of the ἀρπαγμός phrase in Phil 2:6, and which led him to the rendering mentioned above. Hoover thus was able to present an import for, and translation of, οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, which is both appropriate to the Philippians context and confirmed by comparable usage in other literature.

Hoover’s translation contributes two key gains for the study of Pauline Christology. The first is that not only is Phil 2:6-7 regarded as being parallel to 2 Cor 8:9, but may also be seen as parallel to Rom 15:3 in both its antithetical form and its meaning. We have already referred to both those passages as evidence which points toward authentic Pauline theology within Phil 2:6-11, and thus to Pauline authorship.

The second contribution is important as it helps to resolve an aspect of christological interpretation of this passage which has dogged interpreters for centuries. Hoover’s understanding of ἀρπαγμός in its context carries with it the assumption that τὸ ἐίναι ἴσον θεῷ (‘the being equal with God’; v. 6c) represents a status which belonged to the pre-existent Christ. As he explains, this

1 Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 117.
2 Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 106-110, 117-118. See further n. 4 on the previous page.
3 Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 106-114, 117. Thus, he found that when ἀρπάγμα occurs as a predicate accusative with verbs such as ἑγέρσει, ποιεῖσθαι, and τίθέσθαι, it has a meaning distinguishable from, rather than synonymous with, such terms as ἔρμασιν and ἐρήμα (as Jaeger had proposed). In these expressions, Hoover observed that ἀρπάγμα conveys a metaphorical and idiomatric sense similar to that of the verb in the expression ἀρπάξειν τὸν καιρόν; but it connotes no notion of fortunate fortuity, nor is it used in this idiomatric phrase only in reference to situations arising from luck (p. 117).
5 Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 102, 118.
6 Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 118.
7 See above, p. 95 and for more detail, see Appendix 1 below, pp. 489-495.
is bound up with the idiomatic character of the ἀρπαγμός remark itself: in every instance which I have examined this idiomatic expression refers to something already present and at one’s disposal. The question in such instances is not whether or not one possesses something, but whether or not one chooses to exploit something.¹

For Wright, this was Hoover’s strongest christological point. One cannot decide to exploit or take advantage of something which one does not already have. Thus, here, ‘equality with God’, however it is understood, is found by virtue of the idiomatic expression in which it occurs as already possessed by Christ.² As such, argues Wright, even if a distinction between the phrases ‘existing in the form of God’ and ‘being equal with God’ is to be made, such a distinction does not, at least, involve seeing either phrase as referring to something less than divinity and/or the honours pertaining to that state. Both expressions mark out Jesus Christ, in his pre-existent state, as one who is indeed, and fully, capax humanitas, but at the same time different from all other human beings in his nature and origin.³

Wright goes on to note a further grammatical argument for taking τὸ ἔιναι ἱσαθεοῦ in close connection with ἦς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, namely ‘the regular usage of the articular infinitive’ (here, τὸ ἔιναι) to refer anaphorically ‘to something previously mentioned or otherwise well known.’⁴ If that is the case, he states, one could expect therefore that τὸ ἔιναι ἱσαθεοῦ might refer back, exegetically, to ἦς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, and this ‘might even suggest the stronger translation “this divine equality.”’⁵ Furthermore, among other corollaries this ‘clearly indicates the impossibility of any res rapienda view, which begins from the assumption that Christ, although in the form of God, did not yet possess divine equality.’⁶ Similarly, in contrast to the standard retinenda approaches, under this interpretation, ‘nothing

¹ HOOVER, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 118. Similarly, HOOVER noted that discernment of the idiomatic character of the ἀρπαγμός expression rendered as untenable the view which states that Christ did not regard equality with God as something to be held fast. Neither in this idiomatic phrase nor in any other usage does ἀρπαγμον, ἀρπαγμός, or ἀρπαζόμενον, or any of their compounds or cognates mean to retain something (‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 118-119).
² N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 82. This latter point was recently challenged afresh by MARTIN, in his 1997 preface to A Hymn of Christ (pp. lxv-lxxiii); we shall discuss MARTIN’s predominantly theological (as opposed to philological) objections and counter-arguments to WRIGHT shortly below.
³ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 82.
⁴ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83 & n. 108, citing BDF 205 §399; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 84; and also, from ‘among over a dozen possible examples’ of [Pauline?] anaphoric use of the articular infinitive, Rom 7:18 and 2 Cor 7:11 in support.
⁵ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83; followed by, among others, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 216; FLEMMING, Philippians, 114. But this point and the grammatical argument based on an alleged anaphoric articular infinitive (in the phrase τὸ ἔιναι ἱσαθεοῦ) have recently been vigorously disputed – I discuss this serious grammatical challenge below in Section 5.2.4 (pp. 260-276); in my opinion the case against WRIGHT on this is overstated, and unhelpfully polarised.
⁶ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83.
described by either ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων or by τὸ εἶναι ἰσα θεῶ is given up.'¹ Instead, Christ’s ‘equality with God’ is strikingly reinterpreted by him. Hence, for Wright, Hoover’s understanding of v. 6 leads to the additional conclusion that ‘the sense of οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἠγέρσατο will then be that Christ, in contrast to what one might have expected … refused to take advantage of his position’ and the translation of vv. 6-7a as: ‘who being in the form of God, did not regard this divine equality as something to be used for his own advantage, but rather emptied himself …’.² He briefly explains the significance of this for our understanding of the Christ-story: ‘over against the standard picture of oriental despots, who understood their position as something to be used for their own advantage, Jesus understood his position to mean self-negation, that vocation described in vv. 7-8.’³ We will discuss this further below, after considering some challenges to the emerging consensus of scholarly agreement with Hoover and Wright. But before doing that, it is vital that we mention the influence of Moule upon Wright as well.

5.2.3 The Theological Contribution of Moule

If Hoover’s philological contribution to interpreting Phil 2:6 (and 2:6-11) was crucial for Wright,⁴ C. F. D. Moule’s theological understanding was just as significant.⁵ Moule had argued for a strictly abstract, active (raptus) meaning of ἄρπαγμός: Christ ‘did not regard equality with God as consisting in snatching,’⁶ referring to the act of ‘snatching,’ ‘taking,’ or ‘getting,’ or the action behind the attitude of πλεονεξία, ‘acquisitiveness.’⁷

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¹  N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83.
²  N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83. This translation is supported by HERIBAN, Retto φρονεῖν εἰς κένωσις, 268; cf. NRSV: ‘did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited’.
³  N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83 (emphasis WRIGHT’s).
⁴  N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 77-90, 97-98.
⁶  C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266 (emphasis his); cf. his ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 97.
⁷  C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266 (emphasis his); cf. his ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 97.

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[2] N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 83. This translation is supported by Heriban, Retto φρονεῖν εἰς κένωσις, 268; cf. NRSV: ‘did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited’.
[7] C. F. D. Moule, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266-268, 271-276, basing his argument upon the distinction noted above (see p. 252 n. 4) that nouns with a -μος ending typically express the action of the verb (‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266-268). Moule had already answered adequately (p. 272) the common objection that the verbal noun, ἄρπαγμός, if it has an active sense, surely then requires an object (so W. Foerster, ἄρπαγμός, TDNT 1, 474; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 135; cf. xxii-xxiii) as missing the point, since an abstract noun like ‘snatching’ or ‘taking’ does not need an object; it refers, intransitively, to a particular way of life such as characterized pagan kings and pagan deities that the Philippians may have worshipped in their pre-Christian past, in contrast to one of ‘giving away’; thus, N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 89; O’Brien, Philippians, 214; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 206 n. 58.
In response Bockmuehl mentions three ‘slight queries’ which weigh against this particular reading of 2:6 and that tend to support Hoover’s rendering instead. The first query is that it seems absurd that a divine being might have been thought, even hypothetically, to consider ‘snatching’ at something that was not already his; no good reason can be advanced for such a scenario. Secondly, it is more difficult to see a practical analogy with the Christian life (as seems implied by 2:5) if the point is the abstract one that Christ did not consider divinity to consist in acquisitiveness. Thirdly, it is argued, Moule’s reading does not readily explain why Paul has used a strongly adversative ἀλλά (‘but, instead’) in v. 7, since following v. 6bc as understood in Moule’s rendering, Paul could just as easily have used a ‘therefore’ to introduce v. 7. O’Brien has responded to the third point, observing that v. 6b makes clear what Christ might have done (not thought), but chose not to (‘regard equality with God as ἀρπαγμός’), while v. 7 states what he chose to do (to ‘empty himself … humble himself’); but v. 6b does not merely state what Christ might have done – it states that he did not do it. He might have regarded his equality with God as snatching [Moule] or something to take advantage of [Hoover]; instead he chose to regard it as self-giving and to act on that understanding. Thus in either rendering a clear contrast between v. 6bc and v. 7 is still present, even if it is slightly lessened in Moule’s reading. Nevertheless, more recently and quite significantly, Moule has in fact conceded that Hoover, rather than he, had ‘won the day … and … was the final answer to the enigmatic ἀρπαγμός.’

Yet, while most have not supported Moule’s rendering of ἀρπαγμός, his sense of the theological import of the phrase has been well appreciated by scholars. He argued that the Philippians passage requires that ἀρπαγμός be something that would be expected of one who

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1 Note also the objection about ἀρπαγμός, if taking an active sense, allegedly needing an object, mentioned and adequately answered above (see the preceding n. 7, on the previous page).
2 BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 130.
3 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 214; here following N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 89.
4 It follows that the similar concerns about an alleged ‘slackening’ of the contrast between v. 6bc and v. 7 voiced by R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxvi, can here be laid to rest as well.
5 Reported by HAWTHORNE (‘Form of God,’ 102) in 1998, citing a private conversation with him.
6 Recognized by MOULE himself (‘Reflections on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266-267); incidentally, the view dates back to the Latin Fathers (on one reading of them; see N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 73-74, 81). Among those who have followed his translation, see HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 84-85; cf. HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 88, 100; and see also those mentioned by N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 76-77.
7 See those cited in the previous note; and also O’BRIEN, Philippians, 213-214, 216; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 205-209; MACLEOD, ‘Imitating the Incarnation,’ 315-316, 330; F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 77; and additionally, cf. the positive remarks (alongside discussion of other views) of BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 129-130 and HANSEN, Philippians, 143.
is already equal with God. Rather than it being a kingly or divine prerogative to help yourself
to what you want, as was popularly imagined in the Graeco-Roman world, for Jesus, in
Paul’s estimation, ‘deity means not … getting, but, paradoxically, giving,’ and to Moule this
represents ‘the heart of the revelation in Christ Jesus’ and is ‘embedded’ in the pattern of
descent and ascent found in the Christ-story. Thus, Phil 2:6-8 is saying that Jesus thought of
equality with God ‘not as πλήρωσις but as κένωσις, not as ἀρπαγμός but as open-handed
spending – even to death.’ Moule’s understanding makes excellent sense of the exegetical
and theological context: equality with God was for Christ not concerned with snatching,
pursuing ‘selfish ambition’ (2:3) and ‘looking out for his own interests’ (2:4), but divinity in
its very nature meant giving and self-emptying.

For Wright, as mentioned above, it is the combination of Moule’s theology and Hoover’s
philology (including Hoover’s understanding of the idiomatic sense of ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6)
which appear to be most persuasive and satisfactory as representing Paul’s likely intent in the
Philippian passage. As Wright later puts it, the ‘underlying theological emphasis of Moule’s
view of Philippians 2:5-11’ needed to undergo ‘the adjustments necessitated by the
[philological] arguments of Hoover.’ Although Hoover’s analysis of the idiom clashes with
Moule’s, the overall sense achieved by both is similar:

For both, the action or attitude envisaged is not the grasping of, or clinging on to, equality with God,
but the attitude – of advantage-taking, of ‘getting’, of behaving like an oriental despot – based on that
equality. For both, ultimately, the word is abstract and active with a future connotation (what one
will, or might, do on the basis of something).

Similarly, for both, unlike other previous interpretations of ἀρπαγμός, ‘the “grasping” or
“advantage-taking” does not aim at τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θέω: it begins from it,’ thus assuming its
presence already for the pre-existent Christ. Nevertheless, he adds, in English, it is just as
easy, without altering the meaning, to turn the phrase around and express the same idea in
concrete and passive terms: ‘he did not regard his equality with God as something to be used

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1 C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 272, 276; see also his ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 97.
2 C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 272; see also ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 97.
3 As Bockmuehl, Philippians, 130, observes.
4 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 97.
5 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 78-79 (emphasis WRIGHT’s).
6 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 79 (emphasis his).
for his own advantage’. Because of this closeness of actual significance, Wright adduces an important philological implication: ‘it is not difficult to see how in fact ἀρπαγμός and ἀρπαγμα could, precisely within this idiom, be so nearly interchangeable in meaning.’

Wright further noted that ‘if Hoover is right (and, though his conclusions have often been misunderstood, he has not been conclusively challenged on philological grounds), the views of all the other scholars we have reviewed for the sake of clarity in the current debate are undercut at a stroke.’ He believed that two considerations reinforced this apparently sweeping judgment: (i) most other theories already possess serious internal weaknesses of their own, which prompt us to look elsewhere in any case; and (ii) Hoover’s theory is capable of making excellent theological sense, and of including within itself many of the strong points of the other theories. As mentioned, we shall explore its importance for understanding the Christ-story and for this study further below.

However, while Wright’s case (for Hoover’s rendering of Phil 2:6) appears to be winning the day in modern scholarship, it has not gone unchallenged. Leaving aside for the moment what I perceive to be Wright’s weakest point – his Adam Christology (to which we shall return briefly in the next section) – which does not in any way affect his case for the meaning of ἀρπαγμός in Philippians 2, serious philological objections to the Hoover-Wright rendering in published works have come from only two sources: John O’Neill and Samuel Vollenweider.

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1 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 79 (emphasis his); he goes on to note that, ‘if Hoover is right, a native speaker of Hellenistic Greek, faced with that English sentence, would very likely, and quite correctly, render it into idiomatic Greek in the very words of Philippians 2:6.’
2 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 79 (emphasis Wright’s).
3 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 78 (slightly altered from his 1986 original, ‘ὁρπαγμός,’ 339).
4 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 78.
5 See pp. 314-337 below.
6 J. C. O’Neill, ‘Hoover on Harpagmos Reviewed, with a Modest Proposal Concerning Philippians 2:6,’ HTR 81 no. 4 (1988) 445-449; Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 413-433. To these we might add the (as yet) unpublished Ph.D thesis of Gerard M. Ellis, ‘Grammar as Theology’ (see p. 250 n. 2 above) and its fairly radical ‘rereading’ of Phil 2:6. Ellis argues that the verb ἀρπαζεῖν, alongside meanings of ‘to seize’ or ‘grasp,’ could mean ‘to appropriate’ (with the related verbal noun thus being an act of ‘appropriation’) from which he makes a questionable, major semantic jump (p. 181) to translate the noun ἀρπαγμός as ‘something appropriate’ (conveying the notion of ‘appropriateness,’ without any negative connotations) and thereby arrives at a translation for Phil 2:6 as ‘who being in the form of God did not think it something appropriate to be as one divine …’ (where ‘as one divine’ is synonymous with ‘like a god’, as in being like a Roman ruler claiming to be a ‘god’, p. 180); see pp. 166-183, 206-210, esp. pp. 166, 180-181, 208. In supporting his case, Ellis claims (among other things) (i) that ἀρπαγμα and ἀρπαγμός were not synonymous prior to the 7th Century CE, and that translation of the latter can be made without reference to
In addition, a more theological challenge has come from Ralph Martin in the form of six counter-arguments to Wright’s 1986/1991 critique of him.¹

Finally, a grammatical challenge by Dennis Burk and Daniel Wallace has been made to Wright’s understanding of the syntactical relationship between the phrases μορφή θεού (v. 6a) and τὸ εἶναι ἴσος θεῷ (v. 6c), in particular questioning whether the article τὸ in v. 6c is anaphoric or not, which does have bearing upon the interpretation of the phrase within v. 6 and the whole story.²

To date significant responses to these challenges have only been made in the case of O’Neill’s short paper, which Wright had already seen (and essentially dismissed) when he wrote his 1991 revised chapter on Phil 2:5-11.³ I will therefore only briefly mention his particular challenge. However, it is undoubtedly very important that we address the respective concerns of the three remaining challenges (treating Burk and Wallace together), particularly since others have not yet done so, but I will do this in reverse order, giving final prominence to the hypothesis of Vollenweider.

³ See N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 80 n. 105, 84-85 & nn. 116, 119.
Thus, in what follows, we shall deal firstly with the grammatical challenge to Wright on Phil 2:6 by Burk and Wallace, in Section 5.2.4, then with a theological challenge to the consensus view by Martin (Section 5.2.5), and finally with the philological challenges to the consensus view by both O’Neill and Vollenweider (Section 5.2.6).

5.2.4 A Grammatical Challenge to Wright

At the outset it should be noted that technically Burk and Wallace’s challenge does not seek to overturn Wright’s (and Hoover’s) rendering of v. 6b as such. Yet it raises issues of importance to the present study of the Christ-story as a whole that make it worth being discussed here.

As we noted above, one of the most important implications of Hoover’s understanding of v. 6bc is that the phrases ‘form of God’ (v. 6a) and ‘equality with God’ (v. 6c) are to be taken in close connection, since in the idiomatic ἀρματικά expression both are regarded as already possessed by Christ. Wright saw further support for this conclusion in what he considers to be an instance of ‘the regular usage of the articular infinitive,’ in this case, τὸ ἐναντίον, to refer back anaphorically to the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (‘being in the form of God’, v. 6a).

Against this alleged anaphora within v. 6, Denny Burk, with support from Daniel Wallace, has mounted a vigorous challenge, though their case appears to ignore the word order and structure in Paul’s sentence (vv. 6-8) as well as the apparent correlation between the phrases in v. 6a and v. 6c, and Burk’s reasoning in particular appears overstated.

In summary they contend that ‘the most natural reason for the article with the infinitive is simply to mark it out as the object’ in the ‘object-complement’ double accusative construction of v. 6, and, given that, Burk argues, the article in v. 6c has only syntactical value (marking the infinitive expression as accusative, and hence as the object of the verb

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2 Reasons for this will become apparent shortly; however, cf. the scathing review of BURK’S *Articular Infinitives* by classical linguist Shane HAWKINS (*BTB* 38 no. 3 [2008] 141-142).

3 WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 186, 220.
Bygμσατο) and therefore no semantic (and anaphoric) value. Burk contends that the article in v. 6c must strictly carry either syntactical value or semantic value, but apparently cannot have both. Further, he argues his case against Wright as supposedly claiming that the phrases ‘form of God’ and ‘equality with God’ are **synonymous**, and repeatedly argues on this basis, even though a more careful reading of Wright shows that he never made such a claim.

However, not only does Burk want to argue against the supposed synonymity of the phrases, but he further wants to assert not only a distinction in meaning, but a **significant difference** in meaning between the phrases (the first applying to Christ, and the second denied of Christ),

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[3] Burk, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 256: ‘Wright contends that “the being equal with God” (τὸ ἐπίσημον ἴσα θεόν) refers back to “the form of God” (μορφὴ θεοῦ) mentioned in the first part of the verse. The exegetical result is that “equality with God” is equal to or synonymous with the “form of God”. These two phrases (τὸ ἐπίσημον ἴσα θεόν and μορφὴ θεοῦ) are but two ways of referring to one reality. … Since the two phrases refer to the same thing …’ (this claim is repeated almost verbatim in his Articular Infinitives, 138); note also ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 273-274 (cf. Articular Infinitives, 139): ‘what I have shown … is that it is grammatically possible to regard “form of God” and “equality with God” not as synonymous phrases, but as phrases with distinct meanings. Therefore, if N. T. Wright and others want to link these two phrases as two ways of referring to the same thing, they will have to do so on other grounds.’ In fact, Wright has done this (link the two phrases on other grounds; for one Hoover’s idiomatic reading requires such a link, since it implies that both phrases represent things belonging to the pre-existent Christ), but Burk does not acknowledge this. For Wright, the anaphoric use of the articular infinitive merely supports his position; it is not the totality of his case (see further below). Cf. also p. 262 n. 1 below, which shows Wallace also to be arguing against what I will call the ‘straw person’ (see below) of alleged synonymity.


[5] What Burk (‘Articular Infinitive,’ 256 & n. 8) cites of Wright is the following: ‘A further reason, not usually noticed, for taking τὸ ἐπίσημον ἴσα θεόν in close connection with δὲ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχον is the regular usage of the articular infinitive (here, τὸ ἐπίσημον) to refer “to something previously mentioned or otherwise well known”’ (N. T. Wright, ‘ἄρσηγμος,’ 344; repeated in his Climax of the Covenant, 83; and cited by me earlier); however, ‘in close connection’ in no way implies the meaning ‘synonymous.’ More pointedly Wright is clear enough when he says, ‘a distinction [between Christ's being in the form of God and Christ possessing τὸ ἐπίσημον ἴσα θεόν] does not, at least, involve seeing either phrase as referring to something less than divinity and/or the honours pertaining to that state’ (‘ἄρσηγμος,’ 344; Climax of the Covenant, 82). Wright is only arguing that both phrases imply the divinity of Christ (especially with Hoover’s idiomatic understanding); not that they are identical phrases; cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 207 & n. 64, who expresses Wright's point more clearly (and pointing to a view accepted by ‘most interpreters’): it is ‘... not in the sense that the two phrases are identical, but that both point to the same reality.’ If we might display the semantic situations graphically, Burk’s ‘straw person’ has Wright arguing for the left-hand diagram below, while in reality Wright is only arguing for the situation in the right-hand diagram, in which the overlapping middle represents an implied divinity of Christ. Burk’s own position, it would seem, is that the two ovals as applied to Christ in v. 6 do not overlap at all; one is affirmed of him, and one denied of him.

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**Figure 5.1, Burk's 'straw person' of alleged synonymity**

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**Figure 5.2, Wright's actual position on Phil 2:6**
so that he (with his mentor, Wallace) can posit v. 6 as implying an eternal, intra-Trinitarian, functional subordination of Christ to God (the Father). I suggest the case for such a position is tenuous.

Nevertheless, it is important that we ask the question whether or not an anaphoric reference in the articular infinitive of v. 6 can be maintained, given the challenge by Burk and Wallace. Burk points out that Wright appears to be dependent upon the standard grammar by Blass-Debrunner-Funk, and believes that the New Testament evidence shows that BDF has overstated the significance of the article with the infinitive. He argues that with the infinitive (as opposed to the case with other nouns), in New Testament usage, the articular infinitive consistently falls toward the left of a spectrum of syntactical versus semantic value, meaning that the usage is predominantly syntactical:

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1 WALLACE, *Greek Grammar*, 220. After rejecting an anaphoric articular infinitive in v. 6, explicitly against WRIGHT, WALLACE concludes (p. 220): ‘Further, there is the possibility that μορφή θεού refers to essence (thus, Christ’s deity), while τὸ εἶναι ὄν θεοῦ refers to function. If this is the meaning of the text, then the two are not synonymous: although Christ was true deity: he did not usurp the role of the Father’ (thus, assuming a res rapienda interpretation of ἀρπαγμός). But there is a huge leap from ‘the two are not synonymous’ (which was not WRIGHT’s position in any case) to WALLACE’s new ‘possibility’ (later followed by BURK, ‘Meaning of ἀρπαγμός’ [section headed, ‘Exegetical Conclusions,’ para. 2.]). I would suggest it seems unlikely that the Philippian believers would have had such a sophisticated trinitarian understanding to hear this as Paul’s intended meaning. Firstly, the most recent research on the phrase μορφή θεοῦ shows that the view of it referring to divine essence is mistaken (see the recent work by FABRICATORE, *Form of God*); and secondly, one is hard pressed to see from the text that ‘being equal to God’ must mean functionally taking ‘the role of the Father.’

2 The language used here is BURK’s; see his ‘Meaning of ἀρπαγμός’ [section headed, ‘Theological Implications’, para. 1 & 3]; and cf. the revised version of his Tyndale Bulletin article, ‘Functional Subordination’ (with the title representing a new raison d’être for his grammatical arguments), 82-107, esp. 82-83, 103-104. BURK’s case that ‘the contrast between “grasping for equality” and “emptying himself” suggests that both are functional categories’ (p. 103) is far from being persuasive. For recent debate on the issue of intra-Trinitarian subordinationism, see D. W. JOWERS & H. W. HOUSE (eds.), *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), which includes BURK’s revised article. Yet, in his online article (‘Meaning of ἀρπαγμός’), BURK goes beyond positing functional subordinationism in Phil 2:6 to the ecclesiological ramifications he sees as emerging from this view, namely that there is a corresponding functional inequality in male-female roles in both home and church (‘Meaning of ἀρπαγμός,’ [‘Theological Implications’, para. 2 & 3]). I was surprised to see there Christ’s actions in Phil 2:6-8 being described as ‘demure obedience’ to God the Father, modelling a corresponding obedience expected of wives to their husbands in the home.


While this may be correct, more helpful, in my opinion, would be a Venn diagram along the following lines, in which we need to determine the place of the articular infinitive in Phil 2:6:

Burk admits that ‘many uses of the article comprise a combination of both syntactical and semantic features.’ His mentor, Wallace also acknowledges in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* that the article can have the utility of dual syntactical and semantic function, for example, in Phil 1:22 (where the article in the articular infinitive τὸ ζην functions, according to Wallace, ‘both as a substantiver of the infinitive and anaphorically’) and in Acts 14:4 (where the articles [οί μὴν ἦσαν σὺν τοῖς ιουδαίοις] are both pronominal and anaphoric [referring back to τὸ πλῆθος τῆς πόλεως]). Furthermore, of the sixteen articular infinitives in Philippians, a case can be made to see an anaphoric reference in most of them. Yet Burk

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1 Burk, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 260. By ‘semantic value’ Burk refers more narrowly to the article’s value as a *definitizing* determinant, not to the potential value associated with the article’s case (260 n. 17).  
2 Although given what I perceive to be overstated arguments on the part of Burk concerning Phil 2:6, I wonder if his case by case judgments regarding syntactical versus semantic value concerning the articular infinitive might need revisiting. Furthermore, there is no inherent reason why study of the articular infinitive in the Greek language should be restricted to examination of *New Testament* usage only. I suspect that wider Greek usage will show more variance across Burk’s diagram than he indicates. But, regardless of that, each instance of the articular infinitive needs to be considered on its own in its linguistic context; one cannot argue from a supposed norm to any specific case if such variance exists.  
4 Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 238 (of the article, in general): ‘When the article is used as a grammatical function marker, it may or may not also bear a semantic force. But even when it does bear such a force, the grammatical (structural) use is usually prominent.’  
6 Of the articular infinitives following a preposition (Phil 1:7, 10, 23[x2]) a case could be made for Phil 1:23(x2) to see there an anaphoric reference to vv. 20-21 alongside the syntactical value of the article which serves both infinitives following εἰς; of the articular infinitives not following a preposition (1:21[x2], 22, 24, 29[x2]; 2:6, 13[x2]; 3:10, 21; 4:10), all but Phil 3:21 could be said to be anaphoric, but even there a reference to 3:10 might be deemed possible; cf. BDF, 205-206 §399 who suggests most of the references here (i.e. 1:21[x2], 22, 24, 29[x2]; 2:6, 13[x2]; and 4:10) as anaphoric.
rules this possibility out for Phil 2:6, on the basis of it being a ‘grammatical necessity’ to distinguish the phrase τὸ ἐναί ἴσα θεό as being the object (and not the complement) of the verb ἦγῆσατο in an ‘object-complement’ construction. We shall examine that construction in a moment.

Burk argues that a prima facie argument for a clear anaphoric link would be either that the context makes such a link apparent or that similar lexemes, cognates or phraseology are present. He offers as examples of clear anaphoric links, (i) the cognate terms, θωνάτου ... τὸ ἀποθανεῖν (‘death ... the dying’) in Phil 1:20-21; and (ii) the articular infinitive τὸ ... ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκί (‘the remaining on in the flesh’) in Phil 1:24 could be taken as an anaphoric reference to τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί (‘the living in the flesh’) in 1:22. However, he contends that no such clear link is present in Phil 2:6, unless one first assumes that the meaning of the two phrases is the same (which, he claims, is circular reasoning, if that is the basis for seeing anaphora), and therefore one cannot posit an anaphoric link here (if a syntactical reason for the presence of the article is found). As he correctly states, ‘anaphora does not establish a synonymous link between phrases; rather, anaphora follows when such a link is already manifestly clear.’

But in the above Burk would appear to be mistaken; there are in fact multiple grounds for seeing, not synonymity, but a clear anaphoric link between the phrases, when seen in their totality, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (‘being in the form of God’) and τὸ ἐναί ἴσα θεό (‘the being equal with God’), and when seen in the full context of the complex sentence that is vv. 6-8. At least seven such grounds may be identified: (i) First, we may note the obvious fact that each is an expression describing some relation to God; next (ii), the more significant fact that the verbs ὑπάρχων and ἐναί are regarded as being interchangeable in Hellenistic Greek, although the former may take the more specific connotation of ‘to exist [really],’ thus

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4 Burk, ‘Meaning of ἀρταιομῦς,’ [‘Problems in N. T. Wright’s Analysis,’ para. 4].
5 Burk, ‘Meaning of ἀρταιομῦς,’ [‘Problems in N. T. Wright’s Analysis,’ para. 5].
6 Burk, ‘Meaning of ἀρταιομῦς,’ [‘Problems in N. T. Wright’s Analysis,’ para. 5].
7 BDF, 213 §414 (1); BDAG, 1029-1030 (contra the earlier BAGD); Hawthorne, ‘Form of God,’ 97 & n. 3; O’Brien, Philippians, 211; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 202 & n. 40.
offering conceptually similar verbal phraseology; and third (iii), as whole phrases, therefore, they manifestly appear to be set in apposition, ‘being in the form of God … the being equal to God.’¹ It is thus possible to see within Paul’s prose a clear case of poetic parallelism.²

Gordon Fee then raises an important observation that v. 6bc represents a form of indirect discourse, in which the clause begins with the very emphatic οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν … (‘not harpagmon …’), and which indicates that the infinitive phrase which follows it refers back to the initial participial phrase.³ It is worth referring to his argument in full, but before I do, another crucial grammatical point must be highlighted: due to the word order, the negative οὐχ should be seen as negating the noun ἀρπαγμόν and not, as many suppose, the following verb ἤγιόστο (which it would otherwise usually precede);⁴ hence a literal translation is ‘not harpagmon did he regard …’ and not ‘he did not regard … as harpagmon.’ The difference is significant, and a careful interpretation or translation of this verse aspiring to any accuracy must bear this in mind.

¹ Cf. here HANSEN, Philippians, 138; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 207 & n. 62; and note the comments of KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 62, who contended that ‘whether or not one chooses to differentiate between “divine form” and “equality with God,” both terms are at least co-ordinated with one another … Whoever overlooks this fact and separates these two terms in order to consider them in isolation, can hardly be credited with a methodologically sound procedure.’ (Although most scholars have rightly rejected KÄSEMANN’s interpretation of the background to Phil 2:6-11 as being found in the Gnostic ‘Urmensch-Saviour’, his argument now cited, albeit divorced from its original context, remains quite pertinent here.)

² See LOHMeyer’s and HOOKER’s versification of the text (cited above on pp. 56, 65 respectively); so also, HANSEN, Philippians, 138; K. GRAYSTON, The Letters of Paul to the Philippians and to the Thessalonians (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 27.

³ FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 207 & n. 62.

⁴ Note especially, J. CARMIGNAC, ‘L’importance de la Place d’une Negation: ΟΥΧ ἈΡΠΑΓΜΟΝ ΗΓΗΣΑΤΟ (Philippiens II. 6),’ NTS 18 no. 2 (1972) 131-166 (although not with his understanding of ἀρπαγμός as an act of usurpation [pp. 162-166], a variation of the Latin fathers’ interpretation); CARMIGNAC’s basic conclusion is summarized on p. 141: ‘Si S. Paul avait voulu nier le verbe ἤγιόστο il aurait presque certainement … place οὐχ immédiatement devant ἤγιόστο … si S. Paul avait mis la négation devant le verbe, elle aurait encore pu porter sur le complément, mais en la mettant devant le complément il interdisait presque absolument de la faire porter sur le verbe’ (‘If St. Paul had wanted to negate the verb ἤγιόστο he would almost certainly … have placed οὐχ immediately before ἤγιόστο … [however,] if St. Paul had placed the negation before the verb, [even then] it potentially could still relate to the complement [ἀρπαγμόν], but in placing it before the complement he prohibited almost completely it relating to the verb’). See also in agreement, FEE, Pauline Christology, 380 n. 34 (cf. his Philippians [NICNT], 205, 207 n. 62, 208); HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 88-89; cf. N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 71, 73-74, 79 (who accepts CARMIGNAC’s point, but takes the οὐχ as negating the entire phrase as a unit [i.e. ἀρπαγμόν ἤγιόστο together], and with HOOVER’s idiom [rather than with CARMIGNAC’s active, abstract sense for ἀρπαγμός]: ‘he did not consider-it-something-to-take-advantage-of’; in my opinion WRIGHT’s acceptance of HOOVER’s idiom is able to embrace fully CARMIGNAC’s argument about the negation of the noun, without resorting to a somewhat cumbrous compound of verb+idiom). CARMIGNAC’s conclusions are also acknowledged by REUMANN, Philippians, 344, 347 (though his own position is less clear).
So, the fourth ground (iv), as Fee has correctly observed: the verbal clause of Phil 2:6bc, like that in v. 3b in the preceding passage, is an example of indirect discourse and, in both cases, with the verb ἤγερωσα.1 As he explains, this can be expressed in Greek or English ‘by a verb of the mental processes followed by two accusatives on either side of an expressed or, in the case of “to be,” implied infinitive. The first of the accusatives is the subject, and the second is the predicate noun or adjective.’2 Hence, in Phil 2:3 we find, ἀλλήλους ἤγερμεν ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν (lit. ‘one-another regard [as/to be] more important than yourselves’); in direct speech (in English) this would be rendered, ‘regard one-another [as/to be] more important than yourselves’; as written Paul begins with the subject of the assumed clause and completes the unit with a predicate participial phrase. In Phil 2:6, the clause reads, οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἠγίασα τὸ ἐισα θεὸ (lit. ‘[as/to be] not harpagmon did he regard the being equal with God’); in direct speech we would render this as ‘he regarded the being equal with God [as/to be] not harpagmon’; here Paul begins with a negated predicate noun of the assumed clause and completes the unit with the subject of the assumed clause. However, Paul reverses the order; in v. 3 putting the subject of the assumed clause first, and in v. 6 putting it last. The reason for this reversal is both stylistic and, significantly, for desired emphasis in each case: the importance of communal thinking with the initial ‘one another’ in v. 3, and in v. 6 emphasizing what was not Christ’s mindset (harpagmon), thus what equality with God did not consist of. This prepares the way for the dramatic and surprising contrast to what Christ, with the mindset of one being divine, actually did in vv. 7-8. But, Fee continues, ‘at the same time, this also puts our present phrase (“the being equal with God”) in the equally emphatic final position, thereby stressing Christ’s full equality with God.’3

The combination of word order and indirect discourse therefore imply that ‘equality with God,’ however understood in precise terms, is a present possession for Christ. This readily makes for a correlation with the initial phrase, ‘being in the form of God’ which directly implies present possession (again, however we may interpret the phrase ‘form of God’). Reinforcing this conclusion from a different view point, the word order implicitly rules out a common but mistaken rationale for assuming that Christ did not possess ‘the being equal with God’, as Fee explains,

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1 For what follows, see Fee, Pauline Christology, 380 & n. 32 and his Philippians (NICNT), 207 n. 62.
2 Fee, Pauline Christology, 380.
3 Fee, Pauline Christology, 380; cf. his Philippians (NICNT), 207 n. 62.
[It] also means that the infinitive phrase is not to be understood, as it often has been, as the object of a verbal idea inherent in ἀρπαγμόν, as though Christ neither had equality with God nor tried to seize what was not rightfully his. The meaning of the noun, the grammar itself, and the infinitive phrase together simply do not allow such a reading despite the frequency with which it has been suggested in the literature.¹

In other words, what Paul says about τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ is that it (the phrase taken as a whole) was regarded by Christ as not being harpagmos (a noun); this implies that ‘equality with God,’ like ‘being in the form of God,’ was somehow his to so regard, and shows that the two phrases, even though not identical, are nevertheless connected, having an implied overlapping meaning.²

Fifth (v), this is further strongly confirmed by the implications, already noted above, of Hoover’s idiomatic understanding of ἀρπαγμόν ἔγεισθαι τι (‘to regard something as something-to-be-used-for-one’s-own-advantage’), if correct, as the growing scholarly consensus suggests is so; that is, ‘equality with God’ is assumed by the idiomatic expression to be possessed already by Christ in v. 6. Alternative interpretations of the verse are flawed methodologically when they focus, not on the word ἀρπαγμόν as an idiom with the verb ἔγεισθαι, but only on the word by itself and its etymology and then suggest what the verse might possibly mean.³

Sixth (vi), yet further confirmation is found in Paul’s grammar and sentence structure in vv. 6-8, where the main contrast with Christ ‘being in the form of God’ (the participial phrase introducing vv. 6-8) is found in the surprising actions he took following the strongly adversative ἀλλὰ (‘but’) in v. 7a (described by the main verbs of vv. 7, 8, ‘he emptied himself … he humbled himself’), and not between the phrases found in v. 6a and v. 6c, as Strimple notes, describing one of the fatal weaknesses for the res rapienda interpretation of ἀρπαγμός:

[The res rapienda sense] 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

¹ FEE, Pauline Christology, 380.
² Cf. the second (right-hand) diagram concerning the semantic situation in Phil 2:6 in Figure 5.1 in n. 5 of p. 261 above.
³ With STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 263.
binds together these two clauses which precede the real disjunction, which comes with the  ἀλλα at the beginning of verse 7.¹

The overall sentence structure of vv. 6-7 therefore clearly points to the phrase ‘the being equal with God’ as being in conjunction, not disjunction, with the participial phrase introducing v. 6.

Lastly, as mentioned above, (vii) one does not have to look far to find several clearly anaphoric articular infinitives in Philippians itself;² these do not prove an anaphoric link in Phil 2:6, but they do suggest it as entirely plausible.

The net effect of these multiple grounds is that a very strong argument exists to see the presence of anaphora in v. 6. To use Burk’s words, ‘anaphora follows when such a link is already manifestly clear,’³ and we may conclude that the phrases ‘being in the form of God’ (v. 6a) and ‘the being equal to God’ (v. 6c) are indeed manifestly and clearly linked, connected, and co-ordinated. Significantly, none of the preceding arguments depend upon a prior commitment to particular meanings of the two phrases in question. However, our conclusion concerning the two phrases does have important implications for how we interpret them. Though it does not imply the synonymity of the two phrases (the ‘straw person,’ which Burk repeatedly argues against), we have shown that Wright’s case for both seeing the article as anaphoric and the phrase ‘the being equal to God’ as epexegetical of the initial phrase (‘being in the form of God’) is actually well founded.

As mentioned above, Burk and Wallace, however, had advanced one further argument against the article τῶ in the articular infinitive phrase as being anaphoric, namely that the article allegedly is syntactically necessary to show that the phrase is the object in an ‘object-complement’ construction. As we saw, Burk claims that if the article is syntactically necessary, it should therefore not carry any semantic meaning (such as anaphora).

Wallace defines this construction as follows: ‘An object-complement double accusative is a construction in which one accusative is the direct object of the verb and the other accusative

¹ STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 263; followed by FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 208 & n. 66.
² For a listing, see p. 263 & n. 6 above.
³ BURK, ‘Meaning of ὁρμητικός,’ ['Problems in N. T. Wright’s Analysis,’ para. 5].
(either noun, adjective or participle) complements the object in that it predicates something about it.\(^1\) This is no doubt a helpful and useful description for Greek constructions, such as with the verb ηγεσωμαι, which, when used as a verb of the mental processes (‘to think, consider, regard’), takes either two objects (in the accusative case) (e.g., in Philippians, 2:3, 6; 3:7, 8b\(^2\)) or one object (a noun or adjective in the accusative case) with an infinitive following (which itself will carry an accusative object; e.g., Phil 2:25; 3:8a).\(^3\) However, as Wallace admits, a ‘technically more correct’ description is that from Goodwin and Gulick: ‘A verb and an accusative depending on it may together be treated as a single word having another accusative as its object.’\(^4\) This description may well be something a native speaker of Greek might have understood in Paul’s era, but I wonder if Wallace’s description would have been too sophisticated for such a native speaker. I will return to this point shortly.

Wallace then argues, convincingly I believe, that ‘the object-complement construction is semantically equivalent to the subject-predicate nominative construction,’ and therefore that ‘principles used in identifying the components in this latter construction can now be applied to the former.’\(^5\) This led him to apply to the ‘object-complement’ construction a ‘refined’ version of the five principles of Eugene Goetchius for identifying the subject and predicate nominative when they are connected by an equative verb.\(^6\) In his Greek Grammar Beyond the

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\(^1\) WALLACE, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 93.
\(^2\) On the absence of an explicit object in Phil 3:8b, note WALLACE, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 99 n. 39; the implied object (τὰ πάντα) is taken from the previous clause.
\(^3\) So BDAG, 434. WALLACE, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 97 & nn. 24 & 25, notes that Phil 2:25 falls into a ‘questionable’ category of ‘object-complement’ constructions, in which constructions it is unclear whether the infinitive following is functioning substantivally as a complement to the direct object or in some other capacity, such as an infinitive which is ‘complementary to the verb’ (not to be confused with the ‘complement’ or predicate accusative of the verb). He implies that the infinitive phrase in Phil 2:25 is technically the ‘complement’ in his construction, but I believe he is mistaken in this. Instead, the infinitive phrase, πέμψαι πρὸς υμᾶς, ‘to send to you [Epaphroditus]’ appears to function, using WALLACE’s terminology, as the ‘object’ of the verb ἤγησωμαι, and ἀναγκαῖον, ‘necessary,’ as the ‘complement’ (the other alternative would be that ‘Epaphroditus’ is the direct object, with the infinitive phrase being complementary to the verb, but this would then represent an awkward ‘object-complement’ construction). If I am correct, significantly, it is therefore an anarthrous infinitive phrase which is the ‘object’ of ἤγησωμαι. Nevertheless, WALLACE adds (p. 97), ‘however the infinitive is tagged, the meaning of the total construction is not altered,’ implying that the construction of ήγησωμαι + accusative + infinitive following (as in both Phil 2:25 and 3:8a) is also, semantically speaking, a type of an ‘object-complement’ construction.


\(^5\) WALLACE, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 101, 103.

\(^6\) WALLACE, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 104, but see 103-105, citing E. V. N. GOETCHIUS, The Language of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965) 46 (which, WALLACE notes [p. 103 n. 56], GOETCHIUS does apply ‘via analogy’ to the ‘object-complement’ construction [GOETCHIUS, pp. 45-46, 142]). One key refinement is that WALLACE (p. 104) correctly recognizes that the degree of ‘definiteness’ versus ‘indefiniteness’ (mentioned in GOETCHIUS’ principle [c]: ‘If both nouns are equally
Basics, Wallace states three of the principles, now applied to an ‘object-complement’ construction, thus:

- If one of the two is a *pronoun*, it will be the object;
- If one of the two is a *proper name*, it will be the object;
- If one of the two is *articular*, it will be the object.\(^1\)

Significantly, however, Wallace omitted one other very relevant principle (for our discussion) from Goetchius’ list, which, when styled to match Wallace’s listing, can be stated as:

- If one of the two has been *referred to in the immediately preceding context*, it will be the object.\(^2\)

Although aware of it,\(^3\) and though it is quite apposite to Phil 2:6, Burk never once mentions this further principle.

Inappropriately, however, when using Wallace’s three ‘principles’ in his case against seeing an anaphoric reference in Phil 2:6, Burk turns them into grammatical ‘rules,’ by which he then argues for the ‘grammatical necessity of the article’ in τὸ εἶναι ἵσος θεό (v. 6c).\(^4\) In so doing, I suggest he belies native speaker common sense and elevates principles or guidelines based upon observable norms into rigid rules that supposedly the Apostle Paul and his hearers/readers would have been aware of. Thus, Burk argues that had Paul hypothetically omitted the article in v. 6c, the syntactical relation of the infinitive phrase to the rest of the sentence would be unclear, as though Paul’s hearers/readers might have been ‘syntactically confused’ and somehow mixed object and complement: ‘the only way we can distinguish the accusative object from the accusative complement is by the definite article at the beginning’

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\(^1\) **Wallace, Greek Grammar**, 184-185.

\(^2\) Adapted from Goetchius’ principle (d) (Wallace, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 104). Compare Wallace, Greek Grammar, 184-185 (only three principles are mentioned) with his earlier ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 104 (all five principles are mentioned). For the fifth principle of Goetchius, which Wallace also omits in his application to ‘object-complement’ constructions, see p. 269 n. 6 above.

\(^3\) See Burk, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 261 & n. 23 (he has clearly read p. 104 of Wallace’s article, ‘Object - Complement Construction’).

\(^4\) Burk, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 261-262. (On a side note, G. M. Ellis, ‘Grammar as Theology,’ 55, completely misses the point when he argues that a case for textually emending v. 6 [on this, see below, p. 289] is ‘further weakened’ by the removal of the article, since it is ‘a grammatical necessity’ on Burk’s reading [as though Paul could not have written anything else]; he also erroneously regards Burk’s arguments as proven results [cf. Ellis, 79-80].)
of the infinitive … the definite article appears here [in order] to distinguish the object (τὸ εἰναὶ ἵσα θεὸς) from the complement (ἀρπαγμῶν).\(^1\)

But Burk is clearly wrong in this on two counts. Firstly, it is manifestly not ‘the only way,’ for both Burk and Wallace have neglected the fourth principle of Goetchius, mentioned above, which suggests that the ‘object’ may be identified as such if it has already been referred to in the immediately preceding context. Given the almost unassailable arguments discussed above in favour of seeing a close connection between the participial phrase in v. 6a and the infinitive phrase of v. 6c, we could expect that the infinitive phrase (taken as a whole) would therefore be easily identifiable as the object of ἰσακατό regardless of whether it was articular or not. The fourth principle of Goetchius in fact represents good common sense, arguably the way a native speaker would normally and quite naturally determine the object of a verb. Wallace and Burk give no reason for assuming the priority of Wallace’s three ‘principles’ (or ‘rules’ in Burk’s reading) over the one they neglected to mention.\(^2\)

Secondly, there are other evident, contextual reasons as to why Paul’s hearers/readers would not have been syntactically confused even if Paul had somehow omitted the article. Burk himself presents more than one hypothetical ‘confused’ hearer scenario, and in each case observes, correctly, that the hypothetical mistakes would ‘be unlikely’ or ‘make almost no grammatical sense.’\(^3\) But Burk thus undermines his own argument – a native speaker of Greek, in fact, is unlikely to have been grammatically sophisticated, and thus aware of some

\(^1\) BURK, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 261-262.

\(^2\) In fact, one could reasonably argue that this fourth principle should take priority over the third principle (the object will be articular).

\(^3\) Thus, he admits it is ‘syntactically possible,’ but ‘unlikely’ that a hearer/reader would understand ἀρπαγμῶν as the direct object and to take the infinitive as an adverbial phrase, “He did not think about ἀρπαγμῶν so that he would not be equal with God” (BURK, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 273 [emphasis mine]; somehow finding an additional ‘not’ for his hypothetical translation; and repeated verbatim in the revised version, ‘Functional Subordination,’ 102; due to such a lack of clarity, the editors of volume in which the revised article appears found it necessary, in summarizing BURK’s paper, to offer a corrected version of his hypothetical misunderstanding: ‘one could read or hear something like, “who being in the form of God, did not think robbery was being equal with God,” although, they also add, this would make ‘little sense’ [JOWERS & HOUSE, Evangelical Subordinationism?, xiv]); in ‘Meaning of ἀρπαγμῶν,’ [‘Application of the Principle to Philippians 2:6,’ para. 1] BURK offers a second hypothetical possibility: ‘there would be some confusion as to how to view the object ἀρπαγμῶν in relationship to the infinitive. The infinitive would not be the complement, but the neuter plural ἵσα would. Of course this would make almost no grammatical sense as ἀρπαγμῶν is singular and ἵσα is plural.’ Indeed. Obviously, I strongly dispute BURK’s claim that ‘by virtue of the word order we would naturally be more inclined to consider ἀρπαγμῶν as the grammatical object instead of the infinitive’ [‘Application of the Principle to Philippians 2:6,’ para. 1]; the context shows that would not have been natural to Paul’s hearers/readers (see further below).
‘rule’ rendering the article as ‘grammatically necessary’ to ensure that the infinitive expression ‘to be equal with God’ is taken as the object of ἴγγήσατο and is not its complement. Even in the hypothetical absence of the article τό, the improbability of the alternative readings suggested by Burk (which instead take οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν as the object\(^1\)), together with the context and Paul’s emphatic word order, would cause a native Greek speaker to understand (without any confusion) the infinitive expression (v. 6c) as the object of ἴγγήσατο. This appears to be the plain sense of Paul’s sentence and word order in its context.\(^2\)

Four features make this virtually certain: (i) First, the (poetic) parallel nature of the phrases in v. 6a and v. 6c\(^3\) would lead a Greek speaking listener to conclude that the parallel infinitive phrase (taken as a whole) was the object of ἴγγήσατο. The fourth principle (for ‘object-complement’ constructions), the one that was neglected by Burk and Wallace, bears witness as a confirmation of this likelihood (although not as a ‘rule’ which ‘proves’ it must be so, as Burk appears to argue).

(ii) Second, following the participial phrase of v. 6a, the emphatic word order with οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν beginning the verbal phrase of v. 6bc (and remembering that word order makes it

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\(^1\) And note, it is the full expression, οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν, and not just ἄρπαγμόν by itself, that must be taken as either the object or complement of ἴγγήσατο, a point which Burk fails to observe. On this, see again p. 265 & n. 4 above.

\(^2\) It is interesting to note the case of Phil 2:25, a text using the verb ἶγγίσαι, which functions formally as an ‘object-complement’ construction (on this, see above, p. 269 n. 3; note Wallace, ‘Object-Complement Construction,’ 97 & nn. 24-25, who puts it in a ‘questionable’ category, but in which, functionally, ‘the meaning of the total construction [as an ‘object-complement’ construction] is not altered’), and is also formally parallel to Phil 2:6, occurring as indirect discourse, but with an anarthrous infinitive following the verb ἴγγίσαι, even though the full infinitive phrase is separated across the entire verse by five inserted descriptions of Epaphroditus: ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἴγγίσαι Ἐπαφρόδιτον ... πίστις πρὸς ὑμᾶς (in wooden, literal English: ‘but necessary [complement] I determined [verb] Ephaphroditus-to-send-to-you [object]’). In direct discourse (still using the epistolary aorist tense) this would read: ‘I determined to-send-Epaphroditus-to-you [implied subject] (to be) necessary [predicate accusative].’ (The standard English translations, ‘I thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus to you,’ add the word ‘it’ as the direct object of the verb, but ‘it’, while acting in apposition to the infinitive expression, is not present in the Greek.) It is obvious from the context that the infinitive expression (as a whole) acts as the ‘object’ (contra Wallace, ‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 97 & nn. 24-25, who incorrectly groups the infinitive as among the ‘complements’ in his construction), even though the infinitive used is without the article. Incidentally, none of Burk and Wallace’s three rules helps in determining object and complement for this anarthrous infinitive following ἶγγίσαι. The object in this instance … is neither a pronoun, nor a proper noun*, nor does it have the definite article (to re-apply the definitive ‘set of rules’ used by Burk, ‘Articular Infinitive,’ 261). (*Notwithstanding the mention of ‘Epaphroditus’; had Paul substituted an indefinite non-personal object of the infinitive the result would be the same.) It is rather context and sentence structure that make clear which component of the construction is the ‘object’ and which the ‘complement’.

\(^3\) With an A-B/A-B chiastic reversal; thus, literally, ‘in the form of God being … the being equal to God.’
virtually certain that the noun, not the verb, is being negated, and hence that οὐχ ἐρπαγμόν must be taken as a syntactical unit), would very naturally lead a native speaker of Greek to take οὐχ ἐρπαγμόν as the complement to whatever Paul was about to mention as the object of ἡγήσατο.¹

(iii) Third, the preceding context of vv. 3-4, where the ‘not [y], but [z]’ sentence structure of vv. 6-7 is matched linguistically and conceptually twice, shows that Paul is contrasting attitudes (and corresponding actions) that are either to be avoided [y] or adopted [z].² Comparison to Phil 2:3b is useful, because there, as we saw above, Paul employs a similar ‘object-complement’ construction using the verb ἡγεῖμαι. In both v. 3 and v. 6 it is most natural (using Wallace’s ‘object-complement’ terminology) to deem the attitude being described as the ‘complement’ to the ‘object’ [either someone or something] of ἡγεῖμαι. It is almost impossible to take it otherwise. In v. 3b the desired attitude [z] is thus described by ἔρπαγμον ὑπερέχουσας ἑαυτῶν (‘[regarding … as] more important than yourselves’), which is the complement to the object ἀλλήλους (‘one another’). In v. 6 the attitude cannot be described by the infinitive phrase (‘being equal with God’), but only by οὐχ ἐρπαγμόν (i.e. now an attitude [y] to be avoided).³ Hence, in v. 6, the latter must be the complement, and the former the object. The difference is that Paul reverses object and complement between v. 3 and v. 6 in his sentence structure, a common enough phenomenon.

(iv) Fourth, following Fee as we did above, and related to the two previous points, the verbal clauses of v. 3b and v. 6bc are both examples of indirect discourse (with the verb ἡγεῖμαι).⁴ Hence, as before, but now using Wallace’s ‘object-complement’ terminology: in Phil 2:3 we find, ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχουσας ἑαυτῶν (lit. ‘[one-another] regard (as/to be) [more-important-than-yourselves]’); as written Paul begins with the ‘object’ of the object-complement construction and completes the unit with the ‘complement’. By Wallace’s first

¹ To counter this BURK and WALLACE would need to be able to find clear, unambiguous examples of negated nouns functioning as the direct object (not complement) of a verb of the mental processes like ἡγεῖμαι.

² See my earlier detailed discussion of this, above, pp. 101-102, 170-171, 174, 179-181. FEE, Pauline Christology, 380 n. 32 is absolutely right to note ‘it is a cause of some wonder that the association of this clause [v. 6bc] with v. 3 is so seldom noted.’

³ That ἐρπαγμόν is describing an attitude to be avoided is made clear by (i) use of ἡγεῖμαι (being used here as a verb of the mental processes) paralleling its use in v. 3, (ii) the exhortation in v. 5 to ‘have-a-mindset’ which is also in Christ Jesus, thus anticipating vv. 6-8, and (iii) the structural and conceptual parallels with the strongly hortatory context of vv. 3-4.

⁴ See above, pp. 266-267; so, FEE, Pauline Christology, 380 & n. 32; Philippians (NICNT), 207 n. 62.
‘rule’ the pronoun (ἀλλήλους) will be the ‘object’ of the clause; but for a native speaker this is the unambiguous, intuitive reading, even if one was ignorant of the ‘rule.’

Having heard an ‘object-complement’ construction using the verb ἤγιόμαι in indirect speech in v. 3 (although not identifying it grammatically as such), the same construction with the same verb using indirect speech will be readily identifiable to native speakers of Greek hearing v. 6, even with ‘object’ and ‘complement’ reversed, which would not take them by surprise, since stylistic variations like that are common. They would easily identify ‘object’ and ‘complement’ by the combination of indirect speech and the emphatic negated noun introducing the clause (though not using those terms, of course). Thus, following the introductory participial phrase, they will hear οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ἤγιοστο (lit. ‘[not-harpagmon] did he regard’) and by then be expecting the next mentioned phrase (τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῶ), taken as a whole, to be the direct ‘object’ of ἤγιοστο, even if it had been anarthrous.

Hence, the combination of the entire sentence, the indirect discourse and the emphatic negated noun introducing the clause would allow native speakers to determine, intuitively and virtually instantly (without conscious thought of grammatical ‘rules’ or terms), first, that the negated noun could not be the ‘object’ of ἤγιοστο and therefore was a fronted ‘complement,’ and second, almost without thinking, that the infinitival phrase which completed the unit was the ‘object’ of the clause. Therefore, they would intuitively know that ‘to be equal with God,’ however understood (and even if it was anarthrous), must be the direct ‘object’ of the verb ἤγιοστο. Furthermore, a corollary of this, as noted earlier, is that Paul’s hearers would not mistakenly conclude that τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῶ should somehow be understood as the object of the verbal idea inherent in the negated noun, ἀρπαγμόν.

Burk’s flaw (and indeed also Wallace’s) is that he has focussed almost exclusively on a grammatical feature, in which he has selectively applied to the text particular principles, while neglecting another relevant grammatical principle, and ignoring word order, context, sentence structure, and the improbability of alternative readings of the text.1

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1 WALLACE himself (‘Object - Complement Construction,’ 105 n. 65) cites H. R. MOELLER & A. KRAMER (‘An Overlooked Structural Pattern in New Testament Greek,’ NovT 5 [1962] 27) as pointing to word order as ‘the normal guide’ for distinguishing object from complement (‘in distinguishing the subject of an infinitive from a predicate accusative’). I would suggest, against WALLACE, that MOELLER & KRAMER are
Our examination has shown that a native speaker of Greek would not have made the hypothetical syntactical mistakes Burk assumes they would have, had Paul omitted the article in the infinitive phrase of v. 6c, and that they would readily have understood the phrase ‘the being equal with God’ as both already possessed by Christ, and as a parallel phrase to the introductory participial phrase, ‘being in the form of God’. Intuitive, native speaker common sense would help them to draw the conclusion that the object of the verb ἤγιοσατο was the infinitive phrase without them being the ‘grammatical sophisticates’ that Burk supposes them to be.

Furthermore, we can argue that the grammatical principle (‘rule’ is not really an appropriate term) concerning the presence of the article, which Burk and Wallace have pointed to, in relation to ‘object-complement’ constructions, is actually syntactically superfluous in this verse in its context, and the article, therefore, emphatically, cannot be ‘grammatically necessary.’ Burk’s case appears overstated and must be rejected as it applies to Phil 2:6.

What, then, is the value of the article in Phil 2:6c? It does have a clear and simple grammatical function in effectively turning the infinitive ἐίναι (‘to be’) into a noun (‘the being’). In its context, there is also a very strong case for the possibility that Paul included it in part to make an anaphoric reference, or perhaps to make an intended connection between the phrases of v. 6a and v. 6c even clearer, as I think that such a connection already exists apart from any anaphoric article. Could the article also be (not ‘necessary’ but) helpful for identifying τὸ ἐίναι Ἰσα αὐτῷ as the ‘object’ of ἤγιοσατο? Perhaps it could, but primarily for a non-native speaker of Greek, for whom native speaker linguistic ‘common sense’ is not intuitive. I would submit that the article has both syntactical and semantic value, and arguably, contrary to both Wallace and Burk, in the case of Phil 2:6, the semantic value of the

more likely to represent the way in which native Greek speakers would separate object and complement, than the alternative, which WALLACE posits, of his ‘principles’ being the primary syntactical guide. Cf. also the comments of HAWKINS, (Review), 141, concerning BURK’s book, Articular Infinitives: ‘While it is true that the article does not as a rule definitize or substantivize the infinitive, from a historic and synchronic viewpoint the repeated claim (e.g., 56ff., 72-74, 79-82, etc.) that the article came to be used because it was frequently necessary in order to prevent ambiguity or confusion is unpersuasive. Word order, context (mostly ignored by Burk), and the improbability of alternative interpretations are usually enough to prevent such misreadings.’

However, again, it is not a grammatical necessity that the direct object of a verb like ἤγιοσατο be a noun, for Paul can functionally use infinitive verbal phrases in this way (e.g. Phil 2:25; see above p. 272 n. 2).
article in τὸ ἐναπίστα ὁ θεός could be said clearly to dominate. The situation could thus be depicted graphically in a revised diagram:

![Figure 5.4, Syntactical and Semantic Value in the Article of Philippians 2:6c](image)

In summary, Burk’s argument has not overturned Wright’s case for an anaphoric reference in Phil 2:6. There are indeed good grounds for one to explain the phrases ‘form of God’ and ‘equality with God’ in close connection to each other. We have not yet sought to define the precise meaning of these phrases, but are in a better position now to do that.

With Burk and Wallace, and indeed also with Wright, I would affirm that the phrases are not synonymous, but with Wright and most other scholars, and against Burk and Wallace, we are justified, I believe, to posit that both phrases imply (and the word is used very deliberately here) the divinity of Jesus Christ, and thus point (at least) to the same reality even though they indeed probably have slightly (not significantly) distinct meanings. Rather, as we will later see, these phrases enhance and flesh-out the narrative that Paul composed to serve as an example and paradigm for the Christians at Philippi, and of which followers of Jesus Christ today can appreciate and avail to significant personal and corporate benefit.

### 5.2.5 A Theological Challenge to the Consensus

In Wright’s 1991 *Climax of the Covenant* his expanded article on Phil 2:5-11 included ‘six more substantive criticisms’ of Ralph Martin’s *res rapienda* understanding of ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6. Martin responded to these six criticisms in his 1997 preface to *A Hymn of Christ*.  

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1. Cf. Hellerman, ‘ΜОРΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 788 n. 23. Although not our task here, one might revisit Burk’s data seeking to eliminate his black and white interpretative tendencies, and look for recognition, where appropriate, of multiple meanings in the humble article.

2. N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 72-73; the phrase used here is Martin’s (*Hymn of Christ*, lxix). In addition to the confusion of categorization in Martin’s analysis of his own *res rapienda* approach (see above, p. 251 n. 2), Wright thought it important to point out the ‘inherent weaknesses’ of Martin’s view (with my numbering added for ease of reference): [i] First, it cannot (as Martin thinks) claim support from the idiom as analysed by Hoover. [ii] Secondly, it drives a sharp wedge between ὁ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and τὸ ἐναπίστα ὁ θεός, which does violence both to the regular [anaphoric] usage of the articular
It is worth examining his counter-arguments here, particularly since Wright himself and other scholars have not yet done so in any depth. But first let us summarize Martin’s original (1967) position and then make some general comments to put the issues in perspective.

More theologically, describing the significance of v. 6 within the passage, Martin had earlier written:

The pre-incarnate Christ had as His personal possession the unique dignity of His place within the Godhead as the ἐικών or μορφή of God, a vantage-point from which He might have attained that equality with God which the later verses show to be the bestowal of the name of Lord and the function which that name implies. He possessed the divine equality, we may say, de jure because He existed eternally in the ‘form of God’. He could have seized the glory and honour of the acknowledgment of that position vis-à-vis the world if He had grasped His sovereignty de facto by His self-assertion and desire for power in His own right. He considered the appropriation of divine honour and lordship in this way an intolerable temptation. He rejected it and chose to be proclaimed equal with God and to exercise the office of Kyrios over the universe by accepting His destiny as the incarnate and humiliated One.3

In Martin’s understanding, ‘equality with God’ was to be understood dynamically ‘as the exercise of an office, the office of Lord,’ and represented the ‘extra’ implied by the verb ὑπερψωσεν (‘to highly exalt’) in v. 9, and the content of the acclamation of vv. 10-11. Thus, it was not something possessed by Christ at v. 6, but rather a status granted to Christ when God exalted him and gave him the name ‘Lord,’ with the accompanying status of being

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1 R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxix-lxxiv (and see his summary of Wright’s view on pp. lxv-lxix).
2 He did not feel that his recent tome, Paul and the Faithfulness of God (see p. 686 n. 209) was the right place to reply to Martin’s ‘counter-critique.’ However, one might possibly expect a response from Wright in his forthcoming ICC volume, Philippians: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016?).
5 R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 149-150.
‘World-Ruler’ or ‘Cosmocrat’ (vv. 9-11). The temptation faced by the pre-incarnate Christ in v. 6, then, is whether He will treat His possession of His μορφή as a vantage-point, ein Vorsprung, from which He will reach out to the exercise of lordship in His own right and independently of God the Father. We should observe that Martin’s later disagreement with Wright originates primarily in this earlier understanding of the meaning of the phrase, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ (‘the being equal with God’), together with a basic res rapienda understanding of ἀρπαγμός as ‘something to be seized’.

It is important to add that Martin basically saw a linear, narrative progression in the story, which moves from Christ ‘being in the form of God’ (seen as already possessed by Christ; v. 6a), to his decision to reject seizing ‘equality with God’ (which he saw as a status not yet possessed by Christ at this point in the narrative; v. 6bc), through to his actions of emptying and humbling himself in obedience to death (vv. 7-8), which depict the way Christ instead chose to attain the title to divine lordship (and thus the full status of equality with God, described by Martin as the status of ‘cosmocrator’ or ‘world-ruler’), which is what God bestowed on him, as a tribute to his obedience, in the upward movement of the story (vv. 9-11).

Significantly, however, by the time of his 1983 revision to the original Carmen Christi Martin had apparently accepted Hoover’s explanation of the Philippian ἀρπαγμός phrase as being ‘sound’. The issue for him became the way in which Hoover’s idiomatic sense for Phil 2:6 was to be explicated.

Yet, somewhat awkwardly, in both 1983 and 1997 he sought to combine Hoover’s idiomatic understanding with his own earlier (1967) view. Thus, in 1997, his complicated definition of

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1 R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 150.
2 R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 152.
3 Recalling that Martin (Hymn of Christ, 143-148) had inaccurately regarded his view as a combination of the res rapta and res rapienda senses of ἀρπαγμός, it was later correctly characterized by Wright (Climax of the Covenant, 65-69, 81) as res rapienda; on this see, again, p. 251 n. 2 above.
4 My summary here is taken from R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxix-lxx, though see also 148-153 (esp. 151-153).
was ‘literally “a thing to be seized” and then retained or exploited, either way used with advantage to the subject,’ and his updated understanding of v. 6 went like this: ‘Christ refused to use his being in the form/image of God … as an advantage (like a springboard) from which he might have seized equality with God.’

But by essentially maintaining his earlier view, Wright’s double charge that Martin had not properly understood Hoover’s idiom, and that his view created confusion in interpreting Paul’s thought, unfortunately must still stand. Furthermore, in the 1997 citation above, Martin was reasserting his 1967 view that μορφή θεού is also the object of οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἠγήσατο. As Wright correctly observed in 1986 (and again in 1991), this is misleading, to say the least, for the initial phrase of v. 6a is certainly not the object of the verb ἠγέσαθαι, nor of the expression οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἠγήσατο. Further, he went on, Martin thus misused Hoover’s analysis of the idiom, with which he professed to agree, even though Hoover himself had pointed out the impossibility of the position advocated by Martin. Martin’s interpretation has significantly and unhelpfully overloaded the meaning of the expression in v. 6b to an understanding which not a single ancient text can support.

Nevertheless, let us turn more specifically to Martin’s six counter-arguments in response to Wright’s criticisms. (i) Wright had argued that one cannot combine a res rapienda

3 N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 68 n. 48, 72, 78.
6 Thus, N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 68 & n. 48, 72 & n. 69. For Hoover’s critique of Martin on this point, see ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 101; basically Hoover points out that Martin’s “intermediate” interpretation of the ἄρπαγμός comment is based not on linguistic data (he cites no other text in which ἄρπαγμα or ἄρπαγμός carries both active and passive senses at the same time). Martin has since responded to Hoover on this remark (*Hymn of Christ*, lxvii n. 51), alleging that Hoover actually concedes this very point later (‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 107), but in fact Martin has misread an ambiguous sentence of Hoover’s, which if written more clearly, would say that the philological evidence suggests that ἄρπαγμα can carry either an active or a passive sense (which therefore points to the basic synonymity of ἄρπαγμος and ἄρπαγμα); in context (see pp. 107-108) he is clearly not meaning that a given usage can carry both senses at the same time.
7 So Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 101; see the previous note.
8 For the following, see Wright’s six criticisms of Martin’s view, cited in p. 276 n. 2 above.
understanding of ἀρπαγμός with Hoover’s understanding of the idiom of v. 6bc, since the res rapienda sense implies that one does not possess something and does not therefore allow it to be given up as v. 7a implies: ‘that which one might seize, one does not already possess: that which one does not possess, one cannot relinquish.’¹ Martin responded that Wright has overlooked that logically ‘one can forgo the opportunity to use a prize that is held out in prospect’ and that what Christ relinquished was ‘the opportunity for advancement [to the status of being equal with God] that lay in his power. His “decision” viewed as temptation was to refuse such a prize … and choose to attain the title to lordship by a life of obedient submission.’² Thus, he argues, his view, and not Wright’s allows for both a ‘real choice … (implied in the verb ἵγεῖσθαι)’ to be made by Christ (in v. 6) and better ‘accounts for the flow of the drama of the passage in its movement both downward (in condescension and obedience to death) and upward (elevation in verse 9 and exalted station before which the powers “bow down”).’³ He then asks of Wright, if Christ already had divine equality as his possession, why was the word ἀρπαγμός even used, ‘with its inbuilt idea of “advantage”’ if one could conceive of no further advantage to having already the ‘ultimate’ status [of being equal with God]?⁴

In reply, we must observe that Martin’s view represents the flawed understanding noted above, that ‘being in the form of God’ is somehow the object of the phrase, οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ἵγηστο, and is thus fatally undermined. Secondly, his view of a ‘real choice’ for Christ implies a very dysfunctional Trinity, if one assumes (a) Paul’s inherited strict Jewish monotheism, and (b) that somehow the second person of the Trinity could really have been tempted to seize ‘equality with God’ before it had been granted to him by God the Father. It represents an inconceivable notion. Martin had earlier admitted as much when he wrote (in 1967):

Equality with God which might have been His if he had snatched it (the res rapienda view of harpagmos) is hypothetical in more senses than one. It is a hypothetical interpretation of the biblical

¹  N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 72 n. 69.
²  R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxix.
³  R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxix ; cf. lxvi.
But, if that is the case, as surely it must be, then there can be no ‘real choice’ nor a ‘real temptation’ for Christ in v. 6 on Martin’s reading of the text. Although Martin alleged that Wright’s alternate position has ‘weakened’ the choice implied in the verb ἐγείρω, in fact his own position was inherently contradictory; he simply could not have it both ways and be consistent. Thirdly, if Hoover’s understanding of the idiom is correct, it clearly implies that ‘equality with God’ is already possessed by Christ, and implicitly rules out any notion that it could somehow be ‘seized’. Fourthly, if the implied contrast with what Christ did and did not do in vv. 6-8 is (as I believe is correct, and as Wright previously hinted at, but now argues more unambiguously) with Graeco-Roman rulers and despots, then it is very reasonable to conceive of such a ruler, who by definition already has the highest human status possible, seeking further advantage from his/her position and status, namely the privileges, power, benefits, and acclamation that could come his/her way. With this implicit contrast in mind, Christ, who is already equal with God, chose not to use this equality ‘for his own advantage [as might a Greek or Roman ruler], but [instead] …’. Thus, contrary to Martin, under a correct understanding of Hoover’s idiomatic sense for v. 6, Christ indeed had a very real choice to make as to how he regarded his equality with God, and vv. 10-11 show that the further advantage Christ could have received at v. 6 (but chose not to at that point) was in fact cosmic recognition and acclaim of his divine status (particularly in respect of his actions in vv. 7-8). Wright’s view is fully self-consistent. Lastly, it in no way detracts from the flow of the narrative of the passage. The action, as such, does not really begin until v. 7 anyway. Paul has chosen three verbs in v. 6 (a participle, ‘being/existing,’ an aorist verb of the mental processes, ‘to regard,’ and an articular infinitive, ‘the being’) that are in fact not very dramatic ones, to say the least.

(ii) Martin’s second response to Wright concerned the latter’s argument that Martin’s understanding of v. 6 drives a wedge between ὁ ἦν μορφῆς θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and τὸ ἐἶναι ἴσον

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1 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 246. He goes on to add, ‘it [equality with God] is a status which can only be conferred as a gift …’, but this does not avoid the necessary conclusion that there can be no ‘real choice’ (and only a hypothetical one) for Christ under a res rapienda understanding of v. 6.

2 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxix.

3 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 78-79, 83 (here only referring to ‘oriental despots’); cf. much more clearly in his very recent Faithfulness of God, 687, 1292-1299 (seeing Philippians, including the Christ-story, as a Pauline counter to imperial ideology). See further p. 249 n. 5 above, and especially, below, Section 5.3.
θεοῦ, which does violence both to the regular usage of the articular infinitive in v. 6c (as anaphoric) and to the sense of the passage as a whole.¹ Martin suggested, apparently independently of Wallace and Burk, that an alternative explanation exists, that the article in the infinitive expression (τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεοῦ) may rather serve to indicate that the infinitive expression is the object of the verb ἡγησάτε.² This possibility was dealt with at length in the previous Section (§5.2.4).³ As I concluded there, context and word order make it very clear that the phrases of v. 6a and v. 6c are coordinated and parallel, and that the object of ἡγησάτε must be the infinitive phrase (irrespective of the presence of the article).

(iii) The third counter-argument from Martin was in response to several questions posed by Wright about Christ’s equality with God referring to the status of ‘world-ruler’ or ‘cosmocrator,’ which Christ is granted in the second half of the passage. Martin explained that this status ‘is granted to him (note the verb ἐξαρίσατε, verse 9) as a tribute to his obedience, not simply his suffering and death. Lordship attained by any other way would be arrogance.’⁴ He argued this ‘is the force of “more-than-highly-exalted” [ὑπερήψασθαι] in v. 9 and the possession of a divine equality that in the nature of the case could not be his as pre-existent, that is, in the pre-temporal and so pre-cosmic state represented by “being in the form of God.”’⁵ However, this is only so, if one accepts the twin notions, (i) that being granted the status and title of ‘Lord’ with its consequent world-rulership is precisely the same as being granted ‘equality with God,’ and (ii) that being ‘equal with God’ represents a higher status than being ‘in the form of God.’ Of the first assumption, while it may be true that the title ‘Lord’ implies ‘equality with God,’⁶ it does not necessarily follow that Christ did not have ‘equality with God’ prior to the granting of the title. That has to be read into Paul’s account. Both assumptions, in fact, represent inferences not directly supported by the text, which, Bockmuehl contends, is ‘a decisive argument against this [res rapienda] position.’⁷

¹  N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 72, 83.
²  R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxx & n. 63. With respect to WALLACE and BURK’s understanding of v. 6c, see p. 259 and Section 5.2.4 (pp. 260-276) above.
³  See the preceding note for details.
⁵  R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, lxx (emphasis his).
⁶  So W. Foerster & G. Quell, ‘κύριος ... κτλ,’ TDNT III, 1088-1089.
⁷  Bockmuehl, Philippians, 129-130; he further adds, ‘this reading also fails to explain why, had there been such a higher status, it would have been wrong [for Christ] to aspire to it.’ As noted, MARTIN has already
The second assumption also reads too much into the verb ὑπερύψωσεν. But this appears in flat contradiction to what Martin had earlier said about this verb, and with which most interpreters would agree:

The force of the preposition is not to describe a different stage in Christ’s existence in a comparative sense, but to contrast His Exaltation with the claim of other high powers, and thereby to proclaim His uniqueness and absoluteness (Michaelis). ‘God exalted him to the highest station’ (Beare) is a translation which forcefully expresses this thought, without any suggestion that He is elevated beyond His previous position.

If the prefix ὑπερ- was given its full force and treated strictly as a comparative, then the meaning of v. 9 would be that Christ is exalted to a place he had not reached previously. However, as O’Brien points out, ‘both contextual and linguistic considerations strongly suggest the verb has a superlative or, more strictly, an elative force connoting Jesus’ exaltation to [the highest] position over the whole of creation (rather than comparative force in relation to his preexistence).’

A further reason for rejecting Martin’s position that cosmic lordship belongs potentially to Christ in v. 6 but is not actually his until after the cross and exaltation is, as Hansen points out, that it conflicts with the theological structure of the Christ-story: the theological point of

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1 So also Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 221; O’Brien, Philippians, 235-236; Hawthorne, Philippians, 91; Beare, Philippians, 85; Collange, Philippians, 106; Kreitzer, ‘Philippians 2:9-11,’ 118; and most interpreters.

2 R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 240-241, under the heading, ‘the verb ὑπερύψωσει: its superlative force’; Martin’s own 1967 view was harder to discern (for his full discussion, see pp. 239-247), but his 1983 Preface clarified his stance as favouring the ‘superlative’ rather than the ‘comparative’ sense of the verb (Hymn of Christ, xxv): ‘the exaltation (implied in the elative verb οὗτον ὑπερύψωσεν) …’ (on the elative sense, see p. 283 n. 5 below). See also those cited in the previous note. Martin (241-242) also mentions in support the use of a cognate verb as a parallel superlative in Ps 97(LXX 96):9, where Yahweh is praised as ‘the most High over all the earth; you are exalted (ὑπερψωθεῖς) far above all other gods’; on this he writes (p. 242), ‘It is not the thought that Yahweh is on a step higher than other deities, but that He is unique and in a class apart because He is the incomparable One.’

3 For which Pauline usage accounts for twenty of the twenty-eight compounds found in the New Testament, virtually giving Paul what Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 222, describes as ‘the copyright on hyper compounds in the NT,’ to which he adds, ‘and in the vast majority of cases they magnify or express excess, not position.’

4 This is the position of Cullmann, Christology, 180-181, for whom a comparative sense of οὗτον ὑπερψωσεν was central to his exposition of Phil 2:6-11; discussed as an alternative view by Martin (Hymn of Christ, 239-240); see also Hymn of Christ, 240 n. 2 for a list of others holding this viewpoint.

5 ‘Elative,’ sometimes referred to as an ‘absolute superlative,’ describes an intensification of the positive form of an adjective (usually carrying the translation, ‘very …’) before the positive form; on this see Wallace, Greek Grammar, 296; BDF, 127 §244.

6 O’Brien, Philippians, 236; cf. also Feinberg, ‘Kenosis,’ 42-43, 46.
the passage ‘is not that Christ is elevated to the position of cosmic lordship (equality with God) which he did not have before his humiliation, but that Christ reveals the essence of equality with God and cosmic lordship by his humiliation.’ As Wright explains, the logic which underlies the διὸ καί in v. 9a, which links the two halves of the story, vv. 6-8 and vv. 9-11, is best understood as: ‘and that is why …’. There is no sense in the passage that the exaltation of Christ is to a nature or status or rank which only then became appropriate for him. It is rather the affirmation, by God the Father, that the self-giving actions of Jesus Christ truly represented the revelation of divine equality in action, with the corresponding human and cosmic recognition of Christ’s actions confirming this by the acclamation of Christ as Lord (κύριος). With the strict monotheism of Isaiah 45 alluded to in the explicit citation from Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10, where none but the one God of Israel can bear the divine name or glory, it is difficult to conceive of Christ not being eligible for the title of Lord in the pre-existent state described in Phil 2:6. However, the text of Philippians 2 explicitly affirms the divinity of Christ in v. 6a (‘being in the form of God’) and in v. 6bc (under Hoover’s understanding, as already possessing ‘equality with God’), and with the passage of Isaiah 45 alluded to in v. 10, it therefore implicitly affirms him as Lord already in v. 6. In vv. 9-11, Christ is exalted not to a status he did not possess before, but is exalted and appropriately (publicly and universally) recognized as Lord as a human person, that is, as God-incarnate. This important inference arises unsurprisingly from Paul’s theological structuring of the story.

1 HANSEN, Philippians, 145; following N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84-87; cf. KASEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 76.
2 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 86; with support from CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 122-123; C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 96-98; cf. FOWL, Philippians, 100; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 233; HANSEN, Philippians, 151; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 141.
3 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 86.
4 See Isa 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22.
5 The alternative, it would seem, is to resort to a form of diteism (or tritheism) or an adoptionist christology, views regarded as heretical by most Christians, and for which the text offers no substantive support; cf. the similar logic of N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 94 (arguing against the notion that Christ in v. 6 was not pre-existent).
6 Cf. correctly, N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 86-87 & n. 123; CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 123; FLEMMING, Philippians, 120; cf. KASEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 76-78, 80. HANSEN, Philippians, 151-152 does point out that there is one difference between the Son who became incarnate and the Son after the resurrection, namely, that he existed in a resurrected, glorified body which he did not have either before the incarnation or initially after his death on the cross; however, this is not a difference which suggests a higher status of lordship or equality with God than he had before; on this cf. BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 144.
(iv) The fourth part of Martin’s reply to Wright focussed on ‘the propriety of the term soteriological’ in an exposition of Phil 2:6-11. In fact Wright had asked about Martin’s specific ‘ontological’ understanding of the status of ‘equality with God’ (ισός θεός) – that it represented ‘a particular relation [of Christ] – specifically independence – to God the Father’ – and how that could be viewed as ‘soteriological,’ but Martin turned his response to this query into a further defence of a non-ethical, soteriological understanding of the passage as a whole, thus not directly answering Wright’s question. In the main body of this work I have already spent a good deal of time dealing with the paraenetic character and function of the Christ-story, including Martin’s 1997 views, and a further response to him on this is not necessary here. We may however note that in replying to Wright, Martin asserted that the passage in fact ‘does not spell out ontological or trinitarian relationships.’ That is true at the level of primary meaning, but equally, it must be said, as Martin acknowledged, it does not spell out any soteriological relationships between God or Christ and people: ‘There is no explicit mention of Christ’s death as atonement … the hymn in all six verses does not speak of any action of Christ on behalf of others.’ But by going on to explain that the Pauline phrase, ‘even death on a cross’ of v. 8d, ‘may well be exegeted as implying ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for our sakes,” as in Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:8,’ Martin thereby argued for an implicit soteriology, the concession of which simultaneously admits the alternate possibility of an implicit paraenesis (that is, within vv. 6-11 themselves), whereby Christ’s actions represent self-giving sacrifice for others that clearly exemplifies the actions expected of the Philippian believers in vv. 3-4.

(v) The fifth counter-argument was in response to Wright’s ‘accusation’ that ‘the parallel between Adam and Christ is obscured’ on Martin’s res rapienda reading of ἀρπαγμος with the phrase, ‘being equal with God’ in v. 6. Wright asks rhetorically, ‘was Adam grasping at world sovereignty?’ However, while admitting that the Adam-Christ parallel ‘is not exact,’

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2 N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 73 (referring to a point made by MARTIN in *Hymn of Christ*, 152).
3 See above, in Chapter 4, Sections 4.2 and 4.3, esp. pp. 220-228.
7 N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 73.
8 N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 73 n. 70, to use the meanings which MARTIN implies for both ἀρπαγμος and τὸ ἐνιαὶ ισός θεός.
and that ‘several images, resonances, “symbolic fields,” intertextual echoes and textual subplots also lie in the background’ of the passage, Martin retorted that ‘the contrast between what Adam did (in defiance and disobedience) and what Christ refused to do (in humble submission and obedience) is as telling as it can be.’ Unfortunately, again, this is a case of not directly answering the charge against him. However, in reply to both Martin and Wright on this issue, while one can easily contrast obedience and disobedience, that does not mean in any way that Paul is deliberately, contrastively, alluding to Adam in his portrayal of Jesus Christ in Philippians 2. There are good reasons to suggest that he is not in fact doing this, as I have discussed in Chapter 5 (§5.3) above. It is interesting to note that though an Adam-Christ parallel was important to Wright in interpreting the Christ-story in 1991, and while there remains a discernable ‘echo,’ it has become less important to him more recently, due to his discovery of a significantly more plausible alternate background.

(vi) The sixth reply of Martin to Wright represents a continuation of his fourth counter-critique, dealing with the paraenetic function of vv. 6-11 in its epistolary context. Again, we have already dealt with this matter at length, and have demonstrated that the context of the passage points clearly toward an exemplary-paradigmatic function for the Christ-story. Wright observed pointedly that in Martin’s view, the second member of the contrast with v. 6bc (‘not harpagmos did he regard equality with God,’ being the first) is seen in Christ’s obedience (v. 8b), which represents an ‘intolerable delay.’ Quite rightly Wright noted that ‘it is much more natural to see the second member in ἀλλὰ ἐσωτῆς ἐκένωσεν.’ However, yet again, Martin misread what Wright was getting at, when he countered: ‘the assertion that the hymn (at least verses 6-8) centres on the verb “he emptied himself” rather than on the obedience-unto-death motif lacks probative appeal’ since he (Martin) had called attention to obedience as ‘the master thought governing both Christ’s way and the hortatory application.’ In fact Wright had not placed the ‘self-emptying’ of Christ at the centre of the passage; he was merely indicating that it, not obedience (in v. 8b), was the natural contrast to v. 6bc. This is so clearly indicated by Paul’s sentence structure in vv. 6-7, ‘not [y] … but [z] …’

1 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxii.
3 See p. 249 n. 5 above, referring to WRIGHT’s 2013 Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 686-687 & n. 212. Again, this is to be discussed in Section 5.3 below.
4 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 73.
5 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxii-lxxiv, here lxxii.
(οὖχ .... ἄλλα ....), that one wonders how someone could possibly disagree, yet Martin’s *res rapienda* interpretation has led to such awkwardness in interpreting the passage as a whole. Further, without denying the importance of the theme, as we have already stated, the point of the passage is not whether or not Christ obeyed, nor whether or not the Philippians should obey; it is rather the content and character of Christ’s obedience (alongside his other actions) which the Philippians should focus on.

In his reply Martin went on to ask of Wright, what is the *theological* import of the self-emptying (*kenosis*) of Christ (v. 7a), if the decisive moment of Christ’s choice in v. 6 lies in ‘the taking up of an “attitude” … and a way of “interpreting” what equality with God means and implies’? The answer to Martin is found in Hoover’s idiomatic understanding of v. 6bc, and Moule’s theology, which Wright has brought together: Christ did not regard equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage; he chose to give up the possibility of selfish benefit and gain (v. 6bc), and conversely gave of himself (vv. 7-8). Equality with God was for Christ not a matter of getting (v. 6bc), but of giving (vv. 7-8). Martin overlooks the fact that Christ’s ‘attitude’ and ‘way of interpreting’ his equality with God do not remain as mere ‘attitude’ and ‘interpretation’ but result in significant, dynamic actions in vv. 7-8 following the strong adversative, ἄλλα of v. 7a. His claim that Wright’s ‘reconstruction’ is ‘inadequate’ if it ‘fails to account for the clearly storylike movement that gives the hymn a dynamic quality’ is unfounded. As noted above, the action of the story, as such, does not begin until v. 7a.

Similarly, although Wright’s explication of Hoover and Moule on Phil 2:6 led to an understanding of the actions of Christ in vv. 6-8 as representing ‘a new understanding of

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3. Cf. Wright’s own response to Martin’s previous 1983 critique of Moule (Hymn of Christ, xxii-xxiii) on this point (*Climax of the Covenant*, 89): Wright’s (and Moule’s) interpretation ‘does not lose the mutual tension between vv. 6 and 7, as Martin claims. V. 6 says that Christ did not regard his status in one way; v. 7 says that he took the opposite way instead. … [This] does not alter the tension or sequential progress of the hymn. The fact that v. 6 states a thought, and v. 7 an action, is itself evidence of this.’ He goes on to say (p. 89) that Martin’s way of formulating the passage to demonstrate its tension and movement could very easily be reworded into Moule’s view, or his own: ‘Christ might have regarded his equality with God as meaning snatching [Moule] (or, as something to take advantage of [Hooover/Wright]), but on the contrary he chose (to regard it as meaning) the way of self-giving, and, further, to act on that understanding.’
God’1 (which Martin suggested should have led to Wright titling his chapter on Phil 2:5-11 as ‘The Story of God’)2, Martin’s further claim that such a reading thereby disregards the momentous shift in the dramatic plot, which takes place at v. 9 where the δι’ θεόν ‘brings the direct action of God, in contrast to Christ’s own volitional acts in verses 6-8, to the front of the “plot”’3 is without any real basis. Wright’s ‘new’ theological understanding of the passage is not at the expense of it being seen appropriately as both christological and an account of the actions of Jesus Christ. What Martin failed to acknowledge is that in Wright’s reading, the Christ-story actually presents itself at two main levels: (i) the first is the explicit, outward story of the actions of Christ; (ii) the second refers to a deeper level of meaning, namely Christ’s ‘being equal with God’ and what that divinity means in practice within human history. If Wright has emphasized the second level (as being previously largely unrecognized by scholars), it is not to replace the first, but to look underneath it,4 as he himself explicitly states: ‘Underneath this is the conclusion, all-important in present christological debate: incarnation and even crucifixion are to be seen as appropriate vehicles for the dynamic self-revelation of God.’5 Indeed, contrary to Martin, Wright’s account clearly gives the passage a very ‘dynamic quality’ and is far from being a ‘static’ recital of events.6 Furthermore, I would add, it is in fact precisely the ‘attitude’ and ‘interpretation’ (of what it means ‘to be equal to God’) of v. 6, which unifies Christ’s actions from incarnation to crucifixion (vv. 7-8) as one movement in an overall plot of two main movements (namely Christ’s descent [vv. 6-8] and ascent [vv. 9-11], or, to use the language of the passage, humiliation and exaltation).

Thus, to conclude, while Martin’s 1997 preface responded to criticisms voiced by both Hoover and Wright of Martin’s position and counter-critiqued Wright’s interpretation in a substantiative way, essentially he was maintaining his original 1967 view. However, following

1 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84.
2 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxxiii n. 73 (MARTIN’s words, not WRIGHT’s); the latter’s title for the chapter is in fact, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord: Philippians 2:5-11.’
3 R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxiii.
4 Thus, MARTIN’s rejection (Hymn of Christ, lxv, lxviii, lxxiii-lxxiii) of WRIGHT’s use of the word ἀγάπη (‘love’) to describe what vv. 6-8 show in practice (Climax of the Covenant, 84, 86, 87) as being ‘in the realm of a hypothetical meta-story that floats above the text’ (Hymn of Christ, lxxiii) was equally misplaced, for while MARTIN was correct to observe that the text does not speak explicitly of God’s love and sacrifice (‘the word ἀγάπη is missing’; pp. lxviii, lxiii), WRIGHT was merely explaining an implicit deeper level of meaning.
5 N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84.
6 Referring to R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxvi, lxxiii.
the philological analysis of Hoover, he sought to merge his own view with the ‘proverbial sense of ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγείσθαι τί as “something to use for his own advantage.”’ But this only complicated an already problematic res rapienda interpretation. The combination of incompatible views does not usually lead to a satisfactory understanding of a text. While Martin’s understanding represents an important contribution in the history of interpretation, and one which sought to explain the whole of the Christ-story in a largely self-consistent way, it is hard to commend it as a ‘complete package’ today. In large part his position flounders on his unsatisfactory interpretation of Phil 2:6. His criticisms of Wright’s interpretation have been shown to be largely without merit.

5.2.6 Philological Challenges to the Consensus

John O’Neill’s short critique (in 1988) responded to Wright’s original claim that Hoover’s conclusions had not yet been conclusively challenged on philological grounds, and expressed a contrary opinion. While accepting Hoover’s contention that ἀρπαγμα and ἀρπαγμός might be synonyms, he argued that an exception to Hoover’s ‘rule’ (O’Neill’s term) regarding the interpretation of the formulation of ἀρπαγμός with a verb of considering in a double accusative construction – and which Hoover himself had conceded – actually rendered the ‘rule’ invalid. However, as Fee rightly responds, by turning Hoover’s findings into a ‘rule,’ O’Neill eliminates the ‘rule’ by noting the exceptions; but that is not the same as eliminating Hoover’s understanding of the idiom. Significantly, Martin’s evaluation was that, while O’Neill ‘makes some telling criticisms,’ Hoover’s ‘suggestion of a proverbial sense of ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγείσθαι τί as “something to use for his own advantage”’ [nevertheless] ‘seems well grounded.’ Wright surmises that O’Neill’s alternate renderings of particular comparative texts are either ‘very strained,’ less probable than Hoover’s, or end up making the same point as did Hoover’s reading, and therefore that his objections are in fact ‘not

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2 See p. 258 above for Wright’s claim, cited in full.
3 O’NEILL, ‘Hoover on Harpagmos,’ 445-449.
4 HOOVER, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 117 n. 33.
5 O’NEILL, ‘Hoover on Harpagmos,’ 446.
6 FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 205 n. 54.
7 This is disputed strongly by N. T. WRIGHT, *Climax of the Covenant*, 85 n. 119; see below.
telling.’¹ Fowl concurs: O’Neill’s objections ‘have not generally persuaded critics.’² O’Neill went on to argue for the most common meaning (found in extant Greek literature) of ἄρπαγμός, namely ‘robbery,’³ which he believes is ‘the only choice left,’ but one which he admits is ‘near nonsense’ in relation to the meaning of the text as it stands.⁴ Because of this conclusion, he went on to suggest his so-called ‘modest proposal’⁵: that the Philippian text is corrupt and must be emended.⁶ However, no one has accepted this proposal, and it has been justly dismissed as a ‘desperate expedient’⁷ and a ‘counsel of despair.’⁸ With Wright, then, we may say, appropriately, ‘O’Neill’s claim to have successfully challenged Hoover’s reading of the idiom’ is quite without warrant.⁹

A more significant challenge, however, has been mounted by Samuel Vollenweider, who in 1999 argued, against Hoover, that Phil 2.6b should not be understood in the manner of an idiom, but in a clearly negative way, adopting an interpretation of ἄρπαγμός that may be classified as res rapienda, as ‘booty’ (‘Raubgut’) carrying the meaning of something ‘forcibly taken away’ (‘gewaltsam Wegnehmens’).¹⁰ In so doing, Vollenweider has revived an older interpretation of Phil 2:6b, which has had few recent advocates.¹¹

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¹ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 85 & n. 119; contra DUNN, Theology of Paul, 285 n. 87, whose objection on a particular reading is quite misplaced.

² FOWL, Philippians, 94 n. 15.

³ Cf. KJV, NKJV, YLT.

⁴ O’NEILL, ‘Hoover on Harpagmos,’ 448. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxvii n. 51, however, contrarily asserts that O’NEILL’s ‘alternative rendering’ of the phrase does actually ‘fit the context well’ and ‘nicely chimes in with my understanding,’ provided that his (MARTIN’s) and not O’NEILL’s understanding of the phrases ‘form of God’ and ‘equality with God’ is adopted.

⁵ From the title of his article: ‘Hoover on Harpagmos Reviewed, with a Modest Proposal Concerning Philippians 2:6,’ and hardly an accurate description.

⁶ O’NEILL, ‘Hoover on Harpagmos,’ 448-449. The emendation proposed is that the original text of v. 6 went as follows: οὗ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν ὀρχάργαμον ἡγήσατο μὴ ἢναί ὅτε (‘who being in the form of God thought it not robbery not to be equal with God’), with μὴ (‘not’) later being changed to τὸ (‘the’) by a pious scribe.

⁷ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, lxvii n. 51.

⁸ So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 205 n. 54; followed by REUMAN, Philippians, 347; note as well WRIGHT’s own sharp rebuttal (Climax of the Covenant, 80 n. 105; cf. 85 & n. 119); and cf. also FOWL, Philippians, 94 n. 15; SILVA, Philippians (2nd ed.), 104 n. 23.

⁹ So N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 85 n. 119.

¹⁰ VOLLENWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”’, 413-433, especially here 418-419.

¹¹ Cf. COLLINS, ‘Origins of Christology,’ 119 n. 34. In WRIGHT’s classification table (Climax of the Covenant, 81), VOLLENWEIDER’s position would be listed as a variant of interpretation 4(b), alongside LOHMEYER and MARTIN, though his case for this position is very different from those of LOHMEYER and MARTIN, and made with very little reference to their views. VOLLENWEIDER does acknowledge the lack of scholarly acceptance of LOHMEYER’s position and claims to avoid two problematic assumptions that were made by
Vollenweider accepts the basic synonymity of ἀρπαγμός and ἄρπαγμα assumed by Hoover. However, opposing Hoover, he contends that the only comparable idiom (employing ἄρπαγμα + verb + double accusative construction) outside of Christian literature (in the texts of Heliodorus of Emesa) dates to more than 300 years after Philippians 2 was written. Further, he argues, it is revealing that only a few of the Greek Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries C.E. demonstrate an acquaintance with the idiom. More strongly, he believes that the sexual vulgarity in the Heliodorus texts renders usage of the same idiom in a more solemn text reflecting on the ‘highest divine things’ in order to praise Christ (Phil 2:6-11) as completely inappropriate. Of course one of the objections to most interpretations of ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6 is the relative lack of linguistic evidence to support any rendering, whether it is Hoover’s or Moule’s or that of anyone else. Because of that, it is necessary to include all available linguistic data, while being sensitive to the (chronological) history of usage of the expression and its cognates in their contexts. But it is anachronistic to argue that later usage of an idiom in a supposedly inappropriate context renders it as inadmissible in a different, earlier context. The question surely is of a basic demonstrable meaning, regardless of the situation in which the idiom is employed; a nuance or connotation of meaning, however, could well be supplied by the idiom’s context. That basic meaning, for the idiomatic expression observed by Hoover, thus, has not been overturned by Vollenweider.

Nevertheless, Vollenweider then argues on firmer grounds that the ἀρπαζ- word family as documented in the LXX has exclusively negative connotations, along the lines of ‘robbing’ (‘Raubens’), with the related noun meaning ‘robbery’ (‘Raub’). Yet, while most commentators have rejected such a meaning for ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6 as making little sense

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1 VOLLSEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 416, 419 n. 41.  
2 Of which, ἄρπαγμα or ἄρπαγμος is one of the two accusative objects of the verb.  
3 His reference is to the texts from Heliodorus of Emesa (VOLLSEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 416). On these texts, see HOOVER, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 95, 102-106.  
4 VOLLSEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 417.  
5 VOLLSEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 416-417; followed by G. M. ELLIS, ‘Grammar as Theology,’ 56, 60, 299. For ELLIS this rejection is more important as a contribution than VOLLSEIDER’s history of religions approach; but I believe ELLIS is mistaken about the weight of VOLLSEIDER’s paper.  
6 See FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 205, 207 n. 61.  
in its context, due to the implied sense of violence in the terminology (despite the KJV and those who have sought to explain the text on the basis of its translation), Vollenweider has sought to revive an interpretation along these same lines by providing an impressive collection of conceptually-relevant history of religions data against which such violent language in Philippians might be understood. Herein lies the strength of his case, the detail of which is worth exploring.

Rejecting any Adamic background behind Phil 2:6-11, Vollenweider goes on to investigate biblical, Jewish and Hellenistic traditions about the usurpation of equality with God by kings and rulers. He begins with a citation from a second-century CE papyrus text, which reads, ‘What is a God? One who is ruling. What is a king? One who is Godlike’ (τῷ θεῷ; τῷ κρατοῦν - τῷ βασιλεύοντι). He then in turn discusses three areas of background relevant to Philippians 2. (i) First he turns to Old Testament and Jewish texts in which usurpation of equality with God and the biblical motif of the ‘arrogance of the ruler’ (des ‘Hochmuts des Herrschers’) are variously described. Here ‘all the traditions mentioned bring paradigmatically a fundamental biblical insight to expression: a haughty elevation results in a fall, [but] a humble self-abasement leads to a rise.’ (ii) Next Vollenweider discusses God-like kings in the Hellenistic world, where the glorification of the god-like power of kings is seen alongside criticism of both presumption and arrogance which corrupt the royal office. For both of these background areas, relevant questions are raised, which are appropriately comparable to the situation found in

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1 See, for example, the comments of FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 205 & n. 54; cf. BDAG, 133: such a rendering ‘is next to impossible in Phil 2:6’; Flemming, *Philippians*, 113-114.

2 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 419.

3 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 419-427.


6 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 422 (the ET is mine): ‘Alle die aufgeführten Traditionen bringen paradigmatisch eine grundlegende biblische Einsicht zum Ausdruck: die hochmütige Erhebung resultiert in einem Sturz, die demütige Selbstniedrigung führt zur Erhöhung.’

7 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 423-425.

8 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 423.
Phil 2:5-11: ‘Can a ruler exploit his position of power? How can he avoid the dangers of pride, arrogance and self-sufficiency? Can a king ever claim a god-like position? And are there forms of renunciation of power and high status?’ Particular attention is given to Alexander the Great, who is the ‘prototype of the world ruler’ (‘Typos des Weltherrschers’). Discussions of Alexander, both positive and negative, were popular in ancient times, even in Judaism, and alternate between admiration and condemnation of his vainglory and presumption. It was then debated as to whether or not his life climaxed in achieving ‘equality with God’ (‘Gottgleichheit’), though Vollenweider finds some anecdotal evidence which speaks explicitly of the usurpation of a god-like position by Alexander.

(iii) Thirdly, Vollenweider examines the semantic relationship seen in Greek literature between ‘ruling’ and ‘robbery’. In this case, Alexander is considered as ‘the exemplary world robber’ (‘der exemplarische Welträuber’). Vollenweider cites the well known maxim about when Alexander asked a captured pirate why he made the seas unsafe, and who replied: ‘Because I do it with one small ship, I am called a robber (‘Räuber’). But you do it with a great fleet and are called Imperator.’ Also of importance to Vollenweider is Plutarch’s description of Alexander as a type (‘Typos’) of the virtuous ruler in his De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute, which brings together, in negated form, the language of being a ‘robber’ (‘rauberisch’) and the noun ἥρπαγμα (‘Raubgut’): οὐ γὰρ ληστρικῶς τὴν Ἀσίαν καταδραμὼν οὖθε ὥσπερ ἥρπαγμα καὶ λάφυρον εὐτυχίας ἀνελπίστου σπαράξαι καὶ

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3 VOLLENEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”’, 425.
6 VOLLENEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”’, 426.
8 VOLLENEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”’, 426.
For Vollenweider, then, one may find, in Alexander especially, ‘the bridge from world domination to equality with God.’ But here Vollenweider’s evidence is contradictory: in one account Alexander is a ‘world robber’ and in another he is ‘not a robber’. Furthermore, this is the only instance of ἀρπαγμός (or its cognate ἀρπάγμα) in connection with a pagan ruler that he is able to cite (and none that refer to divine equality), and it is one that parallels, rather than contrasts with, the actions of Jesus Christ in Phil 2:6; in both cases the ἀρπαγμός noun is negated as pertaining to the subject.

Nevertheless, from this data, Vollenweider seeks to draw a political interpretation of Phil 2:6 of relevance to Gentile Christians living in the Roman Empire, which focuses on the relationship between imperial power and the dominion of Christ and its implications for ‘Christ-appropriate intra-communal use of power’ (cf. Mark 10:42-44). By focusing on the negative associations of violence and usurpation in his reading of ἀρπαγμός, Vollenweider allows for two possibilities in interpreting Phil 2:6: (i) Christ could already possess equality with God, which the rulers are seeking to obtain through transgression; or (ii), which is Vollenweider’s cautious preference, in v. 6 Christ does not yet possess equality with God (assuming a res rapienda sense for ἀρπαγμός), but this is given to him in vv. 9-11 when God grants him the title of Kyrios (‘Lord’) and its related ‘world dominion.’ In the first case a correspondence between v. 6a and v. 6c is maintained, allowing the ‘form of God’ and ‘being equal with God’ to be regarded as identical, though the elevation to being Kyrios (vv. 9-11) then becomes incidental with respect to Christ’s divinity (which was already his), but very important with respect to his humanity. In the second case, a break is postulated between v. 6a and v. 6c, and ‘equality with God’ represents a striking increase from ‘being in

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1 PLUTARCH, Alexandri 1.8 (330d), ET: ‘for he [Alexander] did not overrun Asia like a robber nor was he minded to tear and rend it, as if it were booty and plunder bestowed by unexpected good fortune’ (trans. F. C. Babbitt; Loeb 305). This is the text that was particularly significant for JAEGER, although, as HOOVER pointed out, ἀρπαγμα is not there found as part of a double accusative expression; see p. 252 n. 3 above. On this text, HOOVER’s discussion (‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 96-97, 98-99) is much fuller than VOLLNEWEIDER’s.
2 VOLLNEWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 426: ‘Der Brückenschlag von der Weltherrschaft zur Gottgleichheit.’
4 VOLLNEWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 428 & n. 91; one version of the Nicene interpretation goes exactly this way.
5 On this, see p. 290 n. 11 above.
6 For an explanation of the Latin terminology, see above, p. 251 n. 2.
7 VOLLNEWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 429.
8 VOLLNEWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 428; consequently, in the Nicene reading (cf. n. 4 immediately above) this elevation to being Kyrios only affects the human nature of Christ.
the form of God’, granted in vv. 9-11, but anticipated at v. 6b, which allows Christ to be
granted both ‘equality with God’ and ‘world rulership’ (‘Weltherrschaft’) as the Kyrios.

It is important to note at this point that Vollenweider admits, of the political background he
has evinced, that it could also support an understanding of the passage based on Hoover’s
idiomatic rendering of ἀρπαγμός.1 In this I believe he is correct, though of course, as
mentioned above, Vollenweider does not accept Hoover’s translation.

To complete his interpretative hypothesis against this royal, political background,
Vollenweider explains the phrase (in v. 6a), the ‘form of God’ (‘Gestalt Gottes’) concretely
and visually, along the lines of royal traditions which often emphasize the god-like
appearance, shape and clothing of the ruler, robes and diadem included, but here in a divine
throne room. For world-rulers it is precisely the outward entrapments of enormous power and
splendour which provoke them to presumption and pride.2 Vollenweider further finds in early
Jewish texts an extraordinary interest in the outward appearance of heavenly beings, whether
it is their clothing or bodies, which makes it unsurprising that ‘divine predication’
(‘Gottesprädikation’) is also awarded to the angels in the heavenly throne room.3 Consistent
with his position (and with a similar interpretative result to the position of Martin),4
Vollenweider argues that ‘being equal with God’ (‘Gott-gleich-Sein’) is actually a higher
status than being ‘in the form of God.’ The pre-existent Christ did not usurp this higher
status, but instead took the form and status of a man and a slave. In consequence the elevated
status was granted to him by God and he attained the supreme position as both the venerable
carrier of God’s name and as ruler of the world (vv. 9-11).5

Vollenweider argues that his context-independent history-of-religions hypothesis actually fits
in very well with a contextual reading of vv. 6-11 (and thus also with Paul as the author of
the passage6), both with the exhortations of vv. 1-5 in mind, and also with the plausibility

1 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 428-429.
2 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 429.
3 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 430.
4 See p. 277 above.
5 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 430.
6 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 430, although he himself sees the passage as a pre-Pauline, Jewish-
Christian composition (428); cf. 413.
that the citizens of the Roman colony in Philippi who received Paul’s ‘most political letter’ would well understand Paul’s meaning (along the lines Vollenweider has suggested).\(^1\) Roman army veterans would be familiar with the importance of ‘ruling, arrogance, robbery and war booty’ (‘Herrschaft, Arroganz, Raub und Kriegsbeute’). And in the city named after Philip II (father of Alexander the Great), an allusion to Alexander would be understood by itself.\(^2\)

Hence, for Vollenweider, in v. 6 the pre-existent, self-humiliating Christ, who did not claim ‘equality with God,’ is conceived of as an antitype to the self-elevating rulers and tyrants of the world (and, perhaps, notably to Alexander) with their presumption, pride, and usurpation of divine equality. Christ’s lordship is not based on usurpation or robbery, but on renunciation and giving up for others (vv. 6-8). Then, what was negated in v. 6b appears positively in vv. 9-11 as the rule of Kyrios Jesus.\(^3\)

Finally, in answer to the question arising as to whether Christ’s position as Kyrios compromises the oneness of God, Vollenweider points to the ‘bold recourse’ made by vv. 9-11 to the strongly monotheistic message of Isa 45:20-25,\(^4\) and concludes that in Philippians 2 ‘the shield of God’s oneness extends itself even over Christ as Kyrios and Kosmokrator.’\(^5\)

Although appearing in 1999, Vollenweider’s article has not yet received significant attention from published scholars. The most significant reactions to his hypothesis have so far appeared only in footnotes, where the response is mostly cautious or negative.\(^6\) Thus, Silva

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\(^1\) Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”’, 430-431.

\(^2\) Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”’, 431, ‘

\(^3\) Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”’, 431, 432.

\(^4\) Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”’, 432.


\(^6\) See, for example, Hellerman, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ’ (2009) 787 n. 22; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians (2011) 142 n. 119; Silva, Philippians (2nd ed., 2005), 104 n. 23; contrast the brief, selective, but more positive (although without being fully persuaded) comments of Collins, ‘Origins of Christology’ (2003) 118-119; Tellbe, Between Synagogue and State, 257 n. 206; and Reumann, Philippians (2008) 347; while a few others showing awareness of Vollenweider only cite him (alongside O’Neill) as an opponent to the now dominant Hoover/Wright interpretation of v. 6b (and without noting the significant differences between O’Neill and Vollenweider). One exception is the unpublished thesis of G. M. Ellis, ‘Grammar as Theology’ (2013) 55-57, 59-60, 299, who gives a very uneven account of Vollenweider’s contribution (misrepresenting the latter’s view on the phrase ‘equality with God’ [p. 57], and playing down the significance of his history of religions approach [60]; see further p. 258 n. 6 above), and who ends up
writes that Vollenweider’s paper is ‘more substantial, though still unpersuasive’ in its objections to Wright and Hoover. Among the weaknesses of Vollenweider’s case is the lack of linguistic data (employing ἀρπαγμός/-μος or ἀρπαζ- language) for rulers who supposedly ‘robbed’ (or sought to usurp) equality with God, which we have noted above. As I have mentioned, while Vollenweider’s criticisms of Hoover are to be noted, he has not advanced any compelling or necessary reason to overturn Hoover’s overall conclusions.

Further, while Vollenweider contrasts Jesus with the hubris of God-like kings, there is nothing in the Philippian passage to suggest a focus on Jesus’ royalty, nor on appropriate or inappropriate royal behaviour; from v. 7 to v. 8 the emphasis is instead on his servile behaviour.

But the crucial weakness of his overall case, I believe, is the problem his translation causes for our interpretation both of Phil 2:6 itself and of the entire Christ-story. Vollenweider’s reading, like Martin’s before him, effectively prevents v. 6a and v. 6c from referencing the same thing; thus a significant distinction between ‘the form of God’ (μορφή θεου) and ‘being equal with God’ (τὸ εἶναι ίσον θεου) must be maintained, with one phrase being affirmed of Christ, and the other being denied. ‘Equality with God,’ thus, is to be seen as a higher status than ‘being in the form of God,’ to which the pre-incarnate Christ (in v. 6) had not yet attained, though might have aspired to. Vollenweider himself acknowledges that this view is problematic, and he only cautiously advances it. But, writes Bockmuehl, a decisive argument against this position is that the context precisely does not suggest it; nor does it explain why, had there been such a higher status, it would have been wrong for Christ to aspire to. Similar is Silva’s appraisal and primary criticism:

Vollenweider … offers some important evidence from the Greco-Roman world regarding the usurpation of divine equality by kings. While this material may have some relevance for our understanding of Phil. 2:6-11 (Christ’s humility contrasts dramatically with the hubris of earthly

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1 Silva, Philippians (2nd ed.), 104 n. 23.
2 With Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 142 n. 119.
3 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 429; cf. recognition of this by Hellerman, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 787 n. 22.
4 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 129-130.
rulers), it hardly follows that, in Paul’s thought, Christ’s claiming equality with God would have belonged in the category of usurping what did not rightfully belong to him.1

It is both difficult and implausible that we conceive of the pre-existent Christ being faced with a real choice to usurp or rob divine equality, but choosing not to do that, as v. 6 would imply. It is also troublesome to reconcile the seemingly necessary implication that it was inappropriate for the pre-incarnate Christ to be equal with God, but somehow now appropriate for the post-crucifixion Christ to be equal with God.

With Silva then, what I suggest Vollenweider’s study contributes to understanding the Christstory is a very helpful and plausible background for recognition of an implicit contrast that Paul is making between Jesus Christ and Roman Emperors and Greek rulers (among other ancient rulers and despots), and which, by Vollenweider’s important evidence, the Philippians would have readily understood. Vollenweider summarizes his data as representing the hypothesis of ‘a political tradition-field’ (‘eines politischen Traditionsfeldes’), and which he seems to believe can support at least two types of interpretations,2 including one which is consistent with Hoover’s interpretation in its understanding of v. 6c.3 Inasmuch as this ‘political tradition-field’ hypothesis is interpreted along the lines of a contrastive background by which the example of Christ in Philippians 2:6-11 may be understood and better appreciated, I believe it is correct. However, I suggest that the evidence points away from the explanation placed upon it in the Philippian context by Vollenweider (i.e. that the contrast demonstrated by Christ is of one who might have ‘robbed’ equality with God but did not), and instead toward the view expressed, for example, by Hellerman, who also expresses appropriate recognition of the political background to our passage, that the Christ who actually possessed divine status, refused to take advantage of this, and willingly surrendered it for the sake of others.4 Vollenweider does acknowledge the feasibility of this latter possibility, but rejects it. He is wrong on that count, I submit.

Thus, none of the major challenges to Wright (and Hoover) can be said to have overturned their essential understanding of the meaning of οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἤγιόσατο τὸ ἐίναι ἴσα θεό in

1 Silva, Philippians (2nd ed.), 104 n. 23.
2 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”’, 427, but see 427-429; this is summarised on p. 294 above.
3 Vollenweider, ‘Der “Raub”’, 428-429.
4 Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 134-135; followed by Flemming, Philippians, 114.
Phil 2:6. The growing consensus that this view represents the most satisfactory interpretation of v. 6 in its context appears to be very well grounded.

We may then proceed to ask about the import of Hoover and Wright’s reading of ἀρπαγμός in v. 6 for an understanding of the Christ-story as a whole. In particular, what is its significance for a narrative understanding of the passage?

5.2.7 The Narrative-Theological Significance of Wright’s Contribution

Wright’s contribution to the understanding of the Christ-story has effectively ruled out most other renderings of ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6, has shown that Hoover’s idiomatic rendering of v. 6 offers the best and most satisfactory understanding of the phrase in the context of the passage, and in so doing has cut through a great deal of interpretative confusion about the christology of the passage. So, as we have seen, Wright translates vv. 6-7 as: ‘who, being in the form of God, did not regard this divine equality as something to be used for his own advantage, but rather emptied himself …’.\(^1\)

If we apply this understanding of vv. 6-7 to the passage as a whole, Wright argues, a ‘new coherence’ results: ‘The pre-existent son regarded equality with God not as excusing him from the task of (redemptive) suffering and death, but actually as uniquely qualifying him for that vocation.’\(^2\) He adds, that it is here, not in the views of Käsemann or Martin, that ‘the real underlying soteriology’ of the passage is to be found.\(^3\) Wright continues, referring to both Rom 5:6-11 and 2 Cor 5:19 to suggest that, as in the Romans passage, the death of Christ ‘is understood as the appropriate revelation, in action, of the love of God himself.’\(^4\) We will come back to that assertion in a moment. Next, he explains that the verb ἐκένωσεν does not refer to the loss of divine attributes (taking the verb in its literal sense), but – ‘in good Pauline

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\(^1\) N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83.

\(^2\) N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 83-84.

\(^3\) N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84.

\(^4\) N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84; cf. 87. In Rom 5:8, Paul writes, ‘But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ and in 2 Cor 5:19, ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.’
fashion’ (taking the verb metaphorically) – ‘to making something powerless, emptying it of apparent significance.’

Then, further explicating the ‘new coherence’ of the Christ-story, Wright adds a pivotal, breath-taking paragraph:

The real humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that the one who was himself God, and who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a vocation. The real theological emphasis of the hymn, therefore, is not simply a new view of Jesus. It is a new understanding of God. Against the age-old attempts of human beings to make God in their own (arrogant, self-glorifying) image, Calvary reveals the truth about what it meant to be God. Underneath this is the conclusion, all-important in present christological debate: incarnation and even crucifixion are to be seen as appropriate vehicles for the dynamic self-revelation of God.

Later he adds for further clarity that ‘the via crucis’ of Phil 2:6-8 is, with ‘the hindsight of faith’ (and, we might add, appropriate theological reflection upon the passage), ‘the full revelation of what it meant in practice, to be equal with God. The one who was eternally “equal with God” expressed that equality precisely in the sequence of events referred to in vv. 6-8. The phrase ‘being equal with God’ thus carries a totally positive, even if surprising, connotation, when Paul asserts the ‘but … he emptied himself … humbled himself’ side of his ou0x … a0lla& … construction in vv. 6-8. This theo-logical explication of the import of Hoover’s idiomatic understanding of v. 6, which Wright refers to as ‘incarnational theology,’ does appear to me to be essentially correct, and is one of the most important results of his extensive survey and analysis of the harpagmos debate.

1 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 84 & n. 112. Wright is absolutely on the mark to take iκινωσεν as a metaphor here (and not as conveying the literal idea of emptying something [himself] of something); on this, see further pp. 304-305 below.

2 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 84, part of which I have already cited above.

3 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 90.

4 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 83-84. R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, liv, drew out a linguistic parallel between Timothy and Christ in his 1997 preface, but completely missed Paul’s point when he said, first appropriately, that the term ἰσοφύσχον (2:20; of Timothy) recalls the phrase, ἵσα θεό in 2:6, but then added, ‘of the heavenly Christ who disdained the opportunity to be “like God,”’ as though the phrase τὸ θεό in 2:6 represented a negative trait which Christ refused for himself. To the contrary, Christ did not ‘disdain’ ‘being equal with God,’ but rather regarded it as ‘not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage’ (οὐχ ὀργανιστικόν) and then to be expressed positively in the very actions he took in vv. 7-8. The phrase ἰσοφύσχον of Timothy equally carries a very positive connotation: Paul has no one else of ‘kindred spirit’ (v. 20a).

5 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 90.
However, when Wright goes on to explain this ‘self-revelation of God’ as ‘a revelation of … the love of God,’ I would caution a degree of exegetical restraint. Rather than the aforementioned texts of Rom 5:6-11 and 2 Cor 5:19 supporting Wright’s interpretation of Phil 2:6-11 as a revelation of divine love, which, as we have seen was sharply criticized by Martin, I would urge a more nuanced view: that these texts offer confirmation of the view Wright has highlighted, that Phil 2:6-11 shows Christ’s attitude and actions as demonstrating ‘the dynamic self-revelation of God’ in a way that is analogous to the self-revelation of God in these other texts. Thus, a reading of a deeper level of meaning underlying Phil 2:6-11 as a revelation of divine love should not be taken to mean that this passage is all (or even primarily) about God’s ἀγάπη, for it is not that. Paul’s purpose in Philippians 2 was not to explicate the meaning of divine love, despite the reference to God’s love in v. 1b (ἐὰν τι παραμάθειν ἀγάπης) and the exhortation to the Philippians to ‘have the same love’ in v. 2c (τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες); while other language from vv. 1-4 finds explicit linguistic reference in the Christ-story (vv. 6-11), notably ἀγάπη does not. This may be implicit in the Christ-story inasmuch as the revelation of divine love and the revelation of God himself are surely inseparable realities. What we may say, though, more precisely, is that the self-revelation of God in the Christ-story is appropriately analogous to the revelation of divine love, as seen in Rom 5:6-11.

Wright goes on to point out that his ‘new understanding of God’ in the Christ-story is strengthened by five considerations. (i) First is that it makes sense of the relevant extra-biblical Greek evidence. Here Wright discusses the relevant references from the Greek and

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1 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 84; cf. 86 (‘the revelation of the divine love in action’); and 87 (‘vv. 6-8 might almost serve as a definition of what [ἀγάπη] means in practice – and vv. 9-11 would then affirm that this love is none other that the love of God himself …’); cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 208 & n. 69, 217; O’Brien, Philippians, 216; Gorman, Cruciformity, 7, 83, 92-94, 164-169.

2 See Section 5.2.5 above, pp. 287-288 & p. 288 n. 4, for a discussion of Martin’s objections to Wright on this point.

3 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 84.

4 As a significant side note at this point, the recognition of Phil 2:6-11 as having a deeper level of meaning as divine self-revelation, which closely parallels the profound Pauline understanding of the action of God in Christ elsewhere (2 Cor 5:19; cf. Rom 5:6-11), is very strong additional evidence for the Pauline authorship of the Christ-story; cf. my previous discussion of this matter in Chapter 3 above.

5 And no less than five such linguistic references can be identified; see Table 3.1a on pp. 98-99 above.

6 For the following, see N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 84-98.
Latin Fathers, and notably from Eusebius, particularly those which had not already been adequately discussed by Hoover, and including a response to the critique of O’Neill.¹

(ii) Second, Wright’s view explains the relationship between vv. 6-8 and 9-11 ‘in a much more satisfying way than the other views’ of this text. As we have already seen, Wright sees the exaltation of Jesus as ‘organically related to what has gone before’; it is the affirmation, by God the Father, that the incarnation and death of Jesus really was an expression of what ‘equality with God’ meant in practice. Thus, there is no sense ‘of an arbitrary reward in v. 9, nor of an exaltation to a divine rank or nature not already possessed (both before and during his human life).’²

(iii) Third, the whole passage (vv. 6-11), as Wright has interpreted it, and not merely vv. 6-8, fits very well into the paraenetic context both of vv. 1-5 and of vv. 12-16. Thus, in this view, the paraenetic significance does not stop with v. 8 (as Martin had suggested of the ‘ethical’ interpretation of the passage), but continues through the entire story: ‘God himself recognizes and endorses self-abnegation as the proper expression of the divine character.’³ For the Philippians, then, Paul does not merely refer to the imitation of Christ, but to ‘the outworking of the life of the Spirit of God’ (Phil 2:1-2). Referencing the Christ-story in the exhortations of vv. 1-5 and especially vv. 1-2, the paraenetic implication is clear: ‘as God endorsed Jesus’ interpretation of what equality with God meant in practice, so he will recognize self-giving love in his people as the true mark of the life of the Spirit.’⁴ Wright goes on to say that this ‘meshes’ with the underlying Adam-christology of the passage,⁵ but as we will see in the next section, I believe he is quite mistaken on this specific point, and actually contradicts his own position.⁶

(iv) Wright’s fourth consideration is that the frequently observed parallel between Phil 2:6-11 and 3:4-11 works very well on his understanding.⁷ Here he brings out further

¹ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84-85; on O’NEILL, see Section 5.2.6 above.
² N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 86-87.
³ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 87.
⁴ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 87.
⁵ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 87-88.
⁶ See Section 5.3.2 below, especially pp. 321-323.
⁷ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 88, 89.
aspects of significance for our understanding of the Christ-story as narrative. Thus, he explains the text of Phil 3:4-11 in terms that have become familiar to us from our analysis of the Christ-story:

In 3:4ff. Paul is first outlining the privileged status he enjoyed (and continued, in some senses to enjoy) as a member of Israel, the people of God, and then showing that, because of Christ, this membership had to be regarded as something not to be taken advantage of. He did not give up his membership; he understood it in a new way, avoiding all possibility of taking advantage of it for self-aggrandisement. This clearly fits into the context of 3:2-3, in which Paul transfers attributes of Israel to the church in Christ. Belonging to God’s people did not, he now realized, mean a privileged status, outward symbols of superiority, an elevated moral stature in the world. It meant dying and rising with the Messiah. In hoping for vindication at the resurrection (3:11) Paul is claiming that the thing which, for him as an erstwhile Pharisee, had always been the hope of God’s people, was now to be his because, and only because, he was ‘in Christ’. So, in 2:5-11, Christ, as himself true Jew, had led the way for this reinterpretation of what it meant to be the people of God.1

I believe Wright’s view here is substantially correct and helpful. Further support for this reading of Phil 3:4-11 in terms of the Christ-story, and the larger story of the people of God, may be noted in the allusions we have seen in 2:12-18 to the pilgrim people of God.2 These show that Israel’s story was implicitly present in Paul’s mind as he dictated Philippians 2, including the central story of Christ in vv. 6-11.

(v) Wright’s fifth and final supportive consideration represents a re-statement of his Adam-christology, but within a yet broader context.3 As he writes, ‘Perhaps the strongest argument for the solution I have proposed is that it is able to integrate three elements within the poem which are sometimes held to be mutually exclusive. Christ as Adam, Christ as Servant, and Christ the pre-existent one.’4 In this way Wright seeks to integrate what he regards as an Adam-christology, a Servant-christology (both of which, he argues, are really ‘Israel-christologies’), with his ‘incarnational theology’ of the Christ-story as a whole.5 If one accepts Wright’s premises for seeing an Adam-christology underlying 2:5-11,6 and similarly a Servant-christology, his ‘strongest argument’ at this point is undoubtedly correct. However,

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1 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 88.
2 See pp. 212-217 above.
3 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 90-97.
4 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 90; in fact, most of his argument on this point (pp. 90-97) is to counter the view (espoused most notably by Dunn, Christology [see esp. 98-128, 251-268] and by very few others) that Christ in v. 6 is not pre-existent.
5 N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 90.
6 But see above, p. 249 n. 5.
I have my doubts on this point without denying his other arguments. As mentioned, though, I will deal with the important issue of the narrative background to the Christ-story in the following section.

In summarising his ground-breaking chapter on Philippians 2:5-11, Wright concludes that under his interpretation, the passage ‘is well able to fulfil the role which, *prima facie*, it has in Paul’s developing argument, namely that of the example which Christians are to imitate.’\(^1\) Thus, in the same way that God acknowledged Christ’s self-emptying and humiliation as the true expression of divine equality, so he will also acknowledge selfless other-centred Christian living (vv. 1-4, 12-18), which appears to be the thrust of key points in Paul’s own story in Philippians 3 (notably vv. 11, 21).\(^2\)

One of the additional contributions to the study of Paul in Wright’s work is the significant removal of much christological confusion surrounding the Christ-story in Philippians 2, which has been associated with this passage since the christological controversies of the early, post-apostolic church. Given that ‘equality with God’ is seen as already possessed by Christ in v. 6, one no longer needs to enquire into any possible change in status or divinity for the pre-existent Christ.

Similarly, the related question of what, if anything, Christ had emptied himself of (the so-called ‘kenotic question’) is resolved rather straightforwardly. Like much of the text of Phil 2:6-11 the verb \(\kappa\varepsilon\nu\omega\varsigma\nu\) has generated huge amounts of scholarly discussion and speculation, revolving around what has been termed the *Kenōsis* of Christ or *Kenotic* Christology.\(^3\) If one takes \(\hat{\iota}\kappa\varepsilon\nu\omega\varsigma\varepsilon\nu\) literally, as in many older interpretations of the verb, then the answer under Hoover’s translation for v. 6 is, much more simply, that it would be the advantages, privileges, and benefits of being equal with God which he gives up, and clearly not some attribute of divinity. But, as Fee points out, the ‘kenotic’ interpretation has often been due to a faulty understanding of \(\acute{\alpha}r\pi\alpha\gamma\iota\omicron\nu\) or because \(\acute{\iota}\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\) \(\hat{\iota}\kappa\varepsilon\nu\omega\varsigma\varepsilon\nu\) was assumed to require (in literal translation) a genitive modifier, ‘he emptied himself’ *of something*.\(^4\)

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4. Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT), 210. Note the following who still interpret \(\hat{\iota}\kappa\varepsilon\nu\omega\varsigma\varepsilon\nu\) literally in this way: BDAG, 539; A. Oepke, ‘\(\kappa\varepsilon\nu\omega\varsigma\ ... \kappa\tau\lambda\),’ *TDNT* III, 661-662; Witherington, *Letter to the Philippians*,
However, each of the other four Pauline (and New Testament) references using κενώσεν (Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor 9:3) is clearly to be taken as metaphorical,\(^1\) and more recent interpretation therefore takes Phil 2:7a in the same way.\(^2\) Hence, Fee is quite right to say, ‘Christ did not empty himself of anything; he simply ‘emptied himself,’ poured himself out. This is metaphor, pure and simple.’\(^3\) What v. 7bc goes on to do is modify the main verbal phrase, έστών έκένωσεν, with modal participial phrases that follow, describing the manner in which he emptied himself: ‘… by taking the form of a slave, that is, by being born in the likeness of human beings.’\(^4\) Verse 8 then adds a parallel phrase, to be interpreted alongside that of v. 7a: ἔσταπεινωσεν έστών (‘he humbled himself’).\(^5\)

Others have further commented on the theological implications of Wright’s interpretation of v. 6. Gorman describes this understanding as ‘extraordinarily significant’ for understanding not just Paul’s christology, but his theology proper, his doctrine of God.\(^6\) He notes that repeatedly in Paul, ‘the story of the cross has not only Christ but God as central character,’ and is thereby drawn to the conclusion that ‘the cross, in other words, is not an independent story but part of God’s universal and cosmic story.’\(^7\) By linking the one who was ‘in the form of God’ with the cross of Jesus Christ, Richard Bauckham similarly asks the theological question concerning Phil 2:6-11, ‘Can the cross of Jesus Christ actually be included in the identity of this God?’ and answers affirmatively:

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\(^1\) So BDAG, 539 (and rightly observed by many of those in the following note); but, somewhat surprisingly therefore, BDAG then interprets έκένωσεν in Phil 2:7 literally.

\(^2\) This view was anticipated by VINCENT, Philippians, 59 in 1897, though first presented in 1911 by W. WARREN, ‘On έστων έκένωσεν, Phil ii 7,’ JTS 12 no. 3 (1911) 461-463; and now is adopted by many, including N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 84 & n. 112; HOOKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 98; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 165-169, 194; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 210-211 & n. 77; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 216-217 (but contradicting what he said on p. 199); REUMANN, Philippians, 347-348, 368; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 85-86; SILVA, Philippians, 119-120; FOWL, Philippians, 95; FLEMMING, Philippians, 116; THEILMAN, Philippians, 117, 126; MELICK, Philippians, 103; GRAYSTON, Philippians and Thessalonians, 28; STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 98; FEINBERG, ‘Kenosis,’ 40-42; GORMAN, Cruciform God, 21, 28.


\(^4\) Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 210, 213; REUMANN, Philippians, 347-349, 368; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 217-218, 224; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 133; and most interpreters.

\(^5\) BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 133.

\(^6\) GORMAN, Cruciform God, 9.

\(^7\) GORMAN, Cruciformity, 94.
The exaltation of Christ to participation in the unique divine sovereignty shows him to be included in the unique divine identity. But, since the exalted Christ is first the humiliated Christ, since indeed it is because of his self-abnegation that he is exalted, his humiliation belongs to the identity of God as truly as his exaltation does. The identity of God – who God is – is revealed as much in self-abasement and service as it is in exaltation and rule. The God who is high can also be low, because God is not in seeking his own advantage but in self-giving. His self-giving in abasement and service ensures that his sovereignty over all things is also a form of his self-giving.

Thus, Gorman is quite right to say that the Christ-story is very much a ‘counterintuitive’ story, because it deals with the ‘essentially kenotic – or cruciform – character of God.’ It represents a ‘narrative of a vulnerable God,’ a story which conveys God’s character and relationship to humanity, thus his presence, ‘in the midst of Christ’s downward mobility.’ Moule, whom we saw was a significant influence upon Wright, had depicted the human limitations of Jesus, described by his ‘emptying’ and ‘humbling,’ as a ‘positive expression of his divinity rather than a curtailment of it.’ Hence he was able to translate v. 6 with the participial phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, understood in a causative sense, as: ‘precisely because he was in the form of God he recognized equality with God as a matter not of getting but of giving.’ At a theological level, I believe Moule (and Wright) are undoubtedly right.

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1. BAUCKHAM, *God Crucified*, 7 n. 5 (= Jesus, 6 n. 5) explains that in using the term ‘divine identity’ he is referring to God’s identity ‘by analogy with human personal identity, understood not as a mere ontological subject without characteristics, but as including both character and personal story (the latter entailing relationships). These are the ways in which we commonly specify “who someone is.”’ GORMAN, *Cruciform God*, 10 n. 7 also citing BAUCKHAM, adds, appropriately, that ‘a crucial part of narrative personal identity is the existence of patterns of similar acts/behaviors.’

2. BAUCKHAM, *God Crucified*, 61 (= Jesus, 45).

3. GORMAN, *Cruciform God*, 10. Note that GORMAN correctly takes the verb κενοῦ in v. 7 metaphorically, not literally (pp. 21, 28).


6. C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 98. However, MOULE’s related statements that ‘emptying’ is ‘really “fulfilling”: kenōsis actually is plērōsis’ (p. 98) and that ‘essentially’ Christ’s ‘humiliation was itself exaltation’ (‘Reflections on Phil 2:5-11,’ 274, emphasis his) were unhelpful in that they suggested (at least to R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, xxii-xxiii, and to NAGATA, whom MARTIN cited) a ‘static’ view of the Christ-story, which seemed to run counter to the ‘sequential’ progress of the passage. WRIGHT, however, responded that this accusation represents a misunderstanding of MOULE’s actual position. Conceding that ‘while obliquely making an important theological point’ MOULE may have obscured the real issue, WRIGHT explained that in a correct understanding of MOULE, ‘there is still a real “humiliation” followed by a real “exaltation”’ (*Climax of the Covenant*, 90 & n. 133). MOULE, I would add, was pointing to a deeper level of implicit meaning underneath the formal level of the story.

7. C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 97 (emphasis his); among those who followed MOULE’s lead in adopting (or affirming) this translation, see also N. T. WRIGHT, *Climax of the Covenant*, 83 n. 110; O’BRIEN, *Philippians*, 214, 216; FOWL, *Philippians*, 94; HAWTHORNE, *Philippians*, 75, 85; and his HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 104; HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 508 (as a preference over the concessive reading); cf. BOCKMEHIL, *Philippians*, 133-134, and FLEMMING, *Philippians*, 114-115, who both affirm the theological sense underlying a causative translation, but prefer a neutral or
here, but at a structural level, the explicit narrative level of the Christ-story, I suggest that the participial phrase is best taken concessively, and I would put a qualifying caveat upon their theological interpretation. To substantiate this requires us taking a closer look at v. 6a in relation to what follows.

How we should translate and interpret the important participle ὑπάρχων (‘being, existing’) at the beginning of v. 6a in relation to the main verb ἤγισκος (‘he regarded’) of v. 6c (as well as the subsequent main verbs in vv. 7-8) is indeed an important question. There are four main translation options for the participle: it may be (i) concessive, ‘although he was [in the form of God] …’; or (ii) causative, ‘because he was …’; or (iii) circumstantial, ‘as/while he [always] was …,’ which is almost the same as (iv) the neutral translation, ‘being/existing [in the form of God].’

As we have seen, Moule and Wright are among others who see the theological understanding implied by their reading of ὰρσαγμῶς in v. 6bc as suggesting the second, causative option. Several commentators adopt the third, circumstantial translation, with a few more plus several English versions opting (mostly without comment) for the similar, fourth, neutral reading, but a majority of interpreters and versions prefer the concessive translation. The circumstantial translation, however, does not seem to do justice to the momentous nature of one ‘in the form of God’ becoming incarnate as a human person; the concessive translation

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1. So FEE, Philippians [NICNT], 202 n. 40; and GORMAN, Cruciform God, 20.
2. See those cited in n. 7 immediately above (p. 306).
4. So HANSEN, Philippians, 123, 134; F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 68; OSEIK, Philippians, 60; THEILMAN, Philippians, 115; BEARE, Philippians, 73, 76, 78; LOH & NIDA, Handbook on Philippians, 55; THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 80-81; LENSKI, Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles, 774-775; HEIL, Philippians, 80, 87; cf. FLEMMING, Philippians, 114-115, who prefers the neutral translation ‘being …’ because it simultaneously allows for both concessive and causative interpretations; cf. also KJV, HCSB, LEB, NIV, YLT, Phillips.
5. For example, GORMAN, Cruciformity, 165 n. 19; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 139 n. 99; SILVA, Philippians, 112, 123; COLLANGE, Philippians, 98; FABRICATORE, Form of God, 144-145; R. P. MARTIN, Philippians (NCB), 94 and his Hymn of Christ, 34; I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 49; MEILCK, Philippians, 102 & n. 146; BANKER, Analysis of Philippians, 85; CRADDOCK, Philippians, 40; J. A. MOTYER, Message of Philippians, 108; HOULDEN, Paul’s Letters, 67; WALLACE, Greek Grammar, 634-635; FEINBERG, ‘Kenosis,’ 31; COUSAR, Galatians, Philippians, 153-154 (?); cf. NASB, RSV, NRSV, ESV, CEB, CJB, NLT, TLB, Mounce.
appears to do that better.¹ Bockmuehl demurs that the concessive sense suggests that Christ took ‘the form of a slave’ despite his status of equality with God,² but this is not a necessary conclusion, for more pointedly, I suggest, the concessive reading offers the nuance that Christ’s understanding of the purpose of being divine in v. 6bc and actions in vv. 7-8 were contrary to what one might have expected of someone in his position.³

Arguably the structure and flow of the narrative from v. 6bc onwards fits much better with a concessive reading than with a causative translation.⁴ As Daniel Fabricatore observes, the causal force does not fit well with the contrasting ἀλλὰ (‘but’) of v. 7a. He is also correct to note that ‘it is not because Christ was in the form of God that ἐστιν ἐκείνος ['he humbled himself'] in verse 7.’⁵ Instead, the οὐχ ... ἀλλὰ ... (‘not ... but ...’) structure of vv. 6-8 (with an emphatically placed οὐχ in v. 6b and a strongly adversative ἀλλὰ in v. 7a) actually almost requires the concessive sense, and which creates a perfectly smooth fit, thereby allowing us to posit a larger, and more significant, narrative structure, first highlighted by Gorman in his 2001 Cruciformity, and depicted by him with the formulation, ‘although [x], not [y] but [z].’⁶

We may thus say of Christ, employing a fairly literal translation with the concessive sense, that ‘although [x] he was (ὑπάρχων) in the form of God, not [y] to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage (ὁχ ύρπαγμόν) did he regard being equal with God, but (ἀλλὰ) [z] he emptied

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¹ With Fabricatore, Form of God, 145.
² Bockmuehl, Philippians, 133.
³ With Gorman, Cruciformity, 165 n. 19; cf. the conclusions of N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 78-79, 83, though he states a preference (however only in a footnote, p. 83 n. 110) for the causative translation.
⁴ Gorman, Cruciformity, 165 n. 19; Cruciform God, 16-17, 20-21; ‘Paul’s Master Story,’ 156; Fabricatore, Form of God, 144-145; Wallace, Greek Grammar, 634-635; but Wallace (who is followed here by Fabricatore) appears to be mistaken when he asserts that ‘only the concessive idea for the participle and a thing to be grasped [i.e. res rapienda] translation for ἀρπαγμόν fit well with v. 7’ (italics his, bracketed insertion mine); for Hoover’s idiomatic rendering of v. 6bc fits even better, aside from it surely now being the preferred reading of v. 6bc.
⁵ Fabricatore, Form of God, 145. But, we should note, it is not because Christ empties himself of something in v. 7 (for the verb σωσθῇ is here metaphorical) that the concessive reading fits better than the causal reading; it is that the ‘although ... [not ...] but ...’ structure works better than ‘because ... [not ...]’ but ...’.
⁶ See Gorman, Cruciformity, 90-91, 165-169, 173; Cruciform God, 10, 16-17, 20-29; ‘Paul’s Master Story,’ 153, 156-163; cf. Oaks, Philippians, 193, who (also in 2001, apparently independently) notes (without much comment) the same narrative structure: ‘being in situation X, Jesus did not do A, but instead did B.’ For a fuller account of this important narrative pattern, alongside other narrative motifs identified by Gorman, see Appendix 3 below, pp. 503-512.
himself … and … [z²] he humbled himself …’. For Gorman, this ‘appropriately stresses both the existing reality of the status of being in the form of God and the dramatic downward mobility and status reversal that ensues to the point of Christ’s taking on the form of a slave.’

It is significant, however, that Gorman, while rightly affirming ὑποτάσσω as concessive at the formal, narrative structural level, upon further reflection, went on to argue in 2007 that ‘the participle hyparchōn in Phil 2:6 may also be translated causatively (“because”) since “because he was in the form of God” represents the deep structure of the text.’ Thus, he suggested two years later, the wider context shows that ‘although’ also means ‘because’. Explaining this he writes that

Phil 2:6 … has two levels of meaning, a surface structure and a deep structure (to borrow terms from transformational grammar), one concessive and one causative: ‘although he was in the form of God’ and ‘because he was in the form of God.’ These two translations, which … are really two sides of the same coin, correspond to two aspects of Paul’s understanding of the identity of the one true God (or ‘divine identity’) manifested in this text: its counterintuitive character (‘although’) and its cruciform character (‘because’).

Gorman’s important formulation is examined in more detail in Appendix 3, though from time to time I will mention it as one of a number of significant narrative patterns in the Christ-story. Nonetheless, here I would like to suggest a slightly more precise realignment to Paul’s text. I believe Gorman’s contribution generally offers a powerful confirmation of the underlying or implicit theological understanding of the Christ-story, as developed by both

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1 Here also following GORMAN’s later descriptors (z¹, z²), used in his Cruciform God (pp. 17, 21) to represent the combined action depicted by [z]. GORMAN’s portrayal of the passage in this respect is quite correct, but he is wrong to describe Phil 2:6b as the syntactic element of a ‘negated [verb]’ (p. 17). As I emphasized in Section 5.2.4 above (see esp. pp. 265-265 & nn.), it is the noun ἄρπαγμόν which is negated, not the verb ἱγγαστο; and similarly, we should not treat the phrase ‘equality with God’ as though it were the direct object of the verbal idea underlying this noun. GORMAN’s mistake represents an all too common misunderstanding of the Greek text, which is exacerbated by most English translations, which imprecisely suggest that Christ ‘did not regard equality with God as harpagmon.’

2 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 20; ‘Paul’s Master Story,’ 156.


5 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 22-25, here 22 (2009), largely reproducing, with minor changes, his 2007 ‘Thesis Nine’ (see the previous note).

6 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 10. On the term ‘divine identity’ (from BAUCKHAM) see p. 306 n. 1 above.

7 For the relevant parts of Appendix 3, see pp. 503-512; but note also Pattern #5 in Tables 6.1a & 6.1b on pp. 367-368 below.
Moule and Wright in particular. Yet I believe that, technically, they have collectively been ‘pinning’ this implicit meaning or ‘deep structure’ to the wrong element in v. 6.

The narrative structure highlighted by Gorman is undoubtedly accurate; thus, ‘although [x] (v. 6a), not [y] (v. 6bc), but [z] (vv. 7-8)’ is correct. However, I suggest that the deeper ‘because’ meaning should not be linked directly to the phrase ‘being in the form of God’ (v. 6a), but rather to the concept inherent in v. 6bc, namely Christ’s understanding (shown by the verb ἔσωσα) of what ‘equality with God’ should mean in practice.¹ As we have noted, there is a negative aspect to this understanding (Gorman’s second element, [y]): ‘equality with God’ (v. 6c) is not something to be used for his own advantage (v. 6b); this represents his posture, negatively stated. There is also a positive aspect: ‘equality with God’ is instead to be regarded according to the decisive, unexpected actions of what is Gorman’s third narrative element ([z] = [z₁] + [z₂]), namely the unified actions of Christ’s self-emptying and self-humbling (vv. 7-8), his praxis.² Together, these two aspects of Christ’s understanding (his posture and praxis) are what allow us to infer that v. 6 as a whole (not v. 6a by itself) may still carry an implicit causal meaning, even if formally the participle in v. 6a should be read as concessive. But, it must be noted, Christ’s understanding is not of what it means to be ‘in the form of God’ (v. 6a), because it is rather ‘being equal with God’ (v. 6c) that is the object of the verb ἔσωσα. The two expressions are not synonymous, however closely they are linked. I think Wright has clearly already recognized and expressed these notions, but his support for Moule’s key causative sentence, linking Christ’s actions in vv. 6bc-8 to v. 6a (‘precisely because he was in the form of God, he …’) represents a semantic and syntactical inconsistency.

Thus, if permitted to re-write Moule’s sentence with greater faithfulness to the text, while still retaining his theological emphasis, we might say: ‘although he was in the form of God, he recognized that his being equal with God was, to be precise, a matter not of getting but of giving.’ Alternatively, using Hoover’s rendering of v. 6bc, we may read ‘although he was in

¹ In other words, pace GORMAN, we should not in fact say ‘because [x], not [y] but [z]’ of Phil 2:6-8, if ‘[x]’ refers to ‘being in the form of God’ in v. 6a, as it does in his concessive formulation. To offer a solution, we might more accurately state, the concessive surface structure of the Christ-story is ‘although [x₁], not [y] but [z]’ and the causative deep structure ‘because [x₂], not [y] but [z],’ where [x₁] refers to ‘being in the form of God’ (v. 6a) and [x₂] refers to ‘being equal with God’ (v. 6c).

² Cf. FOWL, Philippians, 94-95; however, he also evinces a degree of inconsistency.
the form of God, he recognized that his being-equal-with-God was not something-to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage, but instead actually meant giving of himself.'

Hence, there is a subtle but important shift: the effects of theological causality in v. 6 (that is, the explication of what being divine meant in the praxis of Jesus Christ, the actions of vv. 7-8) find their originating cause not in the initial participial phrase ‘being in the form of God’ (v. 6a) but in the final infinitive phrase ‘being equal with God’ (v. 6c) especially in how this reality was regarded or interpreted by Christ. It is thus the meaning-in-action of Christ’s identity in ‘being equal with God,’ which finds itself being worked out in and through his incarnate life and death. I believe this does justice both to the concessive sense of ὑπάρχων in v. 6a and also to the fresh theo-logical reading of the Christ-story sought by Moule, Wright, and Gorman (among others), while remaining true to the overall sense of v. 6 in its context.

Before concluding this section, we should also note briefly that vv. 9-11 also offer a contribution to a narrative, theological understanding of the Christ-story. Even if our time and energy has been spent explicating mostly vv. 6-8, vv. 9-11 are also very important. Fowl correctly observes, what we have already noted in various places, that ‘the transition from v. 8 to v. 9 marks a theological and grammatical shift in this passage.’¹ In the first half of the Christ-story, Christ has been the protagonist and the subject of all the finite verbs; but at v. 9 God becomes the protagonist and subject. The first half of the story deals with Christ’s self-humiliation, while the second half deals with God’s exaltation of Christ; one half is his descent, the other half his ascent. This basic pattern of reversal is very obvious. Less widely noted, at least explicitly, is the resultant V-shaped structure of passage, but I am not aware of anyone recognizing just how closely the narrative of vv. 9-11 reverses the narrative of vv. 6-8, as I will seek to show in Chapters 6 and 7 below.²

The logical link between the two halves of the story is indicated by the inferential double conjunction διὸ καί (v. 9a), which is well translated by the phrase ‘and that is why ...’ to indicate that there is a causal relationship between the actions narrated in each half of the

¹ Fowl, Philippians, 100.
² On this see further below, Sections §6.2 (esp. pp. 340-342 & nn.), and §7.2 on the reversal motifs in the Christ-story. Among the few scholars who have explicitly noted the ‘V’-shape, see those cited in p. 340 n. 4 below.
story;\(^1\) but it also serves to distinguish the beginning of Part II of the story from what has gone before. O’Brien adds that the καί marks an element of reciprocity and shows that God the Father for his part responds in raising Jesus. In the following phrase ὥθεος αὐτῶν ὑπερήφανον, the position of αὐτῶν (‘him’) is emphatic, as is natural in a statement of reciprocity: Jesus humbled himself, and God exalted him.\(^2\) If there is an inferential, causal relationship between the two halves of the story, what then is the nature of that link? It is probably not a matter of God’s exaltation of Christ being a reward for his obedience, nor a promotion to a higher rank.\(^3\) Similarly, while the Christ-story clearly follows a pattern expressed and exemplified frequently in the Scriptures, of humiliation and exaltation, it is not the case that here we are dealing with some inexorable, divine law operating in a universe where God rules, so that humiliation will always lead to exaltation.\(^4\) Rather, Fowl more helpfully explains that if these verses display a crucial aspect of the character of God by complexly tying the manifestation of God’s glory to Christ’s self-emptying, his humiliation, and his unstinting obedience, then it will be important to understand that God’s exaltation of Christ also primarily displays something about the character of God. Christ’s death on the cross is not the last word on the relationship between God and the Christ who both shares God’s glory and manifests the appearance of a servant in his incarnation and obedience. Christ’s willed suffering in obedience to God can truly display the glory of the God of Israel only if that suffering is vindicated. If the circle which begins with glory and equality with God and then moves to servitude, humiliation, and death is not closed by an account of God’s vindication, then the God whose character is displayed in these verses cannot rightly be identified as the God of Israel.\(^5\)

I believe Fowl is absolutely right about this in what he affirms and is particularly helpful in pointing to both halves of the Christ-story as displaying the character of God. However, with Hellerman, I think we need to note that vv. 9-11 function not just as a vindication of

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\(^1\) So Fowl, Philippians, 100; N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 86; Caird, Paul’s Letters, 122-123; C. F. D. Moule, ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 96-98; O’Brien, Philippians, 233; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 151; Hansen, Philippians, 151; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 141.

\(^2\) O’Brien, Philippians, 233.

\(^3\) Against these crude notions, see Fowl, Philippians, 100-101, 104; Gorman, Cruciform God, 30-31 & n. 77; N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 86; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 220-221; O’Brien, Philippians, 234; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 231-232, 244-247 (against the notion of reward); cf. Hansen, Philippians, 159-161.

\(^4\) So O’Brien, Philippians, 235; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 233-235, correctly rejecting this approach, contra, most notably, Lohmeyer, An die Philipper, 93-97; cf. his Kyrios Jesus, 74; and also Hawthorne, Philippians, 90.

\(^5\) Fowl, Philippians, 100-101; cf. his Story of Christ, 94-95. Also affirming vv. 9-11 as a divine vindication of suffering in the face of opposition is Bloomquist, Function of Suffering, 195-196; and Kreitzer, ‘Philippians 2:9-11,’ 116-118.
suffering, for Christ within the narrative, and by implication for believers who suffer for him (Phil 1:29), but also as a vindication of the manner in which Jesus used his divine status and power, not to serve himself but rather to serve others.\footnote{\textsc{Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor}, 153-155.} Thus, both parts of the narrative indeed display the character of God, though not only with respect to the situation of the Philippians’ suffering, but also with respect to the mindset and accompanying actions which, Paul urges, must characterize their community.

Thus God’s activity in the second half of the story fittingly follows Christ’s obedient self-emptying because, in both parts of the story, that is the nature of the one true God.\footnote{\textsc{Cf. Fowl, Philippians}, 101.} It is appropriate then that both as narrative and as theological explication the Christ-story is indeed well unified. And as we will soon see, it is also extremely well constructed.

Discussion of Phil 2:6-11 is often fraught with complexity and, unfortunately, in the light of so many competing positions, confusion. What has been discussed thus far in Chapters 3, 4, and the present chapter has sought to remove some of the obstacles to interpreting the Christ-story as I believe it should be interpreted, as a narrative of Jesus Christ and God (the Father), to be certain, with profound christological and theological implications, but as a story. The preceding analysis, focussing on Phil 2:6, has sought to defend the emerging scholarly consensus on the meaning of ἀρπαγμός in v. 6b (understood idiomatically in its context as ‘[not] to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage’), in order to allow it to guide our interpretation of the Christ-story as a whole. This has been important and necessary. In doing so, we have also begun to draw out what should be seen as the passage’s implicit narrative background.

This, I believe, is along the lines of a Pauline counter-imperial critique, intended to influence the Roman community in Philippi now belonging to Jesus Christ, to allow Christ and not the Empire to determine their existence and inter-communal (as well as intra-communal) behaviour. As a story, this implicit background carries the narrative function of being a dramatic foil to the exemplary person, attitude, and actions of Jesus Christ, who in turn represents the nature and character of God himself. We must remember that Paul’s explicit focus is positively on Christ and Christ-as-God, while keeping this implicit background in our minds, as, I believe, it would have been for Paul’s first hearers.
Yet the issue of the background to the Christ-story itself has also been a matter for much scholarly debate, and not unsurprisingly. This requires our attention briefly before finally exploring, analysing and interpreting Phil 2:6-11 as a narrative.

5.3 Its Narrative-Theological Background

5.3.1 The Quest for the Background to the Christ-Story

To a significant degree the debate about the background to this passage has been fuelled by (what I clearly regard as) the mistaken notion that Phil 2:6-11 represents a pre-Pauline Hymn. Separated from its extant epistolary context, it is not surprising that scholars searching for the origins of a supposed early Christian hymn speculated rather widely.¹

Fee offers a summary of these views with major proponents listed alongside, which is worth reproducing, though with some more recent additions. As he writes, ‘every imaginable background has been argued for’:²

(i) Heterodox Judaism, with a contrast to Satan (E. Lohmeyer)
(ii) The Iranian myth of the Heavenly Redeemer (F. W. Beare)
(iii) Hellenistic pre-Christian Gnosticism (E. Käsemann)
(iv) Jewish Gnosticism (J. A. Sanders)
(v) Old Testament Servant passages (J. Coppens, C. F. D. Moule, R. B. Strimple, L. Cerfau, J. Jeremias, R. Bauckham)
(vi) The Genesis account of Adam (J. Héring, O. Cullmann, J. Murphy-O’Connor, M. D. Hooker, J. D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright)
(vii) The Suffering Righteous of post-biblical Judaism (E. Schweizer³)
(viii) Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom speculation (D. Georgi, E. Schweizer, B. Witherington)
(ix) Jesus Traditions (L. W. Hurtado, G. F. Hawthorne)

¹ See some scholarly reactions to this lack of consensus in pp. 128-129 above.
² Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 43-44; cf. Bockmuehl, Philippians, 120-121; and see the discussions of these backgrounds in O’Brien, Philippians, 193-198, 263-268; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, passim. Even within the general viewpoints mentioned the various scholars listed do not all necessarily agree.
³ As O’Brien, Philippians, 194-195, points out Schweizer later changed his view to Jewish Wisdom speculation (see the next item).
Bockmuehl also adds that some scholars suggest a combination of various of these backgrounds (e.g. D. Seeley).\(^1\)

Unfortunately, the list omits what I consider to be a far more important interpretative background, which I will come to in Section 5.3.3 below.

However, given my conclusion in Chapter 3 above that not only is the passage not a hymn (it is narrative prose), but also that the evidence as a whole points toward rather than away from Pauline authorship, the overall picture changes, and we no longer need to search for a hypothetical original *Sitz-im-Leben* to some speculated early Christian hymn; we need only to seek for something that Paul and his Philippian recipients would have readily identified and understood.

We need to ask, therefore, if anything in the text itself might suggest a particular conceptual or narrative background against which, or alongside which, we should interpret it. The obvious starting point will be to consider any explicit clues in the text, and then, if necessary, consider any indirect or implicit allusions, echoes or significant resonances that are raised by words, phrases or concepts where they might be suggestive of a particular background.

In his 1989 work, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard Hays has developed a useful set of seven tests for detecting and affirming the validity of intertextual echoes and allusions in New Testament and Pauline texts, which have been widely accepted as standard criteria.\(^2\) These are important and need to be kept in mind as we discuss the interpretative

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\(^1\) Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 120-121.

\(^2\) R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 25-33 (esp. 29-32). His seven tests are: (i) the availability of the echo/allusion to the author and/or original hearers/readers; (ii) the volume of an echo, meaning the extent and prominence of its references within the text; (iii) the recurrence of the echo (of the same text) elsewhere in the author’s writings; (iv) its thematic coherence with the line of argument being developed by the author; (v) the historic plausibility of the echo, whether it is likely that the author intended it or would have been readily understood by the recipients; (vi) the history of interpretation, whether previous readers have heard the same echoes; and (vii) the sense of satisfaction created by the proposed echo in illuminating the surrounding discourse. On the reception of these criteria for New Testament studies generally, cf. for example, K. D. Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God’s People Intertextually* (JSNTSup 282; London: T&T Clark, 2005) 61-64; and more critically, N. T. Wright, *Faithfulness of God*, 1450-1452.
background to the Christ-story. Yet they also raise difficulties for our present text, given that, aside from an explicit quotation of Isa 45:23 in vv. 10-11, the passage is so rich and full of potential allusions, echoes, and resonances, as the large number of suggested backgrounds seems to confirm. But we need to be able to identify a primary interpretative background, and not merely list some of the ‘many resonances’ that might be suggested of our passage.

A further concern is that the phenomena of scriptural intertextuality may in fact not actually provide us with a convincing, dominant interpretative background to the passage. As I will suggest below, a cultural, social, and even political intertextuality may offer a more compelling arena in which to find this principal background against which, originally, Paul and the Philippians would have understood this story of Christ, and against which we might read it today.

Here, then, I want to use an important methodological assumption, which is that any explicit clues in the text are likely to be the best guide to the most important, primary background to the story, while ambiguous allusions and echoes are more likely to point to less important, secondary background features, which are less likely to have relevance for the story as a whole.

Furthermore, a primary background against which to understand the Christ-story as a whole should be able to explain satisfactorily the passage as a whole, not just particular phrases within it. Where particular textual elements reasonably suggest either a textual echo or a comparative or contrastive interpretative background, but which cannot support an understanding of the entire narrative against that background, I will suggest that they likely point instead to a less important, secondary background matter. While secondary matters are

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1 HAYS himself admits that he does not use the criteria explicitly for his readings of the texts he considers, but rather that they implicitly undergird exegetical judgments that he makes concerning those texts (Echoes of Scripture, 29, 32).

2 HAYS distinguishes between ‘allusions’ referring to ‘obvious’ intertextual references and ‘echoes’ for ‘subtler’ ones (Echoes of Scripture, 29); N. T. WRIGHT is among those highlighting the still less definite – and more subjective – term ‘resonances’ (see his Faithfulness of God, 686, among many other references); cf. the terms used recently of our passage by R. P. MARTIN (Hymn of Christ, lxxii): parallels, images, resonances, symbolic fields, intertextual echoes, and textual subplots.

3 ‘Many resonances’ is a recent description used concerning our passage by N. T. WRIGHT, Faithfulness of God, 686.
Thus, given (i) my conclusion from Chapter 3 above about the likely Pauline authorship and origin of the passage, (ii) the fact that many commentaries offer standard treatments of the various suggested backgrounds to the passage, and (iii) the methodological considerations mentioned above, I will refrain here from discussing each of the various suggestions mentioned above; some are speculative,¹ and are implausible if the passage is believed to have come from Paul himself. They will also unnecessarily distract us from identifying and elucidating a primary conceptual, narrative background to the Christ-story.

In fact there are two clear places to begin, and some that are less obvious. We may note first of all that Phil 2:10-11 includes an explicit quotation from at least Isa 45:23. The context of Isa 45:23 includes a concern for an Isaianic eschatological monotheism, which for Paul in this passage becomes a christological monotheism;² but it also raises the question as to whether the Servant Songs of Isaiah may offer a plausible background for understanding the Christ-story. In further support of that notion there is a (disputed) suggestion of borrowed language from Isaiah 53 in Phil 2:7. Yet these do not necessarily relate to the whole story.

Secondly, as we have seen in the previous section, after a subordinate participial opening phrase (which I understand to be concessive), Paul begins the first main verb clause of the story with the emphatic negation of a noun (οὐχ ἀπαγγέλλω), which syntactically functions as the complement (or indirect object) of the main verb clause with the verb ‘to regard’ and direct object ‘the being equal with God’; thus v. 6bc reads, literally, ‘not harpagmos did Christ regard the-being-equal-with-God.’ The emphatic negation, yet more prominent by its position at the very beginning of the first main verb clause, appears strongly to suggest that Christ is implicitly being contrasted with someone or something. The question is with who or what? The two most important answers to that question have been:³ (i) Adam (thus, Hooker correctly understanding the implication of v. 6b at this point, posits ‘the negative οὐχ is a

¹ I refer the reader again to comments in pp. 128-129 above.
² These phrases are from BAUCKHAM, Jesus, 33, 37, 184-185, 202; cf. his ‘Worship of Jesus,’ 128-139.
³ However, others have suggested Satan; for example, see LOHMEYER, Kyrios Jesus, 28-29 (note the discussion of LOHMEYER’s treatment in C. BROWN, ‘Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus,’ 10-12).
deliberate contrast between Christ and Adam’¹; I beg to differ, as will be seen below); and (ii) ancient ruler-dictators, perhaps including Alexander the Great, but more probably, and notably, the Roman Emperor.

I will argue below, that with a correct identification of the object of the implicit contrast made by v. 6b, this phrase at the outset of the story is actually a decisive one and does indeed point to a primary background against which the entire narrative may be interpreted. I will argue below in Section 5.3.3 that this background is a contrast with ancient rulers generally, and specifically with the Roman Emperor, and that the Christ-story is thus in part a counter-imperial narrative.

Before we do that, we need briefly to consider the two main alternative contentions, which as noted in the previous paragraphs, are a supposed Servant Christology and an alleged Adam Christology; should the text be read against the background of the Isaianic Servant Songs or the Genesis account of Adam?

### 5.3.2 Adamic and Servant Christologies?

My approach here will be to discuss briefly the suggested Servant background first, and then also briefly the more pervasive, suggested Adamic Christology. I will refrain here from exegetical analysis of the respective verses, focussing on summarizing the general arguments and responding to them at that level.

As well as the suggested explicit quotation of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10-11, several commentators have pointed to a further link between Phil 2:7 and the ‘Servant’ of Isaiah 53, which has found reasonably wide acceptance. It is argued that not only is there a general similarity between the work of the Servant and that of Christ, but that the phrases (in v. 7ab), ‘he emptied himself (ἐστρέψατο ἵκένωσεν),’ ‘taking the form of a slave (δοῦλος),’ and ‘unto death’ (in v. 8cd) are deliberately reminiscent of Isa 53:12, where the Servant ‘poured himself out to death.’²

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¹ Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 98.
However, there are several difficulties with this comparison. The LXX translation of Isa 53:12 does not use the same terms as Paul uses in v. 7ab, but rather παῖς (‘servant’ or ‘son’); nor does it use the term μορφή to speak of the Servant’s appearance, and Phil 2:8c reads, μέχρι θεάσεως in place of εἰς θάνατον in Isa 53:8, 12. Furthermore, a clear allusion to Isa 53:12 would create an implausible structural and chronological disjunction in the text, with v. 7ab then referring to Christ’s death, v. 7cd to his incarnation, and then v. 8cd back to his death again.1 If Paul had cited Isa 53:12 he has clearly separated the Isaianic reference in his Philippian text. Hence while a conceptual echo might be heard, the linguistic evidence does not suggest a clear enough reference to link Phil 2:7-8 with Isa 53:12.

In addition, Hooker has noted that in Isa 53:12 ‘my servant’ is a title of honour given by God, but Paul’s use of ‘servant’ or ‘slave’ points to a position of dishonour and lowly humility,2 and the Servant in Isaiah 53, while dying a shameful death, dies in spite of, and not because of, his status as God’s servant,3 whereas for Paul Christ’s actions in Phil 2:7-8 arise from who he is in relationship to God in v. 6, and his voluntary choice to humble himself.4 O’Brien’s conclusion seems appropriate that the evidence is not sufficient to establish with certainty the identity of the two passages.5

Similarly, Witherington states that it is a mistake to over-read Philippians 2 in light of Isaiah 52-53, for Isaiah is only one source of ideas and images from which Paul has drawn to create this passage, and adds that the most important allusion to Isaiah in the passage is not to Isaiah 53, but to Isa 45:23, which functions ‘to prove that Christ is God, not that Christ is the Servant.’6 We may thus see a resonance with Isaiah 53 in Phil 2:6-8, but not a clear enough

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1 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 135, who does note that the word δοῦλος is used interchangeably with παῖς in some passages (e.g. Isa 42:19; 48:20; 49:3, 5), and in the early 2nd Century translation of Aquila, the text does speak of the μορφή of the servant in 52:14 and 53:2.


5 O’Brien, Philippians, 194, 271 (see also 268-271); cf. also Bockmuehl, Philippians, 135-136; Hooker, Jesus and the Servant, 120-123.

6 Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 147.
allusion to point to it as being a dominant interpretative background for understanding the Christ-story as a whole.¹

With respect to a possible Adam Christology in the passage, here also I do not intend to discuss all the issues involved in a very complex debate. We might begin, however by noting that for many, a particular interpretation of Phil 2:6bc has been what led scholars to believe that Paul was implicitly contrasting Christ and Adam (in Genesis 3).² Wright summarizes the logic, which I alluded to above, himself re-phrasing G. B. Caird who suggested:

(a) that each possible meaning of Philippians 2:6 is open to the objection that the idea could have been expressed more simply, (b) that the complexity is probably due to an implied contrast between Christ and someone else, and (c) that of the possible candidates for the contrasting figure only Adam will do, and he does very well.³

Wright goes on to surmise, ‘when we add to this the close apparent contrast with Adam made at point after point in the poem … a good prima facie case can … be made for seeing Adam implicit in the hymn as a whole.’⁴ His conclusions were stronger: the evidence indicates the ‘virtual certainty of a reference to Adam,’⁵ and one can assume (and proceed on this assumption for interpretation) that Phil 2:5-11 is another example of Adam-christology (and hence of Israel-christology), and that this (at least the Adam-christology, and in 1992) is ‘already quite widely agreed.’⁶

However, in point of fact, the alleged Adam Christology, while influential for some, has also been rejected by many scholars.⁷ The supposed point for point comparisons between Adam

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¹ Cf. BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 136.
² For a list of some of the scholars previously, or now still, advocating an Adam-Christology in Phil 2:6-11, see p. 94 n. 4 above.
³ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 58, himself summarizing CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 120-121.
⁵ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 58.
⁶ N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 59; for his link between an ‘Adam Christology’ and an ‘Israel Christology’ see pp. 18-40 of Climax.
⁷ For example, see (among many others), T. F. GLASSON, ‘Two Notes on the Philippians Hymn (II. 6-11).’ NTS 21 no. 1 (1974) 133-139; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 196-197, 263-268; FEE, Pauline Christology, 375-376, 378-379, 383, 390, esp. 390-393; and his Philippians (NICNT), 209 & nn. 71-74; VOLLWEIDER, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 419; FOWL, Story of Christ, 50-52, 70-75; and his Philippians, 114-117; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 131-133; and his ‘Form of God,’ 6-11; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 134, 141, 144-145.
in Genesis 3 (and 1:26-27) and Christ in Philippians 2, however, have been robustly examined and challenged, both exegetically and semantically.\(^1\) Unfortunately, space does not permit a full account of the debate, though O’Brien’s conclusion is adequate as a summary at this point:

> When a detailed comparison is made between Gn. 1-3 and Phil. 2, it is doubtful whether the apostle intended to present the Adam-Christ parallel at all. Too many linguistic, exegetical, and theological criticisms have not been satisfactorily answered. We conclude then, that the influential contemporary interpretation that suggests that the dominant background to Phil. 2:6-11 is the Adamic one from Gn. 1-3 (whether directly or as filtered through Philonic exegesis) is not convincing.\(^2\)

Bockmuehl sums up the limited value of the Adam-Christ analogy for understanding the Christ-story by stating that it represents ‘an interpretative cul-de-sac.’\(^3\) Similarly, Bauckham describes it as proving to be ‘a red herring in study of this passage.’\(^4\)

There appear to be two main reasons why the Adam-Christ parallel has been posited of Phil 2:6-11 by scholars. Bockmuehl mentions the first, suggesting that ‘Paul’s evident fondness for the Christ-Adam polarity elsewhere’ (e.g. Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15) may have coloured his presentation of Christ in Philippians 2, but he adds, ‘however, the text nevertheless offers insufficient evidence to establish an explicit link, or even a deliberate allusion, to Adam.’\(^5\)

The second reason, is particularly pertinent to our discussion of ἀρπαγμός in v. 6b. Hooker (an advocate of the Adam-Christ analogy in this passage) well explains what I perceive to be the fatal weakness of the comparison often drawn between Adam in Genesis 3 and Christ in Philippians 2:

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\(^1\) To give some examples, STEENBURG, ‘Morphē and Eikōn,’ 77-86 and C. A. WANAMAKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11: Son of God or Adamic Christology?’ NTS 33 no. 2 (1987) 180-183, 190, have fairly effectively shown that there is no equivalency between the terms ‘form’ (used in Phil 2:6,7) and ‘image’ (used in Gen 1:27); FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 209, notes that there is not a single linguistic parallel in Phil 2:6-11 to the Genesis narrative (but cf. HANSEN, Philippians, 139, who notes the one exception to this: ‘God’). Concerning Richard HAY’s criteria for validating scriptural echoes in a text (on these see p. 315 & n. 2 above), I would suggest that an Adam Christology may pass the tests of availability, recurrence and historical plausibility, but in presenting a divided history of interpretation, that it fails, upon closer scrutiny, the tests of volume (within our text), thematic coherence, and satisfaction.

\(^2\) O'BRIEN, Philippians, 197; see his discussion and evaluation of the debate on pp. 196-197, 263-268.

\(^3\) BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 6; see his discussion for this conclusion on pp. 6-11. HOOKER, ‘Adam Redivivus,’ has replied to BOCKMUEHL’s case here, but I do not find her rebuttal convincing.

\(^4\) BAUCKHAM, God Crucified, 57; reproduced in his Jesus, 41.

\(^5\) BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 133.
The starting-off point for the interpretation of this passage as a contrast between Christ and Adam has always been the *res rapienda* interpretation of the word ἀρσενικός: Christ did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped. This has been seen as a deliberate contrast with the attempt of Adam in Gen. 3 to grasp at an equality which he did not possess.1

Indeed if Hoover’s rendering of v. 6b is accepted, as we have argued it should be, then by default a *res rapienda* understanding of ἀρσενικός is automatically ruled out. As Hooker went on about another of the possible interpretations of v. 6b, ‘If we accept the *res rapta* interpretation … and regard equality as something which Christ did not cling to, then this particular contrast cannot be maintained.’2 However, as mentioned, Hoover’s idiomatic translation of v. 6, contrary to Wright, also cannot be applied contrastively to Adam.

I would suggest that if Hoover’s interpretation3 of Phil 2:6 had ‘won the day’ much earlier in the history of interpretation of this verse (as I believe it has now), it is most unlikely that scholars would have perceived an allusion to Adam at all.

Wright himself, of course, disputed that a *res rapienda* interpretation was necessary to maintain an Adam-Christology,4 going on to argue that an Adam-Christ comparison in the passage was still fully compatible with his and Hoover’s idiomatic rendering (even though for scholars such as Dunn it had indeed been based upon a *res rapienda* interpretation).5 He contends that his (and Hoover’s) understanding of v. 6 still allows it in conceptual terms: ‘Adam, in arrogance, thought to become like God; Christ, in humility, became human.’6 Yet, it would appear to me that Wright is inconsistent in seeking to uphold an Adam Christology in Philippians 2, based on his and Hoover’s translation, against the stream of modern scholarship. For example, while affirming five key considerations which strengthen his interpretation of the Christ-story (based on Hoover’s reading of v. 6), he goes on to argue that his view meshes well with ‘the underlying Adam-christology’ of the passage, affirmatively referring to Caird, who had indicated that ‘for the passage to work in its

1 Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 96.
3 Hoover’s interpretation; not to be confused with Hooker’s.
4 N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 59, 72, 90-91, who thus notes on p. 72: ‘It is not the case that only with some sort of *res rapienda* view can the contrast between Christ and Adam be maintained, as [Hooker] suggests.’
paraenetic context (2:3-5, 12ff), the point being made must be that, in contrast to Adam’s *grasping* at a status to which he had no right, Christ voluntarily renounced a status to which he had every right.’¹ Thus, here Wright very inconsistently uses *res rapienda* language (taken from Christ-story interpretation) to speak of Adam ‘grasping’ at being ‘like God.’ But of course, Christ does not ‘grasp at’ equality with God under Wright’s reading; he regards it as ‘not something to be used for his own advantage’! And conversely, how could Adam possibly use something, which was not his, for his own advantage? But one could not make such a contrast without a *res rapienda* interpretation of ἄρπαγμος (as ‘grasping’ [at something]) in v. 6. Under Hoover’s translation, supported fully by Wright, no such contrast with Adam is possible. The notion is inherently contradictory and therefore represents an impossible interpretation.

Hooker herself seemed, in 2000, to hold to a similar inconsistency. Thus, while she affirmed Hoover and Wright’s reading of v. 6b,² she also persisted in holding to a *res rapienda* phrase and understanding as applied to Adam, as is shown in the following diagram:³

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³The diagram in Figure 5.5 below is adapted slightly from HOOKER, ‘Adam Redivivus’ (2000) 231, to express more clearly the implications of her position; she herself had adapted it from a similar diagram in her ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 505.
The top diagram in Figure 5.5 represents a situation of similarity between Adam and Christ that Hooker wishes to deny, in terms of Paul’s intentionality; while the bottom diagram asserts Christ’s uniqueness and superiority (and appropriately denying that he was merely human in v. 6, as some have suggested) while still pressing for a comparison/contrast between Adam and Christ in Phil 2:6-11. Yet very unconvincingly, she tries also to maintain a connection between Christ in Phil 2:6a being ‘in the form of God’ and Adam in Gen 1:27 (LXX) ‘according to the image of God’, with the connection now made via a transference of ‘Son of God’ language.¹

My assumption about the decision of some interpreters to persist in seeing an Adamic background to Philippians 2 is that they found the initial discovery of such a background to so appealing and attractive and therefore committed themselves to it, that when the original grounds for its discovery had been removed, they were reluctant to give it up, and therefore have sought to defend to the last what are ever more tenuous links to the passage in Genesis 3. This is an understandable psychological reaction, but neither represents good theology nor good exegesis.

Most notably, Wright’s most recent defence of an Adam-Christ parallel in Philippians 2 (in his 2013 Paul and the Faithfulness of God) is brief, but now he instead points to vv. 7-8 (not v. 6!) – in particular, to the theme of obedience (via the presence of that theme in Romans 5 as part of an Adam-Christ comparison there) – as being the source of allusions to Adam in the passage.² While not giving up his previous interpretation, he suggests that now Adam is only one of ‘many resonances’ of vv. 6-11, that there remains in Phil 2:6-11 a ‘[discernable] echo’ of Adam in Genesis 1-3, though it is clearly ‘not the main theme’ of Phil 2:6-11, for the passage is ‘about much more than this’.³ But, to me, this seems overly forced.

An Adam-christology may well have been a ‘resonance’ in Paul’s thinking as he wrote the Christ-story, but there is nothing in the passage to suggest it explicitly or implicitly. It has to be read into the passage from parallels with Romans 5 or 1 Corinthians 15 (among other

¹ Hooker, ‘Adam Redivivus,’ 227-234; see further my comments in p. 406 n. 2 below.
² N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 686 & n. 212.
³ N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 686.
places). Without the thematic motif of obedience in Romans 5, Wright would not have a case to argue for an Adam-Christology on the evidence of Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

Thus, I would conclude that an Adam-Christ comparison could, at best, be only a minor and very secondary aspect of the background to the Christ-story. The terms ‘resonance’ or ‘intertextual echo’ might perhaps be appropriate here, but the more definite ‘allusion’ is probably not.

As noted above, Hooker had suggested before ‘that the negative ὅχι [in v. 6b] is a deliberate contrast between Christ and Adam.’ But pace Hooker, I suggest instead, that more to the point, the negative ὅχι is instead intended by Paul to be a deliberate contrast between Christ and the Emperor (and other ancient rulers). This seems to be direction toward which Wright himself is now leaning [in his new Paul and the Faithfulness of God], though, as he says, he was largely unaware of this twenty-five years ago. The chief reason for Wright’s partial shift from seeing Adam as in the background of v. 6 to seeing Adam in the background of vv. 7-8, it would seem, is his recognition now, that the negation of ἀρπαγμοῦς in v. 6b is intended by Paul to imply a contrast between Christ and (not Adam, but) the Roman emperor, as part of a counter-imperial critique of the claim of the Roman empire for allegiance to her above all else. Paul, of course, sets this straight by the end of the Christ-story, as he affirms the lordship of Christ over all, including the emperor.

Although Wright is yet to fully elucidate his newer insights into the text of Philippians 2 (in any thorough-going exegesis of the passage), I believe that a reference to the emperor (and other ancient ruler-dictators) is an important implication arising from his and Hoover’s reading of v. 6. Fee is one of those now acknowledging this; thus, he reports, the ‘emerging view’ of the meaning of ἀρπαγμοῦς in the context of Phil 2:6-7 is not to do with an

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1 Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 98.
2 N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 687.
3 Perhaps we will see this in his forthcoming ICC commentary on Philippians (2016)?; however, see the recent comments he has expressed in his Faithfulness of God (2013), 687, 1292-1299; Resurrection of the Son of God (2003) 228, 233; ‘Philippians’ (DTIB, 2005) 588-590; and ‘Paul’s Gospel’ (2000) 173-183 (esp. 174 n. 33), following Oakes especially, but also Hellerman.
4 Cf. also Fee, Pauline Christology, 383; cf. 381, 398-401, 402-403, 406.
Adam/Christ comparison, but rather the intended contrast in the ‘not … but …’ clause ‘seems far more likely to be a deliberate confrontation with the emperor.’

Hence, I posit that, rather than a scriptural intertextuality, a cultural, social, and political intertextuality actually dominates our passage, implicitly to be sure, but which provides the primary interpretative background against which the Philippian believers would have heard this story of Christ. If it is the case, then, that v. 6b does intend a counter-imperial contrast to be drawn, we need to see how that might be worked out in the remainder of the passage. As I mentioned before, for any suggested background to be regarded as a primary background against which we may understand the Christ-story, we must be able to support a view of that background throughout the entire story. To demonstrating that, we now turn.

5.3.3 A Counter-Imperial Narrative Background

We begin this section, then, by discussing the very important contribution of one of Wright’s students, Peter Oakes, which I referred to in the Introduction. In his 2001 study, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, Oakes believes that several factors make an implicit comparison between Christ and the emperor in Phil 2:6-11 compelling, in terms of what Paul’s listeners in Philippi would have discerned as they heard the Christ-story. In this Section of our investigation, therefore, though with some rearrangements and additions, I want to summarize seven distinct facets of Oakes’ argument to demonstrate this. The discussion will focus the main points of Oakes’ more extended presentation, so that we may then move from this to beginning our analysis of Phil 2:6-11 as a narrative in the following Chapter.

(i) Firstly, then, Oakes believes that the close linkage between the Christ-story and Phil 3:20-21 is very suggestive, given the explicit political background to the latter passage, wherein such an imperial comparison would clearly have been heard, and would impact a second reading of the Christ-story.

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1 FEE, *Pauline Christology*, 383; he also adds ‘… and the capricious, rapacious “gods” of the Graeco-Roman pantheon,’ though I am not as convinced of this as he is.
2 OAKES, *Philippians*, 138-147, pointing to three obvious factors and two lesser factors to establish the certainty of such a contrast being heard: (i) the context connecting both ethics (Phil 3:19) and politics (note Paul’s use of πολίτευμα in v. 20) (p. 138); (ii) the use of an imperial title, σωτήρ alongside language of
(ii) Next Oakes points to the universal authority given to Christ as identifying an imperial contrast.\(^1\) The emperor’s claim to world authority is well illustrated by Roman coinage and inscriptions; for example, one inscription from 1st Century Greece reads, ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου κύριος Νέρων (‘Nero, the Lord of all the world’),\(^2\) and coinage from the same period depicts images of Caesar or Rome standing on top of the world.\(^3\) Thus the emperor regarded every knee on earth as bowing to him.\(^4\) Philo describes one emperor as having ‘succeeded to the sovereignty of the whole earth and sea.’\(^5\) However, as we have seen, and will highlight below, Phil 2:10-11 clearly shows Christ’s authority as far eclipsing that of the emperor.

(iii) The imperial contrast continues, as we note with Oakes, that like the emperor, Christ’s authority is granted to him, granted by a competent authority, and granted for a reason.\(^6\) Thus, none other than God exalts Christ and grants him the highest name (v. 9); and the διὸ καὶ of v. 9a shows that vv. 6-8 provide a reason for God granting him authority. For the Roman Emperor, the process for granting power was two-fold: the Senate voted to the emperor his powers; this was then ratified by the people of Rome gathered on the field of salvation from the state in which the people are living to the state to which they belong to (pp. 138-140; cf. GOODENOUGH, ‘Political Philosophy,’ 98-99; TELLBE, Between Synagogue and State, 250-253; D. CUS, Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament [Paradosis 23: Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1974] 63-71); (iii) the link between ability to save and power, wherein the emperor’s ability to save his people was related to the power which enabled him to subject all things to himself (pp. 140-145); plus two factors, which the Philippians might not have immediately identified, (iv) the ruler saving by transforming his subjects into his likeness (pp. 145-146); and (v) the notion of the ruler as having glory (pp. 146-147; cf. GOODENOUGH, 76-88, 95-97 on the close linkage between visible glory and ancient kingship); additionally, on the political linkage between Phil 2:6-11 and 3:20-21, see also N. T. WRIGHT, ‘Paul’s Gospel,’ 173-183. On the striking verbal links between Phil 2:5-11 and 3:20-21, see again Table 3.1b above (pp. 99-100).

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1. OAKES, Philippians, 149-150.

3. For examples, see E. GHEY & I. LEINS (eds.), M. H. CRAWFORD, A Catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins in the British Museum (Roman Republican Coinage, [1974], 2010) 546.4.1; 546.6.1-2; 546.7.1 (depicting Victory standing on globe; with ‘Imp Caesar’ on the obverse, referring to Augustus); cf. 449.4.1-6 (depicting Rome [‘Roma’] with foot on globe); 397.1.1-3 (depicting a male figure representing the ‘Genius Populi Romani’ with foot on globe); cf. also 480.3.1-9; 480.15.1; 480.16.1-2; 480.17.1-10 (depicting Venus resting elbow upon a shield in turn resting upon globe; with wreathed Caesar on the obverse); note also the photo-reproductions of three similar coins presented by OAKES, Philippians, 148, figs. 12-14 (sourced originally from C. H. V. SUTHERLAND, The Emperor and the Coinage: Julio-Claudian Studies [London: Spink, 1976] 112; Plates I.10, 11; VI. 82).

4. OAKES, Philippians, 148-149, 171.
6. OAKES, Philippians, 151 (and note his discussion of this on pp. 151-160).
Mars. Oakes explains that, in addition, acclamation of the emperor by the troops, prior to the formal granting of power, had great *de facto* force but no role *de jure* until the time of Vespasian (69-79 A.D.).¹ Emperors would therefore always argue that the *consensus universorum* stood behind their coming to power.² Furthermore, authority was granted for a necessitating reason; a saving task needing to be carried out required the leadership of the emperor at the urging of the people.³ In the case of Christ such a task is implied in vv. 10-11, but stated more explicitly in Phil 3:21 as ‘making all things subject to himself,’ though to the ultimate glory of God the Father (2:11c).

(iv) This leads to a fourth significant comparison (and contrast) between Christ and the emperor in what characteristics legitimated selection of a particular candidate for such a task and then legitimated their authority and rule having become emperor. Oakes points to four characteristics commonly found in the legitimation of Roman emperors: (a) abilities needed for the saving task, of which military prowess and victories tended to feature prominently; (b) connections with previous rulers and the gods; (c) the universal agreement that such a person should rule; and (d) the moral excellence of the candidate.⁴

However, he minimizes a comparison with Christ in the first three characteristics, emphasizing the fourth - moral excellence – in particular a concern for others and lack of self-interest, which Christ demonstrates in refusing to seek his own interest, lowering

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¹ OAKES, Philippians, 151 (citing the research of French scholar Blanche PARSI); OAKES is no doubt correct that nothing significant is gained by attempting elaborate parallels between God and the Roman Senate; the key point is the general similarity and that the granting of authority to Christ was by a second party with appropriate authority to do so.

² OAKES, Philippians, 152-153; alongside other evidence OAKES cites a coin dating to 16 BC with the abbreviated legend *Imperatori Caesare Augusto communi consensus* (‘To the Emperor Caesar Augustus by universal agreement’).

³ OAKES, Philippians, 153-154, noting that sometimes the Senate and the people had to demand a candidate accept the position, following a formalised ‘refusal of power,’ which then left no doubt as to the legitimacy of his position. However, as I note further below, it is not appropriate to press every detail of the Christ-story as if Paul were describing Christ in terms of an imperial accession ceremony, for he is not doing that; rather it is a more general comparison and contrast which Paul intends to evoke. We should also, in this instance, distinguish between between the initial formalised polite refusal, giving an external appearance of reluctance to take power, and later abuses of power and privilege for the interests and benefit of the ruler, for which Roman emperors in the New Testament period were well known; it is with the latter situation that the Philippians would contrast Christ’s unexpectedly selfless actions as they hear Philippians 2:6 and 7-8.

⁴ OAKES, Philippians, 154-155 (note his discussion of this in pp. 154-160).
himself, and suffering obediently,\(^1\) which the Philippians will hear as exemplifying the practical exhortations of Phil 2:2-4. Oakes is right that vv. 6-8 would be seen positively in light of the logic of v. 9 as analogous to the moral excellence of an imperial candidate which legitimated his authority,\(^2\) but misses the key, largely negative contrast with the emperor (and other ancient rulers) signalled by v. 6bc, which I believe would already have been heard by the Philippians.\(^3\) Thus he too hastily discounts the possibility that the Philippians would hear vv. 6-8 and think of the emperor.\(^4\) Instead I suggest they would have immediately thought of the emperor at v. 6b – not the ideal emperor, but what some of the emperors of the time had become, after having gained their position of power and authority. That distinction is important and I will come back to it shortly.

We may also propose that in subsequent reflection upon v. 6a,c they would also have noted Christ’s close connection to God (legitimating characteristic [b]), and later, in vv. 10-11, they would note the universal agreement of the people (in response to God’s actions upon Christ) to acclaim Christ as supreme ruler (characteristic [c]). But, what they are told in v. 6bc is that Jesus in fact will be the emphatic opposite of what might have been expected of someone with the position and power of an imperial ruler in the New Testament period: ‘not ἀρπαγμός did he regard equality with God.’

Upon hearing vv. 7-8, however, the Philippians would have been most surprised and greatly shocked at the contrast between Christ and the emperor. Hence, in v. 8 we find the most striking contrast possible to the military victories of an imperial candidate (legitimating characteristic [a]) – Jesus’ humiliating death on a Roman cross. Oakes is well aware of this, observing that ironically ‘Christ’s self-lowering led to crucifixion, the fate furthest from the career of a candidate for the Imperial throne,’ to which he adds, ‘a writer would not have

\(^1\) OAKES, Philippians, 155, 157-160, esp. 159; he does admit (p. 157) that each of the first three factors (a, b, c) can be identified in the text of Phil 2:6-11, but believes that a comparison in characteristic (d) would be more prominent to the Philippians.

\(^2\) OAKES, Philippians, 160-161.

\(^3\) OAKES does accept the rendering of ἀρπαγμός suggested by HOOVER and WRIGHT (Philippians, 193 & n. 67), but sees no implied imperial contrast in the use of the term; this is not a severe criticism, for WRIGHT himself did not see it when he first wrote his influential paper on Phil 2:6 (note his admission in Faithfulness of God, 687).

\(^4\) OAKES, Philippians, 131, 160, 209-210; cf. his discussion of vv. 6-8 (pp. 193-201), which highlights status issues (quite appropriately), but not imperial contrast.
composed verses 6-8 as a depiction of an ideal candidate for [Imperial] rule.'\(^1\) The Roman orator, Cicero (in the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) century BC) well explains the Roman aversion to even the thought of crucifixion: ‘the very word “cross” should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but [also] from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears.'\(^2\) Hence, Jesus was clearly not your average imperial candidate. So, when God steps into the story, immediately after mention of Jesus’ death, to vindicate Christ’s surprising actions and legitimize his divine authority, he thereby completely turns upside down the Philippians’ notions of status and honour.\(^3\)

(v) Fifthly, Oakes points to additional imperial comparisons which may be observed in the actions of God’s vindication. He suggests that the universal submission depicted by the bowing of every knee in v. 10 is unavoidably reminiscent of the emperor, if, as Hofius has argued, this submission and the acclamation in v. 11 involve the salvation of all concerned.\(^4\) In the case of the emperor, his task in bringing salvation, meaning peace through harmony, is widely attested as a key means to legitimate to the world his power.\(^5\) Paul’s citation of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10 is therefore significant. The context of the Isaianic passage, itself part of ‘one of the classic passages of biblical critique of pagan empire,’\(^6\) Isaiah 40-55, explicitly commands ‘all the ends of the earth’ to turn to Yahweh in order that they may be saved (using the future passive of σωζεῖν) ( Isa 45:22), and pictures ‘every knee’ bowing before him in submission and worship (v. 23) and acknowledging that he alone can rescue the nations (v. 24) and justify his people (v. 25).\(^7\) Paul would clearly know this context and that Yahweh in Isaiah 45 is depicted as a Saviour; the Philippians may have known it also, Oakes suggests, if this kind of eschatology was part of Paul’s general teaching. If so, that would support the

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\(^2\) Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo* V.16 (Cicero Vol. IX [trans. H. G. Hodge; Loeb 198; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927] 467); cf. his reference to the incompatibility in Roman thinking of being a citizen with death on a cross in *In Verrem II* V.LXVI.170: ‘To bind a Roman citizen is a crime; to flog him is an abomination; to slay him is almost an act of murder; to crucify him is–what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed’ ([Cicero Vol. VIII](Loeb 293; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935) 654-657); cf. also *Verr.* II V.LXII.162 (pp. 644-647); for discussion of the quote cited and further related material, see also Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 39-45.  
\(^3\) See further my subsequent discussions as to how the Christ-story turns Roman notions of status upside down in pp. 354-356, 359-361, 392 below.  
\(^6\) N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 73.  
\(^7\) The LXX text of Isa 45:23 is given in Appendix 2, on p. 497 below; see also pp. 501-502.
possibility of Christ being heard as carrying out the imperial saving task of bringing harmony by submission to him. ¹

Nevertheless, while the specific language of v. 10b-11a (πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ... καὶ πᾶσα γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσεται) is drawn directly from the LXX text of Isa 45:23 (and chosen by Paul for that reason) and does not coincide precisely with phraseology found in imperial accession ceremonies or the imperial cult, Oakes believes it would be heard as language that is ‘very suitable for describing reactions to an imperial figure’ and thus generally suggestive of the emperor.²

Thus, in relation to the idea of acclamation (v. 11a), Lukas Bormann reports that oaths to the emperors played a significant role to express loyalty and were required to be taken not only by citizens but also non-citizens, at least when the emperor began his rule.³ Further, according to Gregory Aldrete, acclamations, in both Roman tradition and myth, and in contemporary Roman society at the time of Christ, were given the powerful role of literally creating rulers, by naming them as king or emperor and verbally bestowing on them the appropriate authority and titles.⁴ But, for the Roman Emperor, perhaps the most important acclamations that he received were those at his accession to power: ‘acclamations played a pivotal role in the creation and recognition of an emperor and, throughout his reign, they continued to ensure his legitimacy.’⁵ Aldrete continues,

Acclamations formed the very basis of [the emperor’s] power, since the way he initially received his titles and was acknowledged as emperor was through the acclamations of the senate, army, and people of Rome at his accession. Throughout his reign, whenever he received acclamations he was, in the most literal way, reidentified and renamed as the emperor.⁶

¹ OAKES, Philippians, 169-170.
² OAKES, Philippians, 166-170, here p. 168, admitting that ‘with Paul we are on more secure ground than with his hearers’ (p. 169); cf. also BORMANN, Philippi, 48-50. On OAKES’ admission of a lack of corresponding terminology (to the bowing and acclaiming of vv. 10-11) in the imperial cult, we should note with him that while bowing to Jesus does carry a connotation of worship, submission to God, Christ or the emperor has social and political significance that extends well beyond liturgy.
³ BORMANN, Philippi, 48-50.
⁴ G. S. ALDRETE, Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome (Ancient Society and History; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999) 167. For example, Livy, a contemporary of Caesar Augustus, noted in the founding myth of Romulus and Remus how they made their grandfather, Numitor, king: ‘the brothers advanced through the crowd and acclaimed their grandfather as king, after which a unanimous shout from the entire crowd confirmed the title (nomen), and the authority (imperium) of the king’ (LIVY 6.2, cited by ALDRETE, 168).
⁵ ALDRETE, Gestures and Acclamations, 147-148.
⁶ ALDRETE, Gestures and Acclamations, 149.
Acclamations directed at the Roman emperor thus became a central facet of imperial identity. They included brief formulaic shouts and phrases wishing the emperor good health, a long life, happiness, or simply hailing him as a ruler. A common acclamation was simply to shout imperial titles such as ‘Imperator.’ In the case of Philippians 2, it is God (not the people) who grants Christ the highest name (v. 9bc), but this leads to the responsive universal acclamation by all that he is ‘Lord’ (κύριος; v. 11b); the general similarity to imperial acclamations is thus striking.

(vi) A sixth, related comparison with the emperor, then, is to be found in the granting of supreme name, as we saw before, the name κύριος, pointing for Paul to the divine name of God, Yahweh. Many of the Philippians would have had some familiarity with the Old Testament and would hear in v. 9 a connection to the name of God and thus via the LXX a connection to the title κύριος. However, in Roman political terms, in the Julio-Claudian period, ‘the name above every name’ could only belong to the emperor himself. Further, the title κύριος itself was applied to the emperor in both popular and formal usage. Like the imperial title σωτήρ, Tellbe notes that κύριος was not in itself a divine title, but when used to designate an emperor who was worshipped as divine it gained a divine sense to the general populace. Further, he argues, it is no longer possible for commentators to make a sharp distinction ‘between acknowledgment of political subjection to the emperor and worshipful subordination to him as a god,’ concluding with respect to the emperor at the time Paul wrote Philippians that ‘the distinction between the political and religious use of κύριος is not relevant since Nero was increasingly addressed as ὁ κύριος throughout the empire,’ and from Nero’s time the title found increasing popularity. Even though we lack evidence that this title was actually used in imperial accession ceremonies, the usage of κύριος in the immediate context of Phil 2:9-11, which, as we have been seeing, is ‘both heavily

1 ALDRETE, Gestures and Acclamations, 166, 108.
2 OAKES, Philippians, 170-171.
3 OAKES, Philippians, 171-172.
4 TELLBE, Between Synagogue and State, 252-253.
5 TELLBE, Between Synagogue and State, 252, see also pp. 200-207; cf. CUS, Imperial Cult, 53-63; and CULLMANN, Christology, 196, who adds, ‘when on one hand, the emperor was called Kyrios as a sign of his political power and, on the other hand, was revered as divine, the title Kyrios must automatically take on a religious significance.’
6 CUS, Imperial Cult, 59.
Septuagintal and heavily Imperial,’ would, Oakes contends, suggest to the hearers ‘strong connotations in both areas,’ and with the imperial connotation likely to be ringing louder.

Thus, Tellbe argues, the expression ‘every tongue shall acclaim that Jesus Christ is κύριος’ presupposes an awareness of pagan ‘lords’ who claimed divine honours for themselves, and simultaneously undercuts any earthly claims for such honour or allegiance. With him, therefore, we may conclude that the citation of Isa 45:23 (understood in its context) in v. 10 underlines the depiction of Christ in vv. 9-11 as ‘an imperial figure with universal authority.’

(vii) A seventh, area of comparison for Oakes is with the ideal Roman leader, ‘who defines his people’s ethics by example.’ He begins by referring to Hellenistic philosopher Philolaus comparing the universe as the expression of God’s activity with the state as being ‘the product of the character of the king.’ Then he points to literary evidence that highlights the importance of the example of the ruler in the imperial period; we may cite one such prescription from Plutarch: ‘the sovereign must first gain command of himself, must regulate his own soul and establish his own character, then make his subjects fit his pattern.’ Oakes admits, in this final area of comparison, that it is difficult to trace the pervasiveness of ideas such as this. However, while regard for the notion of the emperor as example will have varied sharply across the social spectrum, it is reasonable, he argues, to assume that the concept was probably very widespread in the 1st century. Given our conclusion in Chapter 4 that Christ

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1 OAKES, *Philippians*, 172.
2 TELLBE, *Between Synagogue and State*, 256; nuancing his conclusion, TELLBE argues against a comparison between Christ and any specific Roman ruler (pp. 254-256), suggesting that a contrast is being made more generally to ‘the pursuit of power among earthly rulers’ (pp. 256, 257-258); such a conclusion is, I believe, accurate, although I would maintain (as I suggest would OAKES) that the emphasis of this implicit contrast is upon Roman imperial rule, including the attitudes and practices related to it.
3 TELLBE, *Between Synagogue and State*, 256.
5 OAKES, *Philippians*, 172, citing GOODENOUGH’s use of PHILOLAUS (‘Political Philosophy,’ 69).
(in Philippians 2) would clearly be heard as an exemplar by the Philippians, this would fit comfortably for them, in general terms, against an imperial background.¹

Conceptually, this, then, is the background against which Paul and the Philippians would have understood the actions of both Christ and God in the Christ-story. With Oakes, I affirm that it is not appropriate to press the details into an exact parallel between Christ and the emperor (and other ancient rulers)² – not least because Christ’s position is far above that of even a Roman Emperor; any comparison will thus necessarily have its limitations. Nor should we situate such a comparison narrowly within rituals of the imperial cult or specific accession ceremonies.³ However, to Roman citizens living in Philippi it is the general comparison, together with some striking contrasts, to imperial ideology and practice that would ring loudly in their minds as they hear Paul’s letter read to them.⁴

Study of the Christ-story in its Philippian context is therefore much indebted to Oakes for offering a plausible and also compelling background and framework against which it may be heard and interpreted, and would likely have been heard by Paul’s Roman Philippian friends. Nevertheless, in discussing his important contribution above, I voiced one chief area of disagreement with Oakes.⁵ This is with his emphasis upon a largely positive comparison between Christ and an ideal Roman emperor, via official imperial ideology, especially in imperial accession practices, at the commencement of the emperor’s rule. This is primarily due to Oakes’ focus upon vv. 9-11 of the Christ-story as providing the main basis for such a comparison,⁶ and, correspondingly, him not seeing that Paul had already signalled to his hearers, at v. 6bc, a largely negative contrast with the emperor and other ancient rulers, which contrast continues all the way to the shocking climax of v. 8.

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¹ Cf. OAKES, Philippians, 174.
² OAKES makes this point repeatedly (Philippians, 149-150, 151, 154, 165, 166-168, 169-170, 174).
³ OAKES, Philippians, 166-167, 169-170.
⁵ For what follows, refer back to pp. 328-330 above.
⁶ Thus, OAKES’ major chapter on Christ and the Emperor (Philippians, 129-174) primarily discusses in turn Phil 3:20-21 and 2:9-11 (without any substantial focus upon 2:6-8, which is discussed later [pp. 193-201] and not in relation to any imperial contrast).
The negative, abusive and totally non-exemplary behaviour of some of the emperors, especially of those in the 1st century leading up to the time of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is well known and was widely reported by imperial observers, who described the gaining, maintenance, and abuse of power through ambition, greed, plunder, claiming of divinity, excessive taxation, partiality in matters of justice, debauchery, rivalry, cruelty, violence and murder.¹ In the case of two of these emperors, their behaviour was so abhorrent that their names were erased on monuments by senatorial decree in order to abolish their memory.²

In theory, the official imperial system – in general terms – may well have been viewed positively by Roman citizens living in Philippi (and Paul’s exhortations to them using political language they would understand suggests that; cf. 1:27; 3:20), but their view of individual Roman Emperors and their excessive behaviour was not likely to be so positive.³

So striking, then, is the contrasting, exemplary behaviour of a selfless, self-giving, and self-sacrificing Christ in Phil 2:6-8, whose behaviour is very much the opposite of what some emperors and other ancient rulers had become. At first glance this appears to be a contradiction, with vv. 6-8 expressing implicitly a contrast between Christ and the emperor (and other ancient despots), and vv. 9-11 an implicit comparison with notable parallels – although one, as we saw, in which Christ comes out with a status vastly superior to that of the emperor. But upon reflection these two sides of the story are in fact quite reconcilable and very much belong together. It is a story of ironic comparison, for at both beginning and end Christ is depicted as having a status that is far greater than that of Roman emperors, yet he willingly chooses to use that status and position in completely selfless service. The first half of the story records what is a dramatic lowering of status, in Christ’s self-emptying and self-


² Namely, emperors Caligula and Nero. This practice of ‘damnatio memoriae’ (a modern term) is documented by J. E. SANDYS, *Latin Epigraphy: An Introduction to the Study of Latin Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919) 232; see also DIO CASSIUS, *Roman History* 60.4.5-6.

³ We may compare here the views of VOLLENWEIDER, discussed in Chapter 5 [§5.2.6] above, pp. 292-296, 297-298.
humbling. As we have seen, these actions represent Christ’s interpretation of what his divine status meant in practice – and it is here that the greatest imperial contrast is to be seen, signalled in v. 6, but expressed in concrete action in vv. 7-8. But the second half of the story reveals an equally dramatic reversal,\(^1\) wherein God’s intervention in response to Christ’s actions is to elevate him to the highest possible status once more. Thus God’s actions vindicate those of Christ and indeed Christ’s interpretation of what his divinity truly meant. The overall pattern of humiliation-exaltation therefore frames the two halves of the story and suggests the appropriateness that Paul’s recipients would hear imperial contrast in the first half but imperial comparison in the second half.

Given that both halves of the story therefore say something about the character and identity of God (in the person of Christ), and that Paul’s hearers are exhorted to have the very mindset which is now found in Christ (v. 5),\(^2\) though exemplified in the past actions of vv. 6-8, they would see ongoing significance in their continuing relationship with God and obedience to Christ as Lord (vv. 12-13). With vv. 9-11 resonating against the background of an imperial accession in particular, the Philippians might well understand them to suggest the commencement and ongoing reality of Christ’s divine lordship over the cosmos, but which affects and now includes their behaviour as citizens (πολιτεύομαι; 1:27) in the new heavenly πολιτεύμα (3:20), as they live that out within Roman Philippi. Oakes appropriately stresses that the comparison in vv. 9-11 is not with an imperial apotheosis,\(^3\) but rather with an imperial accession to power and authority, and thus the events of v. 9 refer to an inauguration of the reign of Jesus firstly over his followers and ultimately over the cosmos.\(^4\) Thus, both halves of the story function together to define and determine their identity as Christians living within the Roman empire, with vv. 6-8 setting a markedly counter-imperial example for them to follow, as well as uniquely (and surprisingly) qualifying Jesus Christ to be their κύριος, and vv. 9-11 not only showing God vindicating Christ’s actions and example, but portraying

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1 In Chapter 7 below I will discuss the reversals of the Christ-story in some detail.
2 See again Section 4.4 (pp. 235-240) in the previous chapter.
3 Contra, for example, J. Reumann, ‘Resurrection in Philippi and Paul’s Letter(s) to the Philippians,’ in Resurrection in the New Testament. Festschrift J. Lambrecht (R. Bieringer, et. al. [eds.]; BETL 165; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) 420-421; and his Philippians, 361, 362, 364, 369, 372. The imperial apotheosis or divinization took place after the death of the emperor, when his rule had come to an end; Christ’s exaltation is not to a place of divinity, but rather to the commencement of his lordly rule.
4 Thus, Jesus’ enthronement prepares for his saving return in Phil 3:20-21, which is comparable to the action of a now reigning emperor, rather than to a dead emperor who has been divinized; so Oakes, ‘Remapping the Universe,’ 319; and Philippians, 133, 136; cf. 204-207.
Christ as a supreme κυριος, who therefore has earned their ultimate allegiance, which simultaneously has become Caesar’s loss. Wright is undoubtedly correct, then, that Phil 2:6-11 seen against its political background amounts to ‘a deeply subversive critique of Caesar and his world.’

With these perspectives in mind, it does seem appropriate to affirm that Paul’s story of Christ in Phil 2:6-11 amounts to what could be described as ‘a counter-imperial narrative of divine character.’ The two implicit stories within the story of Christ are the story of God and the story of a critique of imperial power. Given that Paul has written the Christ-story for the Christians living in Roman Philippi, it also invites them to allow their lives to be shaped by this story, so that their lives and community life together might reflect not only Christ’s character (and God’s) in practical ways among themselves, as well as in their community, but would do so with their full allegiance offered now, not to Rome or Caesar, but to Jesus Christ as their true Lord.

This story therefore speaks into their lives at a critical juncture, it would seem, given that like Paul, their friend and founder of their Christian community, the suffering they are experiencing in Philippi, is probably related to the imperial system.

Hellerman’s conclusion, therefore, ‘that Christ is presented in the passage in contrast to the Roman emperor and to imperial ideology can no longer be disputed,’ appears to be an appropriate summary of the emerging state of affairs concerning the narrative background to this central story within the letter to Philippi.

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1 N. T. Wright, ‘Philippians,’ 589; followed by Flemming, Philippians, 122-123.
2 Cf. Oakes, Philippians, 149-150, 171-172, 204-207 (esp. 205); and his ‘Remapping the Universe,’ 318-321; Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 152-153; Flemming, Philippians, 122-123.
4 Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 162;
5 Cf. in seeming agreement, Fee, Pauline Christology, 383 (but see also 381, 398-401, 402-403, 406); Seeley, ‘Philippians Hymn,’ 49-72; Ware, Mission of the Church, 291.
6.1 Narrative Patterns and Motifs of the Cross in Paul

In the Introduction to this study I mentioned a particularly inspiring contribution to the study of Paul in the work of Michael Gorman, most notably in his work, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*. In that work he describes a number of important narrative patterns and motifs of the cross in Paul. I had considered including a summary of his work on these narrative patterns in this chapter, but in the end decided that since it did not focus exclusively on Philippians 2, that I would treat it instead in Appendix 3 below.¹

Similarly, there I also examine one of his most important narrative patterns for describing vv. 6-8 in the Christ-story, which I refer to in various places in this study as the narrative pattern or structure, ‘although [x], not [y], but [z]’ or ‘although ..., not ..., but ...’ (or the same using the Greek text). Because this narrative structure is important to the present study, I include it in Tables 6.1a and 6.1b below;² however, because it represents Gorman’s discovery, rather than mine (as is the case for the other patterns I describe in Tables 6.1a and 6.1b), I decided also to offer my more extensive discussion of this pattern in Appendix 3 below, rather than here.

6.2 Literary Shape and Chiasmus in the Christ-Story

6.2.1 Moving Beyond the Basic Narrative Pattern

Let us then turn to examining some literary narrative patterns (using my definition of the term) in the Christ-story. We shall indeed include a brief analysis of Gorman’s ‘although [x],

¹ For Appendix 3, see pp. 503-512 below.
² For Tables 6.1a and 6.1b, see pp. 367-368 below.
not [y], but [z]’ pattern (in vv. 6-8), what he calls a ‘pattern of voluntary self-humbling,’¹ but will seek to go beyond his important contribution by focussing on those which others on the whole have not yet noted or discussed. One of the reasons for this is that for too long now scholars have from the literary point of view mistakenly approached Phil 2:6-11 not as a story, but as a hymn. Because of that efforts have focussed on versification and hymnic strophes, and any search for patterns has then been sought unsuccessfully in various attempts to match or contrast lines with each other. Consequently much that is of tremendous literary and exegetical value in the passage has remained either undiscovered or unappreciated.

Gorman’s list of literary patterns in the Christ-story also includes the one commonly recognized by almost all interpreters to depict the two natural halves of the story (vv. 6-8 and 9-11), the fairly obvious pattern of humiliation-exaltation or, in other language, the pattern of reversal.² This basic pattern of reversal has also been depicted as Christ’s descent (or katabasis) and ascent (or anabasis).³ Somewhat surprisingly only a few commentators (and not even Gorman) have explicitly identified the related ‘V’ structure of the narrative of Philippians 2:6-11,⁴ but, unfortunately, beyond acknowledging it none of them go on to

¹ GORMAN, Cruciformity, 85, 90-91; cf. also OAKES, Philippians, 193.
² GORMAN, Cruciformity, 87, 90; cf. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, Iviii.
³ These terms are used, for example, by REUMANN, Philippians, 334-335; R. H. FULLER, The Foundations of New Testament Christology (LLib; London: Lutterworth, 1965) 234, 245-246; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, Iviii, 39, 127, 156, 248, 272, 302-303; EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5; cf. WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 132, 149, 151; C. H. TALBERT, ‘The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity,’ NTS 22 no. 4 (1976) 430, 435-437 (but contrast his 1967 ‘Problem of Pre-Existence,’ 148-153, where the concept of ‘descent’ is implicitly denied of vv. 6-8; see REUMANN, 335); C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 97-99; and his ‘Reflexions on Phil 2:5-11,’ 273 (but in the latter he asserts two levels of meaning, which appear to be in tension: on the one hand ‘the pattern of Philippians 2:5-11 as a whole is undeniably that of a sequence – humiliation followed by exaltation, descensus followed by ascensus, loss followed by compensation’ [surface, structural level], but on the other, ‘there is no ultimate question of descent or ascent … because what is styled kenosis is, itself, the height of plerosis: the most divine thing is to give rather than to get’ [deeper level of meaning], ‘Reflexions,’ 273, emphasis his; on the apparent contradiction, see p. 306 & n. 6 above); cf. HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 129-148, esp. 130-131, who importantly describes vv. 6-8 (against its Roman social background) as a cursus pudorum (sequence of ignominies), tracing the ‘descent’ of Christ through three societal status levels to the ‘utter degradation’ of the cross (however, he falls short of calling vv. 9-11 a corresponding cursus honorum, instead describing it as ‘reconstructing honor’ by redefining the notion of honour in the Roman Philippian Christian community; see pp. 148-166, esp. 155, 162-163); cf., quite differently, KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 63-67, 73 who refers by analogy to the descent and ascent of the Gnostic ‘Urmensch Saviour’ (but which appeal has been widely rejected by New Testament scholarship); and cf. also J. A. SANDERS, ‘Dissenting Deities,’ 282; MEÉKS, ‘Man from Heaven,’ 329, 333; K. BARTH, Philippians, 64-66; HANSEN, Philippians, 169; OSIÉK, Philippians, 64; THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 83, 90; FOWL, Story of Christ, 64; and his ‘Christology and Ethics,’ 143.
⁴ C. F. D. MOULE is one of the first in modern times to explicitly identify the ‘V’ structure (‘Manhood of Jesus’ [1972] 97); see also FLEMMING, Philippians, 40, 108, 112, 119, 156; REUMANN, Philippians, 334-335; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 132, 149, 151; Hooker, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 502-503 (on her graphical depiction, see below); B. N. FISK, ‘The Odyssey of Christ:
explicate that ‘V’ shape in any detail. Actually, as we will see in the following section, a better shape to depict the Christ-story is a modified ‘V’: √. I will explain and illustrate this in detail then. However, interestingly, Morna Hooker has already depicted the basic pattern graphically (one of the very few to attempt to do so);¹ her simple, initial diagram is worth reproducing:

I find myself in agreement with Hooker in respect of the overall shape and her upper text descriptions, but would see the incarnation as only one part of the ‘descent,’ not as an overall summary of the bottom of the modified ‘V’, as she does.³ Unfortunately, she herself was not

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¹ Hooker, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 502 (see her Figure 16); cf. also Reumann, Philippians, 335.

² Hooker labels this ‘Figure 16: The Christ Hymn 1’ (‘Letter to the Philippians’ [2000], 502); her Figure 17 represents an alternative graphic depiction, which she titles ‘The Christ Hymn 2’ (p. 503) – on the latter, see n. 1 immediately below.

³ An earlier, similar graphic portrayal of the ‘christological pattern’ observed by Reginald Fuller (Foundations [1965] 246) in the ‘gentile mission’ writings of the New Testament (Paul, Hebrews, John, 1 Peter?), and which he saw as ‘first appearing’ in Phil 2:6-11, is included in Figure 6.2 below for comparison. However, I have removed some elements from his original diagram, which clearly do not apply to our text (namely creation, the life of the Church, and the parousia).
decisively convinced about the precise shape, for later she equivocates between two alternatives.\(^1\) Furthermore, she does not identify any individual plot elements.

However, going beyond her basic shape, the modified ‘V’ shape of vv. 6-11, as we will see before long, very readily forms a modified narrative chiasmus. In a story of dramatic reversal, chiasmus appears not unexpectedly, yet it is surprising that most scholars have not yet seen what (to this writer) the text itself quite clearly reveals – both the \(\sqrt{V}\) shape and a narrative chiasmus containing four or five elements of reversal plus an additional central, climactic element,\(^2\) and what can only represent deliberate intentionality on Paul’s part in composing this exalted passage. For the sake of clarification, I should say that by this I do not believe that Paul, in composing the Christ-story, deliberately set out to create a chiastic structure; rather, I suggest, he set out deliberately to highlight narratively several reversals in the gospel of Jesus Christ that was first revealed to him (cf. Gal 1:11-12, 15-16), in the kerygmatic traditions received by him (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-4), undoubtedly identified through much personal reflection, and perhaps refined through his apostolic teaching ministry,\(^3\) and in so doing he created a chiastic structure.\(^4\) It is a case of content determining form, and form

\(^1\) Thus, Hooker (‘Letter to the Philippians’ [2000], 502-503) goes on to suggest an alternative, for the scenario that Christ, while ‘in the form of God’ might not have been granted ‘equality with God’ until his exaltation by God and being granted ‘the name that is above every name’. In this alternative view, the ‘final exalted status’ is depicted as higher than the ‘pre-existent status’ in her Figure 17 (p. 503). This is a position advocated, for example, by both Martin and Vollenweider, but which I rejected in Chapter 5 above, for several reasons, notably since, under Hoover and Wright’s understanding of ἀρχαίος, it is rendered impossible (see Sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6). Later Hooker seems to reject this position by preferring Hoover and Wright’s rendering of ἀρχαίος, implying that ‘equality with God’ was already possessed by the pre-existent Christ (p. 507), though, again, not decisively (cf. p. 510); unfortunately her subsequent introduction, ‘Philippians,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (CCR; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 113, shows a similar equivocation between the competing alternatives.

\(^2\) For readers curious to look ahead, my modified ‘V’-shaped narrative chiasmus is shown clearly on p. 400 below; the exact number of chiastic elements depends upon whether we count a two-part linked element as one or two elements. To be sure, as I will show below, others have identified chiasms in the Christ-story, which range from one element of reversal up to even six elements (though not all about the same centre), while there are those who have seen incredibly complex micro-chiasms within macro-chiastic structures in the passage. Given the immense volume of literature on this passage, it is quite likely that I will have missed some suggested chiastic structures, but of those I have seen, none really do justice to the passage as a narrative text (although Moessner’s comes close; see pp. 354-361 below) or are likely to convince chiasm-sceptics.

\(^3\) Of course, the exact process by which Paul came to narrate the story of Christ in Phil 2:6-11 remains beyond the limits of our knowledge and of this investigation.

\(^4\) However, Paul’s awareness of a chiastic structure is one thing; the important question arises as to whether the recipients of his letter would perceive such a structure (given that most of them would not actually read it; cf. Witherington, *Letter to the Philippians*, 13 & n. 31). K. E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008) 49-52, suggests that the Hebrew mind was trained to identify chiasms or ‘ring compositions’ as a normal part of poetic communication. However, that becomes problematic for the largely Gentile audience in Roman Philippi (as well as in Corinth, with respect to Bailey’s suggested chiastic structures within 1 Corinthians). Nevertheless, I believe that a
expressing content.\textsuperscript{1} Ian Thomson in an important study of chiasmus in the Pauline letters suggests further that form may enhance content.\textsuperscript{2} We will be given an opportunity to test that claim in the remainder of this chapter.

\textbf{6.2.2 Unsuccessful Attempts to Chiasticize the Christ-Story}

It will be helpful here to mention some of the previous attempts at finding chiasmus in Phil 2:6-11. Not everyone in the theological community, though, is impressed with attempts to find chiasmus (otherwise called ‘ring’ or ‘concentric’ constructions\textsuperscript{3}) in the Scriptures or in the Pauline epistles. Thomson thus reports that, until at least 1995, the perception had been widespread that the study of chiasmus in the New Testament was ‘little more than the esoteric pursuit of a few enthusiasts, whose exuberance in the “discovery” of chiasms of astonishing complexity in almost every page of the New Testament seems to know no limits.’\textsuperscript{4} Unsurprisingly, some, like Dunn, have become very cynical: ‘As for some of the elaborate structures which have been proposed for Paul’s letters, one might simply observe that there seems to be an inverse ratio between the length of proposed chiasms in an individual letter and the light they shed on either the argument or its point.’\textsuperscript{5}

Thomson is among a few who have, in response, sought to bring back methodological controls and defined parameters for the sake of exegetical rigour in identifying and interpreting chiasmus, especially in the Pauline epistles.\textsuperscript{6} He also offers some important

\textsuperscript{1} Correctly noted by J. BRECK, ‘Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning,’ \textit{BTB} 17 no. 2 (1987) 70; \textit{contra} TALBERT, ‘Problem of Pre-Existence,’ 141-153, who suggests that form should dictate content (on him see p. 60 n. 1 above).


\textsuperscript{4} I. H. THOMSON, \textit{Chiasmus} (1995) 13; cf. C. L. BLOMBERG, ‘The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,’ \textit{CTR} 4 no. 1 (1989) 5, who appropriately argues that ‘because chiastic outlines have become so fashionable among biblical scholars any new hypotheses should be subjected to a fairly rigid set of criteria before being accepted.’

\textsuperscript{5} DUNN, \textit{Theology of Paul}, 12.

\textsuperscript{6} His working definition for the presence of chiasmus is useful: ‘chiasmus may be said to be present in a passage if the text exhibits bilateral symmetry of four or more elements about a central axis, which may
comments about the function of chiasmus in a text and its corresponding relevance to exegesis of that text.\(^1\) In relation to the argument of a passage, he stresses that the identification of a chiasmus is not a way of defining the content of a passage, for if one of the prime functions of chiasmus is as a basic structuring device, ‘then what it produces is a pattern that describes primarily the movement of thought rather than the thought itself; it is a dynamic, fluid concept that provides the framework of the passage into which other patterns may well be interwoven.’\(^2\) This last comment, as we will later see, in fact represents a very apt description of what I believe is happening within Paul’s story of Christ in Phil 2:6-11.

In drawing out the exegetical significance of a chiasmus, Thomson urges care in recognizing the nature of the relationship between corresponding chiastic elements, including considering the balance of syntactically similar elements, the balance of key-words, and the balance of similar or contrasting concepts or ideas.\(^3\) The latter is surely the most important, as he seems to recognize. He suggests that four areas of potential exegetical interest may emerge, including: (i) the role of the centre; (ii) the nature of the relationships between corresponding elements (just mentioned); (iii) the shape of the argument within the chiasmus; and (iv) the

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1. I. H. Thomson, *Chiasmus*, 34-45, 220-226. Thomson identifies three basic functions of chiasmus in relation to a text: (i) ‘as an art form, lending beauty as well as a pleasing sound to a passage and giving variety’; (ii) as a mnemonic device; and (iii) as a structuring device that may help to divide one section of material from another (pp. 34-38).
2. I. H. Thomson, 38.
3. I. H. Thomson, 41-42.
role of the chiasmus in the wider argument.\textsuperscript{1} John Breck explains the exegetical significance of a chiasmus in this way:

Chiasmus is a rhetorical form developed on the basis of parallelism. But it takes parallelism an important step further by creating a movement that is in essence concentric. Although any passage reads in linear fashion, from beginning to end, it can also incorporate another movement: from the exterior to the interior, from the extremities toward the center. In this way, meaning is developed from the beginning and end of the passage toward the middle. Accordingly, the ultimate meaning of a chiastically structured passage is expressed not at the end, in what we understand to be the ‘conclusion.’ The real meaning or essential message of the text is to be found rather at its center.\textsuperscript{2}

Concerning narrative chiasmus, Jan Fokkelman similarly speaks of the composition as possessing ‘not only linear progress, but also circular coherence,’\textsuperscript{3} which has been made possible by the narrator’s grip on the material and developed through a vision of the whole: a concentric or chiastic structure, therefore, ‘takes us to … the central member … that has no counterpart and conveys [its] unique message.’\textsuperscript{4} While affirming that by the very fact of the centre being a ‘turning point’ in a chiasmus, ideas deployed there thus enjoy a special prominence, Thomson would helpfully add, though, that the author of a passage may also wish to make other points in a passage.\textsuperscript{5} Clearly that will be the case in Phil 2:6-11, but we will do well to note exactly what Paul highlights and emphasizes at the centre of his story of Jesus Christ.

In fact only a relatively small number of scholars have attempted to find chiastic elements in the Christ-story to date (mostly unconvincingly and unsuccessfully, I would add); as Reumann observed (in 2008), ‘amid numerous proposals for [a macro-]chiastic structure for Phil[ippians], 2:6-11 is itself seldom “chiasticized.”’\textsuperscript{7} It is worth recalling here the parallels we identified in Chapter 4 between vv. 3-4 and 6-8 (in particular the repeated ‘not

\textsuperscript{1} I. H. THOMSON, 43-44.
\textsuperscript{2} J. BREEK, ‘Chiasmus as a Key to Biblical Interpretation,’ SVTQ 43 nos. 3-4 (1999) 254-255.
\textsuperscript{3} FOKKELMAN, Reading Biblical Narrative, 80.
\textsuperscript{4} FOKKELMAN, Reading Biblical Narrative, 80.
\textsuperscript{5} FOKKELMAN, Reading Biblical Narrative, 81.
\textsuperscript{6} I. H. THOMSON, Chiasmus, 38, 43; cf. 224-226. Likewise, he adds (p. 38), there may also be other parallels in a passage which are distinct from the chiastic elements, for ‘within almost any Pauline passage there is a richly coloured and complex tapestry of thought with contrasts, parallels and echoes often overlaid.’ Each of his comments so fittingly applies to Phil 2:6-11, that it is a pity THOMSON did not consider the Christ-story as a passage worthy of consideration for his monograph; cf. Chiasmus, 229 n. 75.
\textsuperscript{7} REUMANN, Philippians, 362 (bracketed additions mine).
… but …’ structure), which were introduced by a simple chiastic arrangement between two elements in each of vv. 1-2 and v. 5.¹ The presence of that introductory chiastic pattern should alert us to the possibility of seeing chiastic elements within the Christ-story itself. At this point we should put to one side various attempts to find macro-chiastic structures within Philippians as a whole in which 2:6-11 either features as a complete unit or as part of a larger unit.² Similarly, I will also largely put to the side attempts to find micro-chiastic structures within parts of the passage, focusing on those which seek to ‘chiasticize’ the whole passage.³

Concerning the Christ-story as a complete unit, then, we have already seen how Hooker’s strophic structure of the passage had a macro-chiastic shape with two strophes of four lines and six lines (vv. 6a-7c, 7d-8d) followed by two of six and four lines (vv. 9a-c, 10a-11c).⁴ Unlike most other suggested hymnic structures for the text, her macro-structure at least accurately matched Paul’s sentence structures in both vv. 6-8 and 9-11,⁵ though she does not attribute significant meaning units to the four elements of her formal chiasm other than noting (correctly) the narrative progression in the passage, and the overall reversal between the two halves.⁶

However, two other interpreters have sought to delineate a basic formal four element chiastic structure (A-B-B'-A’) with minimal efforts to identify elements of meaning in the different parts. Thus Stefano Bittasi (2003) suggests: A = 2:6a-7a (God), B = 2:7b-8d (human), B’ = 2:9a-c (human name), A’ = 2:10a-11c (God), differing from Hooker’s versification

¹ See above, pp. 170-174, and esp. Table 4.1.
² On some of these see above, pp. 106 & n. 2, 208-209 & 208 n. 5.
³ In the following, I will refer to part verse elements (a, b, c, d) for the Greek (not English) text, as indicated above on p. 56, and below in Table 6.1a on p. 367.
⁴ See pp. 64-66 above.
⁵ Exactly, in fact, matching my own structural division of the text; see pp. 110-115 above, and what follows here shortly.
⁶ See Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 94-96; cf. Cousar, Galatians, Philippians, 151-152; and note J. D. Harvey’s similar evaluation (to mine) of her suggestion (Listening to the Text, 249-250). To Hooker’s credit she does also correctly highlight the significance of the main verbs depicting Christ’s actions in vv. 7a and 8a being reversed by God’s actions shown in the main verbs of vv. 9a and 9b (p. 96); as we will see below these do indeed represent the reversal of two of the five narrative chiastic elements that I believe are present in our text, and which are the very two elements which give the story its basic downward and upward narrative movement.
only in division of the first two elements, A-B.\textsuperscript{1} Breck (1987), on the other hand, also including v. 5 and a very short middle element, offers: A = 2:5a-6c, B = 2:7a-8b, C = 2:8cd, B' = 2:9a-10c, A' = 2:11a-c, identified by the key words ‘God’ and ‘Christ Jesus’ in both elements of A-A', and ‘servant,’ ‘he humbled himself’ versus ‘highly exalted him,’ ‘Jesus’ respectively in B-B', with the repeated mention of ‘death’ in the middle section C.\textsuperscript{2} Bittasi’s proposal offers little of interpretative substance, while Breck’s inclusion of v. 5 and identification of certain key-words as the basis for his chiasmus is questionable.\textsuperscript{3} Breck at least appears to recognize correctly the turning point of the chiasmus as the death of Christ (v. 8cd), and makes one short explanatory comment, ‘it is precisely the chiastic pattern that permits this hymn to proclaim the central Pauline theme of victory through the death of “the crucified God.”’\textsuperscript{4} While offering limited interpretative value, then, both at least recognize the basic pattern of reversal in the Christ-story.

If macro-chiastic structures have not been very successful, a few have offered complex micro-chiastic arrangements as an alternative. Thus, an early suggested chiastic structure for the passage was that by Nils Lund (1942), who included Phil 2:6-11 as part of a larger chiasm of vv. 1-11. He displayed the text as three complex line-by-line micro-chiasms arranged in an A-B-A' fashion (A = 2:1-5; B = 2:6-8; A' = 2:9-11),\textsuperscript{5} where the centre of the middle element was v. 7bcd (Christ taking the form of a servant and becoming a human person).\textsuperscript{6} However, the obvious turning point of the story is the reference to the death of Christ on the cross (v. 8cd), as indicated by the immediately following διὸ καὶ (v. 9a) and the change of subject from Christ to God, and it is thus much more reasonable to see vv. 9-11 as reversing vv. 6-8 (in general, as well as in detail). Furthermore, many of his micro-chiastic parallels are

\begin{footnotes}
\item[3] Breck uses italics to highlight these key words in the text, but the italicized ‘Jesus’ in B’ has no match in B (‘servant’ will not really do), while ‘God,’ also in B’, is not highlighted at all, and only matched in A.
\item[5] His actual arrangement was, though, A-B-C.
\end{footnotes}
forced and far from obvious.\(^1\) Porter and Reed conclude that Lund’s analysis ‘lacks critical rigour in virtually all regards.’\(^2\)

A similar judgment may be attributed to a very recent chiastic arrangement also featuring vv. 6-11 as part of a larger passage (vv. 1-16) as seen in the recent ‘hyper-chiastic,’ audience-oriented, oral performance commentary of John Heil (2010):\(^3\) A = 2:1-5; B = 2:6-7; C = 2:8a-c; C’ = 2:8d; B’ = 2:9-11; A’ = 2:12-16.\(^4\) While centering appropriately on Christ’s death, albeit quite lopsidedly (2:8abc vs. 2:8d), he repeatedly stretches one’s credulity beyond breaking point, for example by finding the sole basis for B and B’ in the alliteration of θεοῦ (2:6a) and θεοῦ (2:11c), ὑπάρχων (2:6a) and ὑπερύψωσεν (2:9a), ἡγήσατο (2:6b) and ἱχαρίσατο (2:9b), and ὁμοίωματι (2:7c) and ὕμνωμα (2:10a),\(^5\) to the neglect even of a more pertinent alliterative (and chiastic) pair such as ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν (2:8a) and αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν (2:9a), but which would then mess up his structure. Heil’s overall methodological approach is similarly flawed.\(^6\)

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1 For example, he pairs v. 6a with v. 8d, and v. 6bc with v. 8bc; cf. J. D. HARVEY, *Listening to the Text*, 251-255.

2 As an example, LUND adopts a marginal reading of Phil 2:2 in order to maintain his chiastic symmetry; thus, S. E. PORTER & J. T REED, ‘Philippians as Macro-Chiasm,’ 214-215; cf. the general (i.e. not pertaining to Phil 2:1-11) critical comments of I. H. THOMSON, *Chiasmus*, 17 n. 24, 24 n. 62, 26-27 & n. 78, 31.

3 HEIL, *Philippians*; ‘hyper-chiastic’ is my term: HEIL sees Philippians as comprising ten micro-chiastic units (of varying lengths) arranged in a macro-chiastic structure embracing the entire letter (pp. 10-31), but generously sprinkled with ‘mini-chiasms’ throughout, which Paul’s audience will ‘experience’ as the letter is read to them. See further n. 6 immediately below (p. 348).

4 HEIL, *Philippians*, 17-18, 80-81, 87-93, 181.


6 One is somewhat taken aback to find the ‘very rigorous criteria,’ upon which HEIL’s multiple chiastic structures are claimed to be ‘absolutely convincing’ and clearly ‘not … subjectively imposed upon the text,’ are apparently not the nine initially cited criteria of Craig BLOMBERG for identifying biblical chiasm (HEIL, *Philippians*, 10, citing BLOMBERG, ‘Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,’ 4-8), but instead, ‘all of the proposed chiasms are based on precise linguistic parallels found objectively in the text, rather than on thematic or conceptual parallels, which can often be subjective.’ This is a major methodological mistake; if a biblical form is to enhance our understanding of the meaning of the text, the form must be based upon and related to units of meaning. Further flaws are evident: ’since they are based strictly on linguistic parallels, some of the proposed chiasms may or may not exhibit a balance in the length of the various parallel elements or units’ and may also ‘involve what might be considered by a modern audience as rather ordinary or trivial words’ (p. 11). But to HEIL, these difficulties are discounted, for ‘an ancient audience would presumably be attuned to the key linguistic parallels that are heard’ in the oral performance of the letter, and that ‘what are insignificant words or phrases on the surface to a modern audience may have been very significant indeed … to the original audience.’ Further, as the listeners heard Paul’s letter, they may have ‘unconsciously experienced the chiastic phenomenon as an organizing dynamic,’ which may also have had ‘a subtle but purposeful effect on how they perceived the content’ (pp. 11-12). I am not convinced by this approach.
Ernst Wendland’s recent [2008] chiastic analysis of Phil 2:6-11 is also liable to cause exasperation.\(^1\) He displays the Greek text according to a more detailed five-element chiasmus (A-E, E’-A’), correctly recognizing the overall humiliation-exaltation reversal between vv. 6-8 and vv. 9-11, but then manages to turn his English translation into a six-element chiasmus (A-F, F’-A’), which differs from his Greek arrangement in three places.\(^2\) His rationale for the Greek arrangement is that: elements A-A’ (2:5b-6abc, 2:11abc) both refer to ‘Jesus Christ’; D-D’ (quite appropriately) refers to Christ ‘humbled himself’ (2:8a), and God ‘exalting him’ (2:9a); and E-E’ at the centre (2:8bc, 2:8d) includes two ‘emphatic’ mentions of ‘death’; but of B-B’ (2:7abc, 2:10abc) and C-C’ (2:7d, 2:9bc) he admits, ‘the rest of the proposed composition is not as clearly defined’; and clearly they are very forced parallels.\(^3\)

Also quite unlikely to impress most scholars are the complex micro-chiastic structures of John Bligh (1968) and Frédéric Manns (1976). Bligh proposes a series of four ‘intricate overlapping chiasms’ (2:6a-7b; 7a-8a; 8a-9a; 9a-11c) in which the last two lines of each chiasm forms the beginning of the next.\(^4\) Manns instead displays the text (in French) with three non-overlapping chiasms (2:6a-7b; 7c-8d, 9a-11c), with almost identical first and third strophes to those of Bligh, but with a differing centre strophic chiasm of longer lines than does Bligh.\(^5\) Interestingly, Manns’ arrangement uses almost identical line divisions as in the hymnic arrangement of Hooker, although grouping them differently. Hooker’s arrangement, as we have seen, more closely respects Paul’s sentence structure, unlike Mann’s

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\(^1\) WENDLAND, ‘Modeling the Message,’ 350-353, 359-362.

\(^2\) WENDLAND, ‘Modeling the Message,’ 352-353 (Greek), 360 (English); to get his English arrangement, WENDLAND very inconsistently splits (Greek) element B (v. 7abc) into v. 7ab (new B) and v. 7c (new C); splits (Greek) element E (v. 8bc) into v. 8b (now joining with v. 8a to form new E) and v. 8c (new F); and similarly (Greek) element A’ (v. 11abc) now becomes new B’ (v. 11a plus the words ‘… that Lord’; surely a mistake) and new A’ (v. 11bc beginning with ‘is Jesus Christ, to the glory …’).

\(^3\) WENDLAND, ‘Modeling the Message,’ 352-353. He does also add (p. 353), extremely unconvincingly, of B-B’ (2:7abc, 2:10abc), that the first element expresses contrast (ἀλλά; what Christ lowered himself to), while the complement expresses purpose (ἵνα; what Christ was elevated to; though elements A’ and C’, in fact, show that much better). We also learn, as part of the justification for the chiasmus (p. 353), that the negative thematic and emotive focus of the centre (E-E’) finds a positive counterpart in the second and final line of element A’ (v. 11bc, the ‘Christo-doxology’), where (excluding the initial ὅτι) the ‘hemistichs’ of v. 11b and v. 11c each have seven syllables. As with Heit, one can only respond with disbelief.


\(^5\) F. MANNS, ‘Un Hymne Judéo-Chrétien: Philippiens 2,6-11,’ Euntes Docete 29 (1976) 263-265 (displaying Paul’s text in French; but, in my source, with paragraph separators incorrectly placed between lines of the three sections, p. 263).
arrangement. However, several of their alleged chiastic pairs are forced parallels without any real connection.

It appears obvious to this interpreter that any attempt to fit every word and phrase of the Christ-story (as a whole) into intricate chiastic structures is simply not going to succeed; though formal mini-chiasms for limited parts of the text may be possible.

Two interpreters, however, have demonstrated a more satisfactory approach (than their predecessors) in identifying chiasmus in Phil 2:6-11, one unsuccessfully, I believe (Robert Gundry, 1994), and one, very recently, more successfully (David Moessner, 2009).

Gundry’s more reasoned, but extremely elaborate, approach first divided the passage into twelve lines by participial and finite verbal phrases, which are then paired into six line-couplets that make up an elaborate A-B-C-B'-A' macro-chiastic structure, in which various micro-chiastic and non-chiastic structures also present themselves, based on elements of assonance and euphony:

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1 For HOOKER’s arrangement, see pp. 64-66 above.

2 So notes J. D. HARVEY, Listening to the Text, 250-251. For example, BLIGH with his interlocking chiasms, pairs γενόμενος ὑπήκοος (v. 8b) with διὸ καὶ (v. 9a-part), but also (with MANNS) matches all of διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερήφανον (v. 9a) with εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός (v. 11c), offering as sole justification for the latter pair, ‘since the Father glorifies Christ [v. 9a] … his glorification is no infringement of the Father’s honour [v. 11c]’ (BLIGH, ‘Review,’ 128). Similarly, MANNS’ pairing of ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος (v. 7c) with θεατός δὲ σταυρῷ (v. 8d) and καί σχήματι εὐθείᾳ ὡς ἀνθρώπος (v. 7d) with γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου (v. 8bc) are both equally forced and problematic (‘Philippiens 2,6-11,’ 263; matching his French with the equivalent phrases in Greek). Further, both of them leave the phrases τὸ ἐναὶ ἰς θέω (v. 6c) and ἐπισκοπῶν καὶ ἐπιγνώσων καὶ κατασχοῦν (v. 10c) hanging as rather unusual chiastic centres, with MANNS (p. 263) also emphasizing ἐπισκοπῶν ἰς τοῦ (‘il s’est abaissé lui-même,’ v. 8a) at the centre of his second strophe, while BLIGH (p. 128) emphasizes instead ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος (v. 7c) at the centre of his second strophe and, more appropriately, μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυρῷ (v. 8ac) at the centre of his third one.

3 By ‘formal’ I mean ‘formally chiastic,’ and not necessarily with any related semantic significance. Concerning mini-chiasms in part of the text, the case for noting a limited formal chiasm, for example, in vv. 9-11 may have more merit. However, because such an arrangement would deal with only half of the Christ-story, I have not discussed it in the main body of the present work. For a more plausible, suggested chiasm within only vv. 9-11, although it is one I ultimately reject, see Appendix 4 below.

4 GUNDY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 271-293.


6 Indeed GUNDY’s approach is well thought out and he explains the implications of his macro/micro-structural approach in great detail, though at the start he also describes his proposal as an exercise in ‘derring-do’ (‘Style and Substance,’ 271), suggesting a playful, creative approach that may not convince everyone.
A Pre-existent divine being (6a+6bc, lines I-II)

B Slave-like death (7a+7b, lines III-IV)

C Incarnation as a human being (7c+7d, lines V-VI)

B' (Slave-like) death on a cross (8a+8bcd, lines VII-VIII)

A' Post-existent acknowledgment as divine (9a+9bc+10abc+11abc, lines IX-XII).1

This leaves as the central element of the passage Paul’s reference to Christ’s incarnation: ‘being born in the likeness of a human being and in appearance being found as a human being’ (v. 7cd). In addition, Gundry suggests a third middle-level of chiasmus in that he argues lines I-IV also present themselves as an A-B-B'-A' chiasm.2 He does state his belief that ‘supplemented by … other parallels, chiastic arrangements abound in Phil 2:6-11,’3 but finding three levels of chiasmus within the text strongly suggests he has been overly zealous.

However, his approach is severely flawed in multiple ways.4 The first is Gundry’s primary methodological mistake, allowing participles to function conceptually (though not grammatically) as equals to main verbs.5 As we will see, unsurprisingly, the narrative structure of the passage is primarily carried by its main verb clauses and not by the subordinate participial phrases.6 Further, it is more likely that we will find that the form of the text relates to, and matches, its content, rather than believing one has discovered a form and then, contrary to the syntactical relationships within the text, making the content fit into one’s discovery.

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1 See GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 271-274 for his detailed outline of the Greek text and his English summary (the general outline is reproduced by THURSTON [& RYAN], Philippians, 89); note that GUNDRY’s element A’ (vv. 9-11) comprises four lines, not two. Without reprinting his whole arrangement, the micro-elements of his complex structure are as follows: A (lines I+II) comprises a-b-b'-a'; B (III+IV) = c-d-a''-b''; C (V+VI) = e-f-g-e'g'-f'; B' (VII+VIII) = d'-c'-b'''-a'''-h; A' (IX+X+XI+XII) = i-j-j'-i'-h' + k-l-m-l'-k'-m'.

2 GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 280; he does, however, reject the suggestion that lines V-VIII might present as a similar A-B-B'-A' chiasm (280 n. 18; presumably it is A-A'-B-B', see pp. 274, 285), and sees lines IX-XII as forming another instance of parallelism, A-B-A'-B' (288).

3 GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 280.

4 For the following, cf. also C. BROWN, ‘Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus,’ 22, who also criticizes an alleged ‘conservative theological agenda’ which has ‘driven the radical formal analysis.’ It must be noted that BROWN is generally critical of the notion of Christ’s pre-existence as being seen in the Christ-story (pp. 22, 26-29) and not only with respect to his comments on GUNDRY’s reading.

5 GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 272, 279.

6 See below, pp. 357-358 & p. 357 n. 5, and for detailed discussion of the verbal relationships within vv. 6-8, note Section 6.4.1 (pp. 370-380).
Secondly, Gundry’s structure is very lopsided, with vv. 6-8 comprising four of his chiastic elements, and vv. 9-11 as a whole the remaining one. In a story of reversal with the two obvious halves of the story of roughly similar length, Gundry’s structure is very much out of kilter with the text. Related to that, the evident centre of the text (in both content and syntax) is the climax of Christ’s death on the cross (v. 8cd), both as a final culmination of the actions of vv. 7a-8b, thus a climax to the first half of the story, and also signalled as such by the immediately following διὸ καὶ of v. 9a, which now announces God’s actions in response to Christ. Thus, Gundry’s centre in the incarnation of Christ, expressed merely by two subordinate participial phrases, is both surprising and rather artificial. In fact, as Brown has noted, in Gundry’s overall outline, God does not even play a role; the focus of the five macro-chiastic elements is exclusively on Christ.¹

Furthermore, while a few scholars do support the notion, the vast majority do not agree with Gundry that Christ’s self-emptying (v. 7a) is a reference to his death, based on a supposed allusion to the Servant in Isa 53:12c who ‘poured out his soul to death’, and then on the supposition that the allusion to that reference was separated in Paul’s text into the elements of ἐστὼν ἐκένωσεν (v. 7a) and μέχρι θανάτου (v. 8c).² Even if an allusion to Isa 53:12 is present, the most plausible explanation of v. 7a in its context is that the self-emptying of Christ refers to the incarnation, which led to his death.³ Thus, Bauckham, who also affirms an allusion to Isa 53:12 in both v. 7a and v. 8c, writes, ‘the pouring out or emptying is the self-renunciation in service and obedience, which begins with incarnation and leads inexorably to death.’⁴ In the absence of a precise quotation, we should not expect a mere allusion (if indeed one is present, and as important as it may be) to dictate precise correspondence between Isaiah 53 and the Christ-story, especially when Paul has clearly separated the alleged two

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¹ C. BROWN, ‘Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus,’ 22; GUNDRY’s detailed discussion does of course note God’s role in the actions of vv. 9-11 (e.g. ‘Style and Substance,’ 276), but God does not feature in his overall outline (pp. 274-275).

² Refer to discussion in previous chapter, Section 5.3.2. GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 274, 280, 285, and esp. 290-293; CERFAUX, Christ in St Paul, 377-382, 385-386, 390-396; also JEREMIAS and TALBERT cited on pp. 59-60 & 59 n. 5 above; and STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 265-267; against the notion that Christ’s self-emptying is a reference to his death, see the critical evaluations of the alleged allusion to Isa 53:12 in R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xxiii-xxv, 35, 182-190, 194-196; M. D. HOOKER, Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament (London: SPCK, 1959) 120-121; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 190, 194, 220, 268-271; HANSEN, Philippians, 149-151; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 135-136; REUMANN, Philippians, 348, 367-368; and WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 146-147.

³ With HANSEN, Philippians, 150.

⁴ BAUCKHAM, God Crucified, 43-44.
halves of the phrase, and actually reverses the non-chronological order of Isa 52:13-53:12, by referring to God’s exaltation of Christ after his humiliation.

Additionally, Gundry’s non-chronological reckoning of the Christ-story that proceeds from Christ’s pre-existence directly to his death, then to his incarnation, back to his death, and then to his exaltation by God, makes for a very confused narrative in the space of only six verses of text, quite contrary to the sequential flow of the text. The specific mention of ‘death,’ twice in v. 8cd, makes it both unlikely and premature that Paul would also be referring to Christ’s death in v. 7ab. Gundry’s supporting argument that (i) on the majority interpretation of the passage, four references to Christ’s incarnation (Gundry’s lines III-VI) is ‘surely over-repetitiveness,’ but (ii) on his reckoning, four references to Christ’s shameful death (lines III-IV, VII-VIII) interrupted by two references to the (non-shameful) incarnation (lines V-VI) surely ‘suits the fourfold reference to his exaltation (IX-XII) better than a fourfold reference to the incarnation would do’ is also to strain one’s credulity beyond breaking point.

While one might commend the creative industry behind Gundry’s ‘derring-do’ chiastic approach to the Christ-story, it is difficult to affirm conclusions which arise from it. An approach to chiasmus in Paul that is likely to convince others is one that will clearly require far more restraint.

1 HANSEN, Philippians, 150.
2 The Servant Song of Isa 52:13-53:12 instead commences with the exaltation of the servant (52:13) and then progresses to describing his humiliation. Thus, also R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 186.
3 On the counter-argument to this, first proposed by H. W. ROBINSON, The Cross in the Old Testament (London: SCM, 1957 [incorporating a reprint of his 1927 work, The Cross of the Servant: A Study in Deutero-Isaiah]) 104, that the aorist participles following ἑαυτὸν ἐκκυσάον are antecedent aorists and the participial phrases therefore represent a parenthetical reference to the incarnation, logically prior to the supposed mention of the cross in v. 7a, but which Paul felt he needed to insert after writing ‘he emptied himself,’ see R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 186 and O’BRIEN, Philippians, 268-270, who regard ROBINSON’s hypothetical argument as either ‘too strained’ or ‘very strained’. Further, O’BRIEN (following BDF, 174-175 §339 [1]) adds, the aorist tenses of λαμβάνον, γενόμενον, and ἐντολὴν in v. 7 are more likely to be coincident aorists than antecedent aorists (pp. 217-218, 221, 224, 270); so also FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 211 & nn. 82-83; HANSEN, Philippians, 151; SILVA, Philippians, 120; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 86; and a majority of interpreters. In any case, ROBINSON believed all three participial phrases (‘the form of a slave taking, in the likeness of human beings being born, and in appearance being found as a human being’) represented an antecedent reality to the ‘self-emptying’ of Christ; in contrast, GUNDREY takes only the second and third phrases as antecedent (at the centre of his chiasmus), while the first (‘taking the form of a servant,’ line IV) is supposedly also a reference to the cross, quite inconsistently, for if the first aorist participle refers to a reality simultaneous with the ‘emptying’, then grammatically the second and third participles should also.
4 So, REUMANN, Philippians, 367-368.
5 GUNDREY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 292-293.
6 Cf. p. 350 n. 6 above.
Such an approach is more evident in the very recent chiastic arrangement suggested by Moessner.\(^1\) Following Hellerman in ascribing the issue of power and status in Roman Philippi as important to unlocking the message of Phil 2:6-11,\(^2\) and based on his own study of the verb κενοῦ (‘to empty’) in v. 7a,\(^3\) in my view Moessner comes closer to the mark than most other advocates of chiasm in the Christ-story by recognizing that vv. 9-11 represent an ‘exact reversal’ of vv. 6-8, by which the passage forms an A-B-C-C'-B'-A' chiasm.\(^4\)

Central to his case, but perhaps most problematic, is his particular understanding of the verb ἐκένωσεν. While initially rejecting the literal meaning of κενοῦ, ‘to empty [something of something],’ but wrongly equating it with the metaphorical meaning,\(^5\) what he adopts is nevertheless a form of the literal meaning, ‘to deprive [oneself of something].’\(^6\) In Christ’s case, he argues, this ‘something’ is the ‘ability of others to acknowledge his true status of equality with God’\(^7\); thus, in the societal context of Philippians, which is thoroughly steeped in a ‘mindset’ of human worth and status, by ‘emptying himself,’ Christ “‘deprives himself’ of any genuine status recognition by others.”\(^8\) This leads to his translation of Phil 2:7 as ‘instead, he denied himself any justification of his status [equality with God] by taking the form of a servant-slave.’\(^9\) But this appears to read too much into the translation of ἐκένωσεν, straining the overall interpretation. As we saw earlier, based on Pauline usage of the verb elsewhere it is unlikely that Christ literally ‘empties’ or ‘deprives’ himself of anything; rather he simply (and metaphorically) empties ‘himself’ (ἐαυτόν).\(^10\)

Nevertheless, alongside his conclusions about the verb κενοῦ, Moessner also accepts Hoover’s idiomatic understanding of v. 6b,\(^11\) and together these lead him to viewing the Christ-story, quite appropriately now, along the lines we were discussing in Chapter 5

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1 MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 139-142 (esp. 139).
4 MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 139.
10 See pp. 304-305 above in the previous chapter.
§5.2.5), as a ‘powerful re-formulation of the status and thus also of the character of God.’\textsuperscript{1}

It seems to be a case of the right conclusion being drawn from a questionable premise. Hence, for Paul’s Philippian readers, the Christ-story acts to redefine their notions of status and power by reconceiving the power and status of the death on the cross of Christ, in particular, as ‘the most sublime public disclosure of the character of God.’\textsuperscript{2} Thus, Moessner depicts the Christ-story as a journey of acknowledgment (of status) first deprived (vv. 6-8) and then reversed (vv. 9-11) in the following chiastic structure:\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[A] \textit{Christ Jesus} did not regard his \textit{self-acknowledged} equality with \textit{God} (‘form of God’) as a status to take advantage of for his own praise/glory. (6abc)
  \item[B] Rather, he deprived himself of all justification (\textit{acknowledgment}) of this status by becoming human, an obedient slave/servant; (7abc [7d? 8b?])
  \item[C] As an obedient slave/servant he humiliated himself to the lowest (\textit{acknowledged}) existence, \textbf{execution on a cross}. ([7b? 7d?] 8abcd)
  \item[C’] And so it follows that \textit{God} exalted him to the highest (\textit{acknowledged}) status, and bestowed upon him the name \textit{acknowledged} to be the highest name of all; (9abc)
  \item[B’] In order that the entire universe (every status of being) should \textit{acknowledge Jesus Christ} as \textit{KYRIOS} ([10ab?] 10c, 11ab)
  \item[A’] Leading to the universal \textit{acknowledgment/praise/glory} of \textit{God the Father}. (11c)
\end{itemize}

This chiastic structure is quite attractive on a first reading, and has a number of things in its favour (although my own arrangement of the text will differ from it in several important respects): (i) it appropriately reflects the general reversal of actions in vv. 9-11 from vv. 6-8 (though I disagree with some of his details); (ii) it matches Paul’s narrative logic and syntax very well; (iii) it rightly recognizes the climax of the story in Christ’s death on the cross (highlighted by the bold text) at the end of element C (although still part of it); (iv) Moessner’s middle two elements (C-C’) are very suggestive – describing the reversal from the lowest possible death (on the cross) to the highest possible name; (v) the emphasis throughout on the acknowledgment of status is an important highlighting of the valuable

\textsuperscript{1} MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 139.
\textsuperscript{2} MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 124.
\textsuperscript{3} For what follows, MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 139 (maintaining his emphases, but replacing his a-b-c scheme with upper case letters, and adding verse parts for reference; ‘journey’ is my description, but reflects the narrative movement which MOESSNER appropriately emphasizes).
contribution of Hellerman to understanding the Christ-story against its Roman background,\(^1\) for a contrastive backdrop of status issues, especially of visible status is indeed, I believe, to be found in or behind the Christ-story.\(^2\)

But there are some elements lacking in clarity in Moessner’s arrangement: (i) He appears to borrow the phrase ‘becoming obedient’ (v. 8b) from C for his description of ‘an obedient slave/servant’ in B, and likewise he appears to borrow ‘taking the form of a slave’ (v. 7b) from B for his description of ‘as an obedient slave/servant’ in C; does he imply that there is some chiastic overlap between B and C (as we saw in Bligh’s arrangement), or is it a case where the phrases ‘taking the form of a slave/servant’ (v. 7b) and ‘becoming obedient’ (v. 8b) are somehow linked and mutually interpreting? (ii) Further, whereas the syntax of Paul’s text appears to begin element C with v. 7d (‘and in appearance being found as a human being’), Moessner omits this clause, and instead starts C with ‘as an obedient slave/servant he humiliated himself.’ By omitting the clause of v. 7d, it is not clear if it fits in B or C in his outline, or has been neglected as redundant,\(^3\) and (iii) likewise it is not clear whether v. 10ab (‘in the name of Jesus every knee should bow’) is actually included in B' or has been omitted as well.\(^4\)

Some structural criticisms are due as well. Where I primarily differ from Moessner is in some of the chiastic pairings: (i) firstly, the link A-A’ is somewhat forced; to get A (v. 6) to match A’ (v. 11c) Moessner has to add a phrase to Hoover’s understanding of ἀρπαγμόν in v. 6b, namely, ‘[something – a status] to take advantage of for his own praise/glory’. I would argue instead that the conclusion ‘to the glory of God the Father’ finds its counterpart in the initial

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1 For Hellerman, alongside his excellent 2005 monograph, *Reconstructing Honor* (to which Moessner is clearly indebted), see also his ‘MORPH’ (2009) 779-797, examining how the phrase ‘form of God’ is a signifier of social status in Phil 2:6; his ‘Vindicating God’s Servants,’ 85-102, which compares the status reversal of Paul and Silas in Acts 16 to that of Christ in Philippians 2; and note his more recent popular work, *Embracing Shared Ministry*; on the issue of status, alongside Hellerman, one should also consult the valuable 2001 work of Oakes, *Philippians*, 175-210, and Fowl’s earlier important 1990 monograph, *Story of Christ*, 53-58.

2 I will discuss the issue of visible status further in Sections 7.2.1.4 and 7.3 below.

3 Moessner certainly includes v. 7d (Greek; v. 8a in English versions) in his translation of v. 7 (“Turning Status “Upside Down”,” 139), but it stands out, along with v. 10ab, as a neglected element in his chiastic outline, which expresses in some fashion every other text element.

4 Perhaps he has grouped the ‘bowing’ and ‘acclaiming’ of v. 10b and v. 11a into the single term ‘acknowledge’ in B’, but this is certainly not clear.
phrase of v. 6a only, ‘although he was in the form of God,’ given that ἐν μορφῆ θεοῦ is best interpreted against the background of the outward, visible glory of God.¹

(ii) Secondly, I am not convinced of the match between B and B′ in Moessner’s outline, despite the lack of clarity about whether B includes v. 7d or v. 8b with v. 7abc, or B′ includes v. 10ab with vv. 10c-11ab. By doing this, Moessner contrasts Christ’s self-emptying with the universal acknowledgment (presumably the bowing and acclaiming of vv. 10b and 11a²) of Jesus Christ as Lord (‘Κύριος’). Aside from the lack of clarity in his B-B′, and it being based on a questionable interpretation of ἐκένωσεν, I would suggest a more likely, credible pairing, that the first two main verbs of downward movement are actually matched by the first two main verbs of upward movement in the story.³ In a relatively uncomplicated plot such as we have in vv. 6-11, the main verb clauses function to carry the action forward,⁴ with subordinate clauses, and in particular the participial clauses, functioning to prioritize and clarify the main actions by means of either ‘backgrouding’ or elaboration.⁵ Therefore, the

¹ I will discuss this matter more fully in Chapter 7 (§7.2.1, pp. 404-422) below (but note that I am not here asserting the synonymity of μορφῆ and δῶξα); however, see in support, notably FABRICATORE, Form of God, esp. 146-156, 174-175, 204-209, 213-214; but see also, among a growing number of scholars, not yet forming a consensus, necessarily, I believe, and whose views therefore require an important correction, that ‘the form of God’ is the visible appearance of God, which is his glory, H. A. W. MEYER, Philippians and Colossians, 79-80; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 206-211; FOWL, Philippians, 91-94; and also his Story of Christ, 50-54; HANSEN, Philippians, 135-139; FLEMMING, Philippians, 112-113; STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 259-261; Feinberg, ‘Kenosis,’ 29-30, 45; WANAMAKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 185-187; HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 97-101; HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 131-133; cf. J. BEHM, ‘μορφῆ ... κτλ.,’ TDNT IV, 746, 750-752; SILVA, Philippians, 116; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 126-129; and his ‘Form of God,’ 6-8, 11-23; and note the discussion of this viewpoint in R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 103-105, 109-119.

² See p. 356 n. 4 immediately above.

³ See further below; though I discuss this in more detail later in Sections 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 of Chapter 7.

⁴ Cf. EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5, who also notes this.

⁵ The term ‘backgrouding’ is from S. E. RUNGE, Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010) 129, 250 262, and refers to ‘pushing the less important action into the background’ in order to ‘prioritize the importance of action in a [main verb] clause’ (p. 262). For RUNGE, using participles in a narrative ‘would be understood to signal either backgrouding or elaboration’ (p. 129; note his Chap 12, pp. 243-265 for more detail): ‘participles that precede the main verb have the effect of backgrouding the action with respect to the main verb of the clause, while most participles that follow the main verb elaborate the main verbal action’ (p. 129). He explains that the participial action is not unimportant, but ‘it is simply a matter of prioritization, with finite [main] verbs being used for more central action or activity … Not every action is equally important, and participles provide the grammatical means of explicitly marking this. The Greek participle allows the writer to make one finite verb (e.g. indicative or imperative) central to the entire sentence by rendering the rest of the actions as [less important] participles’ (p. 244). He goes on to add, ‘the most important thing to understand about participles is the idea of prioritization of the action … the finite action is the most prominent one, with participles playing a supporting role’ (p. 245, emphasis his). For my detailed account of the specific relationships between the subordinate or dependent participial clauses of
main verb clauses become the primary elements to which we should first look for any reversal of events between the two halves. Similarly in this narrative, it is clearly God’s actions (vv. 9-11) which primarily reverse Christ’s actions (vv. 6-8). Thus, the ‘self-humbling’ of Christ is matched by God ‘exalting him’ (which Moessner accepts in his C-C’), though the ‘self-emptying’ of Christ is not matched by people bowing before him and acclaiming him (as Moessner would have it), but by God ‘granting him’ the name that is above every name.

(iii) Thirdly, I believe that the two main verb clauses of vv. 10a-11a (‘every knee should bow,’ clearly paralleling ‘every tongue should acclaim’; apparently in his B’) together constitute a reversal of the object-complement construction in the main verb clause of v. 6bc, οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν (‘not as something-to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage’; in Moessner’s A), while the confession ‘that Jesus Christ is Lord’ in v. 11b (which vv. 10a-11a lead up to) correlates best with the direct object of the main verb, τὸ ἴναι ἴσο θεό (‘being equal with God’; also in his A).¹

(iv) Fourthly, rather than the death of Jesus on the cross being the final part of element C, which is reversed in being granted the highest name, I suggest instead that it represents an unmatched climax and turning point, at the centre of a chiasmus. Following v. 8d, the opening words of v. 9, διὸ καί, represent the beginning of the reversal, but the first element of reversal, ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν ὑπερψωσεν, corresponds not to Christ’s death, but to his ‘self-humbling’ (ἐπαινεῖσαν ἐαυτόν), even with a micro-chiastic reversal of the Greek word order.² In the absence of a mention of Christ’s resurrection,³ Christ’s death on the cross surely, then, represents the centre of any chiasmus, and not an element to be reversed in itself.⁴

I have four further conceptual concerns about Moessner’s presentation and following exposition: (i) I do not believe it is helpful to conflate ‘being in the form of God’ with

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¹  I will explain my case for these assertions in Section 7.2 below.
²  I display this micro-chiastic reversal below on p. 433.
³  On this topic (the absence of explicit reference to the resurrection of Christ), see Section 7.2.6 below.
⁴  MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140.
‘equality with God’ as he does in his element A. While the two expressions are clearly related and coordinated, they are not identical, and thus should not be merged. Similarly, (ii) I am not convinced of his assertion that the acting subject in both halves of the story is ‘God,’ whether ‘the form of God’ named ‘Christ Jesus’ (acting in vv. 6-8) or ‘God’ mentioned in v. 9.\(^1\) Paul describes Christ as being ‘in (ἐν) the form of God,’ not as ‘the form of God.’ Likewise, it is not ‘God,’ but ‘Christ Jesus’ (who is ‘in the form of God’) who ‘is hanging on the cross.’\(^2\) While Moessner is absolutely right to see Christ’s actions as revealing the character of God, it is unhelpful to merge the two explicit protagonists of the story into one protagonist, God. Further, (iii) while it may be appropriate to consider the ‘unexpressed actors’ of the story (especially in vv. 10-11), it becomes unhelpfully speculative to identify ‘the people/society who gave birth to Christ (2:7c-γένομενοι) and regarded him as a human being (2:7d- εὑρήσείς)’\(^3\) as the ones who crucified him, and then also apparently those mentioned in the second half (vv. 10-11).

Finally, (iv) while I am very sympathetic to the overall conclusion Moessner seeks to move towards, that the one who was in the form of God obeyed to the point of death on the cross (which represents ‘the lowest conceivable status, a “slave’s death” of execution’\(^4\) is consequently elevated before all created beings to the very status of God, by being granted the name ‘Lord’ (which is universally acclaimed as ‘the highest status of all’), and because of this, ‘notions of status are therefore turned completely “upside down,”’\(^5\) I am not convinced of his rationale to reach that conclusion. It seems again to be a case of the right result drawn from a faulty premise. In this instance, he argues emphatically that ‘what God [sic] has done in the first half of the ode is to “be,” “become,” and “act” in such a way so as to deny any possibility of [human] recognition of the divine status of this “form of God” [sic] in this

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\(^1\) \textbf{MOESSNER,} ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140-141.

\(^2\) While I, too, believe that our text clearly affirms the divinity of Christ, the theological imprecision of \textbf{MOESSNER,} ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 142 at this point is unhelpful to our understanding of the passage as a narrative.

\(^3\) \textbf{MOESSNER,} ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140.

\(^4\) On the cross as \textit{supplicium servile} (a ‘slave’s punishment’), see chapter 8 of \textbf{HENGEL’s} \textit{Crucifixion} (pp. 51-63; 88); he notes that ‘in most Roman writers crucifixion appears as the typical punishment for slaves’ (p. 51) and goes on to document that statement extensively; but the remainder of his excellent, though relatively brief, work should be consulted to help understand the shocking nature of the cross, particularly as Roman citizens of the first century would find it.

\(^5\) \textbf{MOESSNER,} ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 141-142 (\textbf{MOESSNER’s} account, though, speaks of ‘God’ rather than ‘Christ Jesus’ as ‘the one who is hanging on the cross’ [p. 142]; with the exception of quoted text, I have here sought to remove his theological imprecision).
“likeness of human beings” named “Christ Jesus” (2:5b-8).¹ He goes on to explain that the logic of the consequence expressed in the διό καὶ (‘and so it follows that …’) of v. 9a is ‘simply that this is who God is. God is in such a way as to give Himself to death without regard for acclaim or acknowledgment of his status as God.’²

At this point we touch on a matter of christological (and theological) reflection of the most profound nature. Of the story behind the story, that is, of the events referred to in Paul’s narration of them in Phil 2:6-11, the question may rightly be raised as to whether the divinity of Christ (‘being in the form of God’) was hidden or revealed in the death of the cross. In that story, we might well say that Christ’s divinity (and thus status as divine) was hidden in the shocking event of the cross.³ However, here we are dealing with Paul’s narration of that story, Paul’s Philippian text.

Inasmuch as he is referring to the character of God here, Moessner is undoubtedly right. But he is subtly mistaken on two counts, I believe. The first is that Moessner appears to be saying that ‘God’s self-giving on the cross’ is shown only by the second half reversal of Paul’s story (vv. 9-11). However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the narrative logic in the first half of the Christ-story, conveyed by the ‘although ... not ... but ...’ structure of vv. 6-8, is the means Paul actually uses to reveal the character of God in the person and actions of Jesus Christ including his death on the cross. The consequent exaltation by God, granting of the name above all names, and universal acclamation of Christ as Lord, to be sure, represent a powerful confirmation of that truth and reality, but in Paul’s story, the first half has already revealed this truth and reality.

The second subtle error, therefore, is to say that in ‘the first half of the ode’ (to use Moessner’s words),⁴ that is, in Paul’s narration of the story, Christ’s actions (described, however, as God’s actions by Moessner) ‘deny any possibility of recognition’ of his divine status.⁵ To the contrary, for Paul, his careful wording of vv. 6-8 is precisely what enables us

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¹ MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140.
² MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140 (emphasis his).
³ For further discussion, see my account of the narrative threat of the ‘story of the visible cruciform God’ in Section 7.3 below.
⁴ MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140.
⁵ MOESSNER, ‘Turning Status “Upside Down”,’ 140.
to recognize, quite surprisingly (and shockingly, when it comes to mention of ‘the form of a slave’ and ‘death on a cross’ in connection with Christ), what he describes elsewhere, that ‘God was [acting] in Christ.’\(^1\) Paul’s Christ-story does indeed ‘turn status upside down,’ in that Christ’s actions, as one divine, were indeed totally unexpected for someone of his high status (‘being in the form of God’ and ‘being equal with God’), and they do indeed call upon all readers of this text to radically reconsider their notions about the identity and character of God and, correspondingly, to radically rethink conceptions of human power and status. Moessner, to his credit, has come to the right conclusions, but apparently did not recognize that the first half of Paul’s story already makes these points, while the second half only serves to confirm them, should there be any doubt by the end of verse 8.\(^2\)

Thus, several, quite varied attempts have been made to find an overall chiastic structure within the Christ-story, but none so far have been at all compelling. Aside from smaller obvious micro-chiastic units of text (arranged, for example, as A-B-B’-A’), I do not believe that attempts to find macro-chiastic structures by key-words, alliteration, assonance or euphony are likely to succeed. Nor will efforts to ‘chiasticize’ the whole passage, word by word, phrase by phrase, or line by line, convince anyone, as such attempts usually find themselves forcing their form upon an unwilling text. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that none of the foregoing scholars, nor indeed (to the best of my knowledge) other commentators, appear to have seen that the passage as a whole does actually present a reversal of no less than five narrative elements, largely identified by the main verb clauses of the passage, together with a central element (which, as we have seen, quite a few have identified), forming an overall narrative chiasmus.

### 6.2.3 Re-framing the Search for Narrative Shape

Perhaps it is evidence of the truth of Martin’s sagacious observation that ‘this text has not yet yielded its full secrets or rich treasures,’\(^3\) but, again, clearly this highlights how focussing on the passage as an alleged early Christian hymn has effectively led readers and

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\(^1\) Referring, of course, to 2 Corinthians 5:19.

\(^2\) It is not just that both halves (of the story) working together do this, but that the first half and the second half each separately carries these implications.

\(^3\) MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, xl, previously cited on p. 1 above.
commentators astray, away from analysis of the passage as a narrative text. As a prose narrative text one does not tend to focus on individual words, phrases, or lines, to discover literary form. Yet, falsely believing the text to be a hymn or poem of some sort, this is what most ‘chiasticizers’ of the passage have done to date (Moessner apparently represents the only exception), not to forget the prolific hymnic ‘versifiers’ that we saw in Chapter 3.

However, a second reason as to why many scholars have not yet seen a chiastic structure in the text is that it has in part been obscured by previous translations of ἀρπαγμὸς in v. 6 (especially res rapienda interpretations), which mistakenly pointed many interpreters toward an implicit contrast between Christ and Adam, rather than between Christ and Graeco-Roman rulers, including most notably, Caesar. Even Wright himself now admits that he had not seen this implication of Hoover’s idiomatic rendering of v. 6b back in 1986 and 1991. Yet, though he thus managed then to ignore ‘the Caesar dimension of Phil 2:6-11,’ he wrote in 2000, having seen the significant work of Peter Oakes, to whom he expresses significant debt, ‘it now seems to me of great importance.’ Five years later (only a decade ago), in 2005, Hellerman was able to declare decisively, ‘that Christ is presented in the passage in contrast to the Roman emperor and to imperial ideology can no longer be disputed.’ But the contrast between Christ and Graeco-Roman rulers (and especially Caesar) is precisely what will allow us to see a chiastic reversal in the respective narrative elements of v. 6bc and vv. 10-11. That observation will be explained more fully in the pages to come, but it represents something that advocates of an Adam Christology in the passage have largely been blind to.

1 N. T. WRIGHT, Faithfulness of God, 687, 1293 n. 66; cf. FEE, Pauline Christology, 383. Of course, as we have seen, WRIGHT continues to see allusions to an Adam-christology in the Christ-story, but now sees these allusions arising in vv. 7-8, rather than v. 6 (Faithfulness of God, 686 & n. 212).

2 OAKES, Philippians; see the next note.

3 OAKES’ doctoral thesis, completed in 1996 (which formed the core of his 2001 monograph, Philippians), was in fact supervised by WRIGHT; for the latter’s explicit indebtedness to OAKES on the topic, see his ‘Paul’s Gospel’ (2000), 173 n. 30; and Paul in Fresh Perspective (2005) 72.


5 HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 162.
6.3 Discerning the Narrative Outline of Philippians 2:5-11

Somewhat surprisingly, then, the narrative structure (or structures) of the text, including an overarching chiastic structure, may be discovered relatively easily. As I have mentioned, the first step toward doing this is to focus on Paul’s prose sentence structures in the passage. By paying attention to the syntax and grammar of these sentences, we will make a good start. Discovery of an overall literary form for the Christ-story will then necessitate focussing upon key narrative components, namely the setting, characters, and plot of the text, of which the latter two components will be the most helpful initially. Attention to the main characters (or protagonists), alongside the inferential διὸ κοί at the beginning of v. 9, help us to see quite clearly the two distinct halves of the story (Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8 and God’s responsive actions in vv. 9-11), and point us toward seeing the story as one of reversal (both as a whole story, but, as we will later see, also in specific details).

Next, especially in a text of narrative reversal, we will need to identify and examine the various elements of the plot. A good definition of ‘plot’ in a narrative work is that it is a construction of ‘a meaningful chain of interconnected events’, which, in particular, ‘serves to organize events in such a way as to arouse the reader’s interest and emotional involvement, while at the same time imbuing the events with meaning.’¹ Thus, the plot is ‘the main organizing principle of a story,’² but which is determined by the writer’s vision of what is important and necessary for fulfilling his or her particular purposes in narrating the story.³

According to the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, widely regarded as the father of literary

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¹ S. Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible (JSOTSup 70, Bible and Literature Series 17; Sheffield: Almond, 1989) 93; cf. M. H. Abrams & G. G. Harpham (eds.), A Glossary of Literary Terms, 9th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009) 265: ‘the plot … in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects’; and P. Ricoeur, From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II, (trans. K. Blamey & J. B. Thompson; London: Continuum, 2008) 3-4 (emphasis his): ‘the plot is the set of combinations by which events are made into a story or – correlative – a story is made out of events. The plot mediates between the event and the story. This means that nothing is an event unless it contributes to the progress of a story. An event is not only an occurrence, something that happens, but a narrative component.’ He goes on to say (p. 4) that the plot, therefore, ‘holds together’ various circumstances and ‘ingredients of human action,’ giving the whole a sophisticated, ‘intelligible character.’

² Fokkelman, Reading Biblical Narrative, 76.

³ Thus, Fokkelman, Reading Biblical Narrative, 77-78 speaks of the ‘ingenious combination of the “horizontal” and the “vertical” arrangement’ of the plot, with the ‘horizontal arrangement’ referring to the linear succession of narrated events, and the ‘vertical arrangement’ referring to writer’s vision of what will contribute to his/her thematics and the ideological unity of the story.
theory, ‘plot’ or ‘the arrangement of the events,’¹ was the most important component of narrative, its ‘soul,’ with character coming in second place, helping to express the quality of an action.² For him, a plot such as found in our passage would fit his category of being a ‘complex’ plot, because it represents a ‘transformation’ or change of fortune for the protagonist, involving either a ‘reversal’ (which he defined as ‘a change to the opposite direction of events’) or ‘recognition’ (namely ‘a change from ignorance to knowledge’) or both.³ And, he added, ‘the finest recognition is that which occurs simultaneously with reversal,’⁴ which very much appears to be the case in our story.⁵

Yet, Aristotle went on, a well-constructed plot should also have what he described as a ‘unity of action,’ not simply because it narrates events concerning a single hero,⁶ but because ‘the component events [are] so structured that if any is displaced or removed, the sense of the whole is disturbed and dislocated.’⁷ Our narrative, as we will see, will certainly fit this criterion for ‘unity of action’ as each element contributes something of significance to the meaning and significance of the whole, and no element could really be removed from it. The passage has indeed been very carefully constructed and organized to achieve particular purposes within the letter, and bears evidence of notable authorial vision and literary skill on

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¹ Aristotle defines ‘plot’ (μῦθος; mythos) in his Poetics as: ‘the mimesis (μιμησίας; representation) of the action - for I use “plot” to denote the construction (σύνθεσις; synthēsis) of events’ (VI, 1450a.4; trans. S. Halliwell; in Aristotle XXIII [Loeb 199; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999], pp. 48-49).

² Aristotle, Poetics VI, 1449b.36-37, 1450a.1-39; VII 1450b.21-25 (Loeb 199, pp. 48-55). Technically, Aristotle was describing the Greek ‘tragedy’; however, his descriptions of ‘tragedy’ have ready application to all story-telling; cf. Fokkelman, Reading Biblical Narrative, 76. I would suggest, though, that in Paul’s understanding the relationship between character (ἡγομένος) and action (πράξεις) is much closer and more interrelated; indeed as we have seen, Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8 appear to be the expression of his (and God’s) character.

³ Aristotle, Poetics X-XI, 1452a.12-24 (on ‘reversal’; definition, 21), 30-39; 1452b.1-9; XVI, 1454b, 19-37; 1455a.1-21 (on ‘recognition’; for the definition, 1452a.30) (Loeb 199, pp. 62-67, 82-87); notably he later goes on to describe a third element of the plot of a tragedy: ‘suffering … such as public deaths, physical agony, woundings, etc.’ (XI, 1452b.10-13; pp. 66-67).

⁴ Aristotle, Poetics XI, 1452a.33 (pp. 64-65); cf. XIII, 1452b.31 (pp. 68-69).

⁵ Thus, in the reversing actions of Part II, we find God’s exaltation of Christ and granting of the highest name, ‘Lord’ (v. 9), being publicly recognized in vv. 10-11. Although listeners to the story have already been told that Christ was ‘in the form of God’ and ‘equal with God,’ his appearance in the form of a slave, humiliation and death on a cross would not have, by themselves (that is, without God’s intervening, reversing actions in v. 9), led to recognition of his supreme lordship; it is notable that Aristotle regarded the best kind of recognition to be that ‘ensuing from the events themselves, where the emotional impact comes from a probable sequence’ (Poetics XVI, 1455a.16-17 (Loeb 199, pp. 86-87), which appears to be the case in the Christ-story.


Paul’s part as it highlights for the Philippians the exemplary and paradigmatic nature of the story of Christ. As we move on this will become much more apparent.

As I have already mentioned, the plot of this particular narrative text is to be found primarily through its main verb clauses, since they function to carry the action of the story forward, while the role of participial and prepositional clauses is to modify and support the actions of these main verbs. As we have seen, and will re-emphasize, the downward movement of the first half of the story, and the upward movement of the second half, seen in four of the main verbs of the text, confirm the reversal between the two halves, and help identify the basic ‘V’ shape of the story. Finally, attention to a combination of grammar, sentence structure, particular plot elements, and the setting of those plot elements is what will reveal the modified ‘V’-shape \( \sqrt{V} \) of the story and the overall narrative chiasmus, so that we may explicate its meaning as a narrative. That, at least, is an overview of the process before us.

We begin, then, by examining Paul’s prose sentences. As we saw in Chapter 3, the passage reads very well as Pauline sentences, and can be arranged in a way that highlights its syntactical-logical and narrative structures. There is no need to repeat here my descriptions of the prose argumentation of the passage, but they should be kept in mind as we proceed. However, we do need to cite once more the full text of vv. 5-11, so that we may see the overall narrative structure of this key passage, analyse how it ‘works’ syntactically, with a detailed discussion of that in Section 6.4 following, and then move on to consider several significant narrative patterns within it (Sections 6.5-6.8 below). To convey these narrative structures fully, it is necessary to view the passage again on a single page. But this time I will add some narrative markers to indicate the structural divisions of the passage, the overall chiastic narrative structure of the text, two other important narrative patterns, which run as

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1 A further interesting comparison with Aristotelian narrative dynamics is what he regards as ideal characterisation, for which four elements are highlighted by the Greek philosopher (ARISTOTLE, Poetics XV, 1454a.16-36 [Loeb 199, pp. 78-81]): (i) the characters must be good; ‘speech or action reveals the nature of a moral choice; and good character when the choice is good’; (ii) appropriateness, especially the presence of courage of character; (iii) likeness (τὸ ἴθιμов) to others (cf. Phil 2:7c); and (iv) consistency of character; all very much found in the person of Christ Jesus in our passage.

2 See especially pp. 110-115 of Section 3.11 above; but note also Table 6.2 below on the sentence structures of vv. 6-8, which we will come to shortly (p. 370).
threads through the entire story, plus Gorman’s important ‘voluntary self-humbling’ pattern.\(^1\) These will help guide our subsequent discussion and analysis of the text.

Tables 6.1a and 6.1b on the following pages will show how the Christ-story works simultaneously as a narrative on several levels,\(^2\) which I will explain in following sections as noted below. These tables will set our agenda for the remainder of this chapter.

Hence, as we will see, following an introduction in v. 5, Paul has given this Christ-story a very carefully structured, modified ‘V’-shape containing: (i) two matching narrative stages within each of the two main parts of the story (Pattern #1, identified by the narrative markers in the left side bar, I.1 and I.2, II.1 and II.2, and discussed immediately following Tables 6.1a-b); (ii) multiple elements arranged in an overall narrative chiasmus (Pattern #2, identified by the markers, A, B\(^1\&\2\), C, D, E, and D\('\), C\('\), B\('\)-B\('\)\, A\('\) and presented below in the next chapter (Section 7.1); (iii) several reversal motifs within this overall chiasmus (which I will discuss extensively in §7.2); (iv) a narrative thread, running through the whole, which I am calling the story of the visible cruciform God (Pattern #3, highlighted by the markers, F, [G], F\('\)\, F\('\)\, F\('\)\, [H\(1\)], H\(1\), H\(2\), [I], G\('\), G\('\), [F''], discussed in §7.3); (v) a second narrative thread, which is an inter-linking construction tracing the motif of servant-obedience (Pattern #4, identified by the narrative markers, PS\(1\)\, PS\(1\)\, S\(1\), LS\(1\), PS\(2\), S\(2\), LS\(2\), rs\(2\) and rs\(2\), which, as we will see in §7.4, extends yet further in two directions, into the preceding and following contexts, vv. 3-4, 5 and 12-13)\(^3\); and because of its importance, (vi) Gorman’s ‘voluntary self-humbling’ pattern (#5, using his markers, X, Y, Z\(1\), Z\(2\) [vv. 6-8], examined briefly in Appendix 3.\(^4\)

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1 In addition, for ease of reference, I will add the same verse part markers (a, b, c, d), following the versification of the Greek text, as I used in Chapter 3 above (see p. 56; and note also p. 55 n. 7). For the ‘voluntary self-humbling’ pattern, see GORMAN, Cruciformity, 85, 90-91; and his Cruciform God, 16-17.

2 Horizontal lines have been added for ease of matching the various narrative markers with the actual text elements of vv. 6-11.

3 The quite different labels for the Obedient Servant Motif will be explained fully in Section 7.4.

4 See pp. 503-512 below.
Table 6.1a, Narrative Markers and Structures in Philippians 2:6-11 - Greek Text

1 As mentioned earlier (see p. 56 n. 7 & p. 112 n. 1), I am reluctantly following the versification of NA28 and UBSGNT4c (cf. NRSV), which begin v. 8 with ἐπατείνωσεν εὑρέθης, rather than that of most English versions, which begin v. 8 with a translation of καὶ σχημάτισεν εὐρέθης ὡς ἀνθρώπος. As we noted then, the latter is far more preferable since it more accurately corresponds to the narrative structure of these verses.
As before, the literal English rendering looks like this, but now with the narrative markers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Patterns (see below for titles)</th>
<th>5 This mindset have among yourselves which also [is] in Christ Jesus:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td>verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1&amp;2</td>
<td>[G] PS1a Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>PS1b Z1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1a</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1b</td>
<td>LS1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>PS2 Z2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[H1]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>H2 LS2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D'</td>
<td>[I]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1'</td>
<td>rs1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2'</td>
<td>rs2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A'</td>
<td>[F']</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.1b, Narrative Markers and Structures in Philippians 2:6-11 - English Text

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1 As we did previously, the literal English follows closely the structural arrangement of the Greek text seen above, using italics for Greek participles, boldface to show main Greek verbs, and underlining to identify important logical connectors. [Bracketed words] are interpretative.
The overall narrative structure of the passage is first shaped by the introduction of the two protagonists, respectively identified with a pronoun and a noun: the ὁς (‘who’) of v. 6a introducing Part I, and referring to the immediately preceding antecedent, Χρῖστῳ Ἰησοῦ (‘Christ Jesus’) of v. 5b; and ὁ θεός (‘God’) of v. 9a to introduce Part II. In Part I (vv. 6-8) Christ is the subject of each of the main verbs. The two halves of Part I are linked by a paratactic καὶ (‘and,’ at the beginning of v. 7d), which, although rare in Paul, when it does occur is usually found in narrative text. Similarly, in Part II (vv. 9-11), following a striking inferential διὸ καὶ (v. 9a, literally ‘therefore also,’ which as we have seen may also be translated as ‘and that is why’), God, acting in response to Christ’s actions, becomes the subject of the first two main verbs (v. 9), while in the second half of Part II, introduced by a purpose (ἵνα) clause, human persons (and others) become the subjects of the final two main verbs (vv. 10-11).

Thus, as can be seen in the structural arrangement on the previous two pages (note Pattern #1), there are two main parts in the narrative, (I) vv. 6-8, and (II) vv. 9-11, with each part itself divided into two stages as follows:

I.1 Christ’s actions ‘in the form of God,’ leading to the incarnation (vv. 6a-7c)
I.2 Christ’s actions ‘in appearance … as a human being,’ leading to the cross (vv. 7d-8)
II.1 God’s response to Christ’s actions (in I.1 and I.2), leading to Christ being granted the highest name [which name is mentioned later in II.2, v. 11b4] (v. 9)
II.2 The appropriate intended human response to Christ’s actions and lordly status (in I.1, I.2 and II.1), leading ultimately to the glorification of God (vv. 10-11).

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1 For example, 1 Thess 1:6, 9; Gal 1:14, 24; 2:2; Eph 2:1. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 214 n. 3. Parataxis refers to the use of coordinating rather than subordinating conjunctions (hypotaxis), and is a regular feature of Hebrew narrative and of the Markan gospel narrative of Jesus Christ. On the issue of whether the καὶ joins the two parts of the sentence in vv. 6-8 (so, correctly, I believe, most interpreters) or merely the two participial phrases of v. 7c and v. 7d, see further p. 63 above, and note FEE’s cogent reasons for discounting the latter possibility (Philippians [NICNT], 214 n. 3).

2 The word order of v. 9a is very emphatic: διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν ὑπεράνωσεν (literally, ‘therefore also, God exalted’), emphasizing simultaneously (i) the actions of God (ii) upon Christ (iii) in response to Christ’s previous actions.

3 Using the verse divisions of the Greek (not English) text, as noted under Table 6.1a above.

4 The highest ‘name,’ I believe, is clearly κύριος or ‘Lord’ (v. 11b); on this see pp. 383 n. 4 & 384 n. 1 below.
6.4 Narrative Syntax – How the Passage ‘Works’

6.4.1 Sentence Structure and Function in Part I of the Story (vv. 6-8)

With the prose layout of the text and the overall narrative structure of the passage in mind, let me now seek to explain in some detail how the passage ‘works’ in terms of its grammar and narrative syntax. Notably, each stage in Part I (I.1 and I.2) follows an almost identical sentence structure, with the introductory participial clause, leading to a main clause, followed by a modifying participial clause and then a second, clarifying modifying participial or prepositional clause, as the following table demonstrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participial introduction</th>
<th>Contrasting main verb clauses</th>
<th>Participial modifier</th>
<th>Clarifying participial modifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.1</td>
<td>vvs. 6a-7c</td>
<td>ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων</td>
<td>σού ἀρπαγμόν</td>
<td>ὅς μορφὴν δισύλου λαβὼν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[although] in the form of God being</td>
<td>ἐν θεῷ, ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἵκνωσεν</td>
<td>[by] the form of a slave taking,</td>
<td>[that is, by] in the likeness of human beings being born;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.2</td>
<td>vvs. 7d-8d</td>
<td>καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεῖς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος</td>
<td>ἱταμένωσεν ἑαυτὸν</td>
<td>γενόμενος ὑπίκοος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and in appearance being found as a human being,</td>
<td>he humbled himself,</td>
<td>[by] becoming obedient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2, Parallel Sentence Structures in Part I (Philippians 2:6-8)

The three main verbs in vv. 6-8 are third person singular aorist verbs depicting the past actions of Christ. The clauses of these main verbs carry forward the narrated story. However, they are supported by several subordinate participial clauses, which require some remarks about how they support these main verbs. Doing this will also raise the issue of

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1 Cf. here, FEE’s description of these verses (Philippians [NICNT], 195-196), though I differ from him in not linking μέχρι θανάτου (‘to the extremity of death’) with the preceding participial phrase γενόμενος ὑπίκοος (‘[by] becoming obedient’) and instead regarding the prepositional phrase as functionally equivalent to a participial phrase.

2 Note above, pp. 357-358 & 357 n. 5.
whether or not Christ’s pre-existence is assumed by v. 6 in general, and by the initial participial phrase of v. 6a in particular.

We have already considered this introductory participial clause, noting that it should be interpreted concessively in relation to the main verbs ἤγέρσατο and ἐκένωσεν, with an implied ‘although …’. The present tense ὑπάρχων, as we have seen, was often seen as synonymous with εἶναι in Hellenistic usage, but may here have the connotation of ‘[really] existing.’

Earlier interpreters, such as Lightfoot and Plummer, saw the verb as implying prior existence, but lexically this meaning is hard to substantiate in the Koinē period. However, Paul’s choice of the participial form instead of a finite verb, such as ἦν, is probably due to Christ’s always ‘being’ so (cf. the use of the participle ὄν in the conceptually similar text, 2 Cor 8:9).

Although it has been occasionally challenged in the past, the vast majority of scholars concur that Christ’s pre-existence in v. 6 may be inferred and is indeed presupposed by the

1 See above, pp. 264-265 & 264 n. 7.
2 For example, LIGHTFOOT, Philippians, 108; A. PLUMMER, A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians (London: Robert Scott, 1919) 42.
3 So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 202 n. 40; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 211; cf. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 65 n. 2.
4 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 203 & nn. 41-42; FEE, Pauline Christology, 376 & n. 19; HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 97. This is not to say that the participial form itself implies pre-existence, but that its usage here is most consistent with that understanding; notwithstanding the concern of J. H. MOULTON, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. I, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906) 127, that ‘the principle of a timeless present participle needs very careful application, since alternative explanations are often possible, and grammar speaks to exegesis here with no decisive voice’ (highlighted in this context by both O’BRIEN, Philippians, 211 and R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 65 n. 2).
5 Among challenges to Christ’s pre-existence in v. 6 (and, with the exception of DUNN, all are prior to 1980; his subsequent, and less assertive, responses have only been in defense of his 1980 Christology in the Making; on him, see below) are (i) earlier interpreters (REUMANN, Philippians, 342 cites Ambrosiaster, Pelagius, Luther), including Calvin, who saw all of vv. 6-11 (i.e., including v. 6) as dealing with Christ in his incarnation (thus, the human Christ ‘being in the form of God’ was bearing the divine majesty as a human person, albeit in a concealed fashion); more recent interpreters, on the basis of (ii) particular structural arrangements (for example, JEREMIAS, ‘Gedankenführung,’ 152-154; TALBERT, ‘Problem of Pre-Existence’; G. HOWARD, ‘Phil 2:6-11,’ 372-377, 378-387); or (iii) a ‘wisdom christology’ (MURPHY-O’CONNOR, ‘Christological Anthropology,’ 30-42, 49-50); or (iv) an Adam-christology (for example, TALBERT, ‘Problem of Pre-Existence’; J. HARVEY, ‘A New Look at the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2:6-11,’ ExpTim 76 no. 11 [1965] 338; N. K. BAKKEN, ‘The New Humanity: Christ and the Modern Age. A Study Centering in the Christ-Hymn: Philippians 2:6-11,’ Int 22 no. 1 [1968] 74-78; H.-W. BARTSCH, Die konkrete Wahrheit und die Lüge der Spekulation. Untersuchung über den vorpaulinischen Christus hymnus und seine gnostische Mythisierung [TW 1; Frankfurt: Lang, 1974] [the latter cited by WANAMAKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 191 n. 4]; and most notably DUNN, Christology [1980, 1989], xii-xix,
This conclusion is strongly supported by two main contextual grounds: (i) the expressions ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ (v. 6a) and τὸ ἐναντίον ἰσα θεω (v. 6c) themselves both clearly imply Christ’s divinity, and particularly so under the idiomatic understanding of ἀρπαγμός (v. 6b), for which we have been arguing; 2 and (ii) the narrative logic and chronology of the passage. We may observe that the present tense participle (‘although being [in the form of God]’) in v. 6a stands in temporal contrast to the aorist main verb clause of v. 7a (‘but he emptied himself’), and in substantive contrast to the following two aorist participles which modify it (‘taking [the form of a slave],’ v. 7b and ‘being born/made [in the likeness of human beings],’ v. 7c).3 The narrative logic of Paul’s sentence structure (‘although [status], not [selfishness], but [selfless action]’)4 requires Christ’s status to be temporally prior both to his attitude or mindset (how he regards ‘equality with God’) and to the actions described by v. 7. ‘Taking the form of a slave’ (v. 7b) must be temporally subsequent to ‘being in the form of God’; further, being in the form of God, Jesus then did not ‘have’ but ‘took’ (λαβών) the form of a slave.5

Furthermore, the clarifying participial phrase following that, ‘being born in the likeness of human beings,’ only makes sense if the contrasting introductory ‘being in the form of God’

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2 Which, as we have seen, means that both ‘form of God’ and ‘equality with God’ are regarded as already possessed by Christ in v. 6.


4 On this structure, see above, p. 309, and Table A3.1 in Appendix 3 below (p. 510).

5 Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 10.
presupposes prior existence as God. As Marshall has pointed out, vv. 6-7 are ‘extremely odd’ if Jesus had never been anything other than a human being and therefore the contrast between v. 6a and v. 7bc is merely between two stages of his career as a human person, as in some of the Adam-christologies seen by some to be behind our passage. The oddity is further seen in the surprising emphasis of a double mention of Christ becoming a human person (v. 7c, d; with the redundant second mention being totally inexplicable) if v. 6 already assumes his humanity (denying any divine pre-existence). As mentioned, the overwhelming majority of scholars now concur that Christ’s pre-existence in v. 6 is both implied and required by the text. This is true whether in response to early challenges to understanding v. 6 as implying and requiring Christ’s pre-existence, or in specific response to perhaps this view’s strongest challenger, James Dunn, in his (1980/1989) *Christology in the Making*.

What is most significant is that Dunn himself has now modified his earlier position in two important ways: (i) Although he can point to statements in the first edition (1980) of his

5. For example, cf. the conclusion of Fuller, *Foundations* (1965) 235 n. 9: ‘The attempts which have been made to eliminate pre-existence entirely from this passage ... must be pronounced a failure’; echoing this conclusion in 1980 was Feinberg, ‘Kenosis,’ 45; and cf. I. H. Marshall, ‘Christ-Hymn’ (1968) 116-117: ‘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 ... We may surely regard this interpretation of the hymn as without secure foundation.’
6. Cf. the following, A. T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God* (London: SCM, 1982) 62: ‘the conclusion that Paul did hold a doctrine of pre-existence is by far the simplest explanation of the evidence’; Wanamaker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11’ (1987) 190-191 concludes that ‘in the first place the passage is not to be understood as an expression of Paul’s Adamic Christology ... In the second place, those wishing to deny that Phil 2. 6 refers to Christ’s pre-existence are in all probability incorrect. ... It would thus seem fair to suggest that until further evidence is forthcoming from those who reject a reference to Christ’s pre-existence in Phil 2. 6-11, the burden of proof has been shifted back to them’; Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God’ (1997) 10: ‘While acknowledging that Paul was perhaps untroubled by the metaphysical intricacies of “preexistence”, we may accept with the vast majority of interpreters since antiquity that the most natural reading of this and other passages (e.g. Col. 1:15-17; I Cor. 8:6) will associate Christ with a time prior to Adam. (It is worth stressing that early Christian advocates of the Adam typology did not assert it as an alternative to a pre-existential reading of our passage)”; Hurst, ‘Christ, Adam’ (1998) 30, while commending Dunn for succeeding where so many others have failed in attempting to understand what the first Christians thought without the intrusion of later doctrinal perspectives and interests, is critical of his attempt to eliminate Christ’s pre-existence in v. 6: “this makes the inclusion of a potentially unpersuasive thesis at the heart of his study all the more serious.”
Christology as already recognizing it, he now more clearly admits that the issue of Christ’s pre-existence is quite independent of the issue of finding an Adam christology in the passage, and this means, in particular, that the latter (if accepted) does not necessarily imply the former.1 (ii) Secondly, he now affirms that the data of the text points to ‘an obvious understanding’ that the first stage of the story is ‘from preexistence to existence,’ which is ‘all the more obvious, indeed, given the aorist tenses and language of 2:7,’ wherein v. 7c is ‘more naturally read as a reference to [Christ’s] birth.’2 Furthermore, while, for Dunn, the ‘allusive poetry’ of the passage is intended to set in motion a sequence of reflections and parallels between Christ and Adam, ‘the fact remains that it has also set in motion the thought of Christ’s preexistence. And a commentator could hardly draw out the [former] one while disallowing the other,’ that is, his pre-existence.3 Thus, ‘the almost inevitable corollary’ is that Christ Jesus is ‘envisaged as making an Adamic choice at some time (!) in eternity.’4 Hooker, acknowledging Dunn’s new position, states the matter with appropriate conviction: ‘It is … difficult to make sense of what Paul says in v. 7 without acknowledging that it was the pre-existent Christ who became man: so difficult, I suggest, as to be impossible.’5 Thus, Lincoln Hurst is also correct that one may agree strongly with Dunn’s contention that the comparison/ contrast with Adam gives us the best reading of the passage, ‘without accepting his unnecessary corollary that the Adam-Christ parallel therefore demands that we abandon the idea of Christ’s personal pre-existence and equality with God in the hymn. That idea has stood well the test of time, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.’6

Dunn does complain, however, that too many assert Christ’s ‘pre-existence’ without going on to define exactly what that would have meant for Paul and his contemporaries.7 To ask this

1 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 286-287 & n. 97; ‘Christ, Adam,’ 78-79, referring to his Christology, 119-120. However, his criticism (Theology, 287 n. 97) of those who have critiqued his position (on Christ’s pre-existence in v. 6) without observing that he had allegedly already (i.e. in his Christology) distinguished between the issue of an Adam christology and the issue of pre-existence is quite unfair. He clearly argued against Christ’s pre-existence on the basis of his Adam christology (Christology, 119): ‘The point to be grasped is that the question [of pre-existence] cannot be answered without reference to the Adam christology which forms the backbone of the hymn … the individual expressions must be understood within that context … Now Adam was certainly not thought of as pre-existent … so no implication that Christ was pre-existent may be intended. If Christ walks in Adam’s footsteps then Christ need be no more pre-existent than Adam.’

2 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 287; ‘Christ, Adam,’ 78.

3 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 288; ‘Christ, Adam,’ 78.

4 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 288; ‘Christ, Adam,’ 78 (emphasis his; Dunn expresses this statement in the form of a question and answer; my turning it into a statement still does justice to his intent).

5 Hooker, ‘Adam Redivivus,’ 222.

6 Hurst, ‘Christ, Adam,’ 90.

7 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 292 n. 125; ‘Christ, Adam,’ 79 n. 42 (on p. 83).
question expecting an extended metaphysical answer is clearly asking too much of the passage or of Paul’s intentions in first writing it. However, we may quite appropriately enquire into the narrative meaning of Christ’s pre-existence. While logically and theologically required by the context, Paul’s main concern is with the narrative setting and stage of v. 6 and the implicit comparison this makes with the imperatorial setting of the alternative narrative of Roman power, together with the surprising and somewhat shocking direction that Christ’s actions take from this initial setting and stage. Nevertheless, it is thus quite appropriate to conclude that v. 6, including the initial participial phrase of v. 6a, narratively implies both Christ’s divinity and pre-existence.

Returning, thus, to understanding how the subordinate clauses of our narrative text support the main verbs which carry the action of the story, the second main clause of the passage is v. 7a (‘but he emptied himself’, understood metaphorically), and is followed by two aorist participial phrases, which modify it further as part of the first narrative stage (I.1). The aorist participles, λαβων (v. 7b) and γενομενος (v. 7c) are both to be understood as coincident (and not antecedent) aorists with respect to the main verb ἐκένωσεν (v. 7a). However, implicitly they also indicate the mode or means of the action of the main verb: Christ emptied himself … ‘by taking [the form of a slave]’ (v. 7b) and ‘by being born/made [in the likeness of human beings]’ (v. 7c). The second participial phrase (v. 7c), in parallel with the first also modifies the main verb, ‘he emptied himself,’ and does not primarily describe the manner of Christ’s

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1 Cf. BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 10. Yet FOWL, Philippians, 95-96, is also quite right to note (apropos of understanding the ‘self-emptying’ of Christ) that the claim that Paul would never have thought in such metaphysical terms is not in itself theologicially relevant. As he writes, ‘later creeds and confessions are best understood as scripturally disciplined ways of coherently ordering claims, inferences, and implications of scriptural language about God, the world and God’s purposes for the world. Scripture by its very diversity requires such an ordering. The question is not whether Paul thought this way himself. Rather the question is whether one uses historical-critical, sociological, philosophical, or Christian theological categories for ordering that diversity.’

2 Again, see p. 357 & n. 5 above.

3 So most interpreters; see p. 352 n. 3 above; note BDF, 174-175 §339 (1). As SILVA, Philippians, 120 points out, while generally speaking aorist participles refer to actions that have taken place prior to the action of the verb they modify (in which case, λαβων, for example, would need to be translated, ‘having taken [the form of a slave]’ or ‘after he had taken …’), this grammatical ‘rule,’ however, admits of many exceptions, and most writers recognize that the poetic quality of the passage requires some flexibility here.

4 Again, so most commentators; for example, SILVA, Philippians, 120; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 210-211 & n. 82, 213; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 217-218, 224; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 133; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 86-87; HANSEN, Philippians, 151; SILVA, Philippians, 120; MELICK, Philippians, 103-104; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 194; FEINBERG, ‘Kenosis,’ 42. If the mode of Christ’s emptying himself is in mind, Paul will be referring to the manner in which he did that; if the means is in mind, to how he did it; the difference between the two is subtle and largely unimportant here.
‘taking the form of a slave.’ However, functionally it does also clarify and explicate the meaning of this first participial phrase, inasmuch as both explain the meaning of the self-emptying. Hence it can be translated, ‘… that is, by being born …’. Literally, the aorist γενόμενος means ‘having become,’ but combined with the preposition ἐν can have the connotation of entry into a new state of being. However, in its context, Christ’s new state of being is the ὀμοιωματί ἀνθρώπων (‘likeness of human beings’), and thus the translation ‘being born [in the likeness of human beings]’ is quite appropriate, especially in light of the use of γίνομαι meaning ‘born’ in Gal 4:4 and Rom 1:3 (cf. John 8:58).

We may note some important contrasts between v. 6 and v. 7 at this point. Firstly v. 7 portrays clear narrative movement from the static verbs of v. 6 (‘existing … he regarded … being …’) to the action verbs of v. 7 (‘he emptied himself … taking … becoming/being born …’). The most notable of these is the contrast between Christ merely ‘existing’ (ὑπάρχων + ἐν) ‘in the form of God’ in v. 6a and ‘becoming’ (γενόμενος + ἐν) ‘in the likeness of human beings’ in v. 7c (the second participle supporting ἐκένωσεν). Yet the deliberate repetition of the word μορφή also sets up a surprising and even shocking contrast between the pre-existent Christ being in the ‘form of God’ in v. 6a, and the self-emptying Christ taking ‘the form of a slave’ in v. 7b. Thus, and not unexpectedly, each of the subordinate participial phrases in v. 7b and 7c functions to highlight the very surprising (and previously unthinkable) nature of the actions of one in the form of God, who could have regarded his equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage, but in fact did not. This will receive further attention in our subsequent discussions.

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1 O’BRIEN, Philippians, 224.
2 So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 213 & n. 92; cf. his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 40; note H. A. W. MEYER, Philippians and Colossians, 90, and VINCENT, Philippians, 59, who both see v. 7c as defining or specifying v. 7b further; it is more accurate to say as I implied above that v. 7c has two functions, firstly defining further v. 7a, and secondly clarifying the meaning of v. 7b as it too defines v. 7a; this, I suggest, is also FEE’s position.
3 BDAG, 198 (Sc).
4 The meaning of the enigmatic term ὀμοιωμά, along with other key nouns used to describe Christ (μορφή θεοῦ, μορφήν δούλου, σχήματι) will be discussed below in Sections 7.1, 7.2.3 and 7.3.
5 BDAG, 197 (1); O’BRIEN, Philippians, 224; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 213; and his Pauline Christology, 387 n. 61; MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 98, 118, 120; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 75, 87; HANSEN, Philippians, 151-152; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 133, 137; also ESV, NRSV, NLT, NCV, RSV, Phillips, Mounce. The objection of COLLANGE, Philippians, 103 that the parallelism of γενόμενος in v. 7c and v. 8b undermines the likelihood that the first reference can refer to Christ ‘being born’ is overturned by recognizing that the usage is quite different in each case: γίνομαι ἐν versus γίνομαι ὑπέρκος (so O’BRIEN, Philippians, 224 n. 118).
It is not surprising to find still another contrast with v. 6 in v. 7d-8d (the second narrative stage [I.2] in Part I of the story), with a participial introduction (‘and in appearance being found as a human being’; v. 7d; cf. v. 6a) leading to a second contrasting main verb clause in v. 8a; not only did Christ pour himself out, but also ‘he humbled himself.’

We may recall the paratactic καὶ (v. 7d) separating the two narrative stages in Part I of our narrative, and beginning Stage I.2. As we have seen previously it is wrong to assume that the καὶ links the parallel phrases of v. 7c and v. 7d, whether the combined v. 7c-d (i.e. ἐν ὀμοιωματί ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος καὶ σχήματι εὑρέθης ὡς ἄνθρωπος) represents a distinct couplet, or is joined to the previous v. 7ab (and thus with v. 7d also modifying ‘he emptied himself’ in v. 7a), or linked with what follows, v. 8 (and thus with v. 7c-d modifying ‘he humbled himself’ in v. 8a). Each of these combinations runs afoul of Paul’s sentence structure, and in each case inappropriately creates a tautology whose purpose is virtually unfathomable, plus representing a parallelism that would be unparalleled elsewhere in Paul’s writings. More accurately, in line with this passage both as prose sentences and as narrative, the καὶ of v. 7d does not link v. 7c with v. 7d, but rather links grammatically the two main verbs of vv. 7-8 (thus, ἐστών κτένῳ ... καὶ ... ἐπατέως; ἐστών), with their entire clauses, thus linking the two main actions depicting Christ’s descent from existence in the form of God, which describe the ‘but …’ (ἀλλά …) part of the narrative structure of vv. 6-8

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1 Note again that here and in what follows I am (reluctantly) following the versification of the Greek (and not English) text, where v. 7d represents καὶ σχήματι εὑρέθης ὡς ἄνθρωπος (the English text correctly puts a translation of this as v. 8a).

2 On this, see p. 369 and especially p. 63 above.

3 So R. P. MARTIN, *Hymn of Christ*, 36-38 (on this see above, pp. 60-64); but contrast his arrangement of the text in *Hymn of Christ*, 197-228, where he links v. 7c-d to v. 8, modifying ‘he humbled himself’ (in agreement with JEREMIAS; see the second note following).

4 The mistake of H. A. W. MEYER, *Philippians and Colossians*, 90; LOH & NIDA, *Handbook on Philippians*, 57, 59; HAWTHORNE, *Philippians*, 86-88 among others. But then εὑρέθης of v. 7d grammatically must modify v. 7a, thus, ‘he emptied himself … by being found …,’ which is semantically odd to say the least (see FEE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 40 n. 42).


6 So FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 214 n. 3; ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 40-41 & n. 42; again, see above p. 63.

(‘although [x], not [y], but [z]’). Hence, the καὶ primarily links the two narrative stages of Part I of the whole story, with Stage I.1 encompassing vv. 6a-7c and Stage I.2, vv. 7d-8d.1

Thus, the participial expression in v. 7d (καὶ σχήματι εὑρέθης ὡς ἄνθρωπος) introduces and modifies the following (not preceding) main verb clause, ‘he humbled himself’ (v. 8a). Picking up what was affirmed in v. 7c concerning Christ’s being born in human likeness, v. 7d begins by reiterating this important truth to move the narrative forward into a new stage. In effect, then, the clause of v. 7d functions as a Pauline bridge, summing up what precedes and introducing what follows.2 With respect to the action of v. 8a[bcd], v. 7d is thus a ‘backgrounding’ clause.3 This narrative flow is maintained only when we separate the two phrases as being respectively the end of one stage and the beginning of the next. So, if v. 7a-c describes the descent of Christ from pre-existence to the incarnation, then vv. 7d-8d now describe the continuing descent of Christ from the incarnation to the climax of the cross.

As we saw in Table 6.2 above, the two stages of the first half of the Christ-story follow an almost identical sentence structure. If the participial phrase of v. 6a introduced the main verb clauses of v. 6c and 7a highlighting the actions of Christ ‘in the form of God,’ then in v. 7d the actions of Christ ‘as a human person’ (ὡς ἄνθρωπος) are emphasized. In each narrative stage, therefore, the introductory participial phrase shows Christ’s ‘mode of being’ for his subsequent actions.4

The aorist passive εὑρέθης of v. 7d would normally be antecedent to the main verb, thus, ‘having been found, he humbled himself,’ but here the English present passive participle ('being found') offers the same sense.5 The verb points to that quality of a person or thing as

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1 It is not necessary and partly unhelpful, however, to regard v. 7d as beginning a new sentence (as, for example, does Fee, *Philippians* [NICNT], 214 (but note his ambivalence on p. 195 [*‘two clauses joined by “and”’*] and 214 n. 2) and more clearly in his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 39-41; Silva, *Philippians*, 112, 121; Hansen, *Philippians*, 118, 154; Fleming, *Philippians*, 117); the disadvantage for those who posit two sentences within vv. 6-8 is that Paul’s ‘although … not … but …’ structure is then limited to vv. 6a-7c, rather than embracing the whole of Part I of the narrative (vv. 6-8) as I believe it should (with two actions described by the ‘but …’). It is more accurate and helpful to affirm that vv. 6a-7c and vv. 7d-8d represent two halves of the single overall sentence of vv. 6-8, and two distinct narrative stages.


3 For the ‘backgrounding’ function of participles (the term is from Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 129, 250 262) with respect to the main verbs they support, see p. 357 n. 5 above.

4 Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 388; Philippians (NICNT), 215.

5 Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT), 215 n. 4.
recognized or discovered by others as it is seen in the circumstances of an event.\(^1\) This naturally fits well with the description of Christ as ‘being found’ in the σχήμα of a human person, referring to the generally recognized outward form or appearance of something.\(^2\) Thus in Stage I.2, by reiterating (in v. 7d) the human status of Christ mentioned at the culmination of the previous narrative stage, the genuineness of the humanity of the one who humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death is doubly emphasized.\(^3\)

The aorist participle in the next phrase (v. 8b), γενομένος, functions in a similar modal way with respect to the main verb clause of v. 8a (‘he humbled himself’) to how the participles of v. 7b-c supported ‘he emptied himself’. Thus, v. 8b expresses how Christ humbled himself … ‘by becoming obedient …’,\(^4\) and also represents action that is coincident with the self-humbling.\(^5\) In this instance γενομένος takes a less nuanced meaning to that in v. 7c, here simply ‘becoming’.

However, following the first modifier of the main verb there is no second clarifying participial modifier, but rather a prepositional phrase, μέχρι θανάτον, which I believe is functionally equivalent to a participial modifier,\(^6\) followed immediately by a most emphatic and shocking climax to Part I of the Christ-story, θανάτω δὲ σταυροῦ. The phrase μέχρι θανάτου shows how Christ became obedient (in the first instance), and thus the extent of his humiliation (in the second instance), with the preposition μέχρι representing a marker of degree or measure, not merely of a temporal goal (i.e. not meaning ‘until he died’).\(^7\) Thus, Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient ‘to the extremity of death’,\(^8\) or to paraphrase it, ‘by ultimately dying.’ The nature of that death is expressed with the subsequent striking

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1. Cf. BDAG, 412 (2); O’BRIEN, Philippians, 227; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 138; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 215 n. 4; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 208.
2. BDAG, 981; with σχήματι being a dative of instrument, indicating that it was by his appearance that people recognized him as a human being; so O’BRIEN, Philippians, 227; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 208. Although BDF, 105 §195, classifies σχήματι here as a dative of respect, O’BRIEN (227) is right to note that the difference in meaning is slight.
4. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 216; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 228; and most commentators.
5. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 228 & n. 156, with most commentators; as SILVA, Philippians, 121 n. 43, correctly points out, the aorist γενομένος cannot possibly refer to action antecedent to the main verb in this case, since ‘he humbled himself after becoming obedient …’ makes little sense here. This supports taking the previous aorist participles as coincident with their main verb.
6. See again Table 6.2 above, and p. 370 n. 1 there.
7. So BDAG, 644 (3); O’BRIEN, Philippians, 229-230.
repetition of θεωτου (an example of the poetic figure, anadiplosis\(^1\)), an intensifying (and also explanatory) particle, δε,\(^2\) and the jarring mention of a Roman cross (σταυρός). This arresting climax will demand our further attention below.

The foregoing, then, has helped us to see how Part I of Paul’s story of Christ ‘works’ in terms of its grammar and narrative syntax. It is appropriate to analyse Part II of the story in a similar way.

### 6.4.2 Sentence Structure and Function in Part II of the Story (vv. 9-11)

As we saw in Chapter 3, the style and sentence structure of Part II (vv. 9-11) is very different from that of Part I.\(^3\) The neat, balanced structure is not evident, the participial phrases of the first half are completely absent, having been replaced by main verb and prepositional clauses, and logical argumentation now dominates: διο και ... ἵνα ... ὅτι ... (‘therefore also ... so that ... that ...’). However, this is not to the detriment of concluding the narrative; rather, the second half points to the resolution and culmination of the events of the first half.

Verses 9-11 explain God’s response to Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8 and the results which arise from them. While the acclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ is definitely the high point of Part II, the journey to the cross of Part I is undoubtedly the dominant feature of the entire narrative.\(^4\) The paraenetic context of the Christ-story, which draws predominantly upon the exemplary mindset and actions of Christ in vv. 6-8, the first half of the story, makes that very clear.

As we did for Part I, let us then offer some brief comments about how Part II ‘works’ in terms of its narrative syntax, focussing on the clauses which support and join the main verbs. Immediately after the climax of the cross, Paul announces a striking turning point in the story in v. 9, at the same time presenting a new protagonist: διο και ὁ θεός ... (‘therefore, also, God

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\(^1\) Anadiplosis refers to the repetition of a prominent and often final word in one phrase or clause at the beginning of the next. Correctly noted by HOFIUS, Christushymnus, 9-12, 104-108; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 139; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 231.

\(^2\) BDF, 232 §447 (8).

\(^3\) Again, see above, pp. 110-115.

\(^4\) Pace KÄSEMANN and MARTIN.
Following that are two key actions by God in response to those of Christ in the previous verses, described by two main verb clauses: God ‘highly exalted him’ (v. 9a) and ‘granted him the name …’ (v. 9b). God’s direct response to the one who ‘humbled himself’ is very emphatic, ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερήψωσεν (literally, ‘God - him – has highly exalted’). Similarly, in response to the one who had ‘emptied himself,’ God now ‘grants him’ (ἐχαρίσσετο αὐτῷ) a special name. The first main verb attributed to God is a compound verb, which, as we have seen, should be regarded as having an elative force, connoting Jesus’ exaltation or being raised to the highest position. The second main verb is the aorist form of χαρίζωμαι (from χάρις), ‘to grant’ or ‘graciously give [someone something],’ a Pauline favourite (cf. Phil 1:29; Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 2:12; Gal 3:18; Phlm 22).

What links them is another narrative conjunction, καί. However, I am not convinced that this is epexegetical (with v. 9bc explaining and amplifying the meaning of v. 9a), nor an example of *hendiadys,* nor that the two aorist verbs are necessarily coincident. Rather I see this καί as paratactic (cf. καί in v. 7d, as discussed above), linking two distinct, sequential divine actions in response to Christ’s two main actions of descent in vv. 7-8. The phrases are parallel and clearly related, just as ‘he emptied himself’ and ‘he humbled himself’ are parallel...
and related, but are neither equivalent nor coincident phrases. While one might say that the exaltation of Christ could encompass the granting of the name above all names, it would be wrong to assume that this gracious gifting of a name supplies the content of the exaltation of Christ in its entirety. In the story thus far, each main verb has signified a distinct narrative action or stage and there is no reason to expect that to change now. In particular, given the five previous participial phrases, one would expect that had Paul intended v. 9b to explain or modify v. 9a he would have used a participle, not a new main verb. As I will argue in Section 6.6 below, conceptually Paul intends the main verbs of v. 9 to function as reversals of the actions of Christ in vv. 7-8, and this conclusion is further supported by the way Paul has very carefully structured the wording of each of the main verb clauses in vv. 7-8 and v. 9.1

In analogy to an imperial accession,2 God’s exaltation of Christ (v. 9a) recognizes an upward movement from the cross (Christ’s supreme, but totally surprising, qualification for the public appointment to come) to a place of investiture, and the second main verb clause, describing the granting of the highest name (v. 9bc), recognizes continued upward movement from the place of investiture to Christ possessing the highest status and authority (the formal investiture itself), which then allows opportunity for the public acknowledgment of his high position and role (vv. 10-11b).

One further reason for us separating the two divine actions of v. 9a and v. 9bc is that God’s exaltation of Christ would appear implicitly to include raising Christ from the dead (cf. Phil 3:10-11, 21), a death that was the ultimate result of Christ humbling himself, though as we will later see the apostle clearly has particular reasons for mentioning ‘exaltation’ rather than ‘resurrection’ to a Philippian audience.3 To say that the ‘granting’ of ‘the name’

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1 For Section 7.2, see pp. 402-452 below.
2 See my discussion of the imperial background to the Christ-story in Section 5.3.3 above.
3 The matter of the resurrection of Christ, its explicit absence from the Christ-story and why that is so will also receive our attention in Section 7.2.6 (pp. 448-452) below; however, of those who affirm the possibility that the exaltation of Christ at least includes (implicitly) the resurrection (if not also the ascension), note BERTRAM, ‘ὑψωσις,’ 606-613; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 201-202, 236-237; BOCKmueHL, Philippians, 118-119, 141; WARE, ‘Word of Life,’ 215-217; FEINBERG, ‘Κενωσις,’ 44; LOH & NIDA, Handbook on Philippians, 61; GORMAN, Cruciformity, 318-319; N. T. WRIGHT, Resurrection of the Son of God, 227-228 & n. 45, 233; DUNN, Theology of Paul, 245-247, 252, 265; J. LAMBRECHT, ‘The Identity of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2.6-11),’ Understanding What One Reads: New Testament Essays I (ANL 46; Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 258; MANNs, ‘Philippiens 2,6-11,’ 289-290; KRAFThICK, ‘Necessary Detour,’ 23; C. BROWN, ‘Lohmeyer’s Kyrios Jesus,’ 24; and HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 91, who states that Paul’s use of the aorist tense ὑπέρψωσεν is ‘to refer implicitly to that moment in history marked by the resurrection-ascension of Christ’ and later speaks of Christ’s ‘resurrection-exaltation’; and see Ps 9:13 (LXX: Ps 9:14);
explains the content of being ‘highly exalted’ would do justice neither to the explicit narrative (which highlights an unmistakable direct reversal from humiliation to exaltation) nor to the implicit narrative (in which the sequence of death-resurrection would have been expected by those who had heard Paul’s gospel teaching or the oral traditions of the passion narratives later described extensively by our four Gospels). As will be much clearer in the next two sections, the overall narrative structure of the passage unmistakably asks of us that we regard the two main verbs of v. 9 as referring to distinct narrative events.

The next phrase needing our attention then is v. 9c, τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα. This functions as an adjectival qualifier to the meaning of ‘the name’ (τὸ ὄνομα) given to Christ in v. 9b, with the article introducing the phrase being clearly anaphoric. Thus, the phrase means, ‘[the name], namely, the one above every name’ and the whole clause can be translated, ‘and [God] has granted him the name that is above every name.’ The biggest issue concerning this phrase, however, is what does ‘the name’ refer to, or what exactly is this ‘name’? While some of the church fathers understood the ‘name’ to be ‘God,’ and a few persist, quite understandably in light of next clause in v. 10a (‘in order that in the name of Jesus …’), in claiming it must be ‘Jesus,’ derived from the Hebrew word meaning ‘Saviour,’ the vast majority of

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1 The definite article τὸ (in τὸ ὄνομα) is omitted by D F G Ψ and the Majority Text (cf. KJV, ‘a name above all names’), however, the MS support for its inclusion is both early and widespread (א ב C 33 629 1175 1739 and a few other MSS), and represents better Pauline grammar (ὁμοίωμα τὸ without a τὸ preceding the ὄνομα is awkward and less likely to have been penned by Paul); the omission is probably due to a lack of understanding of Paul’s intent (that ‘the name’ is the ‘Lord’). So FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 218 n. 1; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 203 (note d). The presence of the definite article shows that ὄνομα is not a reference to the character or reputation of Christ, but rather to a specific ‘Name’ given to him (FEE, 221 n. 20).

2 FEE, Pauline Christology, 397.

3 Understanding ‘the name’ to be ‘God’ (Θεός) were some of the church fathers (e.g. Novatian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexander); so R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 235 & n. 5.

4 Those who maintain that syntactically v. 10a (‘ιν τῷ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ, ‘in order that, in the name of Jesus’) shows that ‘the name that is above every name’ (v. 9c) is ‘Jesus’ (or ‘Jesus Christ’) include: VINCENT, Philippians, 62; H. A. W. MEYER, Philippians and Colossians, 101-102; C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflections on Phil 2:5-11,’ 270; SILVA, Philippians, 129-130; THURSTON (& RYAN), Philippians, 84 (who confusingly states that God gave the name ‘Jesus’ [v. 9], who also received a new name, ‘Lord’ in v. 11). The main arguments against this position are that (i) the name ‘Jesus’ was already his from birth and a name known to his contemporaries during his life, so it seems unlikely that God could ‘give’ it to him after his death; (ii) other people have been named ‘Jesus’ (e.g. Col 4:11); (iii) in the narrative, the name ‘[Christ] Jesus’ had already been mentioned in v. 5, though ‘Lord’ had not; and (iv) the stronger arguments in favour of ‘Lord’ (see the next note); for fuller discussion of the issue, bibliography, and arguments in favour of the
commentators believe it must have been κύριος or ‘Lord,’ emphatically mentioned first in the acclamation of v. 11b (‘that Jesus Christ is κύριος,’ with the Greek reading, ὃτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς). Paul does not explicitly say what ‘the name’ is, but the striking christological acclamation of v. 11b surely points in the right direction, and beyond the Greek word κύριος to the sacred Hebrew name for God, Yahweh, for which the Greek κύριος served as a common translation (notably in the LXX, including Isaiah 45, which is cited in vv. 10-11).

Bauckham is quite right to note that the confession ‘that Jesus Christ is Lord’ (v. 11) ‘is both a surrogate for calling on him by his name, ΥΔΗ, and also a confession of his lordship.’ And as we have seen previously, acknowledging Jesus Christ as ‘Lord’ had dual implications for the Philippians, both ethical and political: not only must ‘the obedient one be obeyed,’ but the divine lordship of Christ also powerfully ruled out the lordship of Caesar.

Verses 10 and 11 are grammatically dependent upon the two main verbs of v. 9, together forming one sentence. Thus following v. 9bc, Paul introduces a logical ἵνα (‘so that’) clause in vv. 10-11, expressing both the desired result and the purpose of God’s actions in v. 9

name κύριος, see R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 235-239, 245; O’Brien, Philippians, 237-238; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 142-144; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 221-223; Hansen, Philippians, 162-163; Feinberg, ‘Kensosis,’ 44-45; Foerster & Quell, ‘κύριος,’ 1088-1089; cf. Bauckham, Jesus, 199-200; N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 683-684.

1 Note Foerster & Quell, ‘κύριος,’ 1058-1062, 1081-1082, 1088-1092; cf., for example, the emphasis throughout Isaiah 41-55; esp. Isa 42:8 LXX: ‘I am Yahweh God [ἐγώ κύριος ὁ θεός], that is my name [τοῦτο μου ἴση τὸ ὄνομα]’ (see Fee, Philippians [NICNT], 222 & n. 25). The main arguments supporting ‘the name’ (v. 9b) as κύριος include: (i) as stated, the context (vv. 10a-11b) suggests that ‘the name’ is ‘Lord’ as an appellation for God’s name, Yahweh; (ii) for a Jew like Paul, the superlative name could be none other than ‘Yahweh’; (iii) the clear intertextuality of vv. 10-11, where Paul borrows the language of Isa 45:23 confirms this; there, Yahweh (κύριος; Isa 45:18 LXX) says ‘before me every knee shall bow and every tongue will swear …’ (on this, see pp. 501-502 in Appendix 2 below); (iv) the phenomenon of transferring the LXX translation of κύριος for ‘Yahweh’ to Christ as exalted Lord is already present in Paul’s earlier letters (1 & 2 Thessalonians; cf. 1 Cor 8:6: ‘there is one God [θεός], the Father … and one Lord [κύριος], Jesus Christ’; (v) this fits the Pauline view that the basic Christian confession is that ‘Jesus is Lord’ (v. 11; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3); (vi) properly understood ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ … (v. 10a) refers not to someone hearing the name ‘Jesus’ and then bowing before him; rather ‘the name of Jesus’ is juxtaposed with v. 9bc and following the ἐν means something like ‘in the name that now belongs to Jesus …’. So Fee, Pauline Christology, 396-397; Philippians (NICNT), 222 & nn. 24, 25; O’Brien, Philippians, 238. See also others cited at the end of the previous note.

2 Bauckham, Jesus, 200 (cf. also his ‘Worship of Jesus,’ 131); however, he is, I believe, quite wrong to criticise those (p. 199) who regard ‘the name’ merely as Kyrios (‘Lord’), for their understanding of that title is surely no different to that which Wright reports (Faithfulness of God, 683): ‘what they will now confess is … “that Jesus, Messiah, is kyrios” … And there can be no doubt nor cavil … that when Paul writes kyrios in relation to Jesus he means his readers to understand, as anyone familiar with the Septuagint would understand, the word ΥΔΗ’, while additionally acknowledging the meaning of lordship which the Greek title also points to.

3 On the latter topic, see again Section 5.3.3 above.
(cf. ἀναστ. in v. 2; Gal 5:17), and which are described by the two subjunctive verbs of vv. 10b and 11a. Collange is absolutely right that we should not separate the submission and confession of the church and that of the whole creation, nor Christ’s lordship over the church and lordship over the cosmos, for ‘it is evident that the congregation shared in the proclamation and the kneeling called for’ by our passage. BDF note that ‘what can be interpreted as intended or probable result is expressed to a great extent by ἀναστ. and the subjunctive; ἀναστ. in other words has a subjunctive (imperatival) sense.’ To my mind there is no doubt that in narrating the Christ-story Paul expects his readers and hearers also to bow before Jesus Christ and to acclaim him as Lord. That expectation should not be overlooked when we see in v. 10c the wider cosmic implications of God’s actions upon Christ.

In the first part (v. 10a) of the ἀναστ. clause Paul mentions both the object and occasion of the submission and acclamation that he is about to highlight. The phrase ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ raises several interpretative issues. Given the conclusion that ‘the name above all names’ is not ‘Jesus,’ but ‘Lord’ (κύριος), the genitive Ἰησοῦ, then, is not explicative but should be seen as possessive (‘the name which now belongs to Jesus’), so that v. 10a is juxtaposed with v. 9bc, while also looking forward to the acclamation of v. 11b, ‘that Jesus Christ is Lord.’

Jesus’ is, however, deliberately mentioned to emphasize the identity of the one who took the
form of a slave and was crucified with the one now to be proclaimed as ‘Lord.’

Thus, the phrase ‘in the name of Jesus’ ties together the theme of humiliation in the first half of the story and the theme of exaltation in the second half.

The context and sentence structure further show that the preposition ἐν should be interpreted not as depicting the medium or attendant circumstances of the worship (described by vv. 10b, 11ab), with the ἐν + dative taken instrumentally or circumstantially, but rather as describing the object of worship.

Bockmuehl notes that Septuagintal usage suggests that worship ‘in the name of God’ actually means it is offered to God. Hence, the bowing and acclaiming represents worship offered to Jesus ‘in honour of the name belonging to [him],’ which is ‘Lord.’ As Hofius explains, Isa 45:23 is a locus classicus of the Old Testament and ancient Jewish expectation that at the final consummation all creatures will bow down before Yahweh, the king of the world, and will worship him. By citing this text, vv. 10-11 very powerfully indicate that this universal eschatological homage will now be rendered to Jesus Christ. Bauckham appropriately concludes that ‘Philippians 2:9-11 is, therefore, a christological version of Deutero-Isaianic eschatological monotheism.’

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2 Hansen, Philippians, 164.

3 Thus, translating ἐν instrumentally as ‘by’ or ‘through [the name of] Jesus,’ that worship is offered to God (so Beare, Philippians, 86-87) or even, keeping the literal rendering, ‘in the name of Jesus’ worship is offered to God (so Caird, Paul’s Letters, 123), or circumstantially, ‘at [the mention of] the name of “Jesus”’ (which is at least unhelpfully suggested by many translations such as KJV, RSV, NRSV, NEB, JB, NASB, NIV, NLT, ESV); the latter possibility, however, is ruled out when the genitive Ἰησοῦ is taken possessively.

4 So most commentators; see, for example, O’Brien, Philippians, 239-242; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 223-224 & n. 30; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 145; Hansen, Philippians, 163-165; Fowl, Philippians, 103; Flemming, Philippians, 121-122; Loh & Nida, Handbook on Philippians, 162; Hawthorne, Philippians, 92; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 153; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 249-250.

5 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 145 (citing LXX 1 Kings 8:44; Ps 43:9 [= 44:8]; 62:5 [= 63:4]; 104:3 [= 105:3]).

6 Hofius, Christushymnus, 51.

7 With the ἐμοί (‘to me’) of Isa 45:23 being replaced by ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ in Phil 2:10a. For a fuller discussion of the LXX text of Isa 45:23 and its relationship to Phil 2:10-11 (and Rom 14:11, which also cites it), see pp. 497-502 in Appendix 2 below.

8 Hofius, Christushymnus, 51.

9 Bauckham, Jesus, 202; cf. his ‘Worship of Jesus,’ 133. He explains (‘Worship of Jesus,’ 136) that the worship being directed to Jesus does not compromise Jewish monotheism; rather Philippians 2 shows that the career of the crucified and exalted Jesus, including his exercising the unique sovereignty of God over all things, is revelatory of his belonging to the divine identity. Thus, ‘the early Jewish Christians did not preserve Jewish monotheism … by exalting Jesus to the divine throne as a mere agent of God. They preserved Jewish monotheism by including Jesus in the unique identity of the one God as Jewish monotheism understood this’ (136-137).
The next part of the subordinate clause of vv. 10-11 contains two main aorist verbs in the subjunctive mood, continuing to express the purpose and result of God’s actions in v. 9. Bowing or bending the knees (καταγωνίζειν, v. 10b; cf. Rom 14:11, 11:4; Eph 3:14) represents ‘the traditional position of abject reverence adopted to acknowledge a person of awesome authority … and especially God.’ But it is always in recognition of the authority of the one bowed to, with emphasis upon the notion of submission (cf. 1 Clem 57:1). As such it may also be understood as a gesture of humble obedience, and bowing the knee was thus also the appropriate posture of a slave in the presence of his lord or master. To Roman ears the term would have carried the latter connotations more strongly than any of worship or reverence. Although Paul’s language in this instance is drawn specifically from the citation of Isa 45:23 LXX (and not from the imperial cult), to the Philippians the language of Phil 2:10-11 would have sounded as ‘very suitable for describing reactions to an imperial figure.’

Discussion about the scope of the submission and homage offered to Christ revolves around the repeated use of πᾶν … πᾶσα … (‘every [knee should bow] … every [tongue should acclaim]’) and the three genitive plural adjectives in v. 10c, ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ

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1 A significant textual variant, however, exists for Phil 2:11: in place of the aorist subjunctive μισθωσίσεται (‘should confess’), read by 9th B Ψ 104 323 and other MSS, a larger number of MSS including A C D F G K L have the future indicative μισθωσίσῃ (‘will confess’), which is arguably the more difficult reading. However, while it could have been an accidental change, it is possible that the future indicative was introduced to add an eschatological element to v. 11, bringing the text into line with the clear future indicative of Isa 45:23 in the LXX, but thereby separating v. 11 from v. 10 somewhat, despite the conjunction καί linking v. 10 with v. 11, with the parallelism of v. 10b and v. 11a (‘every knee … every tongue’) strongly supporting the linkage, and the common ἵνα purpose clause begun in v. 10. By classical standards the future indicative (following a purpose clause and a first aorist subjunctive) would represent an improper construction (SUMNEY, Philippians, 50) and it seems unlikely that Paul would have used it here. Thus, the balance of probabilities and Paul’s usual style appear to favour the aorist subjunctive as original. Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 203, 249-250; MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 99, 129; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 218 n. 2.

2 BOCKmuehl, Philippians, 145 (citing as examples, Gen 41:43; 2 Kings 1:13; and 1 Kings 8:54; 19:18; 2 Chron 6:13; Ezra 9:5; Ps 95:6; Dan 6:10).

3 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 224.

4 Note especially Rom 11:4 and 14:11 cited above; in secular Greek κάμπτομαι is used metaphorically with the meaning, ‘to submit.’ So H. SCHLIER, ‘κάμπτω,’ TDNT III, 594-595; and his ‘γόνω, γονωπτέω,’ TDNT I, 739; LSJ, 873; cf. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 240-241, 243.

5 SCHLIER, ‘κάμπτω,’ 595.

6 SCHLIER, ‘γόνω,’ 739.

7 Significantly, in official worship of the gods in the Graeco-Roman world, there was no bowing of the knee; so SCHLIER, ‘γόνω,’ 739. While R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 264-265 n. 3 emphasized the aspect of bowing in worship and prayer, his final conclusion was that the kneeling of Phil 2:10 ‘is a mark of extreme abasement and submission … and … marks the subjection of those who so kneel to the lordship of Christ.’

8 OAKES, Philippians, 166-170, here 168; see also p. 331 above.
καταχθονίων (lit. ‘of heaven and of earth and of the underworld’) to explicate the πᾶν γόνυ
(‘every knee’) of v. 10b. The threefold genitives of v. 10c represent a conventional
description of the universe following contemporary Jewish and Christian cosmology into
three divisions: (i) the heavenly realm; (ii) the earthly realm; and (iii) the realm of the dead.2
But who is envisaged as bowing before Jesus? The repetition of πᾶν suggests a universal
bowing and acclaiming, including those who may not have chosen to yield to Christ’s
sovereignty (and it is quite likely that those causing the Philippians’ suffering would be
implicitly understood as among that group).3 A widely accepted view is that the three
adjectives of v. 10c function as masculine nouns, designating rational beings who bow before
Jesus and acclaim him as Lord;4 thus, respectively, (i) angels and demons, (ii) human beings,
and (iii) the dead (who one day will be raised to acknowledge his lordship).5 The use of
anthropological language (with ‘knee’ and ‘tongue’ as synecdoches for the whole person6) in
both Isa 45:23 and Phil 2:10-11 strongly suggests to me an emphasis upon humankind, while
the distinctively Christian acclamation of v. 11b (cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3) implies
prominence to those who freely bow and acclaim Jesus as Lord, though without excluding
either heavenly beings or the enemies of Christ.

The second aorist verb, ἐξωμολογήσται in v. 11a, is linked to the first by both the
conjunction καὶ and the clear parallelism between v. 10b and v. 11a (‘every knee … every

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2 Thus, R. P. Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 257-260; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 145. Some have suggested that
the ‘underworld’ reference implies not the human dead, but demonic powers (see Martin, *Hymn of Christ*,
258; cf. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus*, 59 [who mentions heaven, earth and hell, without specifying the
respective inhabitants]); against this, see Høfius, *Christushymnus*, 40, 122-131, & 129 n. 45 [responding to
Martin]; while others leave the question unresolved, noting that Paul’s point is that all created beings will
ultimately bend the knee (so O’Brien, *Philippians*, 244-245; Flemming, *Philippians*, 121).
3 Fee, *Philippians* (NICNT), 224-225.
4 Rather than neuter nouns, referring to things, thus creation in its totality (Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 113; cf.
Silva, *Philippians*, 133 [but see his n. 68]); but the context (esp. the conscious ‘confessing’ of v. 11a)
favours them as masculine, referring to rational beings.
93; and most interpreters; cf. R. P. Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 258; Silva, *Philippians*, 133 n. 68. It appears
unlikely that the language refers exclusively to spiritual beings (e.g. Beare, *Philippians*, 86; Käsemann,
‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 78-81; Gnïlka, *Der Philippienbrief*, 128; see the fuller discussion of Martin, *Hymn of
Christ*, 258-265 and those cited by him); this view has been well refuted by Høfius, *Christushymnus*,
6 Also noted by Reumann, *Philippians*, 362.
However, its meaning is keenly disputed. In classical Greek the verb ἐξομολογεῖσθαι had the basic meaning, ‘to declare openly or confess publicly,’ but could also mean, ‘to admit’ or ‘to acknowledge openly.’ Yet its frequent use in Septuagintal Greek (over 100 times, to translate the Hebrew yadah) offered the meaning ‘to offer praise or thanksgiving’ or ‘to declare or proclaim openly with thanksgiving.’ It has thus been taken as speaking of a personal confession of faith. While v. 11b, introduced by a recitative ὅτι to indicate a quotation, clearly is a Pauline and Christian confession (‘Jesus Christ is Lord’), the context of v. 11a (as also that of Isa 45:23, esp. v. 24) appears to include some unwilling ‘confessors,’ and thus the more neutral sense of ‘acknowledge,’ ‘recognize,’ or ‘openly declare’ is preferred now by most commentators.

Further, one of the key findings of Hellerman’s important research into the centrality of social status and the value of honour for Roman Philippi and our present passage is that for honour to be regarded as genuine it needs to be affirmed publicly: ‘in the collectivist culture of antiquity, one’s honor was almost exclusively dependent upon the affirmation of the claim to honor by the larger social group to which the individual belonged.’ Honour is thus

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1. These are important factors for judging between the two textual variants for v. 11a; if the future indicative reading were deemed to be original that would tend to separate v. 11 from v. 10 despite such linkages (see p. 387 n. 1 above for a fuller discussion of the probabilities for each variant being original).
2. A good discussion of the debate is found in O’BRIEN, Philippians, 241-243, 245-250; but see O. MICHEL, ‘ὁμολογεῖ... κτλ.’ TDNT V, 199-220 for a thorough discussion of ancient usage; cf. BDAG, 351; LSJ, 1226. One usage that does not apply to the context of Phil 2:6-11 is the meaning ‘to admit or confess [sin].’
3. MICHEL, ‘ὁμολογεῖς,’ 204, 213; cf. BDAG, 351; the prefix ἐκ- emphasizes the public aspect of the act (MICHEL, 204; cf. OAKES, Philippians, 167).
4. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 246; MICHEL, ‘ὁμολογεῖς,’ 204-205.
5. So notes O’BRIEN, Philippians, 246 and R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 263 & n. 2; supporting the latter connotation from the LXX were LIGHTFOOT, Philippians, 113; A. PLUMMER, Philippians, 49; more strongly by HOFIUS, Christushymnus, 37-40 (see O’BRIEN’s summary of his case, p. 247, and detailed response to it, 247-250); cf. HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 93-94.
6. FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 225 n. 37.
7. Isa 45:24 notes that ‘all who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame’; as BOCKmuehL, Philippians, 147 argues, the context of the citation of Isa 45:23 in Rom 14:11 shows that Paul clearly understands the context of the Isaianic reference, and it is very reasonable to assume that of him writing our letter to the Philippians.
8. Thus, REUMANN, Philippians, 358, 372; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 203, 250; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 93-94; BOCKmuehL, Philippians, 146-147; and more clearly in MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 128-129; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 263-264 & n. 4; HANSEN, Philippians, 165; SUMNEY, Philippians, 50-51; FLEMMING, Philippians, 121-122; J. MACARTHUR, Philippians (MacArthur NTC; Kindle Version; Chicago: Moody, 2001) Kindle loc. 3,439-3,453; FOWL, Story of Christ, 67; MICHEL, ‘ὁμολογεῖς,’ 214; BDAG, 351.
9. HELLERMANN, Reconstructing Honor, 35, 40-45, 109, 150-151, 161 (citation from p. 35); cf. the research of Dominique Cuss into the granting of honour in the Greek and Roman worlds (Imperial Cult, 23-35), wherein divine honours might be bestowed by whole cities on their founder or ruler after his death (p. 24;
‘fundamentally the public recognition of one’s social standing.’¹ This understanding fits very well with our present passage and the emphasis in vv. 10-11 upon ‘every’ person acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Lord.

Although many English translations of v. 11a supply the verb ‘confess’ for ἐξομολογήσται, and commentators thus frequently refer to v. 11b as a ‘confession,’ I believe that is both less true to the meaning of the verb in its immediate and cultural context, as well as unhelpfully suggesting a confession of faith leading to salvation (cf. Rom 10:9), an idea which appears to be absent from Philippians 2. In my opinion a better translation is ‘every tongue should acclaim …’ and the description of v. 11b as an ‘acclamation’ does more justice to the sense of open and public acknowledgment of Jesus’ God given status, allowing for the inclusion of unwilling acknowledgers in the action, while retaining a note of enthusiasm appropriate to those who willingly acknowledge his lordship and who will therefore lead the rest of creation in such homage and submission.²

While it is not Paul’s main purpose here, the notion of acclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord as a public acknowledgment also points to a solution to a theological question raised by the Christ-story, and noted by Fowl: if v. 6 has already pointed to the full equality of Christ with God, and it thus appears to be a theological necessity that Christ is eternally ‘Lord,’ then what was the point of God (the Father) granting him this name?³ One helpful answer suggested by Thomas Aquinas (and attributed by him to Ambrose) is that God’s exaltation of Christ is an exaltation of him as a human person.⁴ A second perspective (attributed by Aquinas to Augustine) is that the granting of the name, ‘Lord,’ is God’s making known to all

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¹ HELLEMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 40 (citing H. MOXNES; emphasis his).
² Among those offering the translation ‘acclaim,’ see BEARE, Philippians, 86; I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 54, 57; LOH & NIDA, Handbook on Philippians, 63; OSIEK, Philippians, 65; FOWL, Story of Christ, 68; GORMAN, Cruciformity, 90, cf. 318; CUSS, Imperial Cult, 88; U. B. MÜLLER, An die Philippiter, 107 (‘akklamieren’); the JB appears to be the only ET offering ‘acclaim’; cf. R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 263 n. 4, 266. Of those referring to v. 11b as an ‘acclamation’ (not always exclusively), see REUMANN, Philippians, 361, 372-373; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 238, 246-250 (repeatedly); HANSEN, Philippians, 165-166; FOWL, Philippians, 103; and his Story of Christ, 66-68; GRAYSTON, Philippians and Thessalonians, 28; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 263 n. 4, 264, 272, 278, 310; and his Philippians (NCB), 101; KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 80-82; GNILKA, Der Philippibrief, 128-130; U. B. MÜLLER, An die Philippiter, 107-110; cf. OAKES, Philippians, 160, 166-167.
³ FOWL, Philippians, 104; see my previous discussion of this issue on pp. 282-284 above.
⁴ FOWL, Philippians, 104; N. T. WRIGHT, Climax of the Covenant, 86-87 & n. 123.
creation that which has been true eternally.\textsuperscript{1} Thus the public acclamation of Christ’s lordship is the appropriate responsive human action to the divine action of God publicly exalting him.\textsuperscript{2}

A further key question about Part II of our narrative is that of the timing of this submission and acclamation offered to Jesus Christ. While both verbs of response to God’s actions are probably aorist subjunctives (a textual variant for the second one exists),\textsuperscript{3} and are expressing both purpose and result, it has been asked whether they refer to the actions expected of the acclaiming church now, and thus Christ’ present reign as Lord, or to actions of created beings in the future,\textsuperscript{4} expressing Christ’s future rule?\textsuperscript{5} Our text seems to suggest that both may be true together without contradiction. As we concluded above, Christ is Lord of both the church and the world; this is not an either/or situation. Thus, on the one hand, the aorist indicatives of v. 9 (God exalting Christ and granting him the name, ‘Lord’) represent already completed actions and the aorist subjunctive verbs following Ἰνα in v. 10a express implied imperatives (the intended result of God’s actions) aimed initially at the Philippian Christians, while, on the other hand, the descriptions of the universality of submission and acclaim (the intended purpose of God’s actions), together with recognition of continued opposition to the people of God (cf. Phil 1:27-30) by those not now ‘bending the knee’ before Jesus, look to an as yet unfulfilled future, at the parousia (cf. Phil 1:10; 2:16; 3:20-21; 4:5).\textsuperscript{6} Hansen well expresses that ‘this already-not yet tension inherent in the name Lord is the structure of the eschatological vision of the exaltation of Jesus’ in vv. 9-11.\textsuperscript{7} From a different angle Martin spoke of the ‘realized eschatology’ of our passage and ‘its telescoping the future triumph into a present reality.’\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{1} Foot, Philippians, 104-105; cf. Bockmuehl, Philippians, 144-145.
\textsuperscript{2} Being granted a name that is above ‘every name’ points to an exaltation with clear public ramifications.
\textsuperscript{3} On this, see p. 387 n. 1 above.
\textsuperscript{4} The latter is possible, even though the verb in v. 11a is probably aorist subjunctive and not future indicative (again, see above, p. 387 n. 1).
\textsuperscript{5} See the discussion of R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 266-270.
\textsuperscript{6} This is the clear position of many; so R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, xxviii-xxix, 268-270; for him, ‘both the present enthronement of the Lord and His future universal acclamation’ (emphasis his) run together in this passage and, in his view, what can account for the two is the supposed liturgical origin of this passage as an early hymn, wherein in worship believers may ‘reach out and grasp and express the future acknowledgment of all creatures as though it were a present reality’ (p. xxviii).
\textsuperscript{8} R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, xxix.
But the import of the present reality for the Philippian church needs to be highlighted. In their situation of suffering and distress the Christ-story announces a future which vindicates their belonging to Christ, their endurance and striving together for the faith of the Gospel, their continued obedience, and gives them hope and encouragement. Furthermore, as they themselves submit to Christ and acclaim his lordship, they announce to the world not only the present sovereign rule of their Lord over the cosmos but that one day it, too, and its peoples will be required to bow before Christ. The powerful political message implied by this, (noted already) that Caesar is not Lord, and the radical up-ending of Roman values of power, honour and social status required of those who now submit to Christ and adopt his mindset should be kept in mind as well.

Two final comments about the actual acclamation of v. 11b are necessary. The first is that it contains an implied main verb, ἐστὶ (‘is’; 3rd sing.); thus κύριος [ἐστι] Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (literally, ‘[the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ,’ or in ordinary English, ‘Jesus Christ [is] Lord’). Secondly, the predicate of the sentence, κύριος is emphatically placed first following the recitative ὅτι, which is an additional confirmation that ‘Lord’ is indeed the ‘name above all names’.

Hooker is right in noting that the emphasis throughout vv. 9-11 has been on the superlative: God ‘hyper-exalted’ Jesus (v. 9a), gave him that which is (literally) ‘the above every name’ name (v. 9bc), which leads to the universal responses of ‘every knee’ bowing before him and

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1 Note O. Cullmann, The Earliest Christian Confessions (London: Lutterworth, 1949) 58, after discussing our passage: ‘it is … the present Lordship of Christ, inaugurated by His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God, that is the centre of the faith of primitive Christianity’ (emphasis original); cf. his Christ and Time, 146, 151-155, 157, 185-189, 225-226.

2 Cf. Hansen, Philippians, 168; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 269-270, both of whom appropriately express similar ideas; note also Oakes, Philippians, 204-207; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 228; Fowl, Philippians, 101-102, 105-106; and his Story of Christ, 91-92, 95; and Bloomquist, Function of Suffering, 195-196. As Cullmann, Christ and Time, 154 (cf. 185-189), has stated, ‘the church is the earthly center from which the full Lordship of Christ becomes visible’; cf. Hansen, Philippians, 163-166.

3 See especially the excellent discussions of Phil 2:9-11 by Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 148-156; and Oakes, Philippians, 147-174; and very recently, N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 687, 1292-1299; cf. Flemming, Philippians, 122-123; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 147; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 22-223.

4 Correctly noted by Sumney, Philippians, 51; but mistakenly identifying the ‘predicate nominative’ as Ἰησοῦς Χριστός rather than κύριος. Most English translations also render the text with an implied ‘is’.

‘every tongue’ acclaiming him as Lord.\(^1\) Thus it is not surprising that the final clause of Part II of the narrative points to the ultimate goal (\(\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\) in its telic sense) of the events of the story, that all is ‘to the glory of God the Father’ (v. 11c), meaning to the ultimate honour of God the Father.\(^2\) Since Jesus is publicly exalted as sharing divine lordship, ‘Father’ is added here to differentiate between him and the God who grants Jesus such lordship (cf. Phil 1:2).\(^3\) Yet Paul also carefully avoids compromising Jewish monotheism;\(^4\) his narration of Part II of the Christ-story in fact confirms a powerful implication, which we have seen already in Part I, namely that Jesus is included in the divine identity,\(^5\) and this Jesus now shares the glory which God had said he would give to no other (Isa 48:11). Hence, ‘monotheism is magnificently redefined,’ for ‘Christ’s deity and universal sovereignty, far from detracting from the Father’s glory, only enhances it.’\(^6\) Most commentators thus recognize that the homage paid to Christ does not detract from worship of God the Father, for the homage is rendered ‘to the glory of God.’\(^7\) There is therefore ‘an evident concern to understand the reverence given to Jesus as an extension of the worship of God.’\(^8\)

The prepositional phrase \(\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\omicron\varsigma\omicron\nu\) is a favourite of Paul’s,\(^9\) and its use in v. 11c represents a ‘doxological exclamation mark’ to the entire story.\(^10\) Syntactically it is immediately linked to

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2 BDAG, 257-258 (3) appropriately suggests ‘fame, recognition, renown, honor, prestige’ for the meaning of \(\delta\omicron\varsigma\) in this context.
3 Reumann, Philippians, 359. Kreitzer, ‘Philippians 2:9-11,’ 121-122 suggests that the text deliberately points ambiguously to the lordship of both Christ and God the Father, but in fact the lordship of the Father was already implied; Paul has powerfully narrated the public exaltation to lordship of the man, Jesus Christ. R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 278 more appositely offers the suggestion that divine lordship and Fatherhood are bound together; however, it seems to go too far to posit, with Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 81-82, who was followed by Martin (277-278), that mention of the ‘Father’ implies a soteriological concern that God and the world are thereby reconciled and united, with God as the Father of both Christ and Christians. Rather, I suggest, the emphasis in the text is upon the shared honour (‘glory’) of both Christ and the Father.
5 On this see pp. 305-306 above; I am again using Bauckham’s useful phrase (see p. 306 n. 1).
8 Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ, 151.
9 Cf. Phil 1:11; Rom 3:7; 15:7; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 4:15 where the phrase is used with respect to God.
10 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 148; cf. R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 273. Clearly, I do not view v. 11c as a Pauline addition to an early Christian hymn (as does Martin [Hymn of Christ, 273-276, 36-38], among not a few others; see again Chapter 3 above; but cf. also Hofius, Christushymnus, 8-9, 54-55, 65-66 arguing in favour of including v. 11c, even if vv. 6-11 were an early pre-pauline hymn), but rather a fitting conclusion to an original Pauline composition.
the acclamation of Christ as Lord in v. 11b (though it should not be seen as part of the actual acclamation, nor as directly linked to the verb ἐξομολογήσαται), but has a broader link as a fitting conclusion, not only to Part II of the Christ-story (in particular to the whole of the ἵνα clause of vv. 10a-11b), but to the whole of Paul’s narrative. We may compare the way the similar phrase in Phil 1:11 concludes the whole section of 1:3-11. Fee observes a theological connection between v. 9a (God’s exaltation of Christ) and v. 11c (that all is to the glory of God the Father), however, I suggest that the more fitting connection is between v. 6a (Christ being ‘in the [glorious] form of God’) and v. 11c, whereby both the opening and concluding phrases of the Christ-story function as framing clauses, as an inclusio. I shall explore and defend this notion in more detail shortly in Section 6.6.

This, then, completes our examination of how the passage ‘works’ syntactically, and building on this understanding we may therefore move on to consider more explicitly the narrative shape and significance of Paul’s central story of Jesus Christ.

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1 Correctly, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 250-251 & n. 99; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 273; contra W. THÜSING, Per Christum in Deum: Studien zum Verhältnis von Christozentrik und Theozentrik in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen, 2nd ed. (NTAbh 1; Münster: Aschendorff, 1969) 46-60, who appropriately shows how the lordship of Christ leads to the glory of God, but wrongly claims that v. 11c belongs to the content of the acclamation itself; and contra VINCENT, Philippians, 63, who regards v. 11c as dependent upon the verb ‘to confess’ (‘it is the confession that is to be to the glory of God the Father, not the fact that Christ is Lord’).

2 So also Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 226 & n. 41; R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 272-273, 276 (in his case, as a Pauline addition to an early Christian hymn); H. A. W. MEYER, Philippians and Colossians, 104-105; HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 510; BOCKmuehl, Philippians, 148; F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 80; HANSEN, Philippians, 168; FLEMMING, Philippians, 122; cf. REUMANN, Philippians, 359.

3 Also noted by REUMANN, Philippians, 359.

4 FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 226.

5 Among a few who have also correctly observed this connection (although without employing my terminology), note HOOKER, ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (2000), 510; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 250; HANSEN, Philippians, 169; cf. FOWL, Philippians, 104.
CHAPTER 7
THE NARRATIVE SHAPE OF THE CHRIST-STORY (PHIL 2:5-11)

7.1 The Shape and Significance of the Master Story

As I have mentioned, the narrative structure of the passage is most evident in the arrangement of the main verb clauses in both parts,\(^1\) which identifies distinct plot events in the overall story.\(^2\)

Aristotle’s famous definition of a narrative structure, which is ‘whole and complete and of a certain magnitude,’ is that it ‘has a beginning, middle, and end.’\(^3\) He went on to describe a basic narrative pattern for a ‘complex’ story, involving a situation of reversal and recognition, as does the Christ-story,\(^4\) as including two main sides: what he termed ‘complication’ (τὸ δὲσις) and ‘dénouement’ (τὸ λύσις). He defined the ‘complication’ as ‘extending from the beginning to the furthest point before the transformation (μεταβοσις) to prosperity or adversity’ and the ‘dénouement’ as ‘extending from the beginning of the transformation till the end.’\(^5\) Effectively, thus, Aristotle emphasized three constitutive moments of a narrative model: (i) *complication*, referring to an obstacle to cross or a difficulty to resolve; (ii) *transformation*, the climax of the story, positioned at its middle, the point of greatest tension and crisis, in which a reversal of the protagonist’s fortunes begins to take place (either from good to bad fortune, or from bad to good fortune); and (iii) *dénouement*, in which the difficulty finds a resolution through the outworking of the transforming action. This triangle of three elements has been described as ‘the classical plot,’

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\(^1\) The main verbs were highlighted as *bold text* in Table 6.1b above.

\(^2\) For my previous discussion of ‘plot’ see, pp. 363-365 above.

\(^3\) ARISTOTLE, *Poetics* VII, 1450b.24-27; XXIII, 1459a.17-20 (Loeb 199, pp. 54-55, 114-117); he goes on to define these further: ‘A beginning is that which does not itself follow necessarily from something else, but after which a further event or process naturally occurs. An end, by contrast, is that which itself naturally occurs, whether necessarily or usually, after a preceding event, but need not be followed by anything else. A middle is that which both follows a preceding event and has further consequences’ (1450b.28-36).

\(^4\) For ARISTOTLE’s explanation of what makes a story ‘complex,’ see above, p. 363 & n. 5.

\(^5\) ARISTOTLE, *Poetics* XVIII, 1455b.24-29 (Loeb 199, pp. 90-91); it is important to recall that ARISTOTLE was primarily writing about the Greek ‘tragedy’ (his discussion of Greek ‘comedy’ has largely been lost; see ARISTOTLE, *Poetics* XVIII [Loeb 199], pp. 11, 47 n. 55 & 141 n. 346); but his work very much applies to story-telling in general.
and has been the foundation for basic plot development since. Yet, within the model two further elements can be inferred and added: a beginning, and an end.

A particularly significant and influential development of the Aristotelian model came in the 1863 work of German playwright and critic, Gustav Freytag, *Die Technik des Dramas.* Basing his model on what he saw as typical in ancient Greek and Shakespearean drama, he developed a five-act dramatic structure, which has come to be known as ‘Freytag’s Pyramid.’ Freytag identified five stages of dramatic development (here for a tragedy): (a) *introduction*; (b) *rise*; (c) *climax*; (d) *return* or *fall*; (e) *catastrophe* or *closing action.* In addition he posited the presence of three dramatic moments or crises within the five stages: (i) at the start of the rise, the *exciting moment*; (ii) at the start of the fall, the *counteraction* or *tragic moment*; and (iii) the *moment of last suspense*, prior to the catastrophe. Using modern terminology, and revising his original diagram, the narrative structure of Freytag’s Pyramid looks like this:

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4. Freytag, *Die Technik*, 102 (for full discussion, pp. 102-122); ET: *Freytag’s Technique*, 115 (cf. 114-140); note his simple triangular diagram with the five stages identified by the markers a, b, c, d and e.
Figure 7.1 above graphically portrays a very traditional narrative structure, matching those found in ancient Greek narrative and drama and, frequently also, those found in biblical narrative.\(^2\)

In fact this traditional structure is very useful for describing the Christ-story, itself following this traditional or classical pattern rather closely.\(^3\) However, there are some powerful ironies: in our case Freytag’s ‘rising action’ is a descent from Christ being in the form of God to taking the form of a slave and ultimately dying a slave’s death; the ‘climax’ or ‘high point’ of the narrative is actually the nadir of his death on a Roman cross; and the ‘falling action’ is

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\(^{1}\) In Figure 7.1, please note the following explanations: (i) Exposition or Point of Attack: setting the scene, introducing characters and setting, providing background information necessary for understanding the story (on the Point of Attack, see Herman et. al. [eds.], Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, 440; Abrams & Harpham (eds.), Glossary of Literary Terms, 267); (ii) Inciting Incident: a single event usually signalling the beginning of a situation of conflict in the story; (iii) Rising Action: the situation of narrative Conflict develops, building narrative tension and excitement; (iv) Climax: this represents the moment of greatest tension in the story, often the most exciting, to which the rising action has been leading, and from which the falling action follows; (v) Counteracting Incident: an event following the climax that begins to reverse the actions of the preceding story, thus initiating the stage of falling action; (vi) Falling Action: the narrative Reversal of the preceding situation of conflict, describing events which happen as a result of the climax; (vii) Resolving Incident or Resolution: wherein the protagonist solves the main problem or conflict, or someone solves it for him or her; and (viii) Dénouement: literally the ‘unravelling’ or ‘unknotting’ (in French) of the complexities of the plot, usually closely tied to the resolution, in which the preceding tension loosens, and final explanations are given; somewhat opposite to the exposition, this stage brings the story to a final conclusion. If at the end of the story the protagonist succeeds or achieves his/her goal, the story is (technically) a ‘comedy’; however, if the protagonist fails, the story is a ‘tragedy’: cf. the outcomes described in Aristotle, Poetics XIII (Loeb 199, pp. 68-71): ‘prosperity’ (εὐτυχίας) and ‘adversity’ (στοχάσις or διστοχάσις); unfortunately, his Poetics lacks precise definitions for the two categories of tragedy (τραγῳδίας) or comedy (κomedίας); cf. Loeb 199, p. 18; note also p. 395 n. 5 above).

\(^{2}\) Thus, Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art, 121, notes that biblical narratives typically follow this classical pattern, although variations, of course, may be observed.

Christ’s ascent as a result of God’s responsive actions in exalting him and granting him the name above all names.\footnote{Technically speaking, therefore, in terms of the traditional categories of Greek drama, the Christ-story is a ‘comedy,’ as opposed to a ‘tragedy.’ This is not to describe the Christ-story as humorous (for clearly it is not that), nor to deny that Christ’s death on the cross was incredibly tragic, but rather that, because of the plot outcome of ultimate success and public elevation to a position of being Lord of all, it fits the technical category of ancient ‘comedy.’ While we do not have all of ARISTOTLE’s original discussion of ‘comedy’ (see p. 395 n. 5 & p. 397 n. 1 above), he appears to demonstrate bias against it towards ‘tragedy,’ regarding the former as ‘baser’ and ‘less serious,’ dealing with ‘average’ people, and the latter as ‘more serious,’ ‘elevated,’ ‘complete, and of magnitude,’ dealing with ‘noble’ people (for example, see ARISTOTLE, Poetics IV-VI, 1448b.10-11, 25-27; 1449b.9-10, 22-28; XIII, 1453a.13-14 [Loeb 199, pp. 36-41, 46-47, 70-71]; cf. HALLIWELL’s introductory comments to the Loeb volume, pp. 11-15). However, it needs to be said the portrayal of Christ in Phil 2:6-11, while technically a ‘comedy,’ actually displays all of the characteristics which ARISTOTLE had lauded in the finest tragedies of Greek poetic narrative: a ‘more serious [type of character]’ who ‘produced mimesis of noble actions and the actions of noble people,’ comparable to that found in hymns and encomia (Poetics IV, 1448b.25-27 [pp. 38-39]); and ‘mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude’ (VI, 1449b.24-25 [pp. 46-47]); see also my previous account of other similarities between the Christ-story and ARISTOTLE’s Greek ‘tragedy’ on pp. 363-365 (& nn.) above. Hence, the gravitas of the Christ-story allows it to be compared, very appropriately, with ARISTOTLE’s category of narrative τραγωδίας.} Using these structural narrative categories, therefore, but bearing in mind the need to turn them, quite literally, upside down, the Christ-story may be arranged accordingly, as in Table 7.1 below:\footnote{Note that some overlap of categories with verse parts (of the Greek text) in Part II of the story is necessary.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aristotle’s Narrative Structure</th>
<th>Freytag’s (revised) Narrative Structure</th>
<th>The Christ-Story of Philippians 2:6-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning (initial state)</td>
<td>Point of Attack</td>
<td>v. 6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complication (Conflict)</td>
<td>Inciting Incident</td>
<td>v. 6bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Rising’ Action</td>
<td>vv. 7a-8b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax - Transformation</td>
<td>Climax</td>
<td>v. 8cd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dénouement (Reversal)</td>
<td>Counteracting Incident</td>
<td>v. 9a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Falling’ Action</td>
<td>v. 9a-c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (final state)</td>
<td>Dénouement</td>
<td>vv. 10a-11b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>v. 11c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1, The Christ-Story and the Narrative Structures of Aristotle and Freytag

Thus, the exposition or point of attack of the Christ-story is the description of Christ’s initial state, ‘existing in the form of God’ (v. 6a), which sets the scene for the dramatic contrasts and surprising actions which follow. The inciting incident, which creates the situation of narrative conflict is Christ’s decision not to regard his status as being equal to God as might be expected for someone with his high position (v. 6bc). Christ’s descent (the metaphoric
‘rising’ action; i.e. with tension progressively rising to the climax) is described by vv. 7-8. Right in the middle of the story (and thus very Aristotelian) is the climax of his death on the cross (v. 8cd), which begins the transforming action of God’s responsive, reversing action in v. 9 (‘therefore also, God …’), the counteracting incident, which initiates Christ’s ascent (or the metaphoric ‘fall’) to the resolution of the story, which is the state reached by the end of him being exalted and granted the highest name, the name ‘Lord.’ The dénouement, therefore, is described by purpose and final future consequence of that reversing action, that one day all will bow before Christ and acclaim him as Lord (vv. 10a-11b), including the final refrain of v. 11c. The correspondences of the basic narrative shape to the structures of Aristotle and Freytag are, thus, very close. I will return to these descriptions at the end of the present chapter, but there adding further details, for, while still following the basic structure we have highlighted here, Paul’s narrative design in fact has greater complexity. However, that will become progressively clearer as we proceed.

What is particularly interesting, however, and to the best of my knowledge completely unnoticed in the vast literature on this passage is the way in which the seven (or eight) main verb clauses of vv. 6-11 form a narrative chiasmus, with the event referred to in the first main verb clause (v. 6bc) being reversed by the linked events of the last two (vv. 10b, 11ab), the action of the second (v. 7a) being reversed by that of the fifth (v. 9bc), and likewise the event described by the third main verb clause (v. 8a) being reversed by action of the fourth (v. 9a). In between is the arresting narrative climax of Christ’s death on the cross (v. 8cd), an event described not by a main verb but by nouns in an emphatic prepositional clause; and which is itself not reversed by other narrative events. The opening and closing phrases, respectively a concessive participial phrase (v. 6) and a prepositional purpose clause (v. 11c), form an inclusio for the narrative, as two elements that are conceptually linked, while also presenting in part a subtle reversal.

We have mentioned enough now to display the overall shape of the Christ-story. What emerges from our foregoing analysis is the following narrative shape, seen in Figure 7.2

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1 An eighth main verb (ἐστί, ‘is’) is absent from the Greek text of the acclamation of v. 11b, but is clearly implied.
2 V. 11c, following the ἵνα (‘so that’) of v. 10a, beginning with τε (‘to [the end]’) describes purpose; so BDF, 186-188 §369 (2).
3 I will explain the inclusio of vv. 6a and 11c (with the notions of parallelism and reversal) later.
below, with the primary plot elements highlighted by the main verb clauses, together with the introductory participial phrase, and the central and closing prepositional clauses. The chiastic shape of our passage also becomes quite obvious. And the difference from previous attempts to chiasticize Phil 2:6-11 is marked: this is not a chiasmus of key words nor even of lines of text; it is a chiasmus of narrative events.

Plotting the events of the Christ-story, then, reveals a narrative shape in the form of a modified ‘\( V \)’, \( \sqrt{V} \):

![Figure 7.2, The Overall Narrative Shape of the Christ-Story](image)

The resemblance of the \( \sqrt{V} \)-shape of the Christ-story to Freytag’s Pyramid (Figure 7.1 above), when the latter is turn upside down is rather striking.

In Figure 7.2 it is clear that there are five specific reversals between the two halves of the Christ-story: A / A’, B₁ / B₁’, B₂ / B₂’, C / C’, and D / D’; and as noted one unreversed element, E. It should be noted, though, that elements B₁ and B₂ (in v. 6bc) belong together as a unified event with two parts, and correspondingly elements B₁’ and B₂’ (in vv. 10a-11b) also belong

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1 A literal English translation has been used which matches the word order of the Greek text. The chiastic plot elements are exactly those used in Narrative Pattern #2 of Tables 6.1a and 6.1b above (see pp. 367-368); there I show the full text of Phil 2:5-11, including all the participial and prepositional clauses which support the main verb clauses that are highlighted here (cf. also Tables 7.4a and 7.4b below).
together as a unified narrative event. In the following section (§7.2) I will explain in detail the character of these reversals and offer a justification for each of them; here our focus is to gain an overview of the overall pattern, sequence, and shape.

As noted previously, Part I of the narrative essentially represents the downward movement of the story (vv. 6-8), while Part II the upward moving reversal (vv. 9-11). Verse 6 describes the pre-existent identity of Christ Jesus as being in the form of God, and his interpretation (or decision) about what being equal with God did not mean (and thus also what he did not do). This verse sets the scene and formally represents horizontal (rather than vertical) narrative progression. The action and formal downward movement in the story, however, does not really begin until v. 7a. It is described by the two main verbs of vv. 7-8 (‘he [Christ] emptied himself … humbled himself’) following the διᾶλλα (‘but’) of v. 7a, signalling what Christ’s interpretation of equality with God did mean in praxis (using Moule’s language, not getting [v. 6bc], but giving [vv.7-8]), and this downward movement clearly ends at the mention of the cross in v. 8d.

Thus, in the middle of the chiasmus the prepositional phrase μέχρι θανάτου (‘to the extremity of death’) and the subsequent striking anadiplosis in the final phrase of v. 8 (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, ‘even death on a cross’) combine to form a further unmistakable narrative event (v. 8cd), which itself is not specifically reversed (especially in the absence of any mention of the resurrection) and which brings the action of the first half of the story to a shuddering halt. For now it is enough to note that v. 8cd represents not only the climax of the Christ-story, and in particular its first half, but also as an unreversed event it naturally becomes the centre of the narrative chiasmus.

Correspondingly, the essential upward movement of the story, introduced as a dramatic reversal by the διὸ καί of v. 9a, is seen primarily in the two main verbs describing God’s

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1 However, as an astute observer will have already noticed, the sequence B1-B2 is not reversed as might be expected in a formally precise chiasm by B2'-B1', but rather by B1'-B2'. I will discuss why this is so in the following section (§7.2); on that, see the following note.

2 Thus, here in Section 7.1 I want to focus on the ‘forest’ of the overall shape, without being distracted by the many complex details that arise as one focuses upon the individual ‘trees’ of the text elements.

3 The noun ἄρπαγμός (‘something-to-be-used-for-one’s-own-advantage’) is not to be confused with its cognate and interpreted as though it was a verb; however, it may be seen as powerfully describing several actions of potential response to someone of such high status, as v.6a depicts Christ Jesus.

4 Cf. BOCKMUEHL, *Philippians*, 139.
responsive actions in v. 9 (‘he has exalted him … granted him …’), whereas vv. 10-11, with the final two subjunctive main verbs expressing responsive human actions (‘so that … every knee should bow … every tongue should acclaim …’) and the content of the actual acclamation (‘that Jesus Christ is Lord’), represents the dénouement of the story and, again, essentially horizontal rather than vertical narrative progression.

The horizontal top of the modified ‘V’ thus represents Christ’s pre-existent state (elements A, B1-B2 on the left) preceding his exemplary actions, and his post-exalted state (elements B1'-B2', A' on the right) following God’s exaltation of him. In each case it depicts Christ in heavenly glory in the presence of God (the Father), and in the post-exalted state, also in the presence of humanity who acclaim him as Lord (beginning with the Church now and in the future alongside all creation). On both the top left and top right of the ‘V’ Christ’s status is clearly that of divinity, of affirmed equality with God.

Similarly, the main part of the ‘V’ portrays Christ’s descent (elements C, D) to the climactic nadir of the story, his death on the cross (element E), and then his ascent as the recipient of God’s actions upon him (elements D', C'). Each of these elements depicts Christ in his incarnation as a human person (including being exalted as a human person). Thus crudely, though still accurately, the horizontal top of the ‘V’ represents Christ’s divine status and the main part of the ‘V’ his human status (both pre- and post-crucifixion). This does not, however, imply that he gave up his divinity when he emptied himself, but rather that as one divine he took on humanity. As we have seen already, the story depicts both Christ’s true divinity and true humanity, while describing narratively the nature and character of that divinity through him becoming a human person and by his actions as a human person.¹ Yet, it is clear that there are distinct narrative stages, which the graphical arrangement highlights.

7.2 Reversal Motifs in the Christ-Story

Now is the time to explain further my justification for some of the chiastic elements and reversal pairings, as well as considering their significance for interpreting the Christ-story. As I do this please refer to Figure 7.2 above and Tables 6.1a and 6.1b in the previous chapter for

¹ See above, p. 237 and especially Section 5.2.7 (pp. 299-314).
reference to the text and shape of the Christ-story.\(^1\) After that we will move on to consider two key narrative threads running through the account and into the surrounding paraenesis of Paul’s letter.

We have already noticed the overall reversal in the story from Part I into Part II, introduced by the διό καί (lit. ‘therefore, also’) of v. 9a that can be translated idiomatically as ‘and that is why.’\(^2\) A causal relationship is evident between Part I and Part II. Yet, as we have seen previously, this does not indicate that God’s response to Christ’s actions is one of reward nor a promotion to a higher rank; rather the relationship between the two parts of the narrative is more nuanced. At one level Part II functions to stamp a note of approval and divine authority upon the example and mindset of Jesus Christ seen in Part I.\(^3\) At a deeper level both parts of the story reveal the character of God, both in terms of vindicating obedient suffering in the face of opposition and in vindicating the choices made by Christ not to use his status and power for his own benefit but rather for serving others in humble, selfless action.\(^4\) God’s exaltation of Jesus occurs not in spite of Jesus’ self-humiliation, but precisely because of it; thus, his humiliation is as much an expression of his divine identity and nature as is his exaltation.\(^5\)

The overall reversal pattern of humiliation-exaltation or descent-ascent in the Christ-story is thus quite unmistakable. Less obvious to many interpreters, though, is how Paul depicts this overall motif of reversal with several specific reversals of key details of the story, and how he does this consistently from beginning to end.\(^6\)

\(^1\) Figure 7.2 may be found on p. 400 above, and Tables 6.1a+b on pp. 367-368.
\(^2\) See pp. 311 & 312 n. 1 above.
\(^3\) See pp. 245-244 above.
\(^4\) See again, pp. 311-313 above.
\(^5\) Flemming, Philippians, 120; Bauckham, God Crucified, 61; cf. N. T. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 86; C. F. D. Moule, ‘Manhood of Jesus,’ 96-98.
\(^6\) For example, D. K. Williams, Enemies of the Cross, 129-130, 134, 146 speaks of a three-part ‘scheme’ or ‘pattern’ of ‘privilege’ (v. 6) and ‘loss’ (vv. 7-8) being reversed by ‘exaltation’ (vv. 9-11), but without highlighting any specific reversals. Eastman, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5 is better than most in noting accurately how Paul moves from descent to ascent, humiliation to exaltation, with the story ‘tracking’ through various finite verbs in each half, of which she correctly identifies the two main verbs of downward movement (vv. 7a, 8a) and two of upward movement (v. 9a, b) in what I have labelled as reversal pairs C-C’ and D-D’, but without specifically describing the upward main verb clauses (of the second half) as reversing the downward main verb clauses (of the first half), or noting any other reversal elements.
7.2.1 From Glory to Glory – Narrative Elements A-A’

It would be appropriate to begin with reversal (chiastic) elements A and A’, since they represent the opening and closing clauses of the Christ-story, vv 6a and 11c. After that I will examine in order complex elements B1-2 and B1-2’, then C and C’, D and D’, before dealing with the unreversed element E. Finally, gathering the individual elements together into the bigger picture of the whole will lead us to a fresh discussion of the overall reversal motifs of the passage.

Elements A and A’ represent respectively an opening participial clause (v. 6a) and a concluding prepositional clause (v. 11c):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative element A (v. 6a)</th>
<th>Narrative reversal in A’ (v. 11c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>δὲ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων ...</td>
<td>εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘who [although] in the form of God being ...’</td>
<td>‘to the glory of God the Father’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two clauses are not identical in syntactical form or function, yet have a significant narrative thematic connection and a related element of subtle reversal. Both are subordinate clauses which modify other main verbs. As we have seen the participle in the opening phrase is to be interpreted concessively in relation to the whole of vv. 6b-8d, and sets up a crucial narrative structure describing Christ’s mindset and accompanying actions in vv. 6-8, ‘although [x], not [y], but [z₁] and [z₂].’

The crucial phrase for us at this point is that Christ existed ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ (‘in the form of God’), which will require us to interpret in its context the enigmatic word, μορφή (morphē, ‘form’).

Similarly the concluding prepositional phrase represents an ultimate goal, not only for the acclamation of v. 11b, but also for the ἰνα (‘so that’) clause of vv. 10a-11b (the human responses to Christ), and indeed also for the whole of the Christ-story, that all be to the glory of God the Father. It is the notion of ‘glory’ or ‘glorification,’ δόξα, in v. 11c that is most significant. As we have seen, though Christ was highly exalted and given the highest name, this and the events of the Christ-story are ultimately for the acknowledgment of the ‘honour’
of God the Father.\(^1\) What is interesting to note is how δόξα in both the New Testament generally, and in the LXX (where it is commonly used to translate the Hebrew קָבֹד), carries several fluid meanings, which can only be distinguished artificially, such as ‘divine honour,’ ‘divine splendour,’ ‘divine power,’ and ‘visible divine radiance,’ but all pointing to ways that God reveals himself, albeit with varying emphasis on the element of visibility.\(^2\) Furthermore, the notion of giving ‘glory’ to God implies predication in the sense of active acknowledgment of already existing reality or, in the case of doxologies, as the extolling of what is already present.\(^3\)

**7.2.1.1 The Meaning and Implications of the μορφή of God (v. 6a)**

Found in our passage in both v. 6a (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ) and v. 7b (μορφήν δούλου), most scholars are in agreement that the meaning of μορφή in each case must be the same (this is the most important contextual factor, though not the only one),\(^4\) though its precise meaning has been widely debated.\(^5\) This is not surprising given that the word occurs only three times in the New Testament (Phil 2:6, 7; and Mark 16:12)\(^6\) and seven times in the LXX,\(^7\) though it is widely found in both classical and Hellenistic Greek.\(^8\) Among others, five main interpretations have been offered to explain μορφή in both vv. 6 and 7, which have each had

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3. Kittel (& Von Rad), ‘δόξα,’ 248. The sense of ‘giving’ glory to God in Phil 4:20 is only subtly different from the notion of all being ‘to the glory’ or ‘honour’ of God in both Phil 1:11 and 2:11.
5. The most recent detailed discussion is found in the 2010 monograph, *Form of God, Form of a Servant: An Examination of the Greek Noun μορφή in Philippians 2:6-7* by D. J. Fabricatore (see p. 5 n. 2 above; see esp. pp. 141-156, 174-175 on interpreting the terms in Phil 2:6-7), who provides the most recent and comprehensive compilation of relevant lexical evidence (pp. 27-98) and bibliography (pp. 225-254); however, see also the useful discussions (though with varying conclusions) of R. P. Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, xix-xxi, 99-133; D. Jowers, ‘The Meaning of ΜΟΡΦΗ in Philippians 2:6-7,’ *JETS* 49 no. 4 (2006) 739-766; Hellerman, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ’ (2009), 779-797; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 126-129; and his ‘Form of God,’ 2, 6-23; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 81-84 (and the basically similar revised edition, Martin & Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 110-114); and his ‘Form of God,’ 96-105; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 205-211, 263-268; Reumann, *Philippians*, 342-344 (who listed no less than nine interpretative options, but some of which could well be merged); Fowl, *Story of Christ*, 49-54.
6. The latter reference is part of the longer ending of Mark’s gospel, and describes the ‘form’ of the risen Jesus’ appearance to two disciples on the Emmaus road.
7. Four of which are in the canonical Old Testament (Judg 8:18; Job 4:16; Isa 44:13; Dan 3:19); plus Tob 1:13; Wis 18:1; 4 Macc 15:4. So Behm, ‘μορφή,’ 746.
8. See Behm, ‘μορφή,’ 742-759; and especially the extensive lexical evidence compiled by Fabricatore, *Form of God*, 27-98.
their advocates and opponents, and which are not necessarily all mutually exclusive.¹ It is not possible to investigate each of them fully here (another dissertation in itself), nor, thankfully, is it now really necessary. Two of the viewpoints clearly belong in the past history of interpretation of this term, but are widely considered as no longer tenable: (i) the Adam-Christ Typology view;² and (ii) the Mode of Being view.¹

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¹ In summary these are: (i) the Adam-Christ Typology view, which sees ωφή as broadly synonymous with ἐικόνω (‘image’) and, via the Old Testament creation narrative (esp. Gen 1:26-27; 3:1-5) and with typically a res rapienda understanding of ἀρπαγμός alongside the phrase ‘being equal with God’ (in Phil 2:6b), points to Phil 2:6-11 as drawing an implicit contrast between Adam (in the ‘image of God’) and Christ (in the ‘form of God’); (ii) the Mode of Being (Dasendweise) view, first posited by KÄSEMANN (though employing a translation [‘Daseinsweise’] earlier used by DIBELIUS with different intent) on the grounds of parallels he saw with Gnostic religious dualism, that ωφή refers to a ‘manner of being present, a mode of existence,’ which might apply to God or human beings, a ‘realm in which one stands and by which one is determined, as in a field of force [Kraftfeld]’ (KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11’, 60-61 [tr. by REUMANN, Philippians, 343; and A. F. CARSE]); (iii) the Visible Appearance (Erscheinungsform) view that ωφή refers to the ‘external appearance’ of what it describes, signifying what can be perceived by the senses, especially its visible characteristics; in the case of ωφή θεοῦ, this is seen to be a clear reference to the visible glory (δόξα) of God (though not because ωφή = δόξα); (iv) the Essence view, which has been a popular, traditional view, that ωφή refers to the ‘essential attributes’ of what it describes, a meaning it acquired in Greek (esp. Aristotelian) philosophy, and thus is broadly akin in meaning to the terms οὐσία (‘essence’ or ‘being’) and φύσις (‘nature’), so that ωφή θεοῦ refers to the ‘essential nature and character of God’; and (v) the Status view suggests that the word carries the connotation of ‘rank, condition, status’ (appealing to the sense of ωφη found in Tob 1:13); for detailed discussion of each, see those cited in n. 5 on the previous page, and the notes which follow below.

² For major advocates of the popular Adam-Christ Typology view, see those cited in p. 94 n. 4 above; see also R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 106-120 for a survey of the view and its proponents to 1967; among those who have made a case for rejection of the view are D. H. WALLACE, ‘A Note on Morphe,’ TZ 22 n. 1 [1966] 19-25; STEENBURG, ‘Morphe and Eikon,’ 77-86; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 209, 263-268; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 203 n. 41, 204 n. 49, 209-210 & n. 73; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 82-83; and his ‘Form of God,’ 100-101; STRIMPLE, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 260-263; WANAMAKER, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 179-193; HURTADO, Lord Jesus Christ, 121-123; FEINBERG, ‘Kenosis,’ 28-30; JOWERS, ‘Meaning of MORPH,’ 741-746; FOWL, Story of Christ, 50-52, 70-73; FABRICATORE, Form of God, 147-148. The main reasons why the view has largely been rejected, at least in terms of understanding the term ωφή, if not for the Christ-story as a whole, include: (i) while a degree of semantic overlap between the terms ωφή and ἐικόνω (‘image’) may exist, it has been conclusively demonstrated that they are neither synonymous nor interchangeable (so D. H. WALLACE, ‘Note on Morphe,’ 19-25; STEENBURG, ‘Morphe and Eikon,’ 77-86); (ii) Paul speaks elsewhere of Christ as ‘the image of God’ (οὗτος ἐικὼν τοῦ θεοῦ; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), so it is perplexing that he does not use the word ἐικόνω if that was the meaning or contrast he intended in v. 6a; (iii) Adam is nowhere in the LXX or New Testament referred to as ωφή θεοῦ; (iv) the typology fails when it comes to explaining the usage of ωφή in v. 7b (COLLANGE, Philippians, 97; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 82; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 264); as WANAMAKER (‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 179-193) shows very clearly, ‘this reading leads to logical contradictions and destroys the deliberate syntactical and theological contrast between verses 6 and 7’ (BOCKMUEHL’s summary, ‘Form of God,’ 9); (v) the case for an allusion to Adam in Genesis 1 and 3 has zero explicit support from the wording or context of Philippians 2; ‘the passage has proved remarkably resistant to any positive demonstration of verbal or other specific parallels with the text of Genesis 3,’ including an absence of the terms ‘form’ or ‘equality’ in Genesis 1-3; ‘the text … offers insufficient evidence to establish an explicit link, or even a deliberate allusion, to Adam’ (BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 9, 11; cf. HURTADO, Lord Jesus Christ, 122); (vi) the view has often (though not always) depended upon a res rapienda understanding of ἀρπαγμός (Adam grasped at ‘equality with God’ while Christ did not) in v. 6b and/or upon an understanding of Christ in v. 6 as neither divine nor pre-existent; as we have seen previously, both of those interpretations are now to be regarded as untenable (see pp. 248-314; and pp. 321-323 [Section 5.3.2], 371-375 above); (vii) the implicit and explicit contrasts made by the Christ-story within its context are not with Adam but rather with self-centred behaviour in the
Regarding the other three views, a combination of lexical evidence and contextual evidence is needed to decide the matter. And, of course, our understanding of the term must fit well in explaining the entire narrative. However, in light of recent research, only one of them can rightly make the claim to represent the primary interpretation of the word in its context: that is, [iii] the Visible Appearance view, sometimes called the Glory of God view;\(^2\) to be explained shortly.\(^3\) Nevertheless, the other two (namely, [iv] the Essence

\(^1\) [refer to the prev. page] Alongside KÄSEMANN, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 59-63 (esp. 60-61), other advocates of the Mode of Being view included R. BULTMANN, Theology of the New Testament, Vol 1 (trans. K. Grobel; London: SCM, 1952) 193; cf. also: GNILKA, Der Philippbrief, 112-114; and W. SCHENK, Der Philippbrief, 195-196, 200, 203, 212. The Mode of Being view offered a satisfactory understanding of v. 6a in its context, allowed for \(\dot{\omega}r\phi\eta\) in both v. 6a and v. 7b to be similarly understood, but falls short in v. 7b alongside the references in v. 7c and v. 7d that suggest the phrase in v. 7b has a connotation of visual appearance, and in its lack of pre-Christian lexical support (so FABRICATORE, Glory of God, 150, 154-156). KÄSEMANN’s view was fatally undermined, however, in that it was based upon parallels from the literature of Hellenistic religious dualism (especially the Sibylline Oracles 8.458 and the Corpus Hermeticum 1.13-14) and upon understanding the Philippians passage against the background of the Gnostic myth of the ‘heavenly Man,’ whose position was equal with God (so notes O’BRIEN, Philippians, 209). This view was subsequently strongly rebutted by D. GEORG, ‘Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil 2, 6-11,’ in Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolph Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag (ed. E. Dinkler; Tübingen: Mohr, 1964) 263-266; J. T. SANDERS, Christological Hymns, 66-69; and W. PANNEB ERG, Jesus. God and Man (London: SCM, 1968) 151-154 (cf. the summaries of FABRICATORE, Form of God, 148-150; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 209-210; MARTIN & HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 112-123; and R. P. MARTIN, Philippians [NCB], 94-95), and even KÄSEMANN subsequently rejected this as an interpretative background (as R. MORGAN, ‘Incarnation, Myth,’ 69 reports). More recently, REUMANN, Philippians, 342-344, 367, spoke of a ‘“mode of existence,” sphere, or realm where a person is’ (367), defining ‘sphere’ as ‘realm, place and relationships’ (344), accepting KÄSEMANN’s interpretation of the participle \(\dot{\iota}\nu\) in v. 6a, but without following the Gnostic religious background for the latter’s rendering of \(\dot{\omega}r\phi\eta\); however, WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 141 n. 114 describes REUMANN’s translation of v. 6a, ‘living in the sphere of God,’ as ‘unsustainable.’

\(^2\) So FABRICATORE, Form of God, 151-152; cf. O’BRIEN, Philippians, 208-209; HAWTHORNE, Philippians, 82.

\(^3\) The view finds support among O’BRIEN, Philippians, 205-211 (along with a clear substantial implication); FOWL, Philippians, 92-94; and his Story of Christ, 50-54; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 126-129; and his
The lexical evidence, however, while permitting only two interpretations (Visible Appearance and Essence), points overwhelmingly toward only one of them, the Visible Appearance view. This is the conclusion of the important research of Fabricatore using a

1 The Essence view has been the dominant view, in one form or another, for understanding μορφή in both v. 6a and v. 7b (see the summary of the history of interpretation of the word, and evaluation by Fabricatore, Form of God, 99-133, 146-147, 152-156, 204, 213-214); for a sample of modern supporters of the view, see Lightfoot, Philippians, 108, 125-131; F. F. Bruce, Philippians, 68-69, 70, 76, 78; Hawthorne, Philippians, 83-84, 86; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 204-205; and his Pauline Christology, 378; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 139 and for a detailed case in favour of it over other options, see Jowers, ‘Meaning of ΜΟΡΦΗ,’ 739-766. Lightfoot had based his understanding of μορφή as being roughly equivalent to οὐσία or φύσις in a philosophical sense, based on his survey of Greek classical use (including Plato and Aristotle). But while we are hard pressed to find evidence to support the notion that Paul used the word in such a way; many recent proponents of the view would accept Lightfoot’s main conclusion that μορφή θεοῦ means ‘the essential nature and character of God’ (so surmises O’Brien, Philippians, 207). The view makes excellent sense of the text in both vv. 6 and 7, and draws minority lexical support. However, such a view of μορφή in v. 7b does not easily fit the strong emphasis on outward appearance which is evident in v. 7c-d.

2 The Status view found its principal advocate in E. Schweizer, Lordship and Discipleship (SBT 28; London: SCM, 1960; ET of his 1955 work, Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern) 62; but has found more recent support in R. P. Martin, Philippians (N CB), 95-96, and his Hymn of Christ, xx; and in a nuanced, secondary way by Hellerman, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 779-797 (on this, see the next note); cf. also Hofius’ use of ‘Stellung’ for μορφή (Christushymnus, 57-58). While it fits the context of vv. 6, 7 very well, the view suffers the major defect of a lack of Greek lexical support for such an understanding (so most commentators; cf. Hawthorne, Philippians, 83), not withstanding Martin’s appeal to Tobit 1:13 (‘since I was whole-heartedly mindful of my God, the Most High endowed me with a presence [μορφή] which won me … favour’ [NEB]; Hymn of Christ, xx; Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, 114), which has been adequately countered by Hawthorne, ‘Form of God,’ 99, suggesting it probably instead has connotations of a favour-winning outward appearance or demeanour.

3 Affirming this conclusion with respect to the Essence view (as a secondary implication) is Fabricatore, Form of God, 153-156, 210-211, 214; O’Brien, Philippians, 210-211; affirming the same conclusion with regard to the Status view is Hellerman, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 779-797, esp. 786 & n. 20; Fowl, Story of Christ, 54; cf. Silva, Philippians, 116; Hooker, ‘Adam Redivivus,’ 231-232, 234. For Hellerman, the visible appearance of God’s glory, a ‘garment of divine majesty’ (pp. 792-797) is what allows him to emphasize social status as a crucial interpretative issue (see further below); I believe he is undoubtedly correct, but it is important to see that he is highlighting an implication of the Visible Appearance view, and not asserting that μορφή = status.
synchronic (linguistic) approach to lexical semantics, but thoroughly covering the lexical evidence from Homer through to the early Greek Church Fathers.\(^1\) Regarding \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) in ancient Greek literature he concludes that it is used ‘almost exclusively in regard to something visible in appearance.’\(^2\) Summarizing the data he notes that,

the overwhelming majority of uses of \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) in all of Greek literature denoted the idea of the form or shape of someone or something, but even more critical, the uses expressed the fact that \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) denoted a form or shape that was observable by sight. The majority of uses then fell into the category of visible appearance. A small minority of examples were found that denoted the essence or nature of a person or thing. However, even in several of these uses, the \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) was referring to the visible appearance that described the underlying nature. This semantic range was stable and remained in place for over 600 years.\(^3\)

Similarly, though the data pool is much smaller, the Visible Appearance view has the overwhelming support of Septuagintal usage. Paul, himself steeped in the Septuagint, would thus be aware of this lexical propensity for \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) to denote a visible expression or appearance of someone or something.\(^4\) One would therefore need to articulate a very strong argument to go against ‘the normal way in which \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) is used and understood throughout history as well as at the time of Paul, namely, in terms of a visible appearance of someone or something’\(^5\) in order to embrace the Essence view, which has so little support lexically.\(^6\)

Yet the contextual evidence also points toward us adopting the Visible Appearance interpretation in a primary sense. Contextually, alongside the primary need for an interpretation to make good sense of both v. 6a and v. 7b consistently (permitting all of the major interpretations very well, it needs to be said, excepting the Adam-Christ view, which falls short in v. 7), \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\omega\) also needs to be interpreted in relation to the following phrase of v. 6c, ‘the being equal to God.’ As I demonstrated at greater length in Chapter 5 above

\(^1\) Fabricatore, Form of God; see pp. 1-25 for his methodological approach, and pp. 27-98 for his discussion of the relevant lexical evidence.

\(^2\) Fabricatore, Form of God, 82.

\(^3\) Fabricatore, Form of God, 213-214 (emphasis his); cf. his earlier conclusions on pp. 82, 86-87, 153-156, 174-175, 203-204.

\(^4\) Fabricatore, Form of God, 155. Six of the seven LXX uses of \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) clearly refer to some visible appearance; the seventh (Tob 1:13) may have the connotation of status (so Martin & Hawthorne, Philippians, 114; but see Fabricatore, Form of God, 101-102; KJV translates \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\) in Tob 1:13 as ‘favour’; cf. Behm, ‘\(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\varphi\iota\eta\)’, 743 who regards that reference figuratively as ‘good pleasure’; however, RSV renders it as ‘good appearance’), though this evidence is not sufficient to allow the adoption of the Status view in a primary sense. None of the LXX uses support the Essence view.

\(^5\) Fabricatore, Form of God, 175.

\(^6\) Fabricatore, Form of God, 156, 175.
(Section 5.2.6), the latter phrase is very closely coordinated with the former, not identical in meaning, but both pointing to a similar reality, namely the status of divinity and the pre-existence of Christ.\(^1\) In this lies the possibility that two of the interpretations may be true in a secondary manner (as mentioned, the *Essence* and *Status* views).\(^2\) Hence, while Christ’s divinity appears (in context) to be implied by what Paul actually writes, it cannot be regarded as the primary meaning intended by his use of μορφή.

Similarly, the instance of μορφή in v. 7b must also be interpreted in light of the two related anthropomorphic words in v. 7c-d (ὁμοίωμα and σχῆμα) and the participle εὑρέθεις in v. 7d.\(^3\) It is here, however, that the *Essence* view is inadequate as a primary meaning. The immediate context of the phrase ‘form of a slave’ strongly suggests that Paul is emphasizing the physical appearance of Christ in his incarnation. The other two anthropomorphic terms, ὁμοίωμα (‘being born in the *homoïôma* of human beings,’ v. 7c, which further explains the clause of v. 7b, ‘taking the *morphê* of a slave’), and σχῆμα, along with the participial phrase εὑρέθεις ὡς ἀνθρωπός (‘and in *schēma* being found as a human being,’ v. 7d, this clause paralleling v. 7c to introduce a new main verb in v. 8a), each individually, and collectively, point unmistakably to Paul expressing not the essential nature of the incarnate Christ but the visible appearance of Christ in the form of a human person, and notably the form of a slave.\(^4\)

Eastman notes that the ‘three parallel participial phrases of v. 7 form a triad that amplifies the meaning of ἐκένωσεν in terms of Christ’s public appearance in human form: taking the form of a slave (μορφήν δούλου λαβών), becoming (or being born) in the likeness of human beings (ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρωπῶν γενομένος), and being found through his outward aspect as a singular human being (καὶ σχῆματι εὑρέθεις ὡς ἀνθρωπός). Operative here is a close connection between performance, participation, and perception, conveyed through the

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1 See pp. 264-268, 275-276 and p. 261 n. 5 in Chapter 5 above (§5.2.4); cf. FABRICATORE, *Form of God*, 145, 205-211.
2 Cf. SİLVA, *Philippians*, 116: ‘it seems misleading to present [the various views] as mutually exclusive of each other.’
language of “form” (μορφή), “likeness” (όμοιωμα), and public appearance (σχήμα), that describes Christ’s actions in Phil 2:7.’

Similarly, v. 7d introduces the main verb clause of vv. 7d-8d, which concludes not with the somewhat abstract notion of ‘obedience unto death’ (v. 8bc) but in the shocking and concrete visual imagery of death on a Roman cross (θάνατος ... σταυροῦ; v. 8d). Thus, the expression ‘form of a slave’ is best interpreted not as the inner nature or essence of a slave, but as ‘the external aspect or distinctive characteristics of a servant.’ As Hellerman correctly points out, Christ did not become ‘an actual servant’; he became an actual human being (ἐν ὀμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος). Christ’s appearance as a δοῦλος was an image well known to believers in the Roman world. These characteristics as displayed in the context of the Christ-story include his obedience, humility (in action), servanthood, and the pouring out of his life for others. Paul affirms the reality of the incarnation by emphasizing the physicality and visibility of Christ as a human being and servant/slave; his appearance was precisely how he was recognized (‘found’; note the passive εὑρεθίζ) by people.

That Paul could intend a primary meaning of μορφή as visible appearance in no way implies that he is asserting the notion of ‘mere appearance.’ Hence, there is no sense whatsoever of this reading of μορφή being docetic, the mistaken basis for Dennis Jowers’ final rejection of

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2 C f. F ABRICATORE, Form of God, 167-169, 175.
3 Correctly, in 1859, EADIE, Philippians, 113; cf. FABRICATORE, Form of God, 162-163.
4 H ELLERMAN, Morphi Theou,’ 791, using the terminology of JOWERS, ‘Meaning of Morphi,’ 760 (against his position). Yet HELLE RMAN is also correct, I believe, to note that the main parallel (intended by Paul and heard as such by his readers) to ἐν μορφή θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (v. 6a) is μορφήν δοῦλου λαβών (v. 7b) and not ἐν ὀμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος (v. 7c), despite the similar syntax of v. 6a and v. 7c and the attractiveness of the view that sees Christ ‘being’ or ‘existing’ in the form of God and then ‘becoming’ in the likeness of human beings (p. 792 n. 33). Thus, v. 7c represents an elaboration of v. 7b (‘taking the form of a servant’) and it is the μορφή clause of v. 7b which most strikingly provides the main contrast to v. 6a. The visible element or external characteristics of a servant are thus the primary meaning intended by Paul. That said, while the notions of ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ may be secondarily present as a contextual implication, I believe HELLERMAN gets it right by pointing to the secondary implication of social status which is suggested by the visible appearance language (as well as the terminology of v. 6) as being more important than notions of ontology (790-792 & n. 33).
5 F ABRICATORE, Form of God, 163.
Thus the Visible Appearance understanding of \( \mu \rho \phi \eta \) is by far the best supported, both lexically and contextually, while each of the other views falls short in either or both of those areas. We may add that theologically this view also makes excellent sense of the text. 2

While the Essence view also makes good sense of the text theologically, 4 unquestionably the lexical and contextual evidence now challenges the popular notion that the primary understanding of \( \mu \rho \phi \eta \) in Phil 2:6, 7 is in an ontological sense comparable with or equivalent to the Greek terms \( \sigma \omega \sigma \sigma \) ('essence' or 'being') and \( \phi \upsilon \iota \varsigma \) ('nature'). 5 Had Paul intended that sense or meaning, he had those very two words available, which are eminently more suitable (to that view), or alternatively could have stated that reality even more directly. 6 To be sure it is a valid argument that in v. 6a the 'form of God' points toward an essential understanding in a secondary sense, since existing in God's \( \mu \rho \phi \eta \) can only imply that one is actually God, 7 for, as H. A. A. Kennedy maintained, \( \mu \rho \phi \eta \) 'always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it.' 8 But this is an implication of the text, not the primary point of reference for interpreting the term used itself. Fabricatore is no doubt correct that the reality of Christ's divinity and of his incarnation as a servant is thus not so much conveyed

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1 Jowers, ‘Meaning of \( \text{ΜΟΡΦΗ} \),’ 753, rejecting a version of the Visible Appearance view that no one in fact has been asserting; note Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 11-12, who argues that though ‘form of a slave’ in v. 7 may be interpreted literally in terms of visible appearance, it nevertheless clearly denotes something ‘fairly concrete’; see also Hellerman, ‘\( \text{ΜΟΡΦΗ} \) \( \Theta \text{ΕΟΥ} \),’ 791 n. 31.

2 Jowers, ‘Meaning of \( \text{ΜΟΡΦΗ} \),’ 753.

3 Fabricatore, Form of God, 156, 214.

4 Fabricatore, Form of God, 156, 214. Interestingly, the Essence view probably became the dominant understanding among interpreters because it supported a theologically orthodox position, which affirmed and emphasized the divinity of Christ. However, unfortunately, this has tended to keep the semantic issue largely unchallenged until recently (Fabricatore, Form of God, 214). As I affirm below, accepting the Visible Appearance understanding in a primary sense in no way invalidates the Essence view when placed more appropriately as a secondary implication of the text.

5 The best survey of those holding to the Essence view is found in Fabricatore, Form of God, 99-122.

6 In agreement is Fabricatore, Form of God, 146-147. An interesting parallel to v. 6 is found in a significant usage by Philo, describing the visible appearance of Emperor Gaius Caligula, dressing himself up in clothing to resemble the appearance of the gods (see his Legat. XIII.93-XVI.114), as a counterfeit ‘divine form’ (\( \theta \epsilon \omega \mu \rho \phi \phi \iota \varsigma \); Legat. XIV.110); it is notable that this counterfeit outward ‘divine form’ (\( \theta \epsilon \omega \mu \rho \phi \phi \iota \varsigma \)) is, in Philo’s conclusion to the section, Legat. XVI.114-115, contrasted with the ‘nature’ (\( \phi \phi \iota \rho \varepsilon \o \varsigma \)), ‘substance’ (\( \sigma \omega \sigma \sigma \iota \varsigma \)), and ‘purpose in life’ of the gods, which, Philo states, the Emperor does not possess, and thus ultimately with the ‘one God who is the Father and Maker of the world’ (Legat. XVI.115).

7 This is admitted also by Fabricatore, Form of God, 210-211.

8 H. A. A. Kennedy, ‘Philippians,’ 436 (mistakenly attributed by some to Moulton and Milligan; e.g. Hawthorne, Philippians, 83; O’Brien, Philippians, 210).
by the term μορφή by itself, but rather by the genitive nouns to which μορφή refers, θεός and δώελος themselves1 – particularly, I would add, in their contexts. John Eadie, discussing the issue in 1859, was thus on the mark when he warned about the Essence view:

> The meaning assigned to μορφή is of primary importance. It denotes shape or figure ... it is not to be confounded with φύσις or ωσία. It may imply the possession of nature or essence, but it does not mean either of them. ... [The form of God] ... is not the divine nature, but the visible display of it – that which enables men to apprehend it, and prompts them to adore it.2

Given that the Visible Appearance understanding of μορφή is deemed to be the view best supported (and strongly so) by both lexical and contextual evidence, the next task is to ask what this means for the phrase ‘the μορφή of God’. Here, the alternate designation for the Visible Appearance view, ‘Glory of God,’ points toward the simple but convincing answer: that, by mentioning Christ existing ‘in the outward visible form of God,’ Paul is referring to the manifest appearance of the glory of God.

### 7.2.1.2 The Visible Appearance of the Glory of God

Throughout the LXX the visible manifestation of God is often conceptually associated with God’s glory, δώεξα,3 and God’s glory is sometimes clearly visible to human eyes.4 Some

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1 FABRICATORE, *Form of God*, 163, 205, 210-211.
2 EADIE, *Philippians*, 99-101, cf. 111. EADIE went on to refer (99) to what we have termed the Essence view as a ‘blunder,’ which ‘the Greek Fathers, and after them Calvin, Beza, Müller, Robinson and others, have fallen into.’ By this he referred to the assumption that v. 7a (interpreted literally and not metaphorically) therefore implied that Christ must somehow have emptied himself of his divinity, rather than merely the ‘visible display’ of the ‘spendour of divinity,’ the outward ‘form’ of God (100-102). While we may question his own assumption that Christ literally ‘emptied himself’ of the ‘form of God’ (102), his understanding of the term μορφή was indeed both insightful and accurate, running counter to the dominant view espoused by many earlier commentators.

3 FOWL, *Philippians*, 92; cf. his *Story of Christ*, 54 & n. 2; citing Exod 16:10; 24:16-17; 33:17-23; 40:34-38; 1 Kgs 8:11; Isa 6:3; Ezek 1:28; 43:3; 44:4; 2 Macc 2:8; 3 Macc 4:18; 1 Enoch 14:21; Test. Levi 3:4; Asc. Isa 10:16; to these we may also add: Exod 16:7; Lev 9:6, 23; Num 14:10, 22; 16:19, 42; 20:6; Deut 5:24; Ps 102:16 (LXX 101:17); Isa 35:2; 40:5; 60:2; 62:2; 66:18, 19; Ezek 3:23; 39:13; Hag 1:8; cf. Ps 19:1 (LXX 18:2); 97:6 (LXX 96:6).

4 This is true in many of the texts cited in the previous note. It appears to go against another biblical strand, which emphasizes the invisibility of God (e.g. John 1:18; Rom 1:20; Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; cf. John 4:24, ‘God is spirit’), and strongly resists any visual representations of God (Exod 20:4). However, the book of Exodus also shows God responding to Moses’ request to see God’s glory (Exod 33:18; δώεξα in the LXX), saying that no one can see God’s ‘face’ and live (33:20), but affirming that Moses could still observe God’s glory in some form (‘you shall see my back,’ 33:23); see further the discussions of FABRICATORE, *Form of God*, 206-209; BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 13-17; and FOWL, *Philippians*, 91-94. Among ancient Greek writers, FABRICATORE (207-208) discusses two of XENOPHON’S writings which speak of the appearance of the gods in a visible form (μορφή): *Memorabilia* 4.3.13.3 (*Xenophon Vol. IV* [Loeb 168; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013] 318-319); *Symposium* 8.1.4 (*Xenophon Vol. IV* [Loeb 168] 640-641). More significant evidence is found in the Jewish writings of JOSEPHUS and PHILO.
significant passages include renderings of God’s ‘form’ as his δόξα. Paul’s familiarity with the LXX would suggest both that he knew that the few uses of μορφή denoted something that is visible in appearance and that he was aware that God often manifested himself and his glory (δόξα) in visible ways. It is very plausible, then, that Paul would have understood that the glory (δόξα) of God is often manifested visibly and that the visible appearance of his glory, radiance and splendour could be regarded as the μορφή of God. Thus, the expression would not refer simply to external appearance, but ‘pictures the preexistent Christ as clothed in garments of divine majesty and splendour.’

Other New Testament writers also offer support to the premise that the glory of God and of Christ could be manifested visibly. It is appropriate to surmise of Paul’s likely understanding, that God ‘sometimes manifests himself visibly in brilliant glory, and this visible appearance of that glory is his μορφή.’

JOSEPHUS in Contra Apionem 2.190 (Josephus Vol. I [trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; Loeb 186; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926] 368-369) clearly asserts that God has a ‘form’: ‘By His works and bounties He is plainly seen, indeed more manifest than ough else; but His form [μορφή] and magnitude [μεγάλος] surpass our powers of description [νους διαφανείς].’ PHILO in Life of Moses 1.12.66 (Philo Vol. VI [trans. F. H. Colson; Loeb 289; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935] 310-311) describes what Moses saw in the midst of the burning bush in Exodus 3 as a form [μορφή] of the fairest beauty,’ which, BOCKMUEHL, ‘Form of God,’ 15 explains, ‘in every significant respect could easily be taken to be that of God.’ Bockmuehl (pp. 16-19) goes on to discuss other Hellenistic Jewish and early Jewish Christian texts, alongside some Palestinian Jewish texts from Qumran, which parallel PHILO’s language about God, pointing to the visibility of God’s ‘form,’ including Jewish mystical traditions speaking of the physicality and beauty of God’s body, and both Jewish and Christian allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs, in which the Lover is taken to be none other than God, and whose ‘form’ (μορφή) is beheld in its beauty. These texts and traditions point to both the language and conceptual framework by which God may be held to have a visible ‘form’, and by which we may understand Paul’s use of μορφή in Philippians 2, especially his reference to the ‘form of God’ in v. 6a. See further Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 19-23; Fowl, Philippians, 92-94.

Thus, Num 12:8 speaks of Moses beholding ‘the form of God’; the word ‘form’ is the Hebrew וּמָנָא, translated once as μορφή in the LXX (Job 4:16), but in other places as ὀμοίωμα or δοξα, including Num 12:8 where it is rendered as δοξα (so Fabricatore, Form of God, 206-207). Similarly, in Isa 52:14 and 53:2 the prophet discusses the Suffering Servant and how his ‘appearance’ would be perceived by people, describing his ‘form’ (52:14) and his ‘stately form or majesty’ (53:2); in 52:14 the Hebrew תּוֹא is rendered as δοξα, but as μορφή in Judg 8:18, while in 53:2 the same Hebrew word תּוֹא (‘stately form’) is rendered now as εἴδος though put alongside δοξα (‘majesty’). Hence, as Fabricatore, Form of God, 207 explains, two different Hebrew words are both rendered in Greek by δοξα to describe the visible appearance of the Suffering Servant, one of which is elsewhere in the LXX translated by μορφή.

2 Fabricatore, Form of God, 206-207; Fowl, Philippians, 92.

3 O’Brien, Philippians, 210-211; followed by Hawthorne, ‘Form of God,’ 101.

4 Thus, comparisons to John 1:14 (‘we have seen his glory’), 17:5 (‘the glory I had with you before the world began’), Heb 1:3 (‘the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being’) and 2 Pet 1:16-18 (cf. Matt 17:1-6; wherein Peter was an eyewitness to the majestic glory at the transfiguration of Christ) are each apt, though, of course, these writings have not influenced Paul; cf. Fabricatore, Form of God, 208-209.

5 Fabricatore, Form of God, 209. Mention of God ‘sometimes’ manifesting himself visibly is important, given the witness of Scripture that God is both ‘Spirit’ and ‘invisible’; although seemingly paradoxical that
This view of μορφή is compatible with v. 7b in that Christ is there known to be a slave, because he takes on the appearance of a slave; similarly, in v. 6a he is known to be divine because he has the appearance of God in his eternal glory.\(^1\)

While we should not assume that the form of God itself is constituted by the appearance of Christ in his incarnate ‘form of a slave’ as though that were identical with him being ‘in the form of God,’\(^2\) Fowl appropriately suggests that Christ’s taking on the ‘form’ of a slave may be that action which definitively makes God’s glory visible to people.\(^3\) In other words, as we have seen previously, if the visible appearance of Christ in divine glory points unmistakably to his divinity, then vv. 7-8 represent a striking visual expression of what that divinity means.\(^4\)

It is significant, then, that Paul goes on in Phil 3:21 to speak of believers ultimately being transformed (μετασχηματίσει) from ‘the body of our humiliation’ (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν) into conformity with (σύμορφον + dative) Christ’s ‘body of glory’ (τῶ σῶματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). This is a striking reversal of the movement that Paul has narrated in 2:6-8, of Christ ‘in the form of God,’ appearing in divine glory, to him taking a human body of humiliation, well described by the phrase which introduces Christ’s incarnate state, ‘the form of a slave.’ Given the very close verbal links between the Christ-story and Phil 3:20-21\(^5\) and the presence of this notable reversal, the linkage of a cognate of μορφή with Christ’s δόξα in the latter passage offers strong support for the meaning of μορφή θεοῦ that we have adduced for v. 6a.

\(^{1}\) Fowl, *Philippians*, 92-93.


\(^{3}\) Fowl, *Philippians*, 93; cf. Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 21 who suggests, ‘the form of God pertains to the beauty of his eternal heavenly appearance, which is expressed in the eternally present but historically realised act of taking on “the form of a slave.”’

\(^{4}\) Cf. Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God,’ 21 who has well understood this, pointing to the notion earlier expressed by C. F. D. Moule; on this see my previous discussions on pp. 255-257 and 299-314 above.

\(^{5}\) See again Table 3.1b (pp. 99-100) above.
7.2.1.3 Objections to the Visible Appearance View

Like any interpretation of facets of the Christ-story, the Visible Appearance (Erscheinungsform) understanding of μορφή has faced some criticisms. One superficial objection is that this view asserts the equivalency or synonymity of the terms μορφή and δόξα, by which the inappropriateness of the meaning δόξα in v. 7b then renders it inadmissible. However, there is no assumption of the synonymity of μορφή and δόξα. As Strimple rightly points out, the criticism ‘misses the point that verse 6 refers to Christ’s eternal δόξα not because μορφή equals δόξα but because the μορφή θεοῦ is δόξα.’ The same answer applies equally to the paucity of linguistic evidence for the equivalency of μορφή and δόξα; but no one is now asserting this.

Another objection to the Visible Appearance understanding was its alleged propensity to permit a docetic reading of the person of Christ. As we have seen, that possibility is clearly ruled out by the context. Jowers also objects to another implication, which is not actually required by the Erscheinungsform view, as though it was required, namely the notion that Christ exchanged one μορφή for another μορφή at his incarnation. To be sure the notion of an ‘exchange’ of μορφαι has been held by some supporters of this view, and if it was required of our text indeed would make this view still more attractive than the Essence view, which could only embrace it with great difficulty, but it is far from a necessary assumption.

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1 For example, Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 204 n. 49; R. P. Martin, Hymn of Christ, 104; Hawthorne, Philippians, 82; and his more recent ‘Form of God,’ 100 (somewhat surprisingly after his more nuanced discussion of the views of Fowl and Wanamaker, pp. 99-100); Silva, Philippians, 115 (cf. Collange, Philippians, 97) mistakenly alleging that H. A. W. Meyer (and others) held to this view (while Meyer’s Philippians and Colossians, 79 might suggest that reading, a closer examination of his commentary on Phil 2:6-7 shows that he understands not μορφη but μορφη θεου to refer to the divine δοξα).

2 Strimple, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 261; his explanation is noted and affirmed by O’Brien, Philippians, 208-209; Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 132; Feinberg, ‘kenosis,’ 30; Fabricatore, Form of God, 152.

3 Hawthorne, ‘Form of God,’ 100; cf. Steenburg, ‘Morphē and Eikōn,’ 80-81. The claim of synonymity has been suggested because in the LXX δοξα translates θυμα in Num 12:8 and Ps 17:15, while using μορφη to render the same Hebrew word in Job 4:16 (so notes Feinberg, ‘kenosis,’ 30, though himself rejecting simple synonymity); indeed the use of both δοξα and μορφη to render the same Hebrew word is significant and suggestive (see p. 414 n. 1 above), but cannot be used to assert the equivalence of the two terms; at best it can suggest semantic overlap and fitting correlation.

4 See p. 411 above; this is the objection of Jowers, ‘Meaning of MORΦΗ,’ 746, 753.

5 Jowers, ‘Meaning of MΟΡΗ,’ 750-753.

6 For example, by Eadie, Philippians, 100-102; Wanamaker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 185.

7 Thus, it is rightly pointed out that the notion that Christ gave up his essential divinity (i.e. emptying himself) of the divine essence or nature in order to become a human person is an absurdity; so Wanamaker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 185; cf. Jowers, ‘Meaning of MΟΡΗ,’ 747-748, 750-752.
As Jowers himself correctly points out, the ‘exchange’ concept is based upon two false assumptions about the meaning of Phil 2:7: ‘the assumptions (a) that in order to empty himself, Christ must empty himself of something; and (b) that this something must consist in the μορφή θεοῦ.’¹ Inappropriately, he then argues against the Visible Appearance view on the basis of the ‘exchange’ notion still being accepted, by pointing out its inconsistencies; but this is a non sequitur.² It is in fact quite unnecessary to contend for an exchange of μορφαί within the Visible Appearance view; for Paul, Christ reveals his pre-existent glory (and equality with God) in the course of his actions in vv. 7-8. As Hooker also concludes, ‘Christ … does not cease to be ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ by taking on the μορφή δουλου.’³

One further objection exists, as raised by Käsemann, that the interpretation cannot do justice to the force of the preposition ἐν in the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, which he believes must have a local, spatial meaning designating the realm in which one stands and by which one is determined.⁴ Thus, the claim goes, we might speak of a person ‘having an appearance,’ but not their being ‘in that appearance.’ But, of course, this is playing with words, swapping the literal translation of μορφή, ‘form,’ for its basic meaning, ‘visible appearance.’ The awkwardness of using the word ‘appearance’ to translate μορφή is not reproduced when one more accurately translates it as ‘form’: we may quite appropriately speak of someone being ‘in the form [of something].’ In any case, Jowers notes the objection holds the other way around just as powerfully, in light of v. 7b: ‘one can enter into, dwell within, or exit a realm, it seems, but one cannot take one.’⁵ O’Brien is undoubtedly correct that in this case too much significance has been read into the preposition ἐν. He notes that the picture of the pre-existent Christ ‘clothed in garments of divine majesty and splendour’ can make excellent sense of the phrase, suggesting the close parallel of Luke 7:25 (cf. 16:23; Acts 5:4).⁶ Furthermore, the ἐν

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¹ Jowers, ‘Meaning of МОРФΗ,’ 750; see his well reasoned argumentation for this on pp. 750-752.
² Jowers, ‘Meaning of МОРФΗ,’ 753 appears to admit that, but without acknowledging the strength of the non-‘exchange’ version of the Erscheinungsform view.
³ Hooker, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 99; cf. also O’Brien, Philippians, 216; F. F. Bruce, Philippians, 70; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 133-134.
⁵ Jowers, ‘Meaning of ΜΟΡΦΗ,’ 756.
⁶ O’Brien, Philippians, 209; cf. also Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 132-133; and his ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 795; Hawthorne, ‘Form of God,’ 101; Volllenweider, ‘Der “Raub”,’ 429. Luke 7:25 (ἐν ἴματιμοί ἐνδέξατο καὶ τρυφὴ ὑπάρχοντες) is noteworthy in its use of δόξα terminology with ἐν plus the dative ἴματιμοί ἐνδέξατο, very closely paralleling the use of μορφή with ἐν and ὑπάρχον in Phil 2:6. For a further interesting parallel from Philo, relating the very similar phrase θεοῦ μορφῆ to the wearing of clothing by Emperor Caligula (Legat. XIV.110), see my comments on p. 412 n. 6 above.
in v. 6a in no way diminishes the meaning of ‘[the] form of God,’ as though existence in God’s form meant less than being God’s form, just as the έν in v. 7c does not diminish the meaning of being in ‘[the] likeness of human beings,’ as if it meant less than being human.¹ Given this, and the general rejection by scholars of Käsemann’s ‘Mode of Being’ interpretation of θεοῦ, we have adequate warrant to reject his overly technical reading of the preposition in v. 6a.

Thus, objections to the view can be readily answered and fairly easily dealt with. It is appropriate to conclude that the primary sense of θεοῦ in verses 6 and 7 is that of visible appearance and, in the case of θεοῦ in v. 6a, the full phrase referring to God’s visible appearance is therefore a reference to divine glory belonging to Christ and characterizing his existence prior to his incarnation. The notions of his divinity and pre-existence and a corresponding sense of his underlying divine ‘nature’ are, to be sure, present as secondary implications of our text in its context, which are important but not to be confused with the primary meaning. Yet there is a further secondary implication that perhaps is more significant for the Christ-story in its Philippian context.

7.2.1.4 Social Status Implications of the Visible Appearance View

Building on basically the same conclusions, Hellerman helps us to take the Visible Appearance view one step further with a noteworthy implication: that θεοῦ may also be regarded as ‘a signifier of social status.’² For him this is not adopting the Status view of θεοῦ; rather he fully accepts the sense of visible appearance.³ Following O’Brien, he believes θεοῦ refers to ‘Christ’s garments of pre-existent glory,’ referring to Christ being ‘clothed in garments of divine majesty and splendour.’⁴ Then he makes a case for linking the phrase θεοῦ to the notion of social status with three main strands of

¹ Correctly, GUNDRY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 283-284; HAWTHORNE, ‘Form of God,’ 98 & n. 18.
² HELLERMAN, ‘ΜОРΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 779-797, expanding the suggestion made earlier in his Reconstructing Honor, 131-133, 135-148; cf. also FOWL, Story of Christ, 54; and his ‘Christology and Ethics,’ 142 & n. 14.
³ Thus HELLERMAN, ‘ΜОРΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 786 n. 20, argues not for a one-to-one correspondence between θεοῦ and status, but for ‘a more general connection between the ideas of visible appearance (which θεοῦ clearly connotes) and social status … In the symbolic and social world shared by the apostle and his readers, Paul’s reference to the “visible appearance of God” (θεοῦ) in Phil 2:6 would almost certainly have resonated within the interrelated semantic fields of honor, prestige, and status.’
⁴ HELLERMAN, ‘ΜОРΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 786, 792-797; drawing upon language from O’BRIEN, Philippians, 209; one of the meanings of the cognate verb δοξάζειν is ‘to cause to have splendid greatness, to clothe in splendour, glorify’ (BDAG, 258).
evidence: (i) a close association between ‘glory’ and ‘clothing’ in the biblical and Jewish literature;¹ (ii) the close connection between clothing, visual appearance and social status in Roman social codes (including evidence from Philippi itself);² and (iii) supporting contextual evidence that the connected phrase of v. 6c (τὸ ἐναὶ Ἰσσα θεὸ), the contrasting parallel phrase μορφὴ δούλου in v. 7b, and even the reference to the cross (in v. 8; a slave’s punishment in the Roman world) should also be understood at least in part in relation to social status,³ not to mention several facets of vv. 9-11.⁴ We may also note the research of Erwin Goodenough showing how closely connected the concept of visible divine glory was to ancient philosophies of royalty and kingship,⁵ suggesting that ἵν μορφὴ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων may also connote to Paul’s hearers the high status of royalty.

Oakes then offers an appropriate summary of what Paul is implying in the juxtaposition of ‘form of God’ in v. 6 and ‘form of a slave’ in v. 7: ‘Between being like God and being like a slave, there is a widest status gap imaginable by Paul’s hearers. Paul is saying that for Christ to become human meant that deep a drop in status.’⁶ Christ willingly moves from the highest


² See HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 12-19, 32-33, 132-133, 158; ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 792-797; as he writes in the latter work (p. 793, initially citing C. BARTON), “For the Romans, being was being seen” … And clothing was a key aspect of one’s visual appearance where social status was concerned … So closely was the idea of visible appearance tied to social status that the Romans commonly utilized a piece of clothing as a synecdoche to refer to a whole social class.’

³ On the phrase ‘being equal with God’ in relation to ἴππαρμυσθ as potentially ‘something to be exploited,’ HELLERMAN argues that literary parallels in connection to emperor veneration point to an understanding of τὸ ἐναὶ Ἰσσα θεὸ in terms of rank, status, honor and the exercise of authority (and not in terms of Christ’s substance or essential nature); so Reconstructing Honor, 133-135; ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 787-789; on the phrase, μορφὴ δούλου as a reference to the shameful status of a Graeco-Roman slave, a δοῦλος, which the Philippians would understand as none other than a reference to a common household slave, see his ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 784, 790-792 & n. 32 (citing FEE, Philippians [NICNT], 63 on the term δοῦλος in Phil 1:1), 796-797; Reconstructing Honor, 135-142; cf. also OAKES, Philippians, 194-196; FOWL, Story of Christ, 58; and on the cross as the nadir of possible human social status, a slave’s punishment, see Reconstructing Honor, 129-131 (note his depiction of Phil 2:6-8 as a cursus pudorum, a sequence of ignominies), 143-148; ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 784; HENGEL, Crucifixion, 46-50, 51-63, 88; cf. OAKES, Philippians, 198-200; FOWL, Story of Christ, 63-64.

⁴ On the social status implications of vv. 9-11, which HELLERMAN sees as a cursus honorum (sequence of honours), broadly reversing the previous cursus pudorum (see the previous note), see his Reconstructing Honor, 148-156, 162-163; cf. OAKES, Philippians, 201-207.


⁶ OAKES, Philippians, 196; cf. HELLERMAN, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 791; FOWL, Story of Christ, 58.
honour and status of appearing in divine glory to the ill repute and dishonour of appearing as a slave.¹ Thus, Hellerman contends, ‘a non-substantial interpretation of ὁμομορφή θεοῦ in terms of rank or social status, alluding to Christ’s garments of preincarnate glory, has much to commend it.’² Indeed, it has, and I suggest he has very helpfully highlighted social status implications that have often been overlooked by others, but perhaps he goes too far in appearing to reject entirely the other secondary implication of Paul’s ὁμομορφή language in terms of Christ’s divine nature or being. I believe both can be regarded as implied in context by Paul’s primary reference to the visible appearance of Christ in v. 6a, his glorious pre-existent ‘form’.

7.2.1.5 From Glory to Glory: the Inclusio of v. 6a and v. 11c

We are now in a good position to compare the two narrative text elements of v. 6a and v. 11c, the opening and closing clauses of the Christ-story. I mentioned before that the notion of giving ‘glory’ to God implies predication in the sense of active acknowledgment of already existing reality, the extolling of what is already present. Thus the story begins with a visual descriptor of the pre-existent Christ appearing in divine glory, and concludes with the affirmation that the cumulative actions of Christ and the divine and human responses to those actions are all intended to return glory back to God the Father. The double reference to glory, therefore, provides a conceptual and thematic link between v. 6a with v. 11c, which is in part conceptually parallel and in part a subtle reversal regarding the direction of ‘glory-giving.’

Narratively, the concessive clause of v. 6a (‘who, although he was in the form of God …’) serves as a point of attack for the following story,³ with the reference to the visible appearance of the protagonist, named in v. 5b, Christ Jesus, intended to describe his situation and status as one sharing the very glory of God. This is significant, for the God who will share his glory (Heb. קָבֹד; LXX δόξα) with no other (Isa 48:11) is, here, in the opening clause of the Christ-story, by implication, sharing his glory with Christ Jesus. By existing in the ὁμομορφή θεοῦ, the form belonging to the one and only God, Christ is thus implicitly the

¹ HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 132.
² HELLERMAN, ‘ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ,’ 797.
³ On the phrase point of attack (a literary term), see above pp. 396-399 & p. 397 n. 1.
beneficiary, as it were, of God’s own glory. In terms of his divine identity or existence, he eternally receives glory (honour, splendour, divine status) from God the Father.

Notably, then, the concluding purpose clause of the story, v. 11c, functions as a narrative reprise to the opening reference to Christ’s visible glory in v. 6a, picking up that introductory theme, but turning it around – the one who appeared in God’s glory now, in effect – through his actions, offers that glory back to God. As we have seen, the combination of Christ’s actions, God’s responsive exaltation of him, and how the believing church and the world respond to Christ as exalted Lord, now and in the future, all ultimately bring reciprocal honour and glory to God the Father. Hence the purpose clause of v. 11c, εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός may fittingly carry the meaning that all that has preceded (in the Christ-story to this point) ultimately adds to what was the existing glorious splendour (and honour) of God the Father. A paraphrase of v. 11c, ‘... adding to the glory of God the Father,’ I suggest, is quite appropriate. In relation to the opening clause of the story, it is as though a circle has been completed.

Thus as point of attack and reprise, the opening and closing clauses of the Christ-story function very clearly and effectively as a narrative inclusio, defining and linking the beginning and ending and unmistakably unifying the story as a whole. Yet there is also a further theological inclusio. As God implicitly shares his glory with Christ at the beginning and Christ likewise implicitly returns glory to the Father at the closing of the story, together both clauses affirm the unique divine identity of Christ and God the Father.

Thus, both the opening and concluding phrases of the Christ-story (chiastic elements A and A') function as framing clauses, as an inclusio, in part parallel, and in part subtle reversal. Narratively, the opening phrase functions as a point of attack, from which the story develops, with the concessive participle ‘although being [in the form of God]’ setting the stage for the surprising narrative conflict announced by the remainder of v. 6: although in the form of God, surprisingly Christ did not regard his equality with God, as would have been expected of contemporary human rulers possessing a comparable position and status, as something to be used for his own advantage. Likewise, the concluding purpose phrase then functions as a

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1 Correctly recognizing vv. 6a and 11c as forming an inclusio is Reumann, Philippians, 372.
narrative reprise to the opening phrase, binding together between the two all the intervening actions as a unified story. And so, shared glory and splendour as visible appearance leads ultimately to shared honour and glory as public acknowledgment of already existing reality.

### 7.2.2 Divine and Imperial Advantage – Elements B-B′

The second chiastic pair in our story that we need to consider is between v. 6bc (narrative elements B₁&₂) and vv. 10a-11b (narrative elements B₁&₂′) as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative elements B₁&amp;₂</th>
<th>Narrative reversal in B₁&amp;₂′</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B₁ (v. 6b)</td>
<td>B₁′ (vv. 10-11a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν</td>
<td>ἵνα ... πάν γόνυ κάψῃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘not harpagmon [something to be used for his own advantage]’</td>
<td>... καὶ πάσα γλώσσα ἐξουμολογήσῃται</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B₂ (v. 6c)</td>
<td>B₂′ (v. 11b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἡγήσατο τὸ ἐίναι ἴσα θεῷ</td>
<td>... ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘did he consider equality with God’</td>
<td>‘... that [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In my view, this is a complex reversal pairing, with the text arrangement B₁-B₂ (v. 6b-c) and B₁'-B₂' (vv. 10-11b) – in that order in each half of the Christ-story – representing two distinct reversals, B₁ / B₁′ and B₂ / B₂′. Again, it is important to recall that I am arguing that this is a chiasmus of narrative events, identified by the main verb clauses of the text, not one which seeks chiastic reversal of every phrase or detail. However, with elements B₁-B₂ and B₁'-B₂' our chiasmus loses its perfect symmetry; one might have expected the reversal pair (in a formally precise chiasm) instead to be B₂'-B₁′, but it is not. Why is that?

In each case the sequence concludes with an affirmation of Christ’s identity in equality with God with the phrases τὸ ἐίναι ἴσα θεῷ (B₂, v. 6c) and κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (B₂′, v. 11b). While chiastic element B (v. 6bc) emphatically began with a description of what ‘equality with God’ did not mean for Christ, that is, not ‘something to be used for his own advantage’ (οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν; v. 6b), it also highlighted the fact that the next part of the story (from v. 7a) was to be precisely about how Christ did understand (ἡγήσομαι) his ‘being equal with God’
(τὸ ἐννοεῖ ὅσο θεός), similarly emphasized at the end of the clause of v. 6bc.¹ It makes sense then for Paul to mention first what Christ is not (and did not do) – v. 6b – before speaking of what he is (and did) – v. 6c – which vv. 7-8 go on to explain. The narrative logic of vv. 6-8 (‘although … not … but …’) dictates then that text elements v. 6b and v. 6c follow precisely in that order.

Similarly, since the acclamation of v. 11b (element B2'), identifying Jesus Christ with Yahweh (God) as κύριος, is the climax of Part II of the story and, introduced by ὅτι, must clearly follow rather than precede the verb ἐξομολογήσται, Paul has allowed it the prominent position following the universal bowing and acclaiming. It would have been fitting and possible, with a different sentence structure, to mention the lordship of Christ immediately after v. 9bc (referring to him being granted the name above all names), and then move on to the consequent bowing and acclaiming. That would have preserved a perfectly arranged chiasmus, with text elements B1-B2 formally being reversed by B2'-B1'. But as I mentioned earlier, in writing this story of Christ, Paul was not attempting to create a chiastic structure as such, let alone a perfectly arranged chiasmus; his purpose in my view was to highlight several important status reversals in the Christ-story, and in so doing he created a chiastic structure with this minor formal imperfection, which in no way detracts from its beauty and power for later observers. Highlighting the climactic acclamation (v. 11b) by giving it prominence at the end of the narrative (save for the final reprise of v. 11c) was clearly more important to Paul than any unconscious desire for ‘formal perfection’ in a chiasmus. Hence we may appropriately refer to the resultant creation as a ‘modified narrative chiasmus,’ and it is thus the combined elements which are reversed as a unit across the two halves of the story.

What then of the individual elements? Let us begin with the first pair, B1 / B1'. We may recall that ‘existing in the form of God’ (v. 6a) and ‘being equal to God’ (v. 6c) are appositional, parallel phrases, non-identical, but pointing to the same reality, the divine status of Christ, both belonging to Christ in his pre-existent state.² Element B1 (οὐχ ἄρπαγμένον; v. 6b; the negated complement of the verb ἤγγειστο), then, is the emphatic denial that Christ’s ‘equality

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¹ This double emphasis at both the beginning and end of v. 6bc is correctly noted by FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 207 n. 62.
² See my extensive discussion of this in Chapter 5 above (§5.2.4, pp. 260-276).
with God’ meant for him ‘something to be used for his own advantage.’ As we have seen, consensus around this long disputed word, ἄρπαγμός, is now converging around this rendering suggested by Hoover and Wright. Yet what had not been seen by those two scholars (initially, in the case of Wright) is that v. 6bc is a reference to an implicit counter-imperial contrast with the Roman Emperor and other ancient despots, perhaps also including Alexander the Great. This was discussed above in some depth in Section 5.3.3 in a previous chapter.

Against such a political background, v. 6b is then affirming that Christ regards his equality with God as not to be used for his own advantage, meaning that, unlike other ancient rulers, his status and position were not to be used selfishly for his own personal benefit, prestige or privilege. Such privileges and benefits by virtue of Christ existing in the form of God and being equal with God were, by the standards of the Roman world, rightly his to claim – and with far greater justification than any ancient ruler had to do so. Yet, in marked contrast to Roman emperors and other despots, that was not his interpretation of what being divine and possessing the status of divinity meant for him; rather, as we know, equality with God meant for Jesus incredible self-giving and self-humbling.

If, then, element B1', vv. 10-11a, was to be a reversal of the self-denial of element B1 (v. 6b) we would expect it to show some re-instatement of the divine privileges which Jesus Christ had renounced. This is in fact exactly what we see – the bowing of human and angelic subjects and the universal acclamation of him as Lord clearly represent such a reversal, a restoration of surrendered rights. With the implicit political background of the text in mind, in particular recalling Oakes’ important treatment of the accession of the Roman Emperor, the combination of submissive subjects honouring their new sovereign and their acclamation of him as Lord in vv. 10a-11b offers significant parallels.

1 See Section 5.2 above.

2 Please refer back to pp. 326-337 above (§5.3.3); and also to my earlier discussion of VOLLWEIDER’s case for a political background to interpreting Phil 2:6a (in his article, ‘Der “Raub”’), which I concur with, although disagreeing with him in his rejection of HOOVER and WRIGHT’s rendering of ἄρπαγμός, and with his subsequent interpretation of the text (pp. 292-296, 297-298 above); as I note there, VOLLWEIDER himself conceded that his argument could also support a political interpretation of our passage based upon HOOVER and WRIGHT’s rendering (“Der “Raub”,” 428-429).

3 OAKES, Philippians, 129-174, especially pp. 147-174; which I summarize in §5.3.3 above.
If the Roman Emperor was to be bowed before and acclaimed by all his subjects (senators, soldiers, and the ordinary people) as their new supreme ruler, so now every human being (πᾶς is mentioned twice for emphasis, with ‘knee’ and ‘tongue’ as synecdoches for the whole person) should bow before Jesus and acclaim him as Lord (κύριος), implicitly acknowledging him as one with Yahweh, God, and themselves as his servants and subjects. Christ, of course, is given a far wider scope of authority and dominion than the Roman Emperor, as the insertion of the qualifying line ‘in heaven and on earth and under the earth’ (v. 10c) into the citation of Isa 45:23 emphasizes. Indeed the mention of ‘every knee’ bowing before Christ presumably includes even the emperor’s own knee bowing.¹

The context of Isa 45:23, in which first person pronouns dominate, makes it clear that the bowing and swearing of allegiance are privileges which belong alone to God: ‘I am Yahweh and there is no other … there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Saviour. Turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other’ (vv. 18-21). The LXX text of v. 23, which Paul cites in part, unsurprisingly continues this exclusive emphasis by placing ἐμοί (‘to me’) at the beginning of the ὅτι clause relating the content of what God himself swears: ἐμοί κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τῷ θεῷ. Hence, Paul’s christological redefinition in Phil 2:10-11 of Isaianic monotheism² describes privileges of divinity now being shared with Jesus, publicly, in view of all created beings (human and angelic).

Against the passage’s political background, it is not difficult to see these responsive actions as privileges and advantages, akin to those which a Roman emperor would enjoy at his accession (in more limited fashion, however, in the emperor’s case), now being restored to Jesus. The one who previously had the highest possible status, existing in the form of God and being equal with God (v. 6a, c), would, according to the logic of both imperial practice and Isaianic understanding, already have deserved them, but contrary to expectations, he chose a different manner and set of actions to express his status, position and identity, which was not to his advantage, but very much to his disadvantage, as his own actions resulted

¹ OAKES, Philippians, 136, 149-150; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 31; in light of the citation of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10-11, we may also compare Isa 49:7, where kings and princes will ‘prostrate themselves’ before the Servant of the Lord.

² BAUCKHAM, Jesus, 200-202, 206; and his ‘Worship of Jesus,’ 132-133, 136.
in a progressive lowering of status all the way to the staggering nadir of a slave’s death on a Roman cross.¹

This ‘social descent’ in Jesus’ pilgrimage is well depicted graphically by Hellerman as a *cursus pudorum* (sequence of ignominies), which I have reproduced in Figure 7.3 below:²

![Diagram of Status Levels](image)

Figure 7.3, Hellerman’s *Cursus Pudorum* in Philippians 2:6-8³

However, he does not observe the corresponding narrative reversals indicated in the second half of the Christ-story – the right hand side of our √-shape – what could be described as a *cursus honorum*, provided that we recognize that Part II of the story radically redefines (especially in light of the unexpected events of Part I) the common Roman notions of honour, status and social ascent. Hellerman is quite aware of this redefinition, as his monograph title, *Reconstructing Honor*, suggests,⁴ though regrettably his diagram captures only half of the total narrative.⁵

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1 See above p. 359 & n. 4.
3 HELLERMAN, *Reconstructing Honor*, 130; with some explanatory details added.
4 See HELLERMAN’s discussion of Phil 2:9-11 in relation to the *cursus honorum* (Reconstructing Honor, 1-2, 148-156, 157-166), but notice that, while vv. 6-8 are named as a *cursus pudorum* (pp. 129-148; and cf. his monograph subtitle, *Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum*), he refrains from describing vv. 9-11 as a a *cursus honorum*, preferring to describe these verses as ‘reconstructing honor.’ For background understanding of the issue, see further his account of the Roman preoccupation with the *cursus honorum* (pp. 34-63).
5 Of course, the second half ‘ascent’ is not so much a ‘social ascent’ comparable to the ‘social descent’ in Part I, so my criticism of HELLERMAN is not so severe; clearly it was not his purpose to describe the narrative reversals as I am attempting to do. Part II represents several narrative reversals, yet in which, in social terms, the main character experiences an immediate elevation back to HELLERMAN’s ‘Status Level
God’s reversal of Christ’s self-emptying and self-humbling (seen in narrative elements C’ and D’ respectively, though in inverse order), thus leads to the purpose and result of universal human and angelic submission before Christ and acclamation of his new title, which restores him to Hellerman’s ‘status level one.’ In my narrative portrayal of the text this combined double action (expressed by two main verb clauses, bowing and acclaiming) thus represents the first of three elements of narrative reversal at the top horizontal level, on the right hand side,1 of our modified narrative ‘V’ shape, √ (see again Figure 7.2 above).2 At this ‘status level’ Jesus receives responses appropriate for one who is divine, yet, as we have seen, which are analogous to those observed in imperial accessions. Hence a reversal of text element B1 (v. 6b) may clearly be seen in the two main verb actions (bowing and acclaiming) of vv. 10a-11a. These two actions together thereby define text element B1’ as a restoration of divine ‘advantages’ that were implicitly renounced by Christ in the first main verb clause of the Christ-story.

If these, then, represent the first narrative reversal pair, B1 / B1’, identification of the second pair of this complex element, B2 / B2’ follows straightforwardly. As we have seen, the order of these elements in each half of the story is respectively B1-B2 and B1’-B2’. In each case the second element attests to both the divine identity and status of Christ, respectively as ‘equal to God’ (B2, v. 6c) and as ‘Lord’ (B2’, v. 11b). Element B2, the articular infinitive phrase τὸ ἐναὶ Ἰσα θεό is the direct object of the verb ἣγήσατο, with οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν as an object-complement. As we have seen, τὸ ἐναὶ Ἰσα θεό is appositional to the opening phrase, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, both of which refer to the position, status and identity of the pre-existent Christ, from which Christ refuses to take selfis h advantage (v. 6b) and instead acts with surprising and remarkable humility and selflessness (vv. 7-8). As such the article before the infinitive of v. 6c may be taken as anaphoric, suggesting the translation ‘this divine equality,’ which is one implication of him existing in the form of God (v. 6a). The two phrases are non-identical, but refer to the same reality and status. As we have observed, v. 6a

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1 That is, for people whose language is read from left to right, and which normally leads to chronological arrangements portrayed from left to right. However, for Middle Eastern peoples, written language and chronology are typically expressed from right to left.

2 We may remember that the horizontal top of the √ describes Christ’s pre-existent state (v. 6a-c) on the left, and his post-exalted state (vv. 10a-11b) on the right, both involving the clear status of divinity for Christ.
is primarily a reference to Christ’s visible appearance as clothed in garments of divine glory, but which carries secondary implications concerning both his status and nature or identity. Similarly, τὸ ἐναὶ ἵσα θεό includes clear reference to Christ’s divinity, but primarily points to his pre-existent status, position of power and authority, and supreme rank.¹

This becomes clearer when we consider the expression against the political background to the Christ-story. In Chapter 5 above (§5.2.6) I considered Vollenweider’s case for interpreting the phrase from v. 6c in comparison to ancient rulers seeking divine honours and equality with the gods.² The second century CE papyrus Pap. Heid. 1716 v. compares God and king, and exercising power with ‘equality with God’: τῷ θεοῖ; τῷ κρατοῦν · τῷ βασιλεύ[ν]; ἴσοθεοῖς.³ A humbled Antiochus IV, in 2 Macc 9:12, acknowledges on his death-bed the foolishness of anyone thinking that they are ‘equal to God’ (ἴσοθεοῖ): ‘It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God.’ The context of that passage (2 Macc 9:1-29, esp. v. 8) shows that the issue is not so much a ruler trying to become divine, but arrogantly seeking to exercise God-like power and prerogative.⁴ Similar terminology to Paul’s is used by the Roman historian, Appian, describing the honours given to Julius Caesar (following his death) by Augustus as τιμῶν ἴσοθεοῖν (‘honours [appropriate to those who are] equal to the gods’), which provided the blueprint for later emperors to receive similar ‘divine honours,’ also following their deaths.⁵ However, some emperors sought to become like the gods while alive.⁶ This is also implicit in the adoption of the title κύριος by some (and the attribution of the same to the emperor by others); and thus Paul’s clear statement in Phil 2:11b (element B2'), that Jesus Christ is κύριος, a reference to his divine identity with

¹ HELLERMAN, ‘ΜORMATHEOY,’ 788-789; Reconstructing Honor, 133; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 143. HELLERMAN argues strongly for a non-substantial, non-ontological sense to the phrase ‘equality with God,’ and I am in agreement with him in terms of the emphasis of the text, but, against him, I would not rule out a secondary predication or implication of divine identity (however, in his more popular work, Embracing, 143, he does correct this).

² See Chapter 5 above (§5.2.6), pp. 292-296, 297-298.

³ For the text from Pap. Heid. 1716 v., see p. 292 & n. 4 in Chapter 5 above (§5.2.6) (HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 133 incorrectly cites this text as 1716.5, mistaking the ‘v.’ [meaning verso] for ‘line 5’).

⁴ HELLERMAN, ‘ΜORMATHEOY,’ 789.

⁵ APPIAN, Bella Civilia II.xx.148 (Appian III [Loeb 4; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913] 500; my translation); cf. TELLBE, Between Synagogue and State, 256 & n. 203; HELLERMAN, ‘ΜORMATHEOY,’ 789.

⁶ On this facet of the abuse of imperial power (among other abuses), see p. 335 & n. 1 above, noting there the actions of Emperor Caligula and, on him, see also p. 412 n. 6 above.
Yahweh, is very much also, implicitly, a counter-imperial declaration that Caesar is not ‘Lord.’

There are indeed clear and undeniable implications, for Paul, and for later readers, in terms of the nature and identity of Christ as a divine being in these affirmations of his lordship and ‘equality with God,’ but for his Philippian audience it is the status, power, and authority of Christ, alongside some counter-imperial implications, that would resonate more strongly as they hear the expressions of v. 6c and v. 11b. We should note, with Oakes, that vv. 9-11 provide a comparison between the inauguration of the resurrected Christ’s rule as Lord and imperial accession ceremonies, rather than with any imperial apotheosis; Christ is not being elevated to ‘equality with God’ in vv. 9-11, nor is he being ‘divinized.’ But whether one emphasizes Christ’s status, power and authority, or alternatively his divinity, a close parallel between the phrases of v. 6c and v. 11b remains intact. A further correspondence may be seen in the use of the infinitive εἰναι in v. 6c and the implied εἶστι in the acclamation of v. 11b.

Hence, narrative elements B2 and B2’ very obviously parallel each other. But linked with the first part of element B/B’ in each case, the combination B1-2’ represents a recognizable, conceptual narrative reversal of B1-2.

With such reversals present in the Christ-story, structurally, the excellent fit in its context of Hoover and Wright’s idiomatic rendering of ἐρπαγμός as meaning ‘something to be used for his own advantage’ does not prove their philological conclusions, but does confirm the appropriateness of an interpretation of their rendering against the background of ancient emperors and kings. In different words, the narrative reversal and chiastic matching between B1&2 and B1&2' supports reading the whole of Phil 2:6-11 against a political background. Thus, bringing together an imperial understanding of v. 6bc (with Hoover and Wright’s reading of ἐρπαγμός) and Oakes’ convincing case for a political background to vv. 9-11 highlights the narrative unity of our text and enhances our understanding of the impact Paul intended to make through this story of Christ upon his Roman Philippian hearers. In the

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2 See p. 336 & n. 4 above.
background to all of vv. 6-11, and not only in vv. 9-11 where Jesus rather than Caesar is said to be Lord (κύριος), we may detect an implicit anti-imperial agenda.

Paul’s purposes, however, are not to put the emperor down and lift Christ up as such, but rather to effect a transfer of allegiance among his Philippian friends from a Roman πολιτευμα to τὸ πολιτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς (Phil 3:20), where Christ is not only their Lord, but their example – as Hurtado helpfully puts it, their ‘Lordly example’ – and this so that they may be unified as a believing community (2:1-4) for the sake of the gospel and against the opposition they were then facing (1:27-30), some of which was likely to be from the imperial system, and for the sake of their witness in a hostile world (2:12-18, esp. vv. 14-16).

7.2.3 Giving and Receiving – Elements C-C'

The διό καὶ at the beginning of Part II of the narrative stands at the head of both narrative elements D' (v. 9a) and C' (v. 9bc) and, as we have seen, emphasizes God’s actions in both D' and C' as responses to the previous actions of Christ. This prepares us well for seeing the first two narrative elements in Part II, namely D' and C', specifically as narrative reversals.

More obvious reversal elements in the Christ-story, if any are detected by commentators, are those described by the clauses of the two aorist finite verbs of vv. 7a and 8a (ἐκένωσεν, ἐπατέωσεν) in Part I of the story and those of the two aorist finite verbs of v. 9ab (ὑπερύψωσεν, ἔχαρισα) in Part II. Respectively, these constitute the essential downward movement, and upward movement of the whole story, the elements of vertical progression in our modified ‘V’-shaped narrative, and thus belong closely together. Yet, in fact they describe two conceptually distinct reversals or connected pairs of narrative events. In my chiastic narrative scheme, these are elements C-C' and D-D'. The reversal from ‘he humbled himself’ (D; v. 8a) to ‘God highly exalted him’ (D'; v. 9a) is noted by many, and unsurprisingly the pattern of humiliation-exaltation, as a pairing of obvious opposites, is then

1 Hurtado, ‘Jesus as Lordly Example’; followed by O’Brien, Philippians, 222-223.
2 See above, pp. 336-337.
3 Quite accurately noted by Eastman, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5; cf. p. 403 n. 6 above.
4 Note again Figure 7.2 on p. 400 above.
often used to summarize the two halves of the story, but most do not see a specific reversal in
the other pair of main verbs (ἐκένωσεν and ἐχαρίσατο; C and C').

We shall examine the latter pair here and the former pair (D-D') in Section 7.2.4 following.
However, because Paul also employs a formal micro-chiastic structure embracing all four of
the main verb clauses involved, I will return to discussing them together in §7.2.4.

Narrative elements C and C', then, revolving around the main verb clauses in each case, are
as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative element C (v. 7abc)</th>
<th>Narrative reversal in C' (v. 9bc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἀλλὰ ἐστῶν ἐκένωσεν  μορφήν δούλου λαβών,</td>
<td>καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν ὠμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος</td>
<td>τὸ ὑπέρ πάν ὄνομα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but himself he emptied [by] the form of a slave taking</td>
<td>and has granted him the name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[that is, by] in the likeness of human beings being born</td>
<td>that is above every name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted previously the main verb clause of v. 7a is further defined by the two participial
phrases which follow (v. 7b and 7c), describing the manner of Christ’s self-emptying, and
similarly the object (τὸ ὄνομα) of the main verb in v. 9b receives further definition by the
adjectival phrase of v. 9c.

The first element of downward movement in the story is seen in the aorist main verb clause
describing the surprising action of Christ’s self-emptying (ἀλλὰ ἐστῶν ἐκένωσεν; v. 7a).
Ἐκένωσεν represents the first of two main verbs, which express-in-action Christ’s practical
interpretation of what his equality with God means (vv. 5, 6bc). It is matched by the second
element of upward movement in the story wherein God grants (ἐχαρίσατο) Christ the highest
name (v. 9bc).

1 However, cf. EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 5, who correctly identifies the four main verbs involved here,
and rightly notes the general downward and upward movement that they describe, but falls short in not
matching them as specific reversal pairs; similarly O’BRIEN, Philippians, 233-235 speaks appropriately of
God’s ‘reciprocal response,’ in the two finite verbs of v. 9, to Christ’s actions (expressed by the two finite
verbs of vv. 7a and 8a), but only explicitly pairs Christ’s humiliation (v. 8a) with God’s exaltation of him
(v. 9a).
As we saw in Chapter 5 the verb κενῶν in v. 7a, like its use in four other Pauline contexts, is not to be taken literally, and refers metaphorically to Christ’s ‘emptying himself’ or ‘pouring himself out.’ This is a supreme act of self-giving in contrast to the self-serving actions of other ancient rulers, who Christ implicitly chose not to be like (in v. 6bc). Following Moule’s theological understanding of v. 6bc, we understand that Christ regarded being equal with God not as a matter of getting, but as one of giving, the volitional giving of himself as the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτόν emphasizes by its prominent position before ἐκένωσεν.

The responsive divine action of v. 9b is very much a reversal of such self-giving for now Christ is on the receiving end of God ‘granting’ or ‘graciously giving’ (χαρίζω) something, the name that is above every name. This reversal from ἑαυτόν ἐκένωσεν to ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ is further highlighted by the micro-chiastic arrangement of verb and verbal object (a pronoun in each case). The Christ who gave out of himself is now given to, with God as the giving agent. And if Christ’s self-giving was very much his interpretation of what ‘equality with God’ meant in practice, the reversing action of God granting him the highest name, the divine name ‘Lord’ (κύριος), publicly identifying him as included in the divine identity, is then very appropriate.

This is true, too, when we consider the two participial modifiers of v. 7a, which each individually intensify the distance Christ moves downward from his prior existence (ὑπάρχων) ‘in the form of God’ (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ). Thus, Christ emptied himself (i) firstly, ‘by taking the form of a slave’ (μορφῆν δούλου λαβὼν; v. 7b), where the stunning visual contrast from the μορφή θεοῦ to the μορφή δούλου is highlighted by the repetition of μορφή and the incredible drop in status from highest divine glory to the lowly outward form of a mere slave, and (ii) secondly, ‘by being born in human likeness’ (ἐν ὁμοιωματί ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος; v. 7c), where the syntactic phraseology of v. 6a (ἐν + dative noun of outward appearance + genitive noun θεοῦ + participle of existing) is so closely repeated (ἐν + dative noun of outward appearance + genitive noun ἀνθρώπων + participle of becoming), describing the equally astounding shift from divine existence to human birth or, theologically speaking, the

1 See above pp. 304-305.
2 See my discussion of this on pp. 255-257 above.
3 For this understanding of the aorist ἐχαρίσατο, see p. 381 & n. 4 above.
4 See Figure 7.4 in the next sub-section for a diagram of this.
act of incarnation, of God becoming a human person. Each modifying participial phrase (that is, v. 7b and v. 7c) describes the status and nature of the incarnate Christ, each contrastingly relating back to the initial concessive participial phrase which describes his status and nature as God. Thus, fittingly, the narrative reversal in v. 9bc of Christ’s first downward act of self-emptying is the upward moving action of God granting him a name which, now before the entire cosmos, reinstates and reaffirms Christ’s status and nature as divine.

Narrative element C, then, finds its reversal in element C’, which refer respectively to the actions of giving and receiving, wherein each narrative event is very closely linked to the reality and status of Christ as one divine.

### 7.2.4 Humbled and Exalted – Elements D-D’

Closely related to the narrative reversal C-C’ is the very obvious reversal from Christ humbled (D) to Christ exalted (D’):

**Narrative element D (vv. 7d-8b)**

και σχῆματι εὑρέθης ὡς σωματικός

ἔταπείνωσεν ἕαυτὸν

γενόμενος υπήκοος

*and* in appearance being found as a human being

**Narrative reversal in D’ (v. 9a)**

διὸ καὶ

ὁ θεός αὐτὸν ὑπερήψωσεν

*Therefore also God him has highly exalted*

*he humbled himself*

[by] becoming obedient

Just as the two downward moving finite verb clauses (narrative elements C and D, vv. 7a and 8a) are linked by a paratactic καὶ (introducing the participial phrase of v. 7d), so also are the two upward moving finite verb clauses (narrative elements D’ and C’, v. 9a and 9b). A similar paratactic καὶ (v. 9b) links the two divine responses to Christ’s actions and distinguishes them as distinct (though clearly related) narrative events. Structurally, therefore, reversals C-C’ and D-D’ belong together.

This is further evident in a double micro-chiastic arrangement of the main verbs in vv. 6-8, describing as the downward movement of the story what Christ did (‘himself he emptied … and … he humbled himself’), and vv. 9-11 describing now in upward movement God’s actions in response (‘God him has highly exalted … and has granted him …’). In this
instance, chiasm is not merely present in the macro units, C-D-D'C', but is also observable in the Greek word order of the main verbs and their pronominal objects,¹ as Figure 7.4 below shows:

C v. 7a ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν himself he emptied

C' v. 9b ἐχαρίσατο σὺνῷ [God] has granted him

D v. 8a ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτόν he humbled himself

D' v. 9a σὺνῷ ὑπερψώσεν him [God] has highly exalted

Figure 7.4, Micro-Chiastic Reversals in Narrative Elements C-C' and D-D'

By this structural arrangement of the text, the reversal of Christ’s actions of self-emptying and self-humbling in God’s two-fold response is doubly intensified. Given that these are the four main verbs of downward and upward movement in the story, the presence of these micro-chiasms provides additional confirmation of the specific narrative reversals I am advocating.

The finite verb clause (v. 8a) defining narrative element D (vv. 7d-8b) summarizes the second stage of Christ’s descent in Part I of the story – Christ humbled himself (ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτόν). It is introduced by a participial phrase (v. 7d), which announces the continuing downward movement from the incarnation toward the paradoxical climax (narrative element E) of the cross. Following the exhortation to the Philippians to humility (ταπείνωφροσύνη) in vv. 3-4, Paul highlights here its supreme exemplification in the story of Christ.²

The subordinate participial modifying phrase of v. 8b shows how Christ humbled himself, ‘by becoming obedient’ (γενομένως ὑπήκοος), linking the theme of humility with obedience,³

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¹ Cf. GUNDARY, ‘Style and Substance,’ 272-273, 280-282 who alternatively notes the chiastic arrangement of the main verb clauses, v. 7a with v. 8a (my C and D; his elements c-d, d'-c'), and v. 9a with v. 9b (my D' and C; his elements i-j, j'-i'). The text allows both possibilities; however, I suggest that the micro-chiasms in the respective macro-reversal elements C and C', D and D' (my arrangement) carry more significance (see below).

² For my previous discussion of humility in the Christ-story (v. 8a) and its paraenetic context (vv. 3-4), see pp. 176-179 above.

³ It needs to be recognized that the main clause of the text emphasizes the humility of Christ and thus subordinates his obedience as an expression of his self-humbling. In this respect the attempts by some to make Christ’s obedience the centrepiece of the text misrepresent Paul’s intent through his syntactical
which goes as far as Christ being willing to die (v. 8c; cf. Rom 5:19), the death of a Roman cross (v. 8d).¹

Paul does not specify who Christ obeyed, and some commentators prefer to emphasize the mere fact of his obedience.² However, by explicitly linking Christ’s obedience with his death, and his death on a cross (rather than by using ‘obedience’ as a metonymy for death as in Rom 5:19), Paul appears to highlight both the content and character of his obedience (and thus of his self-humbling), not just its incidence as part of a larger eschatological event.³ With Bockmuehl, there seems to be no warrant to suggest that Christ’s obedience is to death itself, or to demonic powers, or to humankind as some have suggested.⁴ Rather, the most plausible inference we may make is that implicitly Christ’s obedience is to God the Father (cf. Gal 1:4; Rom 5:19 in its context).⁵ Yet Paul does not want to emphasize at this point any trinitarian relationship and so refrains from specifying the object of this obedience.⁶ Nevertheless, if God’s action in exalting Christ reverses Christ’s self-humbling, the implicit logic of ‘he humbled himself, by becoming obedient [to God] … therefore also God exalted him’ does seem natural.
Yet, without denying this, it seems possible to refer to a further possible reason as to why Paul has left the object of Christ’s obedience unspecified. Collange notes that in classical Greek the cognate verb ὑπακούειν (‘to obey’) pertains to the condition of a slave.¹ Thus, as one who took the form of a slave (δοῦλος), humility and obedience are now, as it were, his lot. In Collange’s opinion the reason for the use of both ἐπανεινώσεν and ὑπήκοος ‘is to be sought nowhere else than in the antithesis which they express to lordly power, which is the dominant theme of the hymn [sic].’² While I continue to believe that the inference of Christ’s obedience to God is correct, his assertion helpfully highlights the status concerns of the Christ-story which we have raised previously. The downward movement from Christ’s incarnation (as a human person, in the form of a slave) seen in narrative element D is very much a further lowering of Christ’s status.³ Humiliation (the lowly position of a slave) and obedience (as a slave must obey) represent the public expression of Christ’s status as a slave, and indeed do stand in stark contrast with the lordly power of the emperor and other ancient rulers, especially for one who was in the form of God. Yet, Christ will descend still lower, as we shall observe in narrative element E.

Given that the extent of Christ’s self-humbling, by becoming obedient, is from the incarnation (v. 7d) to Christ’s death (v. 8cd), it is reasonable to assume that all of Christ’s life is implied in the self-humbling and obedience,⁴ but the emphasis is upon his obedient choice of a path leading to death.⁵

The reversal of Christ’s self-humbling, of course, lies in God’s hyper-exaltation of him in v. 9a. We do not need to add much to our previous discussions of the aorist compound verb ὑπερψωσεν, and the related, common biblical motif of humiliation-exaltation.⁶ Paul’s recipients would have readily picked up on this obvious and prominent narrative reversal, structurally highlighted as it is, from v. 8a to v. 9a, especially with Paul’s emphatic

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¹ Collange, Philippians, 104-105.
² Collange, Philippians, 105.
³ See again Figure 7.3 above (p. 426).
⁴ So A. Plummer, Philippians, 47; Bornkamm, ‘Understanding the Christ-Hymn,’ 116.
⁵ Rightly, Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 216 & n. 10, who notes that the obedience ‘unto death’ (μέχρι 8ανώτου) does not mean a life of obedience ‘all the way to the very end of his life’ (against Plummer, cited in the previous note) but rather expresses the degree to which his obedience took him. Nevertheless, the framing the self-humbling by obedience between v. 7d (the incarnation) and v. 8cd (death on a cross) in Part I.2 of the Christ-story does in fact point to the totality of Christ’s life.
⁶ See above, in various places, pp. 93, 283-283, 306, 311-312, 335, 381 & n. 3.
arrangement of the first words of Part II of the story: ‘therefore, also – God – him – has highly exalted.’ They would undoubtedly discern this reversal of fortune in terms of Christ’s status and as Part II continues would hear clearly a sense of the re-instatement of high divine status. The verb ‘to be highly exalted’ would most likely imply for them a public manifestation of that former status. I. H. Marshall offers an appropriate analogy wherein a king might present before the people a son, who already has royal status, giving him a public investiture which recognizes that status and becomes the occasion for the people’s acknowledgment of it.¹ A further new aspect for Christ is that he is to be acclaimed as Lord by the whole of creation, including especially humankind (vv. 10-11; narrative element B’).

As we have noted before, however, God’s exaltation of him is not an elevation to an equality with God that he did not previously possess, but rather is his being exalted publicly as a human person;² that is, the one who had emptied himself by becoming a human person (v. 7a-c), and as a human person who had humbled himself by becoming obedient all the way to death on a cross (vv. 7d-8d), is the one now being exalted. In short, the public spectacle of Jesus’ life and death in such humble and even shameful circumstances (element D) now finds its public reversal in God’s exaltation of him (D’).³

For the Philippians, Christ’s progressive voluntary lowering of his social status would have been both surprising and somewhat shocking to hear (especially so as they reach the climax of the cross). Upon hearing the two divine acts of vindication and reversal (D’ and C’), however, they would begin to see Christ’s actions in new light.⁴ Although possessing the highest status and position, Jesus used this divine status and power not to serve himself but rather to serve others.⁵ The reappraisal enjoined on them by God’s vindication of Christ would turn their former notions of status, honour and power upside down,⁶ motivating them to be willing to practice what Paul had exhorted them in vv. 2-4 in their communal

¹ I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 55.
² See my more detailed discussion of this important point (in response to R. P. MARTIN) in pp. 282-284 above (in §5.2.5 of Chapter 5; note also those cited on p. 284 n. 6). Incidentally, this also implies that the reversal is not merely of the self-humbling of Christ alone, but is a reversal of that including the initial participial phrase (v. 7d) of element D, which repeats the assertion of his identity and status as a human person.
³ I. H. MARSHALL, Philippians, 55.
⁴ Cf. FOWL, Philippians, 99-101, who similarly highlights the cruciality of vv. 9-11 for ‘any attempt the Philippians might make to adopt the patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting displayed by Christ Jesus’ (p. 100).
⁵ HELLERMAN, Reconstructing Honor, 153-155.
⁶ Cf. my earlier discussions of this on pp. 330, 354-356, 359-361, 392.
relationships as followers of Jesus Christ, and encouraging them to work together as a community facing external opposition, as citizens of a radically different, counter-cultural πολιτεία (1:27-30; 3:20) within Roman Philippi. Having been exalted by God and granted the highest name, that is κύριος, Christ assumes a position of highest authority and now implicitly commands the allegiance and obedience of the Christian community. Implicitly this also underwrites Paul’s own authority, who as a δοῦλος of Christ Jesus (1:1), and who by his own story later in Phil 3:4-14 commends ‘the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus’ in very personal terms, as his own Lord (τοῦ κυρίου μου; 3:8), as he calls the Philippians to adopt within their own community (2:5) the continuing mindset that was exhibited by Jesus’ actions in Part I of the Christ-story. All in all, therefore, the divine reversals in Part II of the narrative function very powerfully and compellingly in helping to persuade and motivate this struggling community of believers to live as Paul has been calling them to, that they may live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27).

7.2.5 The Climax of a Roman Cross – Element E

Christ’s descent in vv. 7d-8b (narrative element D) quickly moves to its climax in v. 8cd, narrative element E, his death on the cross. Given that the very first part of Part II of the story, God’s exaltation of Christ (v. 9a) is a clear and specific reversal of his self-humbling (v. 8a), ἐταπέινωσεν ἑαυτὸν … αὐτὸν ὑπερήψωσεν (the main verb clauses of elements D and D’), we do not need to look for a reversal of v. 8cd (although, as we shall shortly see, that is in part surprising); it remains the one unreversed element, the climax of the story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative element E (v. 8cd)</th>
<th>(unreversed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>μέχρι θανάτου,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the extremity of death,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even death on a cross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paul’s emphatic double mention of θανάτου, together with the initial preposition μέχρι representing an extremity that has been reached, the ultimate depth of humiliation and obedience, work to define this element as a distinct plot event, to which the self-humbling obedience of Christ inexorably leads. It thus clearly represents a lower step in the narrative
than the humbling obedience of Christ (element D), rather than merely the final part or culmination of the latter.

It seems rather facile to posit the double mention of θενάτου in v. 8cd as suggesting two central elements in a chiasmus (e.g. E and E’) as some have done. Clearly in both the historical event and Paul’s narration of it Christ does not die twice. Thus, in a narrative chiasmus, the death of Christ, which via anadiplosis is, to be sure, strikingly emphasized, can represent only one narrative event, and therefore only one chiastic element.1

Rhetorically, the combination in v. 8d of the use of anadiplosis, an intensifying particle ἀλλ’, and especially the jarring final mention of death on a Roman cross (σταυρώσει),2 would function to take the breath away from any Roman listener not already familiar with the story, likely creating a jaw-dropping pause in the reading of Paul’s letter.3 The genitive σταυροῦ (literally, ‘[death] of the cross’) describes the nature of Christ’s death, referring (for several reasons) explicitly to death by execution using the cruelest method then known.4 Not even in death did Jesus choose his own preference, such as a zealot’s ‘honourable’ death in battle; instead he willingly endured a shameful and humiliating execution normally reserved for slaves and rebels.5 Crucifixion was, according to Cicero in 70 BC, ‘the most cruel and

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1 For this reason I cannot really accept Karl Barth’s assertion (Philippians, 65) that Christ’s humiliation to the point of death represents his ‘second-last step’ and that it went as far as ‘even death on a cross’ therefore represents its ‘last and lowest’ step. Rather, the mention of ‘death on a cross’ is an emphatic qualifying description of the depth and character of the first mention of death, and not a second step of death. Incidentally, his suggestion would also point not to a ‘V’-shaped narrative but to a ‘Y’-shaped one.

2 On this see above pp. 329-330 & 330 n. 2; and Hengel, Crucifixion, 22-32, 33-38, 39-45.

3 Cf. Bockmuehl, Philippians, 139-140: ‘structurally … this phrase [v. 8d] is not extraneous to the passage but is singled out as the deliberate climax at least of verses 6-8 … It has the effect of an arresting musical syncopation, marking the end of the downward narrative but leaving one on the edge of one’s seat for what comes next. These words stand out syntactically and thematically, drawing attention to the centrality of the cross as both the climax of Christ’s exemplary humility and the final purpose of the incarnation itself’; cf. also Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 208 & n. 69, 214-215, 217; Hansen, Philippians, 157; Witherington, Letter to the Philippians, 150-151.

4 J. Schneider, ‘σταυρός, σταυρώσει … κτλ,.’ TDNT VII, 575, is hardly correct when he asserts that in v. 8d Paul ‘is not concerned to depict the historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus but rather to show its saving significance’; with O’Brien, Philippians, 231, it is precisely the historical event that Paul was concerned to depict with the words θενάτου ἀλλ’ σταυρῶ, and for several reasons, which do not include soteriology – as O’Brien notes (p. 232; emphasis his), ‘the central concern of this passage has been to set forth what Christ’s obedience meant for him, not for us, that it meant condescension, humiliation, death, and finally exaltation.’

5 Bockmuehl, Philippians, 139; Hengel, Crucifixion, 46-50 (on crucifixion as a punishment for rebels and criminals), 51-63, 88 (on crucifixion as a slave’s punishment, the supplicium servile), and cf. 86-90 (for Hengel’s overall summary); Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 146-148.
abominable form of punishment.¹ By the standards of the first century, Bruce observed, ‘no experience could be more loathsomely degrading’ than undergoing death on a cross.² To many in the ancient world, even mention of the topic was deemed obscene, shocking, offensive, and unsuitable for polite conversation.³ It was also equally reviled by Jews, for whom it fell under the curse of Deut 21:23 (cited by Paul in Gal 3:13), meaning that the victim of crucifixion would be regarded as under a ban of excommunication from God’s covenant.⁴

Θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ thus represents not only a narrative climax to Part I of the story,⁵ but also the uttermost nadir in the descent of Christ, both absolutely and in terms of his status in the Roman and Jewish worlds. Martin thus could describe ‘the abject degradation of Christ’slowly obedience,’ where, in his identification with humanity, Christ had ‘reached the lowest rung of the ladder.’⁶ Paradoxically, the narrative’s centre is its lowest point, and its most shocking.⁷

It is the point of both the highest narrative tension and the greatest theological tension. That the one who existed in the form of God, in divine glory, could end his incarnate life and obedient servanthood by dying a humiliating slave’s death on a Roman cross is one of the

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¹ CICERO, Verr. II V.LXIV.165 (Loeb 293, pp. 650-651), but trans. here from BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 139; cf. HENGEL, Crucifixion, 22-32 who sums it up as ‘a barbaric form of execution of the utmost cruelty’; HANSEN, Philippians, 157.
² F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 71.
³ F. F. BRUCE, Philippians, 71-72; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 139; WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Philippians, 150; FLEMMING, Philippians, 118; HENGEL, Crucifixion, 1-10, 22 (on the offensiveness of the topic of crucifixion, its folly and shamefulness); and see also the previously cited comments by CICERO on the topic, on p. 330 & n. 2 above.
⁴ R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 221-222.
⁵ This is noted by most commentators, although a few recognize Christ’s death on the cross as more than the climax of merely Part I of the story; so N. T. WRIGHT, Faithfulness of God, 687-688; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 139-140; HANSEN, Philippians, 157-159.
⁷ It is ironic, therefore, given the centrality of v. 8d to the story, that some regard this line as an intrusive ‘add-on’ to an original hymn that Paul has incorporated into his letter (see my previous discussion on this on pp. 90-92 above); so also notes FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 217 & n. 12; BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 139-140; O’BRIEN, Philippians, 230-231; and HENGEL, Crucifixion, 62-63, who concludes, ‘if it did not have θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ at the end of the first strophe [sic], the hymn [sic] would lacks most decisive statement.’
great imponderables of the Christian faith.¹ Even the title Christ and crucifixion hardly belonged together in popular human understanding: ‘Messiah meant power, splendour, triumph; crucifixion meant weakness, humiliation, defeat.’² Yet in doing so, v. 8cd highlights not only the full extent of Christ’s self-humbling and obedience – how far they took him – but also the incredible depth of the self-humbling obedience of Christ, and most emphatically it reveals the depth of character of not only Christ, but God (for, as we have seen, the events of vv. 7-8 represent Christ’s interpretation of what being equal with God means in concrete action).³ In Paul’s perspective, the conclusion appears unavoidable, that ‘in the cross God’s true character … was fully manifested.’⁴ Thus, Hengel speaks of the cross in terms of the ‘kenosis of God.’⁵ That Christ or Christ-as-God could pour himself out and humble himself so fully to die on a Roman cross leaves one awestruck.

Given that the Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8 exemplify the other-centred mindset Paul was urging the Philippians to practice within their community, it is indeed appropriate to regard Christ’s actions implicitly as being other-centred actions; and thus the Christ-story as containing an implicit soteriology,⁶ although we must remember that Paul is narrating primarily what Christ’s obedience meant for him rather than ‘for us’.⁷ Nevertheless, to some degree the effectiveness of Paul’s appeal to Christ’s example in his suffering and death may lie also in them recalling the saving significance of that death as the basis for their inclusion in the Christian community.⁸ Given this, it is fitting also to regard the Christ-story as being analogous to a story of divine love,⁹ as some have urged.¹⁰

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¹ Cf. Hansen, Philippians, 157-159; and Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 208 n. 69 who writes, ‘here is the apogee of true “God-likeness,” where the divine Christ gives himself away in the utterly execrable “weakness” (humiliation) of crucifixion.’

² Fee, First Corinthians, 75 (emphasis original), who adds that there is thus ‘little wonder that both Jew and Greek were scandalized by the Christian message.’

³ See again my discussion of the narrative-theological significance of Wright’s interpretation of v. 6bc in Section 5.2.7 above, especially pp. 305-307, 309-313.

⁴ Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 208; cf. his ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 45.

⁵ Hengel, Crucifixion, 89.

⁶ This was previously discussed on pp. 101-102 above; for some of those admitting an implicit soteriology, see there p. 102 n. 2.

⁷ Correctly, O’Brien, Philippians, 232; Hansen, Philippians, 158; cf. p. 439 n. 4 above.


⁹ On the notion of the Christ-story implicitly or analogously being a story of divine love (including my caution for exegetical restraint in this area), see pp. 299-301 above.

¹⁰ For example, see those cited on p. 301 n. 1 above.
Yet Christ’s death on the cross is also one of the most subversive elements of the story. As Fowl explains, the most humiliating form of state-sponsored execution was a humiliation by Roman power, wherein the public display of the crucified body served both as testimony to Rome’s power over all others and as a deterrent to any who would challenge it or transgress against its rules.¹ As we have seen one of the common legitimating characteristics for a candidate to imperial power in Rome was his military prowess, and here we find the most striking contrast possible to that, in the utter weakness and humiliation of Christ crucified.²

The possibility that crucifixion might be the extent to which one humbled oneself in obedience to God, who then vindicates that person by exalting him to a position of the highest power and authority as κυρίος, strikes ‘at the very roots of the power Rome sought to display in crucifying someone’ for ‘on the cross Christ’s body becomes the site where Rome’s pretensions to dominion are overwhelmed by the power of God, a power which is revealed in weakness’³ (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-2:5).

For the Philippians this implicit subversion of Rome’s power functions simultaneously to replace in their own minds Rome’s authority in their lives with the authority of God, Christ and the heavenly πολιτεύμα, and to overturn their own traditional notions of honour, status, and power inasmuch as those notions affected their understanding of God and Christ and their intra-communal relationships with each other.⁴ Christ’s actions, and God’s vindication of them, turned the values of their Roman world upside down. As exemplified in Christ, power, status and honour were not to be used for one’s own selfish advantage, but rather to be used in humble, other-centred service, where others were regarded as better than themselves and the interests of others deserving of their practical concern. And at the centre of this implicit political subversion, this reconstruction of status and honour, and this radical reorientation of personal interest, lies Jesus’ death on a Roman cross. While initially

¹ Fowl, Philippians, 99-100; Hengel, Crucifixion, 46-47, 50, 54.
² See pp. 328-330, above.
³ Fowl, Philippians, 99; cf. Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 217-218; and his First Corinthians, 77-78; Tellbe, Between Synagogue and State, 257-259.
⁴ Cf. Tellbe, Between Synagogue and State, 257-259; D. K. Williams, Enemies of the Cross, 145-146; but I regard the latter’s claim that ‘the terminology of the cross functions as Paul’s rhetorical weapon in the context of conflict and polemic’ (p. 146; cf. 132-133) as overstated in the case of Phil 2:6-11; he does not really demonstrate why it is ‘necessary’ or ‘demanded by the context,’ given that the Philippians are experiencing internal strife or external threats (p. 133), for Paul to make some kind of reference to the cross within the Christ-story. His claims for use of ‘the cross’ as such a ‘rhetorical weapon’ are better grounded in his discussion of Phil 3:18 (pp. 148, 217-228, 232-233, 234-252).
surprising and shocking to the Philippians, with the events that had led to it (vv. 6-8b) and the events that now led from it (vv. 9-11) also in view, Paul’s mention of the crucifixion in v. 8cd, would have been a catalyst that would begin to transform their φρόνημα and ἀγάπη, and cause them to be συμψυχοι, transforming their way of thinking and living, their love for one another, and their unity in spirit (vv. 2, 5). Such transformed communal behaviour would further result in them ‘appearing as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life’ (vv. 15-16) in the midst of hostile, persecuting world, bringing much joy (vv. 2, 16-18) to the apostle who wrote them this letter.

In a narrative chiasmus, as we have seen, movement can be both linear, in terms of narrative progression, and inwards, from the exterior to the interior.¹ In terms of the former, recalling the modified ‘V’-shape of Figure 7.2 above,² element E represents the climax of Part I, in which Jesus Christ is the protagonist, beginning with him being in the glorious form of God (element A) and his decision not to use his equality with God for his own advantage (element B = B₁-B₂), followed by his downward journey from pre-existence to incarnation (his self-emptying, C) and from the incarnation to the cross (his self-humbling, D). In the reversal of Part II of the story of Christ, but with God as the protagonist, the upward journey, corresponding to an imperial accession, is from the cross to a position of investiture (God’s exaltation of Christ, D’), and from the place of investiture to possessing the highest status and authority (God granting him the highest name, C’). In response to the divine announcement of that high status comes the appropriate public acknowledgment (people bowing before Christ and acclaiming him as Lord, B’ = B₁’-B₂’), which all works to bring glory to God the Father (A’).

In terms of chiastic movement in the story, element E finds itself positioned at the centre, the place from which four significant narrative reversals take place (respectively, D’ reversing element D, C’-C, B’-B and A’-A). Each of the reversal pairs draws some significance from its relationship to the centre, though perhaps the most significant is the relationship between the outer elements and the centre. Wright was certainly correct when he recently observed that v. 8d is ‘the fulcrum … around which everything else balances … and so … [a]t the centre of the poem, at the climax of the purpose, at the beating heart of all things, stands the sign of

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¹ On this, see above pp. 344-345.
² See again, p. 400.
shame and glory … [the Messiah’s shameful crucifixion],¹ although, unfortunately, he does not go on to explain the observation or its narrative significance.

The greatest contrast imaginable exists between Christ in the form of God, describing his visible appearance and status in divine glory (element A) and, having taken the form of a slave, his dying a slave’s death on a Roman cross (element E). Yet, in the Christ-story the two are connected: although he was in the form of God (v. 6a) … he went all the way to death on a cross (v. 8d). The striking, gut-wrenching, public death by crucifixion is also a visible revelation of the identity of Christ as God. That this paradoxical linkage between the identity of Christ and the cross can (along with the other elements of the story) ultimately be to the glory of God the Father (v. 11c, element A’), gives new meaning to doxology as the predication of glory, forever linking Christian worship as a response to the self-revelation of the crucified God, as Figure 7.5 below shows:

![Figure 7.5, Outer Elements (A-A’) and Centre (E) of the Christ-Story Chiasmus](image)

Similarly, elements B and B’ both affirm the equality of Christ with God, the one κύριος (vv. 6c, 11b) in terms of his position, authority, status, power and divine identity. Christ’s actions in vv. 7-8 represent, as we have seen, his own understanding of what ‘equality with God’ practically means, thus defining his mindset and the character of God in relation to those events, which culminate in the cross.

At the same time, v. 6b (οὐχ ἄρσις ὑπαγόμενον) sets up an implicit narrative foil, by alluding to whom Christ was not like – ancient rulers and despots, including the emperors of the first century to the time of Paul’s letter. Although ancient rulers felt they deserved the privileges and advantages of their position, including having subjects who would bow before him and acclaim him, Christ interpreted his status and position otherwise. That Christ endured crucifixion as a state criminal at the hands of one of Caesar’s proconsuls² is at once ironic

1  N. T. Wright, Faithfulness of God, 687-688.
2  Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 31-32, 217.
and subversive. The stark reality of the cross emphasizes the vast distance between the selfless Christ and such self-serving rulers, and turns the common notions of status, honour and power upside down. That it is the crucified Christ who is exalted and given the status of supreme lordship, including lordship over Caesar himself, challenges the power and authority of Caesar to determine the lives of those under him, implicitly calling for a new way of living as subjects of a new Lord in a new πολιτεία. The shame and weakness of the cross, while representing the most unlikely qualification for an imperial candidate, is precisely what qualifies Jesus Christ to become κύριος of all.

Knowing that the journey to the depths of the cross was what led to Christ’s public appointment as Lord of all (already included in the divine identity) now prompts a sense of humility and gratefulness from his followers who freely and gladly bow before him and acclaim him with their words, deeds and lives. This is indeed the reaction that Paul expects of the Philippians as he exhorts them to ‘work out your salvation in fear and trembling, for God is the one working among you to will and to work for his good pleasure’ (2:12b-13; cf. Ps 2:11; Isa 66:2, 5).1

In terms of elements C and D, the cross provides ultimate definition to what Christ’s self-emptying and self-humbling meant for him. The κενώσις of Christ (and Christ-as-God), his self-giving and pouring out of his life, and the ταπείνωσις of Christ, his self-humbling, are each given new depths of meaning, given that each action is carried out willingly to the final extremity of death on a cross (element E). The cross represents the culmination of each action as it is worked out in the life of Christ, wherein each would be deficient without it, at the same time heightening the impact as example of each. Given that in the context of the Christ-story (vv. 1-4, 5, 12-13) his attitude and related deeds are implicitly exemplary, the cross is what enables the Christ-story to function as a ‘governing metaphor’2 for shaping a Christian φρόνσις (2:2, 5) and a Christian πολιτεία, worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27).3 It thus can stand as an ultimate paradigm for ‘cruciform existence’ following the pattern of Christ’s life for all relationships within the believing community.4

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2 The term is from D. K. WILLIAMS, Enemies of the Cross, 145-147.
3 MEEKS, ‘Man from Heaven,’ 333.
4 D. K. WILLIAMS, Enemies of the Cross, 146-147; affirmed by REUMANN, Philippians, 375; cf. also FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 363; FEE, Pauline Christology, 389.
This is what Paul appears to pick up when he later affirms one of the key aspects of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord (3:8, 10) is knowing ‘the participation in his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death’ (τοῦ γυμνοῦ ..., τῆν κοινωνίαν τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφοῦσαν τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ; 3:10). The whole pattern of Christ’s life in 2:6-8 is thus summed up by Paul by the phrase ‘conformity to his death’ which clearly echoes the language of the Christ-story.¹ The present passive participle, συμμορφοῦσαν, suggests a process of being continually conformed to Christ’s death. Conformation to Christ’s death (3:10) thus represents the structure of the Christian life.² That this is so is confirmed later in chapter 3 when Paul urges the Philippians to join in following Paul’s own example (συμμιμήται μου γίνοssa), and to observe those who walk (περιπατοῦντες) according to the pattern (τύπος) you have in us’ (3:17) and then warns of ‘many who walk (περιπατοῦσιν) … as enemies of the cross of Christ’ (τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; 3:18).³ With the verb περιπατεῖν referring to ethical behaviour, the conduct of one’s life,⁴ it is clear that for Paul one can live and behave either as an enemy of the cross or in conformity to the cross (and thus according to the model Paul himself also provides).⁵ ‘The cross of Christ’ in Phil 3:18 therefore stands as a cipher for a pattern of life, and for which the supreme pattern is clearly that of Christ in 2:6-8.

Yet the cross is closely linked to the reversals of elements D’ and C’ also, in that as a specific divine response (διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ...) to the actions leading up to the cross (elements C and D), they represent the first reversals (v. 9abc) which immediately follow the event of the cross (E). As divine vindication of the choices and actions of Christ, which culminate in the cross, God’s actions must derive part of their significance from being also a vindication of that death. The reversal pair closest to Christ’s death, humiliation-exaltation, revolves around the cross. Although his resurrection from the dead is not explicitly mentioned, it would appear to be implicitly included in the act of God’s exaltation of Christ.⁶

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¹ Note Table 3.1b above (pp. 99-100).
² TANNEHILL, Dying and Rising, 121-122.
⁴ BDAG, 803 (2).
⁵ D. K. WILLIAMS, Enemies of the Cross, 191, 222.
⁶ See above p. 382 & n. 3, also p. 381 n. 3.
Similarly, although Christ’s sufferings are not explicitly mentioned, the Philippians would readily appreciate the immense suffering experienced during a Roman execution by crucifixion. Suffering is also implied in the mention of Christ’s taking the form of a slave, and in his humiliation and obedience, which lead up to the cross. Paul’s readers would rightly (and as intended by Paul) relate their own sufferings to those of Christ, as suffering for his sake (τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν; 1:29). Likewise, Paul’s mention of ‘participation in his sufferings’ ([ἡ] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ; 3:10c), part of what it means to know Christ (3:10a), also appears to look back to the Christ-story at 2:7-8, given the subsequent reference to conformity to his death (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ; 3:10d). The Christ-story serves as the theological ground for that concern. Interestingly, in one of the actions of divine vindication, the gracious granting (ἐξαρίστη) of the name above all names (v. 9b), Paul echoes the same verb that was found in 1:29: ‘to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake (ἐὰν ὑμῖν ἐξαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ), not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.’ Given that Christ suffered at the hands of one of Caesar’s proconsuls, the divine reversals of narrative elements D’ and C’ lifting him to a place higher than the emperor would also provide encouragement to the suffering Philippians that one day they too will ultimately receive God’s vindication (cf. 3:20-21). The Christ-story provides the paradigm which brings hope of that future reality.

Each of the narrative elements in the story, therefore, is closely related to the central element of v. 8cd (E). From the point of view of the linear progression of the narrative, and also of the story’s movement inward toward its chiastic centre, Jesus’ death on the cross is the most decisive, climactic event within vv. 6-11 as a whole. The Christ-story would be utterly incomplete without it.

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1 Thus, Basevi & Chapa, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 346 regard the words θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ as providing the ultimate and most important reason for the identification of the suffering Philippians with Christ, and the basis for the unity of the Philippians under their circumstances.
2 Fee, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 44.
3 See my previous discussion of this on pp. 210, 230-232, 312 above.
4 Fee, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 44.
5 It seems incredible that a commentator such as Beare could write of v. 8d (regarding it as a Pauline gloss) that it ‘stands outside the formal structure of the hymn [sic] and is substantially irrelevant to its theme’ (Philippians, 85); cf. also Käsemann, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 75-76: ‘in the hymn [sic] … the kind of death is irrelevant … the additional gradation [death on the cross] is disruptive,’ making sense only as a Pauline insertion.
I mentioned before that the lack of narrative reversal of the event of Christ’s death is in part surprising. Resurrection would be a natural reversal to his death, but Paul has refrained from explicitly mentioning it in the Christ-story, in which other reversals feature prominently. Before moving on therefore it is worth asking why that is so. Resurrection, of course, is a central component of his gospel, and he explicitly refers later in his letter to knowing Christ as knowing ‘the power of his resurrection’ (τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὑτοῦ; Phil 3:10) and the future hope of ‘resurrection from the dead’ (εἰ πώς καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν; 3:11). Furthermore, his account in 3:20-21, containing as it does multiple echoes of the Christ-story, of Christ’s future eschatological transformation of believers from ‘our body of humiliation’ into conformity with ‘the body of his glory’ (ὁς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σώματι τῆς δοξῆς αὑτοῦ) clearly seems to imply that the exaltation of Jesus in 2:9-11 must have included the glorious resurrection of his body. Yet a further notion of resurrection is alluded to in Paul’s mention of the Philippians presently ‘shining as lights in the world’ (2:15). As a deliberate echo of Daniel 12:3, it implies their present participation in the resurrection age, indicating that Paul here regarded ‘the present life and vocation of Christians in terms of a resurrection life which had already, in one sense, begun, even though it was to be completed in the bodily resurrection itself.’ Clearly, then, the topic did not disappear from his thinking during the writing of the Christ-story.

As I have suggested above, I believe resurrection is indeed implicitly included in God’s act of exalting Christ; the notions of exaltation and resurrection are related closely enough to allow that assumption, and by affirming Pauline authorship of the Christ-story there is no need to

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1 On the absence of the topic of resurrection as an argument against Pauline authorship of the Christ-story, and for counter-arguments to that position, see above pp. 91, 92-93; those arguments will not be repeated here.
2 N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, 228 n. 45; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 119.
3 See, for example, Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:4-5; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:3-4, 12-22; 2 Cor 5:14-15.
4 Note again Table 3.1b above (pp. 99-100).
5 So N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, 229-236 (esp. 232-233).
6 On this verse, see above pp. 214-215; note the present tense of φαίνεσθαι (2:15c).
7 N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, 228.
8 See previously, pp. 93, p. 382 & n. 3, also p. 381 n. 3; Bertram, ‘ὑφός,’ 606-612; cf. also Acts 2:32-33; 5:30-31; Eph 1:20-21.
think otherwise. Dunn is able to conclude a discussion of the risen Christ in Paul by saying, ‘it would be difficult to make any real distinction between Jesus’ resurrection and his exaltation in Paul’s thought. The resurrection was itself the exaltation which installed Jesus into his new status.’1 Furthermore, Paul’s use of the title κύριος for Jesus Christ (cf. v. 11) usually carries an implication that the risen Christ is in view.2 As Dunn notes, ‘in passages where the theology of Jesus’ lordship becomes explicit, it is clear that the resurrection was understood as the decisive event in his becoming Lord.’3 Moreover, ‘the affirmation of Jesus’ lordship is one which we can trace back at least to the earliest days of Christian reflection on Christ’s resurrection.’4

Why then has Paul chosen not to mention the resurrection explicitly in this account of Christ’s journey? There are in fact several reasons that may be suggested. The most obvious place to start is by noting that his preference was to emphasize the reversal from Christ’s humiliation to his exaltation. The narrative pattern of humiliation-exaltation is the overarching motif in this ‘V’ shaped story and corresponds respectively to (i) Christ’s actions of descent and (ii) his ascent as the object of God’s response to those actions.5 In status-obsessed Roman Philippi, the emphasis on the humiliation-status motif suggests that status concerns have been pre-eminent in Paul’s mind as he addresses the Philippians’ need for unity in the face of external opposition and internal disputation. Selfishness, status-obsession, status-climbing and self-interest need to be replaced by love, humility, concern for others’ interests, and regard for others as more important than oneself. Christ’s exemplification of that kind of mindset in vv. 6-8, though surprising and somewhat shocking, involving as it

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1 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 265 (for his full discussion of the risen Christ, see pp. 234-265). For a differing opinion, note M. J. Harris, Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament (Basingstoke, Hants.: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983) 85, who suggests that frequently in the New Testament Christ’s resurrection ‘is related to the vindication of Christ’s messiahship and sonship … while exaltation is related to the inauguration of his lordship.’ He goes on to suggest (p. 85) a nuanced distinction that the resurrection proclaims the eternality of his life, while the exaltation proclaims the eternality of his reign. My impression is of a greater semantic overlap in the texts involved; and I suggest that one cannot separate the resurrection of Christ from his lordship (in Paul) as easily as Harris proposes.

2 See p. 501 in Appendix 2 below; and note Dunn, Romans 9-16, 810; and his Theology of Paul, 244-252; Forster & Quell, ‘κύριος,’ 1089; cf. Hawthorne, Philippians, 91.

3 So Dunn, Theology of Paul, 245, citing as evidence Rom 1:4; 10:9; 14:9; and Phil 2:9-11, pp. 246-247 & n. 60, citing Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:23-25; Col 3:1; Eph 1:20, of which he mentions, ‘in each case the installation to lordship is coincident with or the immediate corollary to Christ’s resurrection’ (pp. 246-247).

4 Dunn, Theology of Paul, 246 & n. 60; for evidence, see the texts cited in the previous note, and outside the Pauline corpus, Mark 12:36 (and parallels); 14:62 (pars.); Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22.

5 See my previous comments on the twin theme of humiliation-exaltation on pp. 93, 311-312, 335 above.
does service rather than lordship, shame rather than honour, and low status rather than high status, which is well summarised as self-humbling or humiliation.¹ The flip-side or reversal to that is not the resurrection of the body,² a concept that bears no necessary status implications whatsoever, but rather exaltation – elevation to a higher status in recognition of what Christ had done in his self-lowering.³

Similarly, the emphasis in vv. 6-8 is upon the character, attitude and example of Christ, to which the Philippians should seek to be conformed in their lives. Kraftchick rightly states that the Christ-story provides ‘the content domain of Christian existence between the exaltation and final resurrection’.⁴ Paul’s emphasis for the Philippians’ communal life is on the Christian life now, for which the way of the cross (the pattern of 2:6-8) must dominate; in the future (3:11, 20-21), Christian conformity to the resurrection will be attained. Christ’s exaltation, Part II of the story, is indeed part of the paradigm of Christian existence, but it is largely for the future (cf. 3:12-14).

At the same time, as we saw in the previous chapter, the deeper structure of the text is that the Christ-story is also a story of God, of Christ revealing the very character of God in his attitude, choices and actions. The other side to this narrative character depiction is the divine vindication, approval and commendation of Christ (vv. 9-11), which is better conveyed not by the notion of resurrection, but rather by the notions of exaltation and the granting of the highest name, which lead to acknowledgment of him possessing the ultimate authority. While

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¹ Cf. BAUCKHAM’S description of the contrasts in the passage as being ‘between high and low status, and between service and lordship,’ to which he later adds, ‘between … exaltation and humiliation, honour and shame’ (God Crucified, 60, 73; also in his Jesus, 44, 54).

² REUMANN, ‘Resurrection,’ believing that the Philippians themselves first wrote vv. 6-11 (minus v. 8d) as an evangelistic tool for their Roman context (pp. 409, 420-421), suggests some further possibilities (with my numbering): (i) that the concept of resurrection (and resurrection of the body from the dead) was largely ‘alien’ to the Graeco-Roman world (p. 420; see also his Philippians, 372); (ii) that mention of it had brought difficulties in some of Paul’s other congregations as 1 Thess 4:13-5:11 and 1 Corinthians 15 highlight (p. 420); and (iii) that the presence of the Dionysus cult in Philippi may have led to a desire to avoid mention of the topic, in order to avoid unwanted comparison with the notion of rescue from the underworld found in the cult’s mysteries. Without subscribing to REUMANN’S theory on the authorship of vv. 6-11, his first mentioned suggestion may have some merit.


⁴ KRAFTCHICK, ‘Necessary Detour,’ 23.
not out of mind, explicit mention of the resurrection may have disturbed the rhetorical function of the two halves of the passage.¹

Related to this, the striking comparison Paul draws between the Christ-story and his own story in Phil 3:3-9 suggests a further reason for the absence of the resurrection in the Christ-story.² In 3:3-9 Paul narrates his own life story as a double series of both progressive loss and progressive gain (vv. 7-9). In the loss column, corresponding to the descent of Christ’s self-humiliation in the Christ-story, Paul emphasizes how far he has gone in giving up his boast in the flesh (v. 3), although in terms of his status as a religious Jew, he has every reason to boast in his human achievements (vv. 4-6). It is entirely analogous to 2:6-8 of the Christ-story. But in the gain column, by comparison to Christ’s ascent of 2:9-11, Paul’s ultimate gain of Christ, his highest gain (3:8d), corresponds more closely not to Christ’s resurrection but to his exaltation. Thus the pattern of humiliation-exaltation rather than that of death-resurrection is clearly more pertinent when status concerns are being highlighted.

Adding in the political dimension brings further understanding. In drawing a deliberate, implicit contrast with the arrogance and self-serving behaviour of ancient rulers, including the Roman emperor, Paul stresses how unlike them Christ was – one implicit theme of vv. 6-8.³ Even the final mention of the cross provides a striking rhetorical contrast to the power of Rome, and the military prowess of an imperial candidate.⁴ In vv. 9-11 God’s consequent exaltation of Christ to the highest place shows that Christ and not Caesar is the world’s true lord. But, while the emperors sought to exalt themselves (even to divinity), their rhetorical claims never included being raised from the dead.⁵ Thus, in Paul’s implicit counter to imperial pretensions, while Christ’s death on a cross is supremely important, his resurrection is not a theme of great relevance; much more germane to the divine response of Part II of the story is the theme of exaltation – of the one truly worthy to be acknowledged as Lord of all.

² Note the linguistic echoes in Table 3.1b above (pp. 99-100) and my previous discussion of this comparison in evaluating Wright’s position on Phil 2:6b for understanding the Christ-story as a whole on pp. 302-303 above; cf. Kraftchick, ‘Necessary Detour,’ 24.
³ N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, 227-228.
⁴ See above, pp. 328-330.
⁵ N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, 228, 233.
Similarly, with respect to the suffering of the Philippian believers, and even of Paul himself, which is analogous to the sufferings of Christ implicit in what he undergoes in vv. 7-8, the Philippians are not yet in need of resurrection, for there is no evidence of any of them being martyred, but they are in need of encouragement that God will ultimately vindicate them as he vindicated Christ in vv. 9-11, and that one day ultimately even their oppressors will need to bow before Christ. Thus, with the note of exaltation in vv. 9-11, explains Fee, ‘Paul both affirms the rightness of the paradigm to which he has called the Philippians and keeps before their eyes the eschatological vindication that awaits those who are Christ’s.’

Hence, Paul has almost certainly used the humiliation-exaltation motif in the Christ-story rather than an explicit death-resurrection motif, (i) because of the situation of suffering and opposition facing the Philippians, (ii) to address issues of status of greater immediate relevance to the Philippian Roman community, and (iii) because it relates better to the political context of the story with the implicit imperial comparison it draws. Though it may not be out of mind, Paul’s concern in Phil 2:6-11 is not to tell the story of Christ’s death and resurrection. God’s exaltation of Christ certainly implicitly included his resurrection, but in order to emphasize the exaltation Paul did not need to dwell on its details or respective stages.

7.3 The Story of the Visible Cruciform God

We have now discussed the overall narrative shape of the Christ-story, including its \( \sqrt{\text{-}} \)-shape, modified chiastic structure and the key narrative reversals seen between Parts I and II of the story. At the end of this chapter I will present more of a literary analysis of the passage. However, there are two important threads which run through the entire story, which need to be mentioned briefly, as they add to the impact of the whole. I mentioned them in the previous chapter (§6.3), where I described them as Pattern #3, the story of the visible cruciform God and Pattern #4, the obedient servant motif (see especially Tables 6.1a and 6.1b above, for their respective narrative markers alongside the text). Thus, we turn now to discuss Pattern #3, and in the next section (§7.4), Pattern #4.

1 Fee, Pauline Christology, 393.
2 Correctly observed by O’Brien, Philippians, 201.
3 Please refer back to pp. 366-368 above.
As we have observed one of the striking things about the opening phrase of the story and the phraseology used to describe Christ’s incarnate status is the predominance of visual appearance terminology. I want to suggest that Paul has emphasized this deliberately with careful linguistic choices, and that he thus portrays the overall Christ-story, with all its various reversals, as a visible narration of Christ’s journey. It is a story in which the invisible God is made visible in the person of Jesus Christ and his entrance into human history. It is thus a story which the Philippians will both hear and visualize.¹

Five stages of the visible journey of Christ are evident in the Christ-story: (I) his pre-existent glory (v. 6); (II) his incarnation (v. 7a-c, d); (III) obedience leading to death by crucifixion (v. 8a-d); (IV) his exaltation by God (v. 9); and (V) the post-exaltation acclamation of Christ and predication of glory to God (vv. 10-11).

The ‘although … not … but …’ narrative structure of vv. 6-8 (Pattern #5 in Table 6.1a+b in the previous chapter) is very significant to Pattern #3. The first stage (I) represents the concessive ‘although ...’ of this narrative structure, and also the ‘not ...’ element. Stages II and III represent the ‘but ...’ part of the narrative, which is reversed in stage IV, while stage V represents a reversal of the ‘not ...’ clause in Stage I.

To describe the individual elements in each stage I have used various narrative markers, which, because they delineate a different function, differ somewhat from the chiastic markers of Pattern #2 discussed in the previous two sections (§7.1 and §7.2).² Table 7.2 below shows Pattern #3, highlighting the visible elements described in each part of the text. Those elements which are shaded, and have narrative markers in square brackets represent elements that have implicit visible aspects, while those that are unshaded represent explicitly visible imagery. My descriptions and the following discussions assume the exegetical conclusions reached to this point, especially in the previous chapter (§6.4).

¹ Rightly, EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 4; though I am not convinced when she adds, ‘and perhaps even sing.’
² For a correlation of the respective narrative markers for Patterns #2, #3, #4 and #5 against individual text elements, see again Table 6.1a+b on pp. 366-368 above.
Thus, the story begins (Stage I) with Christ, existing in the form of God, meaning with the visible appearance of God’s glory (v. 6a, narrative marker F). This sets up the visible imagery for the multiple contrasts that follow in vv. 7-8. Christ’s interpretative decision to regard his position of equality with God not for his own advantage (οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ἴμπλησε ποτε οἷον θεὸν, v. 6bc, marker [G]) is implicitly an anti-imperial foil, contrasting Christ with the Roman emperor and other ancient self-serving rulers who would be expected to use their power and privileges for personal gain. Implicitly it triggers a mental picture of the imperial court or perhaps a corresponding divine throne room. This picture is picked up implicitly and explicitly in the second half of the story, which provides a narrative reversal to Christ’s selfless refusal to use his position and status for his own advantage.
Stage II represents the actions associated with Christ’s self-emptying incarnation. Each of them includes explicitly visible terminology, which further surprises those listening to the story (particularly following the ‘but …’ of v. 7a), as they describe visually a dramatic drop in Christ’s status. Two distinct and remarkable contrasts are made with the opening phrase of the story (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχουν): first, Christ takes the form of a slave (μορφὴν δοῦλου λαβῶν, v. 7b, F1a’); and secondly, he is born in the likeness of human beings (ἐν ὑμοιώματι ἄνθρωπων γενόμενος, v. 7c, F1b’). Although syntactically v. 7d belongs with what follows it, it repeats the visual imagery of the previous clauses affirming both the reality of the incarnation and Christ’s status as a human person (καὶ σχῆματι ἐφήβεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος, F2’). Respectively the visible appearance of a domestic slave, the picture of human birth (implied by the verb γενόμενος in its context of v. 7c), and the two physical descriptions of Jesus’ humanity represent a stunning descent in the narrative, as also in Christ’s social status.  

Thus, with these visual descriptions portraying Christ-as-God who has poured himself out (ἐκένωσεν, v. 7a), the Christ-story makes some of its most profound christological and theological statements. It is well to be reminded that Christ ‘does not cease to be ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ by taking on the μορφὴ δοῦλου.’ Similarly, it is not that Christ ‘exchanged the form of God for the form of a slave, but that he manifested the form of God in the form of a slave.’ The visible form and actions of Jesus Christ represent the visible presence of the invisible God.

The third Stage (III) in the story of the visible God describes further surprising actions of social and narrative descent. As Jesus humbles himself, becoming obedient (v. 8ab, [H1]), this evokes common, somewhat shocking images of a life of lowly, obedient servility. But the greatest shock comes when Christ’s descent reaches the nadir of a slave’s death on a
Roman cross (v. 8cd, H1, H2). The death of a person was also a common image, but mention of a Roman crucifixion would trigger a visceral repulsion wherein the sensibilities of any person living in the first century, Roman or not, would try to push out of mind the shocking image evoked. But the rhetorical effect of the use of *anadiplosis* and the final word of the extended sentence of Part I of the narrative, σταυρόν, would make that difficult. A deep breath would need to be taken to absorb the immensity of what Paul had just mentioned. From form of God to form of a slave, and from servile obedience to a slave’s death on a cross, no greater descent could be imagined, nor, theologically speaking, could any narrative be as paradoxical, with the one who existed in the glorious form of God now pictured dying on a Roman cross.

As we have seen Christ’s actions reveal not only his own exemplary character and attitude, but God’s own character. Given the dominance of visual imagery in Part I of the story, which continues in reduced fashion in Part II, with only two explicit visual pictures (v. 10b and v. 11a), it seems appropriate, therefore, in view of the story’s climax, to describe this narrative thread (Pattern #3) as the Story of the Visible Cruciform God.

At the same time, the visual imagery of Part I also serves to highlight the social status implications of the story of Christ for the Philippians. As we have seen, between Christ being in the form of God and being in the form of a slave, let alone the obedient life of a slave, and the humiliation of a slave’s execution as his death, there is a vast immeasurable distance and drop in status.¹ By visually highlighting Christ’s voluntary willingness to accept such a drop in social status himself, Paul uses the Christ-story to overturn popular notions of power, privilege and status in Roman society and to support his call for an entirely different mindset to be worked out in the communal practice of the followers of Jesus Christ living in Philippi.

The narrative resolution of the downward story is found in the upward moving Stage IV and the final resolution of Stage V. Initially, God’s exaltation of Christ and granting of the highest name (v. 9abc, [II]), would evoke comparisons in the Philippians’ minds with an imperial accession ceremony. Upon hearing the reversals of v. 9, they might picture that setting or perhaps again the divine throne room, for the verb ὑπερψάω occurs in Old

Testament visionary language that depicts God’s enthronement and exaltation.\textsuperscript{1} Clearly explicit images are evoked, however, with the mention of ‘every knee bowing’ (v. 10ab[c], G1’) and ‘every tongue acclaiming’ Jesus Christ as Lord (v. 11ab, G2’), with both descriptions reversing the implicit picture of Christ’s renunciation of the advantages and privileges of divinity in v. 6bc (G). While a newly appointed emperor might appear publicly before a crowd of senators, soldiers and citizens who would recognize and acclaim his accession, in Christ’s case, all of humanity (and all heavenly powers) are pictured as bowing before him and acknowledging his Lordship. Yet it is not the emperor who is shown to be the true Lord of all, it is Jesus Christ. It is a stunning picture that not only reverses his previous descent, but simultaneously lifts him up as the one to whom all should give allegiance, and whose exemplary mindset and actions people should pay close attention to. It is the crucified servant who is now exalted as Lord of all, and his cruciform attitude and actions that are now commended to the Philippians (and indeed to all believers). Given the citation in vv. 10-11 from Isa 45:23, and the unswerving monotheism of that passage, we must also conclude that Christ, as the recipient of this cosmic bowing and acclamation as κύριος, is being included in the divine identity, for there can only be one κύριος, not two. As such there is an implicit sense that Christ has been publicly restored to his existence in the visible form of God.

This seems to be confirmed as the story concludes with a reference to God the Father. As we have seen, the final narrative reprise of v. 11c (εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς, [F’]), echoes the opening clause of v. 6a (F), and together form an inclusio that frames the Christ-story as a complete unit. As an echo of the opening visual scene, the assertion that all that has happened is now to the glory of the Father presents an implicit picture of worship as the open and public acknowledgment of God’s glory. In the social milieu of Roman Philippi, as we saw, public recognition is necessary for honour and, we may add, glory, to be deemed genuine. Martin’s conclusion concerning v. 11c is apposite: ‘in spatial and kinetic terminology, the circle of His mission is complete; and heaven and earth are united by this act.’\textsuperscript{2}

In Stages I, II, and III (vv. 6-8) Christ’s equality with God and existence in the glorious form of God was hidden from human sight. In Stages IV and V it is revealed for all to see.

\textsuperscript{1} For example, Ps 96:9 LXX; Dan 3:52-88; 4:37 LXX; so EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 19.
\textsuperscript{2} R. P. MARTIN, Hymn of Christ, 277-278.
Thus, this narrative thread that I have called the story of the visible cruciform God is the story of the visibility of God seen in the person of Jesus Christ through his journey from pre-existence to incarnation and incarnation to the cross, and then his exaltation and public lordly status. This thread in the Christ-story prompts a response of humble submission, obedience and worship, which will result in harmonious communal relationships as the followers of Jesus Christ allow it to shape and transform their lives. Paul uses the drama of the visibility of God in Christ to present not only a deeply theological interpretation of the story of Christ but also the ground and paradigm for a cross-shaped existence in the believing community.

7.4 The Obedient Servant Motif

A second narrative thread also runs through the entire Christ-story, except this time extending further into the preceding and following paraenetic context of the passage (vv. 3-4, 5 and 12-13). This is Pattern #4, which I am calling the Obedient Servant Motif, and it consists of several inter-linking elements, tracing the motif of servant-obedience and centering on vv. 6-8 or Part I of the Christ-story.1

The inter-linking elements, which extend in both directions, show how closely integrated the Christ-story is into its paraenetic context, to the point that Paul’s deliberative argument would be rather incomplete without the Christ-story, and likewise the Christ-story incomplete without its paraenetic context. The motif as a whole shows how the humble obedience of Christ the δοῦλος is to become the obedience of his followers.

I have divided the obedient servant motif into six phases, as Table 7.3 below shows, together with various narrative markers for this Pattern within the Christ-story. Phases I and VI focus on the Philippian community, with Paul’s initial practical exhortation to them in vv. 1-4, and the following practical exhortation of vv. 12-18, of which vv. 3-4 and vv. 12-13, respectively, provide the main links with this motif in the Christ-story.

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1 Again, see Tables 6.1a and 6.1b, pp. 366-368 above to reference this narrative pattern and its respective markers against the text as a whole.
Phases II and V function as transitional sections in the development of this narrative thread. Initially, v. 5 (Phase II) represents a call to place the Philippian community’s needs (Phase I) alongside the example of Christ (Phases III and IV). Phase V, embracing the whole of Part II of the Christ-story (vv. 9-11), although focussing on v. 10b and v. 11a, represents an implicit universal call, in response to Christ’s actions in vv. 6-8, for all created beings to submit in humble obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord. As the Philippians are implicitly included in this universal group, this prepares the way for the specific exhortation to them in vv. 12-13 (and following), Phase VI.

In the middle are two phases (III and IV) which describe exemplary actions of Christ in vv. 6-8 or Part I of the Christ-story. Phase III (vv. 6a-7c) relates more specifically to Christ’s identity as a self-giving servant, while Phase IV (vv. [7d], 8a-d) emphasizes his praxis or humble, obedient service. Interestingly, Phase III contains a pattern of three conceptual elements (PS1a-PS1b, S1, LS1), which is repeated in the same order in Phase IV (PS2, S2, LS2), and together these two phases form the heart of this motif of the obedient servant.1

The motif is presented in tabular form in Table 7.3 below; an explanation of the individual elements (and their narrative markers) alongside how they function together will follow.2

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1 On the meaning of these markers, see the following note.

2 However, please notice, of the narrative markers within the Table (and subsequent Figure), capital letters denote markers pertaining to Christ: ‘PS’ refers to the ‘Posture of a Servant’; ‘S’ to the identity or praxis of a ‘Servant’; and ‘LS’ to the ‘Life of a Servant’; while the lower case markers, ‘rs,’ refer to the ‘response of [human] servants.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Marker</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Text element</th>
<th>Obedient-Servant function</th>
<th>Community Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial exhortation</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Doing] nothing from selfish ambition nor from empty glory, but in humility consider others as better than yourselves. Each of you looking not to your own interests, but rather [look] to the interests of others. (vv. 3-4)</td>
<td>The need and exhortation to the posture of servanthood (not selfishness, but humility and selflessness) and to actions of servanthood (selfless actions)</td>
<td>Philippian community: the posture (mindset) and practice needed among them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional verse</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>This have-as-a-mindset among yourselves, which is also in Christ Jesus (v. 5)</td>
<td>Call to adopt a mindset of selfless servanthood through relationship with Christ</td>
<td>Call to place the community need alongside the example of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS&lt;sub&gt;1a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Although in the form of God, not harpagmon did he consider equality with God (v. 6)</td>
<td>The posture of servanthood (not for selfish gain, personal advantage)</td>
<td>Identity (being): Christ as Self-giving Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS&lt;sub&gt;1b&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>but himself he emptied (v. 7a)</td>
<td>The posture of servanthood (self-giving)</td>
<td>Christ as Example: the posture and practice of Christ as Obedient-Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>taking the form of a slave (v. 7b)</td>
<td>Jesus becoming a servant/slave</td>
<td>Praxis (doing): Christ in humble, obedient service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>being born in the likeness of human beings (v. 7c)</td>
<td>Jesus being born as a human person (the life of a servant)</td>
<td>Praxis (doing): Christ in humble, obedient service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>and ... he humbled himself (v. 8a)</td>
<td>The posture of servanthood (humility)</td>
<td>Praxis (doing): Christ in humble, obedient service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>becoming obedient (v. 8b)</td>
<td>Jesus obeying (like a slave)</td>
<td>Praxis (doing): Christ in humble, obedient service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>to the extremity of death (v. 8c)</td>
<td>Jesus dying (on a cross – both as a human person and like a slave; the life of a servant)</td>
<td>Praxis (doing): Christ in humble, obedient service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rs&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>... every knee should bow ... (v. 10b)</td>
<td>Human response – submission, obedience (as a slave bows before a master/ruler)</td>
<td>Christ as Lord: the human response to Christ as Lord, and in relationship with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rs&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>every tongue should acclaim ... (v. 11a)</td>
<td>Human response – acclamation (acknowledgment of a ruler; pledged allegiance)</td>
<td>Christ as Lord: the human response to Christ as Lord, and in relationship with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following exhortation</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you ... (vv. 12-13)</td>
<td>Encouragement and exhortation to continued obedience (and implied selfless servanthood) out of submission to Christ as Lord, and in relationship with God</td>
<td>Philippian community: response to the Christ-story in ongoing practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3, The Obedient-Servant Motif
Inter-links between various phases of the motif and between particular narrative elements are depicted in Figure 7.6 on the following page.

In vv. 3-4 (Phase I) we find Paul calling the Philippians to the posture and actions appropriate to servanthood. He uses the double ‘not ... but ...’ structure of these verses to emphasize first what they should not be like, and secondly what they should be like with respect to both posture and praxis. Thus they need to display not selfishness, but humility and selflessness, and to practice the selfless actions of servanthood.

Significantly, as we have seen, Paul uses the same ‘not ... but ...’ structure to describe the posture and actions of Christ in vv. 6-8 (Phases III and IV). This structurally links vv. 3-4 with vv. 6-8, while v. 5 also is structurally linked to vv. 1-2 as well as providing the transition between vv. 1-4 and vv. 6-8. The first half (v. 5a) of this transition verse both looks back to the exhortations of vv. 1-4 (Phase I), ‘have this [foregoing] mindset among yourselves,’ and the second half (v. 5b) looks forward to the example of Christ in vv. 6-8 (Phases III and IV), ‘which is also in Christ Jesus.’ The present tense of v. 5 (including the implied ἐστίν of v. 5b) suggests that the call to adopt a mindset of selfless servanthood will take place through an ongoing relationship with Christ.

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1 See above, pp. 98-102 and pp. 170-171 (especially Table 4.1 there), 174.
2 Hence, note the paragraph linkages marked (i), (ii), and (iii) on the right of Figure 7.6 on the next page. See again my earlier discussions of these textual relationships on pp. 103-104 and especially in Section 4.3.4 (pp. 181-206) above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Marker</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Text element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial exhortation</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Doing] <strong>nothing</strong> from selfish ambition <strong>nor</strong> from empty glory, <strong>but</strong> in humility consider others as better than yourselves. Each of you looking <strong>not</strong> to your own interests, <strong>but</strong> rather [look] to the interests of others. (vv. 3-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional verse</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>This <strong>have-as-a-mindset</strong> among yourselves, (v. 5a) which is also in Christ Jesus (v. 5b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS₁a</td>
<td>III</td>
<td><strong>Although</strong> in the form of God, <strong>not</strong> harpagmon did he consider equality with God (v. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS₁b</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>but</strong> himself he emptied (v. 7a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S₁</td>
<td></td>
<td>taking the form of a slave (v. 7b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS₁</td>
<td></td>
<td>being born in the likeness of human beings (v. 7c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS₂</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td><strong>and</strong> ... he humbled himself (v. 8a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S₂</td>
<td></td>
<td>becoming obedient (v. 8b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS₂</td>
<td></td>
<td>to the extremity of death (v. 8c) even death on a cross (v. 8d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rs₁</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>... every knee should bow ... (v. 10b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rs2</td>
<td></td>
<td>every tongue should acclaim ... (v. 11a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following exhortation</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you ... (vv. 12-13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7.6, Inter-Links of the Obedient-Servant Motif**

Next, paralleling the exhortations given to the Philippians in vv. 3-4, Paul describes first negatively what Christ was not in terms of his posture or mindset (the ‘not ...’ clause of v. 6bc), and then positively what his posture actually was (the ‘but ...’ clause of v. 7a and, via a paratactic koi, the parallel clause of v. 8a). The narrative markers PS₁a and PS₁b in Phase III
and PS2 in Phase IV refer respectively to three aspects of Christ’s posture as a servant. Firstly, although he has the high status and position of being divine, he regards this as *not* being for his own selfish gain or personal advantage (PS1a, v. 6bc). In sharp contrast he positively adopts the posture or mindset of servanthood in two specific ways, as a self-giving posture (PS1b, ‘*he emptied himself*’; v. 7a) and as the posture of humility (PS2 ‘*he humbled himself*;’ v. 8a). While the main verb clauses of vv. 7a and 8a describe actions, they are actions arising from a mindset or attitude of selfless servanthood.

Next in each of Phases III and IV, v. 7b (element S1) describes Jesus becoming a servant or slave (δοῦλος), while v. 8b (element S2) describes an action very closely tied conceptually with servanthood: ‘*he became obedient.*’ The first, however, describes Jesus’ identity as a servant, while the second describes his praxis as a servant. Notably within the thread of this motif in the Christ-story, what Christ becomes in each case follows from the posture-in-action he has adopted; thus, he becomes who (and what) he has already decided to be, and both his identity and praxis spring from what we have termed his prior ‘interpretative decision’ about how he regarded his equality with God and what that meant to him practically speaking (as we saw previously, ‘not a matter of getting, but of giving’).

Following from this, two further elements define what I will call the ‘Life of a Servant,’ referring respectively to his birth and death, for which I am employing the markers LS1 and LS2. In Phase III, in a phrase partly specifying further the meaning of Christ ‘taking the form of a servant’ (v. 7b) and partly specifying his ‘self-emptying’ (v. 7a), v. 7c describes Jesus being born as a human person (element LS1). This relates the identity of the incarnate Christ as a self-giving servant as being from his birth. Correspondingly, in Phase IV, the culmination of the exemplary actions of Christ is in his dying (v. 8cd, element LS2). Christ’s death on a cross is both as a human person and like a slave (with the cross understood as a slave’s execution). Taken as the third element in the repeated sequence of vv. 6-7c (Part I.1 of the overall narrative) and v. [7d],8a-d (Part I.2 of the story), LS1 and LS2 thus delimit Christ’s incarnate life with the actions of his birth and death, which speaks to his obedient servanthood as embracing the whole of his life, arising from a posture adopted in his pre-existence, but expressed in his incarnate existence (PS1a-PS1b, PS2), and which includes both his identity and his praxis as a servant (S1 and S2). The repetition of this simple narrative pattern across the two stages of Part I of the Christ-story heightens the impact of
this Obedient Servant Motif and thus the example of Christ in the actions of vv. 6-8. The movement from Phase III focussing on the identity of Christ as a self-giving servant to Phase IV emphasizing his praxis in humble obedient service, all the way to death, also highlights the unity of Christ’s personhood and actions; what he does perfectly expresses who he is.

Part II of the Christ-story focuses upon God’s subsequent exaltation of Christ and granting of the highest name, ‘Lord’. It represents a divine vindication of Christ’s actions and as such implicitly commends both the posture and praxis of his humble, obedient servanthood. Yet Part II of the narrative (Phase V within this narrative thread) also contains an implicit call to the Philippians (and all believers) to adopt the posture of Christ as an obedient servant themselves. The purpose (ίνα) statement of vv. 10-11 mentions that in response to Christ’s exalted lordship one day ‘every knee should bow’ before him (narrative elements rs1, v. 10b) and ‘every tongue acclaim’ him as Lord (rs2, v. 11ab). As we have seen, while all created beings are included among those envisaged bowing and acclaiming (v. 10c), implicitly a narrower referent is intended also – all believers, including those in Philippi at the time of Paul’s letter to them.1 They too should now bow before Christ and acclaim him as their Lord. While Paul’s language is drawn from the LXX (Isa 45:23), against the political background of the passage, for the Philippians the verb καταπτωμαι would carry connotations of submission and obedience to a lord or master,2 and in its context ξομολογηθαι likewise would imply not only public acknowledgment of a ruler, but also a pledge of allegiance to him.3 Thus, Phase V describes the human response to Christ as Lord generally; and those who bow before him willingly and acclaim him as their Lord, show forth their own attitude or posture of submission and allegiance to Christ, and their willingness therefore to be his obedient servants.

In this way Phase V functions as a transition from Christ’s example (Phases III and IV) through to the concrete exhortations specifically addressed to the Philippians immediately following the Christ-story, and in particular to vv. 12-13 (Phase VI).4 Here the Philippian

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1 For my previous discussion of this, see above, pp. 387-388, 390-392.
2 See above, p. 387.
3 See pp. 331-332, 388-390 above.
4 Observe, at the right of Figure 7.6 above, the paragraph linkages marked (iv), (v), and finally (vi).
community comes back into the spotlight as Paul encourages them in continued obedience (‘just as you have always obeyed’) and implicitly exhorts them to selfless servanthood out of submission to Christ as Lord (v. 12a, looking back to the implicit imperatives of vv. 10-11), and in relationship with God, who is at work in their midst (v. 13). This is to be their response to the Christ-story in their ongoing communal life – both putting into practice the initial exhortations of vv. 3-4 and following the example of the obedient servant, Jesus Christ. There is a sense of participation in the Christ-story in that they are both called to follow the posture and practice of obedient servanthood as exemplified in the life of Christ, but they are implicitly also involved in that story, given that the implicit purpose of Christ’s actions and God’s response to them is to lead them to precisely such a place in their own submission to Christ. Thus, the paraenesis arising from the Christ-story is grounded both soteriologically (Christ’s obedient servanthood to the point of death on a cross creates the possibility of their own obedience, as they ‘work out their salvation with fear and trembling’ [v. 12d]) and ethically, as their ongoing obedience (which is not argued for, but rather assumed) has its content and character informed and shaped by the exemplary life of Christ’s obedient service.1

Hence, what I am calling the narrative thread of the obedient-servant motif (Pattern #4) embraces both the hortatory frame passages of vv. 3-4 (part of vv. 1-4) and vv. 12-13 (part of vv. 12-18), as well as the Christ-story itself (vv. 5, 6-11). The motif integrates and unites the needs of the Philippian community and Paul’s exhortations to them (vv. 3-4, 12-13; Phases I and VI), via two transitional phases (II and V; vv. 5, 10-11), with the example of Christ the obedient servant in vv. 6-8 (Phases III and IV). Christ’s obedient service both models and enables a life of obedient servanthood to be worked out practically in the community of believers in Philippi, and indeed in all places where the obedient one is acknowledged as Lord.

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1 Please refer back to my previous detailed discussion of the theme of obedience in v. 8 of the Christ-story and in v. 12 of the following paraenesis in Chapter 4 above, pp. 209-210, 219-229. Thus, in relation to the debate between supporters of the kerygmatic interpretation of the passage and supporters of the ethical interpretation, it would seem that a false dichotomy has been posed; it is not a case of either one interpretation or the other, but a case of both/and. Cf. with differing emphases, but the same basic agreement, FEE, *Philippians* (NICNT), 230-237 (esp. 234-235 & n. 23); and EASTMAN, ‘Philippians 2:6-11,’ 2-4 & n. 7.
Philippians 2:6-11, thus, may be described as a \(\sqrt{\text{ }}\)-shaped story of Christ in which several key narrative reversals have worked together to create a modified chiasmus. But though that defines the overall shape of the story, we have now identified and outlined two important narrative threads which run through the whole and develop it further. I have referred to these threads respectively as (i) the story of the visible cruciform God, and (ii) the motif of the obedient servant. These two threads not only help to unify the story but also supply some of its christological and theological depth and beauty, as well as helping to integrate it thoroughly with its paraenetic context. As we have seen, each of the two narrative threads serves in different ways to allow the Christ-story to function both as soteriology and as exemplar and paradigm for the Christian community.

Our journey thus far has been reached by regarding the prose of this exalted passage as a narrative in terms of both form and content, and we have seen how very well those two aspects are integrated in this particular text. To this point, however, we have not yet engaged in a thorough-going literary analysis of the passage. Building upon our journey up until now and upon all the conclusions we have reached thus far, it is time to do just that.

### 7.5 An Overall Narrative Analysis of the Christ-Story

All our previous work has brought us to the position where we may analyse in literary terms the overall passage as a narrative. What follows in this section will bring our foregoing analysis to a climax as we see how the passage functions narratively before its original listening audience of Paul’s friends in Roman Philippi. It seems appropriate first to present a one-page summary of this analysis, and this I do in Tables 7.4a and 7.4b, which follow below. Given the integration of form and content in this passage, the analysis is not overly complicated and will somewhat speak for itself. Yet I will seek to explicate it in conclusion to the present Chapter, with reference to some of the main conclusions already reached in this study.¹

In the following tables, therefore, I will display the Greek and English text of Phil 2:6-11 (along with v. 5) as a narrative chiasmus, while continuing to respect the syntactical

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¹ However, I will refrain from repeating all the exegetical conclusions previously discussed; for these details, reference will need to be made to the preceding sections of this chapter and those before it.
structures of the text, and will identify not only the major syntactical (and narrative) divisions of the passage (Narrative Pattern #1), but also, respectively, the narrative setting, characters, stage, and function of the various text elements. Primarily these will be noted in relation to the overall narrative (Pattern #2), rather than to the two narrative threads we have just considered (Patterns #3 and #4). To do this it is best once more that we display the text and narrative analysis in each table on a single page.

It will be helpful also to keep the modified ‘V’-shape, \( \backslash \), of the story in mind as we proceed, so I will reproduce this overall narrative shape in Figure 7.7 following the tables, this time adding in descriptions of the particular narrative stage and function for each text element.

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1 In the Tables below, the chiastic structure of the text will be highlighted, with the main events of the narrative chiasmus identified with their respective narrative markers (A, B, C, D, E etc.) and bold text for the corresponding main verb clauses, opening participial clause (v. 6a), closing prepositional clause (v. 11c), and the climactic central prepositional clause (v. 8cd). (It should be noted also that v. 11b has an implied main verb.) In Table 7.4b (English text) logical connectors will also be shown with italics.

2 See p. 400 above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactical Division</th>
<th>Narrative Setting</th>
<th>Narrative Characters</th>
<th>Narrative Stage</th>
<th>Narrative Function</th>
<th>Narrative Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Philippian church</td>
<td>Philippian church</td>
<td>Transitional verse, Narrative intro.</td>
<td>Link (paraenesis to narrative)</td>
<td>τούτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦς</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I.1</td>
<td>Pre-existent state, heavenly glory</td>
<td>Christ Jesus (in God’s presence)</td>
<td>Divine glory (&amp; [implied] equality)</td>
<td>Inclusio, Point of attack</td>
<td>οὗ ἐστὶν ὁ παράκλητος</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decision regarding equality with God</td>
<td>Implied foil, Surprise #1, Narrative conflict</td>
<td>ήγῆσατο τὸ ἐννοεῖ τὰ θεοῖς,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incarnation as a human person, state as a slave, leading to slave’s death</td>
<td>Christ Jesus (as a human person among humanity)</td>
<td>Descent #1 Incarnation &amp; slave status</td>
<td>Surprise #2</td>
<td>άλλα ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπους</td>
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<td>Descent #2 Humiliation, obedience</td>
<td>Surprise #3</td>
<td>ήγῆσατο τὸ ἐννοεῖ τὰ θεοῖς,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Descent #3 Nadir, status of slave’s death</td>
<td>Shocking climax of the story</td>
<td>ήγῆσατο τὸ ἐννοεῖ τὰ θεοῖς,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part II</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.1</td>
<td>Progressive elevation to exalted state; (implied) heavenly glory</td>
<td>God (acting on Christ Jesus)</td>
<td>Ascent #1 Exalted status</td>
<td>Turning point Reversal #1</td>
<td>διὸ καὶ οὗ θεοί τούτοι ὑπήρξαν πάντων ὑπὲρ τῶν όντων</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ascent #2 Granting of Name</td>
<td>Reversal #2</td>
<td>καὶ ἐχόμεθα αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντων όντων,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Present and future exalted state, now before humankind (and all creation), heavenly glory</td>
<td>Human persons (and other created beings) responding to Jesus Christ as Lord</td>
<td>Ascent #3 Present and future universal acclamation of status as Lord (divine equality)</td>
<td>Reversal #3 Dénouement</td>
<td>ήνα ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ πάν τὸ σώμα, καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ τῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ τῆς καταστασίας καὶ τοῦ ἅγιου κληρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>God the Father</td>
<td>Glorifying God</td>
<td>A' εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.</td>
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</table>

Table 7.4a, Narrative Analysis of the Christ-Story - Greek Text
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactical Division</th>
<th>Narrative Setting</th>
<th>Narrative Characters</th>
<th>Narrative Stage</th>
<th>Narrative Function</th>
<th>Narrative Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td>Philippian church</td>
<td>Philippian church</td>
<td>Transitional verse, Narrative intro.</td>
<td>Link (paraenesis to narrative)</td>
<td>This mindset have among yourselves which also [is] in Christ Jesus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.1</td>
<td>Presence of God</td>
<td>Christ Jesus</td>
<td>Divine glory (&amp; [implied] equality)</td>
<td>Inclusio, Point of attack</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decision regarding equality with God</td>
<td>Implied foil, Surprise #1, Narrative conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christ Jesus</td>
<td>Descent #1 Incarnation &amp; slave status</td>
<td>Surprise #2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(in God’s presence)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incarnation</td>
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<td>Descent #2 Humiliation, obedience</td>
<td>Surprise #3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>as a human person, state as a slave, leading to slave’s death</td>
<td></td>
<td>Descent #3 Nadir, status of slave’s death</td>
<td>Shocking climax of the story</td>
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<tr>
<td>I.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Christ Jesus</td>
<td>Ascent #1 Exalted status</td>
<td>Turning point</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(as a human person among humanity)</td>
<td>Ascent #2 Granting of Name</td>
<td>Reversal #1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>God</td>
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<td>God (acting on Christ Jesus)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(acting on</td>
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<td>Ascent #3 Present and future universal acclamation of status as Lord (divine equality)</td>
<td>Reversal #3 Dénouement</td>
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<td>Christ Jesus)</td>
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<td>Climax of Part II</td>
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<td>God the Father</td>
<td>Glorifying God</td>
<td>Reprise, Inclusio</td>
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<td>Part II</td>
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<td>Ascent #1 Exalted status</td>
<td>Turning point</td>
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<tr>
<td>II.1</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
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<td>Ascent #2 Granting of Name</td>
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<td>elevation to</td>
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<td>God (acting on Christ Jesus)</td>
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<td>exalted state; (implied) heavenly glory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ascent #3 Present and future universal acclamation of status as Lord (divine equality)</td>
<td>Reversal #3 Dénouement</td>
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<td>Climax of Part II</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Present and future exalted state, now before humankind (and all creation), heavenly glory</td>
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<td>God the Father</td>
<td>Glorifying God</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reprise, Inclusio</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A who [although] in the form of God being
B1 not to be used for his own advantage
B2 did he consider the being equal with God

C but himself he emptied [by] the form of a slave taking [that is, by] in the likeness of human beings being born
D and in appearance being found as a human being he humbled himself [by] becoming obedient
E to the extremity of death, even death on a cross.

D' Therefore also God him has highly exalted
C' and has granted him the name that is above every name

B1' so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth
B2' that [the] Lord [is] Jesus Christ
A' to the glory of God the Father.

Table 7.4b, Narrative Analysis of the Christ-Story - English Text
The specific narrative stages and the function of various text elements seen in Tables 7.4a and 7.4b are depicted graphically in Figure 7.7 below:

![Figure 7.7, Narrative Stage and Function in the Various Elements of the Christ-Story](image)

The setting of the Christ-story progresses through various stages as the plot moves forward. The transitional v. 5 implies a dual setting of the Philippian church community (v. 5a) and being in the presence of Christ and God (suggested by the implied present tense ἐστίν in the elliptical v. 5b): ‘have this mindset among yourselves, which is also [now] in Christ Jesus.’

Then the story proper moves from Christ’s pre-existent state and heavenly glory (v. 6) to his earthly existence, via his incarnation as a human person and condition as a slave, leading ultimately to a slave’s death on a cross (vv. 7-8). In Part II of the story, Christ’s progressive elevation to an exalted state (v. 9) implies a resumption of him being in heavenly glory, which extends from the time of Christ’s exaltation, to the ‘present,’ and ultimately into the future, when Christ appears before humankind (and all creation) who acclaim him as Lord (vv. 10-11).

In terms of the characters of the Christ-story, very obviously the main character, introduced in v. 5b, is Christ Jesus, and all actions, save for the final reprise of v. 11c, revolve around him. He is the protagonist of the first half of the story (and the subject of all the main verbs),
which includes descriptions of him initially in the presence of God (v. 6) and then as a human person and among humanity (vv. 7-8). As we have seen, in the second half God becomes the protagonist, but acts upon Christ Jesus (v. 9). In vv. 10-11b other characters are introduced into the story, human persons (and heavenly beings) who now respond to Jesus Christ as Lord. Finally we see that all the preceding actions are intended to bring glory to God the Father (v. 11c).

An introduction to the narrative is provided by the transitional v. 5, which first mentions his name and is thus the referent of the relative pronoun ὁς, of v. 6a. As already explained, this verse relates the way of thinking (and behaving) that Paul expects of the Philippians to the way of thinking (and behaving) of Christ Jesus as risen Lord (implied by the present tense of v. 5), but which was exemplified in his past actions, described in vv. 6-8. Verse 5 thus serves as a link between the preceding paraenesis and the narrative itself. It also creates interest as listeners upon hearing v. 5 would expect narration of some exemplary aspect of the person or life of Christ.

The participial opening clause of the narrative itself (v. 6a) describes Christ in divine glory, implicitly in the presence of God, and, in light of v. 6bc, implicitly with full equality with God. It functions as a point of attack for the following narrative, raising the question for the status-concerned Philippians, what would someone in Christ’s position and with his most high, divine status do? As the sentence and narration continues this opening line would be heard as a concessive clause, ‘although he was in the form of God …,’ setting up the ‘although … not … but …’ narrative structure which dominates vv. 6-8. In addition, by the end of the story, v. 6a and the concluding purpose clause of the story, v. 11c, will be perceived as a rhetorical inclusio, defining and joining the beginning and end of the story (narrative elements A and A’ in our chiastic scheme).

What follows in the main verb clause of v. 6bc, however, represents the first unexpected surprise of the story (Surprise #1 in Figure 7.7), very emphatically introduced with the words, οὐχ ἔφησεν. Narratively, a ‘surprise’ describes a situation when what happens violates
expectations that listeners may have formed about a character or their actions. The whole clause, as I suggested in the previous chapter, would be heard implicitly as a contrast with the Roman emperor and other ancient rulers, perhaps including Alexander the Great, who have used their power, status and position for their own advantage and benefit. Thus, v. 6bc functions as an implied narrative foil, setting up a very radical contrast between Christ’s actions and those that would be expected of a powerful ruler with the position and status of someone such as the Emperor or Alexander. Implicitly this becomes the beginning of an arresting critique of imperial power and indeed the empire as a whole as one of two πολιτεύματα competing for their allegiance (3:20; 1:27). The clause thus creates the primary narrative conflict in the whole drama, arousing tension for listeners as Christ begins to act contrarily to typical Roman expectations for someone in his position. In his case, of course, he has a unique status, which no Roman ruler could match, existing in the form of God and being equal with God. But this fact heightens the tension felt yet further. When ‘surprise’ is combined with rising narrative tension or suspense both rhetorical impact and emotional engagement are heightened.

The stage in the narrative reached in v. 6bc (narrative elements B₁&₂) is not yet one of action, but rather one of decision – how Christ considered his equality with God. As we have seen this is first stated negatively in v. 6bc, ‘not as something to be used for his own advantage,’ and in vv. 7-8 we see the actions arising from the positive side of his interpretation of being equal with God. Thus narrative stage B₁-2 explicates Christ’s attitude, disposition, or mindset, first referred to in v. 5, while narrative stages C, D and E (vv. 7-8) develop that in practical terms. As noted, Paul had also asked the Philippians to share a common φρόνησις (v. 2) prior to the practical actions he urged them to adopt in their mutual relationships (vv. 3-4). In both cases one’s praxis arises from one’s identity and posture.

Downward action in the story, however, begins in explicit contrast to what Christ had refused to be like, announced by the ἀλλά in v. 7a, which embraces the main verb clauses of v. 7a (element C) and v. 8a (D), all the way to his death on the cross in v. 8cd (E). Thus, the three clauses of v. 7abc, centering on the main clause of v. 7a represent what I have called Descent

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1 Abrams & Harpham (eds.), *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 266.
#1, and the second Surprise of the story (#2). Rather than be self-serving, Christ emptied himself, pouring himself out, giving of himself as he took on the form of a slave and was born in the likeness of human kind. Each clause in narrative element C (v. 7abc) contributes to the impact of the surprise felt at this point, with the unimaginable drop in status experienced by Christ from being in the form of God to taking the form of a slave rather shocking in its radical contrast to behaviour observed in the lives of the rulers of the age. Similarly, the description of Christ, as equal with God, being born as a human person describes an event of immense profundity for both ancient and modern readers and listeners.

Surprise #3 is experienced as Christ, in narrative element D (vv. 7d-8b), as the one in appearance as a human person now humbles himself and, like a lowly slave, becomes obedient, and this represents the second movement of Descent (#2) in the story. The self-giving one is the self-humbling one, who not only is an obedient servant in identity and posture, but also in his praxis. This is so unlike other rulers that the Philippians may have known or heard of.

The most effective surprises, especially in realistic narratives, are those which turn out, in retrospect, to have been grounded in what has gone before, even though an audience may have made wrong inferences from the information they have had to that point in the story. In this case Paul’s story causes them to re-evaluate not only Christ’s divine status in light of his revealed, selfless, self-giving and humble personhood, but they gain a new revelation of what being the one and only God really means. In consequence, the surprising character of Christ in posture and praxis prompts a radical re-evaluation of their own situation, status and communal relationships.

Narrative events B1&2, C and D largely describe the example of Christ for the Philippian Christians, but their full impact is not felt until the culmination of the third movement of narrative Descent (#3), v. 8cd, the climax of the story, Jesus’ death on a cross. Tension and suspense have been building to this point and they now reach a tumultuous peak, which ironically is the absolute nadir and pit of Christ’s descent, the point from which he can go no

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1 ABRAMS & HARPHAM (eds.), *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 266.
lower (element E). The phrase μὲν χριστοῦ, ‘to the extremity of death’ (v. 8c) highlights the full extent of actions C and D, while θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (v. 8d) goes beyond surprise now, totally shocking the listening ‘saints’ (1:1) and, as already mentioned, taking their breath away in so doing. For first hearers the unthinkable has happened, but the paradox of the visible cruciform God will deeply impact their individual and corporate existence from this point onwards, and any who hear the story repeated will marvel.

After the pause of this shocking and numbing climax, the next four words (διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς) will signal a dramatic turning point, and a change of protagonist, and listeners will expect that a consequential action is about to take place. As they hear the prominent following pronoun, […] ὁ θεὸς τῶν, immediately announcing the direct object of the following main verb, ὑπερψωσέν, they will know that God’s responsive action was directed to Christ personally (as opposed to being an impersonal commendation, addressed to others about him). The verb ‘to exalt’ and the emphatic word order (recall the micro-chiastic structures of the main verb clauses of vv. 7-8 and v. 9 in Figure 7.4 above) will also convey at once that a reversal is taking place. Thus, v. 9a (narrative element D’) signals not only the turning point of the whole story and the beginning of Part II, but also represents Ascent #1 and Reversal #1. As shown in Figure 7.7 above, the first stage of ascent corresponds to the third stage of descent, while Reversal #1 corresponds as a reversing action to Surprise #3.

As we have seen, implicitly God’s exaltation of Christ must have included raising him from the dead, and logically this implicit event would be part of the stage of Ascent #1, though Paul has chosen not to mention it here, instead focussing on the visible status concerns associated with the motif of humiliation-exaltation and on his implicit counter-imperial critique for which mention of the resurrection was not greatly relevant. The public, personal honouring of Christ is however important, and that it is a hyper-exaltation (an elative) with God doing the exaltation places Christ in a unique position with a status far above that of other ancient rulers including the emperor.

The second narrative stage of ascent (#2; corresponding to Descent #2) is narrative element C’ (v. 9bc), the granting of the highest name, which is κύριος. While following from and
building upon the exaltation, the gracious gifting of the name above all names (Reversal #2) reverses Christ’s previous self-giving (C, v. 7a; Surprise #2). Again, the micro-chiastic reversal of syntactic elements would be picked up by the hearers, and would re-emphasize the overall reversal between elements C and C’. This second major reversal is akin partly to an imperial investiture and partly to an investiture of the son of a king by the king himself. However, as I have stressed previously Christ is not being elevated to a status he did not already possess, but is now being elevated (i) publicly, (ii) in recognition of his selfless, self-giving actions, and (iii) as a human person who had become the obedient Servant going all the way to dying on a Roman cross.

The ἵνα (purpose) clause of vv. 10a-11b implicitly points to a preceding third stage of ascent (#3), corresponding to the first descent (#1), wherein Christ has been placed once more at the narrative level of divine glory (the horizontal top of our √-shape) with the unique status of divine lordship. This corresponds to a newly appointed ruler now being openly presented before the general populace; within Freytag’s narrative structure, this would be the incident of narrative resolution. But again the imperial accession, while alluded to, is left far behind in the implicit comparison: an emperor was presented merely to senators, soldiers and representative citizens at the imperial court, but Christ is presented before every person and heavenly being ‘in heaven and on earth and under the earth’ (v. 10c). The purpose of this public presentation is that now (for those freely choosing allegiance to Christ) and particularly one day in the future (for all peoples, whether freely or involuntarily) every knee might bow before Jesus Christ and every tongue acclaim him as κύριος. Implicitly these public acts of homage and submission recognize Christ’s full equality with God and inclusion in the divine identity. Thus, narrative element B1-2’ (vv. 10a-11b) represents the consequence of the resolving incident, what is appropriately the dénouement of the story, and Reversal #3 (reversing the action of the first surprise [#1]). The final acclamation of v. 11b is appropriately the climax or high point of Part II of the narrative, though structurally, at the centre of our chiasmus, the crucifixion of Christ (element E; v. 8cd) retains the position and narrative status as climax of the story as whole.
The final narrative element, A’ (v. 11c) functions as a reprise recalling v. 6a, element A, and with it forms the two elements of an inclusio, unifying and framing the whole story. The two elements are in part parallel (as references to glory associated with God) and in part a subtle reversal (in terms of the direction of the ‘glory-giving’). Thus, the story which began with Christ appearing in divine glory (implicitly in the presence of God the Father) now ends, in view of all that has preceded, with glory being offered to God the Father.

The three major reversals of D’, C’, and B1-2’ in Part II of the story represent God’s vindication of the choices, actions and suffering of Christ in Part I, including his identity, mindset, and character. They commend the ‘lordly example’ of Christ’s posture and praxis to the Philippians for their communal life (and to all hearers/readers of the story), and represent a paradigm of encouragement to suffering Christians wherever they might be, and to servant-hearted and other-centred followers of Christ that one day their sufferings will be vindicated and their humble, obedient selfless service will also be recognized by God. The two halves of the story belong together, and the multiple narrative links between Part I and Part II confirms the inseparability of the story and the importance of both halves.

Furthermore, the two narrative threads we have examined, the Story of the Visible Cruciform God, and the Motif of the Obedient Servant, which run through the story as a whole (and, in the latter case, into the preceding and following paraenetic context) also serve to highlight the essential unity of the Christ-story.

While the example of Christ is seen in only Part I of the story, and Part II represents not Christ’s, but God’s responsive actions (and outcomes arising from them), as a whole the passage provides a paradigm for the Christian life, which Paul will pick up when he tells his own story in chapter 3 of the letter (especially in vv. 3-14, 20-21). Both sides of the Christ-story are represented analogously in Paul’s story, repeatedly, and in various ways. This, however, must remain a subject for further exploration outside the present study. Notably, though, when Paul recounts his spiritual autobiography, the climax of his own story is reached in Phil 3:10-11, where he affirms his desire ‘to know Christ’ (τοῦ γνῶσιν αὐτόν; v. 10a) and elucidates that ultimate goal not by reference to Christ’s humiliation and
exaltation, but rather to his death and resurrection: ‘[knowing] the power of his resurrection and the participation in his sufferings (καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ), becoming conformed [with him] to his death (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ) and somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead (εἰ πώς καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξαναστάσιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν)’ (vv. 10b-11).

Given that conformity to the resurrection of Christ is explicitly put into the eschatological future (3:11, 12-14, 20-21), it is significant that Paul emphasizes conformity to Christ’s death (3:10d) as the goal of the present Christian life. This, I suggest, especially in light of the subsequent reference to the ‘cross’ as a determinant of Christian ethical behaviour (3:17-18), is an implicit reference to conformity to Part I of the Christ-story. It includes participation (κοινωνία) in Christ’s sufferings (3:10c) and would appear to be a life that is presently empowered by the resurrection of Christ (3:10b). However, full conformity to the resurrection of Christ (an unstated but implicit aspect of Christ’s exaltation in Phil 2:9) must await an eschatological fulfilment, when full conformity to Part II of the Christ-story is realised in ‘the transformation of the body of humiliation into conformity with the body of [Christ’s] glory’ (3:21), which implicitly involves the resurrection from the dead. In this way the Christ-story as a whole is paradigmatic of the whole of the Christian life from present experience and existence (in conformity to Christ’s death) to the future eschatological fulfilment (in final conformity to his resurrection and exalted state of glory).

This concludes our narrative exegetical and literary analysis of the Christ-story of Philippians 2:6-11, and with what has been accomplished in the preceding two chapters, one hopes it has evoked in the reader, as in this writer, a fresh sense of discovery and appreciation for this superbly crafted and structured master narrative. All journeys and climbs must come to end, however, and so we move to our final concluding chapter …
Part IV

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION: NARRATIVE SHAPE AND PARAENETIC PURPOSE
IN PAUL’S LETTER TO PHILIPPI

8.1 A Summary of the Journey Taken

We arrive, then, at the end of a long journey – a long and sometimes torturous climb, in fact – and it is time now to reflect albeit briefly on what has been achieved in this investigation, and to glance ahead to how this unique story of Jesus Christ might not only impact Pauline scholarship in the future, but also to consider how it might impact the lives of modern readers and hearers of this narrative in Philippians 2, this present reader/writer, included.

Our journey began with an introduction to Paul’s letter to Philippi in Chapter 2 and various aspects of importance for understanding the letter, especially where those features of the letter or its interpretation had some impact upon our understanding of the Christ-story within it. Three aspects of that introduction need to be emphasized here. One was our recognition of the intersecting stories of the letter – Paul’s, the Philippians’ (including the two co-workers of Paul addressed in the final chapter of the letter), those of their respective emissaries, Timothy and Epaphroditus, and especially the story of Christ in Phil 2:6-11. Links and interconnections between them are significant and need to be appreciated. The intersecting stories of the letter function also to highlight its unity and to ground it for later readers as accessible stories of real people engaging with a real world. The second related, introductory aspect was our recognition of a political background to the letter, written to Christians living in a Roman colony, not all with Roman citizenship, but all very much dominated by the Roman empire, its administration, and its values, and at the period when it was written to them, beginning to experience the initial impact of a clash between living in a Roman πολίτευμα while belonging also to the heavenly πολίτευμα. We saw Paul’s primary concern for the Philippians expressed in the propositio of the letter (1:27-30), that in this increasingly
difficult context, they might live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ. We noted that the letter, in rhetorical terms, was predominantly deliberative, focussing on a series of examples and exhortations to prompt desired actions related to the circumstances in Philippi, and that the *propositio* was therefore worked out in a wider paraenetic context of the letter’s *probatio* (2:1-4:3), in which 2:6-11 appears as a central and important passage. In particular, this account of Christ serves to support and exemplify, in a nuanced way, the paraenesis of 2:1-4 and 2:12-18, yet it is also closely linked to the remainder of the wider paraenetic section.

Our journey moved then to considering three chapters in Part II, dealing with major interpretation lines in the study of Phil 2:5-11: Chapter 3 dealt with the related issues of the genre or form of the passage and its authorship; Chapter 4 dealt with issue of the function of the passage in its present epistolary context; and Chapter 5 considered the implicit stories within the whole passage, focussing in particular upon those stories implied by a correct understanding of the text of Phil 2:6bc, where we drew upon the influential contribution of N. T. Wright.

Those three chapters laid the groundwork to move to Part III, where this study makes its primary contribution to Philippian studies, and where we began to analyse the passage as a narrative, in an integrated fashion, in terms of its form, function and content. Thus, Chapter 6 dealt with the issue of narrative patterns and syntax in the Christ-Story, including examining previous attempts at finding the narrative patterns in the story and a literary shape for the passage *as* a narrative,¹ and providing a detailed account of the narrative syntax of the passage – how the various phrases and clauses work together to shape the whole narrative. Chapter 7, the summit of our journey, as it were, focussed on outlining a specific narrative shape for the Christ-story, identifying a modified narrative chiastic structure revolving around key narrative reversals in the story. From explication of these narrative reversals, we moved on to consider two important narrative threads which run through the entire story, uniting its two halves, and linking it to the paraenetic context of the epistle. This led, finally

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¹ That is, beyond the search for a hymnic structure, which in Chapter 3 we had deemed to be a task no longer deserving of attention, given my conclusion that the passage is not an early Christian hymn, and represents (Pauline) prose narrative both in form and content.
to detailed literary, narrative analysis, considering the narrative setting, characters, stage and function of the various textual elements within the story.

8.2 Form, Function and Meaning in Philippians 2:5-11

In what follows here, I will refrain from recalling the numerous exegetical and some theological conclusions that have been made along the way, as well as their implications (for, though each exegetical decision on each textual element is important in itself, including its help toward arriving at a satisfactory understanding and interpretation of the whole, there are simply too many to list), and I will instead focus on the main ‘big picture’ results arising from this study.

Four primary results from the foregoing investigation may be noted here: (i) firstly, this study has sought to demonstrate that Philippians 2:6-11 represents a Pauline prose narrative (and not a pre-Pauline hymn), which may be called the Christ-story (results from Chapter 3); (ii) secondly, it should therefore be interpreted as prose narrative in terms of its form, function, and content, albeit situated in its present epistolary paraenetic context (the concern of Chapters 4 and 5), a task we have now accomplished in some depth; and (iii) thirdly, as I have argued, treating it as a narrative in both form and content has provided several fresh insights into this much studied and debated passage, including some that have hitherto remained largely unnoticed (a focus of Chapters 6 and 7); and (iv) fourthly, the enterprise thus provides a framework which allows some previous major contributions to the study of this passage to be brought together (which had been in part discussed in Chapter 5), in order to form what I humbly offer as a more comprehensive overall interpretation of the passage (presented in Chapter 6 and, especially, Chapter 7).

More specifically, within those four over-arching results, this thesis offers the following conclusions:

(i) The Christ-story of Philippians 2:6-11 should be interpreted as an exemplary-paradigmatic Pauline narrative, wherein: (a) as an exemplary story, it models the
mindset in thought and action that Paul desires to be reproduced in the lives of his status-obsessed hearers and subsequent readers, thus supporting the surrounding paraenesis in the epistle; and (b) as a paradigmatic narrative it offers a structure for both describing and shaping Christian life in various respects, including providing hope and encouragement of vindication for those who remain united and faithful to Christ in the face of opposition, and in the face of a (yet future) ultimate conformity to the glory of the exalted (and resurrected) Christ. But it also invites participation in Christ, so that his story may begin to shape the lives of his followers, both presently (largely in conformity to Part I of the story, vv. 6-8), and until the last day (in conformity to Part II of the narrative, vv. 9-11).

(ii) Related to the exemplary character of the story is the conclusion we drew from an implication of Hoover and Wright’s rendering of v. 6bc, that the Christ-story is also implicitly a story of God and God’s character, revealing who God is through the mindset, actions and journey of Christ.

(iii) The Christ-story also implicitly relates a counter-imperial narrative, with implicit contrasts to the emperor and other ancient rulers, in which Paul implicitly calls the Roman Philippians to supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and to the new heavenly politeuma under his lordship, while also providing them with encouragement as a Christian community in Philippi to appear as lights in a hostile world, with hope for future vindication of their steadfastness and unity in the face of such opposition. With the previous result linked to the present one, we may then see the Christ-story as a counter-imperial story of divine character.

(iv) Fourthly, I showed that Paul has given the Christ-story a (modified ‘V’) \( \sqrt{V} \)-shape, and has carefully crafted it to narrate several key reversals in the journey of Jesus Christ, which has resulted in the creation of a modified narrative chiasmus, a chiasmus of narrative events. I argued that recognition of the overall shape and structure of the story and showed how an elucidation of the narrative reversals in the story helps us to understand better the passage as a whole.
(v) I also identified and explained two narrative threads that run through the Christ-story as a whole, which may be described, respectively, as (a) the story of the visible cruciform God, and (b) the motif of the obedient servant; the first relates the story of the invisible God made visible, representing Christ’s identity, posture and praxis, leading to his death on the cross, implicitly revealing the character of God, and the second both exemplifies and implicitly commands obedient servanthood for the Philippian community, thereby closely linking the passage both to its preceding and following paraenetic context.

(vi) A further conclusion was that as a narrative in both form and content, the Christ-story needs to be interpreted as a narrative, allowing a detailed literary appreciation of its shape, motifs, and construction to assist in determining its overall meaning and function for both its first and subsequent hearers and readers; thus, at the end of the investigation I engaged in a detailed literary, narrative analysis of the passage, which represents the summative effort of this present study. In doing so, I showed how a narrative analysis of the passage, keeping in mind the overall \( \backslash \text{-shape} \), the respective narrative reversals (forming a modified narrative chiasmus), and the two narrative threads running through the whole could integrate previous contributions to the study of the passage, embracing social status and political background concerns, and the implicit divine narrative within the story of Christ, and so supporting a comprehensive understanding of the function of the passage in its paraenetic context and, perhaps, also for better understanding Paul and his theology more generally.

(vii) A final, more specific conclusion is also worth mentioning here. As I argued, and demonstrated in the foregoing narrative analysis, the narrative climax of the story as a whole is the unreversed element at the centre of the story (narrative element E), Christ’s death on a Roman cross. I argued that the part-climax of vv. 9-11, the final acclamation of Jesus Christ as ‘Lord’ was not itself the climax of the whole, but that the shape and construction of the narrative pointed decisively to seeing v. 8cd as the overall story’s climax. I explained how this central story element related to each of the surrounding concentric elements. We saw how shocking Paul’s mention of the cross
would have been to his Philippian audience. We further saw how Christ’s death on the cross served to turn traditional Roman values of status and honour upside down for the story’s first hearers (as it does also to many values of modern society).

It is deeply ironic therefore, that, at the beginning of this journey ourselves, we set out to climb ‘a mountain’ – and indeed, according to the narrative theory of Aristotle and Freytag, the structure of the whole looks quite like a ‘mountain’ (\(\Delta\)) – but, as we discovered, the journey of Christ was very much the opposite of climbing a mountain; for One who was ‘in the form of God,’ a divine being, clothed in divine glory, it was a descent to lowest place imaginable, a slave’s death on a Roman cross!

Climbing our ‘mountain’ has in fact led us into the ‘deepest valley’ (perhaps ‘pit’ might be more appropriate). This is a sobering and humbling conclusion; and one with profound implications, not only for Pauline christology and Christian theology, but also for Christian life and existence, both then and now.

To conclude this section, therefore, that the narrative content and narrative shape of Phil 2:6-11 as a whole perfectly matches the logical-syntactical structures of the text, as (very typically Pauline) prose sentences, would appear to confirm the rightness of reading and interpreting this passage as a narrative text, and the inappropriateness of reading it as a series of hymnic strophes. As we have seen, much has been gained by reading the passage as two (Pauline) sentences of prose narrative and then interpreting it as such. Conversely, much that I have elucidated in the foregoing analysis and exploration has not yet been observed (or at least not reported, as such), especially by those who have persisted in interpreting the passage as an example of an early Christian hymn. The present study has sought to remedy this deficiency, by reading and interpreting it, indeed ultimately appreciating and enjoying it, as a narrative account of the journey of Christ.

Perhaps, then, this work may contribute to the voices of a small but growing minority of scholars seeking to shift the consensus away from singing a Christ-hymn, to telling and re-telling (and especially within our lives) a Christ-story.
8.3 An Invitation to Participate in and be Shaped by the Christ-Story

The case for the narrative shape and structure of the Christ-story which I have identified and proposed stands on its own merits. Although outside of the scope of the present study (unfortunately), I believe that compelling confirmation of the shape of the Christ-story appears in Paul’s own narrated story in Philippians 3, where the same overall narrative shape seems to have been adopted by Paul in retelling his own story. The basic pattern of descent and ascent is seen most obviously in Paul’s use of the motif of dying and rising with Christ in Philippians 3. I believe, therefore, that narrative analysis of Paul’s autobiographical accounts, especially where he employs the motif of dying and rising with Christ (for example, aside from Phil 3:2-21, as found also in Galatians 2, or 2 Corinthians 1, 4, 6, 10-11) may also offer fresh insights for interpreting and understanding the apostle, his ministry, and his letters.

Robert Tannehill’s classic 1967 study of the motif of dying and rising with Christ\(^1\) perhaps has not been bettered since,\(^2\) though a comprehensive account of that motif today might scarcely be possible given the volume of secondary literature on all the passages included in his relatively short work (136 pages; cf. my opening comments in Chapter 1 above — concerning the mere six verses in one chapter of only one of Paul’s letters, which have been the focus of this work). However, one aspect of the motif of dying and rising with Christ not well covered by Tannehill, is upon how Paul serves as an example to believers when he employs that motif in order to narrate his own life-story.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, to date not a lot of ‘narrative dynamics’ effort in Pauline scholarship has been expended in study of the explicit narratives contained within Paul’s letters. Yet his autobiographical accounts, some of which are indeed extended narrations, are in fact explicit narrative accounts – autobiographical stories, if one likes. I believe that further study of these accounts, including employing literary, narrative analysis might better help us to appreciate and understand the apostle and his ministry, including helping to elucidate the function of these autobiographical accounts in their own epistolary contexts; and, one may

\(^{1}\) TANNEHILL, Dying and Rising.

\(^{2}\) See p. 16 n. 6 above, for some of the more important recent studies of this motif.
add, for understanding the motif of the imitation of Paul, given my personal belief that Paul’s autobiographical accounts are also implicitly intended to be exemplary or paradigmatic for his hearers, and for the Christian life in general. Yet that, and detailed study of Philippians 3 in particular, awaits, offering avenues of potential enquiry for Pauline scholars, whether it be by the present writer or by others.

However, the conclusion of this present author is that such efforts, and not only in Philippians 3, must be made with explicit reference to what Gorman has appropriately called, Paul’s ‘master story’: the Christ-story of Philippians 2:6-11.

Given one of the results of the present investigation, summarized above, that the Christ-story serves as both exemplar and paradigm for the Christian life, seen in its entirety, there are three final aspects that I would like to highlight in closing, in terms of Christian participation in, and engagement with, this story of Jesus Christ:

Firstly, (i) I want to emphasize the notion of interchange (Hooker), and the quite similar concept of reverse-mimesis evoking a responsive mimesis (Eastman). The Christ-story portrays Christ and his journey in a narrated account structured in two parts, with a descent (representing his selfless actions in incarnation and obedience to the cross) and a reversing ascent (representing God’s exaltation of him and gracious granting of the highest name, Lord). The story also points to a structuring of the Christian journey, whereby conformity to Christ in the present life primarily involves conformity to him in the descent stage (Part I) of the story, conformity to the way of the cross; while conformity to Christ in the future will include our conformity to him in the ascent stage (Part II) of his story (cf. Phil 3:20-21). The Christ-story thus shows Jesus entering into humanity to ‘become one of us’; but it also correspondingly structures the Christian life in terms of shaping our destiny to be in ultimate conformity with Christ, and thus metaphorically we can say it enables us to enter into his story.

Secondly, (ii) I want to mention again the aspect of participation in the story of Christ, which I discussed in my treatment of Phil 2:5 (see especially Section 4.4 above), following
Bockmuehl’s lead in supplying a present tense ἐστίν in the elliptical v. 5b: ‘this have-as-mindset among yourselves, which is also in Christ Jesus …’ As the human response to Christ (bowing and acclaiming him as Lord, seen in vv. 10-11 of the story) is also responsively directed towards Christ’s actions, so the mindset exemplified in Christ’s actions, which according to our translation of v. 5, is a present tense reality (‘which is … in Christ’), adopting that mindset (Christ’s present mindset) must now become part of the believer’s response to him. Supplying a present tense ἐστίν in v. 5b does not of itself mean that believers participate in the Christ-story; rather, I suggest, it invites such a participation, through our being ‘in Christ.’ In that way also, the Christ-story can be ‘entered into’ and can begin to shape and structure Christian life.

Finally (iii), a growing number of scholars (both secular and religious) are today acknowledging the transformative power of story for shaping and defining community and social identity, and in particular for shaping Christian community and identity. I will cite only two here, but there are many more. David Horrell, for instance, notes of our very passage, that the narratival nature of Paul’s discourse in Phil 2:5-11 clearly demonstrates that such stories ‘are used to construct and to legitimate patterns of social organization’ for Christian community.1

In a different field and vein, Stephen Cornell speaks of narrative as being formative for construction of ethnic identity (of any given group), and notes that the power of narrative to do this lies in its ‘sense-making properties,’ its ability to help us understand ourselves and our communities.2 He writes, ‘when people take on, create, or assign an ethnic identity, part of what they do – intentionally or not – is to take on, create, or assign a story, a narrative of some sort that captures central understandings about what it means to be a member of the group.’3 He then speaks of a process of ‘narrativization’ including three steps of selection of events, plotting them by drawing links between the events, and to the group, and then

1 Horrell, Solidarity and Difference, 90.
3 Cornell, ‘Story of Our Life,’ 42.
*interpretation*, the making of claims about what the events signify and mean for the life of the group.¹

I would like to suggest that for Paul, his choice to include the Christ-story in his letter to Philippi, has effectively been along similar lines. It is deliberately intended to be a story to shape the Philippians’ lives, set as they are in the Roman colony of Philippi, marking them out as belonging to the Christ of the story, a very different, but greater Lord than the Caesar of Rome. For Paul, this story is to define who they are, who and what they should be like, and who and what they may become.

The Christ-story of Philippians 2:6-11, I suggest, carries that same function and transformative power for us today. It is intended to shape the Christian life.

¹ CORNELL, ‘Story of Our Life,’ 43.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Narrative Correspondences between Philippians 2:6-8, 2 Corinthians 8:9, and Romans 15:3

This first appendix deals with some narrative-theological correspondence between Phil 2:6-8, 2 Cor 8:9, and Rom 15:3. This discussion is relevant to Chapter 3, Section 3.8 dealing with the linguistic and theological arguments connected to the issue of whether or not Phil 2:6-11 represents a pre-Pauline or Pauline composition. What follows below (especially the final conclusion) was deemed to be important, but too much of a lengthy distraction from the flow of the argument in Section 3.8 above; hence its appearance here in Appendix 1.

In what follows, I seek to demonstrate the close correspondence of the first half of Phil 2:6-11 (i.e. vv. 6-8) with the theology of both Rom 15:3 and 2 Cor 8:9. We begin with the latter text first, as it requires the least attention.

In 2 Cor 8:9, Paul writes, ‘for you know the grace [or generous act; χάρις] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.’ This verse narrates Christ’s self-impoverishment in a way very similar to that of Phil 2:6-8. Caird notes of these two passages that only Paul attributes to the pre-existent Christ an act of choice and then makes that choice an example to be imitated by Christians; no other New Testament writer does that. Looking at the specific similarities, ‘though he was rich’ parallels ‘though he was in the form of God’ (Phil 2:6); and the ‘not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage’ (οὐχ ἐρωταγμένον) of Phil 2:6 is paralleled in the implicit notion of 2 Cor 8:9 that Christ did not use his wealth for his own advantage; while ‘he became poor’ closely relates to ‘he emptied himself … humbled himself’ (Phil 2:7-8).

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1 For the reference to this Appendix in the main body, see p. 95 above.
2 CAIRD, Paul’s Letters, 102.
3 GORMAN, Cruciformity, 169-171.
Gorman maintains that the metaphor of self-impoverishment may be deliberately vague in order to comprehensively refer to Christ’s incarnation and death, but it certainly includes the latter. This contention, he argues, is supported by two further factors in the text.\(^1\) The first is that 2 Cor 8:9 explicitly defines the ‘generous act’ as being others-oriented, that is, ‘for your sake’ (δι’ ὑμῶν). This is not present in Phil 2:6-11, but the theme of considering the interests of others before oneself is prominent in the immediate paraenetic context of the passage (i.e. Phil 2:1-4), of which Christ, by his actions in vv. 6-8, appears to be an example.\(^2\) It is also suggested by other passages which define Christ’s loving or gracious death as being ‘for all’ (ὑπὲρ πάντων; 2 Cor 5:14-15) or ‘for me’ (ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ; Gal 2:20).\(^3\) Further, the concept of ‘interchange’ is clearly present in 2 Cor 8:9 (‘he became poor … so that you might become rich’) and Hooker has persuasively shown that this pattern of ‘interchange in Christ’ in Paul is closely connected to Christ’s death.\(^4\)

Regarding Rom 15:3, there Paul writes, ‘for Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of the ones reproaching you fell on me.”’ He cites Ps 69:9 in the latter part of the verse, and this is commonly understood as representing the prayer and attitude of Jesus at his death. This Psalm is cited in all of the passion narratives in the gospels, and was commonly read as pointing to Jesus’ death in the early churches.\(^5\) The reference to ‘Christ not pleasing himself’ is correspondingly seen by most commentators as an allusion to Christ’s death.\(^6\) Both the narrative structure and meaning of the verse, as well as usage of the third person reflexive pronoun, ‘Christ did not please himself, but … [the reproaches of the ones reproaching you fell on me]’ (ὁ Χριστός οὐχ ἐαυτῷ ἠρέσει, ἄλλα …), closely parallel

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2. The ethical or, as I prefer, exemplary-paradigmatic interpretation of Phil 2:6-11 was be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 above.
3. **Gorman, Cruciformity**, 170. He notes that while the preposition is different and δι’ may carry a less sacrificial or substitutionary sense, it nevertheless expresses a similar altruistic or other-centred action (p. 170 n. 27).
4. **Hooker, ‘Interchange in Christ’; ‘Interchange and Atonement.’** Thus **Gorman, Cruciformity**, 170 n. 26. Of 2 Cor 8:9, **Hooker** argues that while regarding ‘he became poor’ as solely a reference to Christ’s death is a forced interpretation, and the passage immediately refers to Christ’s ‘incarnation’, ‘we should … be wary of driving a wedge between incarnation and crucifixion’ (‘Interchange in Christ,’ 353-354, citing both H. Windisch and E. Stauffer).
6. For example, **Moo, Romans**, 868-869; **Dunn, Romans 9-16**, 838-839; **Käsemann, Romans**, 382; cf. **Kruse, Romans**, 529.
that in Phil 2:6-8: ‘not to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage ... but he emptied **himself** ... humbled **himself** ... [to ... death on a cross]’ (οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ... ἀλλὰ ἰαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν ... ἔτοπείνωσεν ἰαυτὸν ...).\(^1\) Thus, Christ’s death is interpreted as an act not of pleasing himself, but rather of his acting with respect to God for the benefit of others, in taking the reproaches of people upon himself (cf. Gal 1:4 and 2 Cor 5:14).\(^2\)

However, if the structural and conceptual parallels between Rom 15:3 and Phil 2:6-8 are striking, the paraenetic contexts of the two passages are also very similar, including additional linguistic and conceptual parallels, not to mention the apparently comparable function of the references to the death and related actions of Christ in each of those paraenetic contexts.

We may note the following, numerous contextual correspondences:\(^3\) (i) Romans 15:1-13 concludes the food-related conflict between the strong and weak in chapter 14, though broadens this to an inter-cultural desire for Jews and Gentiles to live together in harmony and unity; this is akin to the overall ethical concern of Phil 1:27-2:11 for same-mindedness, harmony and unity among the Philippians in their own situation of growing opposition (Phil 1:27-30; 2:2, 5);

(ii) Very similar language is used to express this unity in both cases (cf. ‘to have the same mindset among one another ... in order that with one accord with one voice ...’, Rom 15:5-6, with ‘standing firm in one Spirit, with one soul, striving together ... having the same mindset, having the same love, united in soul, having the one mindset ... have this mindset ...’, Phil 1:27; 2:2, 5),\(^4\) with nearly identical language between Paul’s first petition to God for the Romans (v. 5b) and his introduction to vv. 6-11 in Phil 2:5 (cf. 2:2), here using more literal translations \(^5\) –

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\(^1\) Thus Hoover, ‘Harpagmos Enigma,’ 118.

\(^2\) For the above, see Gorman, Cruciformity, 171.

\(^3\) Cf. here the more limited discussions of Strimple, ‘Philippians 2:5-11,’ 254-255; Fee, Philippians (NICNT), 201 n. 36; O’Brien, Philippians, 258.

\(^4\) On the rendering of the verb φρονέω in Rom 15:5 and in Phil 2:2, 5 as ‘to-have-a-mindset’, see above, p. 189.

\(^5\) Both of these verses (though especially Phil 2:5) received detailed attention in Chapter 4 above.
Rom 15:5 τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν
‘to think the same among one another according to Christ Jesus’

Phil 2:5 τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν οὐ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
‘this think in you which also in Christ Jesus’

(iii) The purpose for their unity (in Romans 15) is that together, ‘in one accord with one voice they might glorify God’ (v. 6) is conceptually comparable to the purpose statements of Phil 1:27; 2:2 about being united so as to ‘live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ’;

(iv) God and the Scriptures are described as giving ‘encouragement’ (παράκλησις; vv. 4, 5), while the Philippians have received παράκλησις ‘in Christ’ (Phil 2:1), and in both cases this is seen to be one of the enabling means for their efforts toward unity;

(v) Also in both cases the activity of the Spirit is important (v. 13; cf. Phil 1:27; 2:1);

(vi) As a means to achieving unity among the believers, in vv. 1-2 the Romans are exhorted ‘not to please themselves’, but ‘to please their neighbours for their good and edification’, and this parallels Paul’s ethical concern for the Philippians to avoid focussing on ‘one’s own interests’ and instead demonstrate an ‘others-centeredness’ (Phil 2:3-4);

(vii) In both places Paul is concerned that ‘each’ person in the community is involved in these selfless actions (v. 2; cf. Phil 2:4 [x 2]); and

(viii) That these should be towards ‘one another’ within their community (vv. 5, 7; cf. Phil 2:3-4);

(ix) In four different places in Romans 15 (explicitly in vv. 3, 5, 7, and implicitly in v. 8),¹ Paul appears to regard actions of Jesus Christ as providing a paradigm or exemplification for what he desires to see among the Roman believers while, according to the now dominant

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¹ On Christ in Rom 15:8 as an implicit example, see p. 494 n. 1 in Appendix 1 below.
interpretation of Phil 2:5-11, Paul is effectively doing the same thing in Philippians 2.¹ This is evident in the following texts,

Rom 15:1-3 ... μη ἑαυτοῖς ἀρέσκειν. ἐκαστὸς ἡμῶν τῷ πλησίον ἀρεσκέτω ... ‘... not ourselves to please. Let each of us please our neighbour ...

Rom 15:5 τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλίλοις κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ‘to-have-the-same-mindset among one another according to Christ Jesus’

Rom 15:7 προσελαβήσθη ἀλλίλους, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς προσελαβήστε ὑμᾶς ‘accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us’³

which are each comparable to,

¹ See Chapter 4 above for extensive discussion of this matter. It is worth noting that in his later commentary on Romans, KÄSEMANN’s discussion of Rom 15:1-6, under the heading ‘The Model of Christ’, and concerning Rom 15:3 in particular (Romans, 380-382), cited Phil 2:5-8 as presenting Christ both as a model [Vorbild], and simultaneously as a prototype [Urbild]; the full citation is worth reading and I have included it in full in p. 147 n. 1 above.

² DUNN, Romans 9-16, 838 translates the καὶ as ‘too’; however, others prefer to use ‘even’ in this context, thus ‘for even Christ did not please himself’; so MOO, Romans, 868 & n. 22; L. L. MORRIS, The Epistle to the Romans (PNTC: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 498 n. 14; and also KJV, NIV, NASB.

³ On Rom 15:3 as depicting Christ’s actions as an example or model to follow, see DUNN, Romans 9-16, 838, 842-843; MOO, Romans, 868-869; KRUSE, Romans, 528; MORRIS, Romans, 498-499; M. BLACK, Romans (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1973) 171; C. K. BARRETT, The Epistle to the Romans (BNTC; London: Black, 1962) 269; C. E. B. CRANFIELD, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Vol II. Romans IX-XVI (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1979; repr. 1989 with corrections) 732; J. A. ZIESLER, Paul’s Letter to the Romans (TPINTC; London: SCM, 1989) 337-338; KÄSEMANN, Romans, 380-382 (on KÄSEMANN’s understanding of this, see n. 1 immediately above).

⁴ Concerning Rom 15:5 as seeing Christ as paradigm or example, see DUNN, Romans 9-16, 840, 843; MOO, Romans, 871-872; KRUSE, Romans, 530; MORRIS, Romans, 501; M. BLACK, Romans, 172; cf. C. F. D. MOULE, ‘Reflections on Phil 2:5-11,’ 266. Κατὰ Χριστὸν ἵσσου (‘according to Christ Jesus’) may mean either that the unity of believers should be in accordance with the will, or spirit, of Christ (cf. Rom 8:4-5; 2 Cor 11:17; so KÄSEMANN, Romans, 383; CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 737 & n. 4) or that it should be in accordance with the example of Christ (the ‘common view’ according to KÄSEMANN, Romans, 383). The latter is supported by the explicit appeal to the example of Christ in v. 3 and v. 7. DUNN, Romans 9-16, 840 notes also that echoes of the Jesus tradition in the preceding exhortation (Rom 14:13-15, 18-19; 15:1-2) suggest conduct modelled ‘after Christ’ in a fuller sense, and that the double sense of ‘modelled on and obedient to’ seems implicit in other similar κατὰ phrases in the Pauline corpus (Col 2:6, 8; Eph 4:24; cf. Rom 13:14; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4, 6). Hence, DUNN and MOO each acknowledge that in Rom 15:5 Paul may in fact be intending both senses of κατὰ.

⁵ With respect to Rom 15:7, see DUNN, Romans 9-16, 846, 851-852; KRUSE, Romans, 532; MORRIS, Romans, 502-503. As DUNN notes (p. 846), καθώς (‘just as’) usually means that a comparison is indicated; otherwise Paul would have used a different conjunction (so also MORRIS, Romans, 502 n. 38; contra MOO, Romans, 875; KÄSEMANN, Romans, 385; CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 739, who take καθώς in its rarer, causal sense, but thereby ignore the force of the καὶ). He goes on to say that what Paul has in mind is not simply the fact of Christ’s acceptance of believers, but the manner of it, which v. 8 goes on to illustrate, in the humbling of oneself as a servant (διόκονος).
Phil 2:5-8 τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὡς καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦν, ὦς ...

‘this have-as-a-mindset among you which [is] also in Christ Jesus, who ...’;

Further, (x) Christ is also presented as ‘becoming’ a ‘servant’ (διάκονον γενόμενον; v. 8), probably in an implicit exemplary sense, but which nevertheless conceptually matches Christ in Phil 2:7-8 ‘taking the form of a slave ... becoming a human person ... becoming obedient’ (μορφὴν δουλού λαβὼν ... ἀνθρώπων γενόμενον ... γενόμενος ὑπήκοος); (xi) alongside the overall concern for same-mindedness, unity and harmony among the believers, which represents the heart of Paul’s prayer for the Romans in vv. 5-6, in his concluding prayer for them in this section (v. 13), he states that one of the outcomes of their efforts will be ‘joy’; similarly, in Phil 2:2, Paul desires the outcome of his own ‘joy’ being ‘made complete’ through the Philippians’ unity together;

(xi) The concern to ‘glorify God’ is repeated three times in Romans 15 (vv. 6, 7, 9) alongside three references to praising God (vv. 9, 11 [x 2]), while a similar concern ends Phil 2:6-11 – ‘to the glory of God’ in Phil 2:11;

(xii) The language of ‘confessing’ before God and ‘among the nations’ finds its place in v. 9 (citing 2 Sam 22:50; Ps 18:49) and also in ‘every tongue’ ‘confessing’ in Phil 2:11 (in both cases using ἔχωμολογεῖν);

(xiii) Related to that, both texts refer to ‘the name’ of God or the Lord as being praised or revered (v. 9; cf. Phil 2:9);

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1 The manner of Christ accepting believers in v. 7 appears to be illustrated in v. 8 by the humbling of oneself in becoming a ‘servant’ (διάκονος) of both Jew and Gentile (vv. 8-9a), and suggests an implicit presentation of Christ as a model for Christian service. Further, Paul’s allusion to Christ’s self-denial in v. 3 and the preceding echoes of the Jesus tradition (Rom 14:13-15, 18-19; 15:1-2) make it possible that in v. 8 he has in mind the saying of Jesus in Mark 10:43-45. Thus, DUNN, Romans 9-16, 846; cf. CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 741; MORRIS, Romans, 503-504; M. BLACK, Romans, 171; BARRETT, Romans, 271; and FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 201 & n. 36.

2 On the close association in Paul of the respective terms, διάκονος (‘servant’) and δουλος (‘slave’), see above, pp. 88-89.
Finally, Christ’s rulership over the nations (or Gentiles) is mentioned in v. 12 (citing Isa 11:10) and compares with the lordship of Christ over all in Phil 2:10-11.

Thus, Rom 15:1-13 demonstrates contextual similarities with distinct verbal, structural and conceptual parallels and comparable ethical concerns to Phil 1:27-2:11, and in particular to 2:6-11. To be certain, not all of these Romans 15 parallels are direct parallels with the text of Phil 2:6-11; however, those that are not are clear parallels with its paraenetic context and these provide compelling support for seeing the passage as thoroughly integrated within, and belonging to, a very Pauline ethical context.

To conclude, the extensive combination of the various parallels is striking enough that the use of a closely matching parallel narrative pattern for Christ’s death in both Rom 15:3 and Phil 2:6-8 is, together with the parallel seen in 2 Cor 8:9, a strong piece of narrative-theological evidence in favour of the likelihood of Pauline authorship of at least vv. 6-8 of Phil 2:6-11, if not indeed the whole passage.
Appendix 2: A Common Intertextuality in Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10-11

This second appendix deals with a common intertextuality that is found in both Phil 2:10-11 and Rom 14:11 in their common use and citation of Isaiah 45:23. This discussion is relevant to Chapter 3, Section 3.8 of the main body of the study dealing with the linguistic and theological arguments connected to the issue of whether or not Phil 2:6-11 represents a pre-Pauline or a Pauline composition. What follows below (especially the final conclusion) was deemed to be important, but also a considerable distraction from the flow of the argument in Section 3.8 above; hence its appearance here in Appendix 2.

Concerning the second half of our passage, Phil 2:6-11, we may note the similarity of Paul’s citation of the LXX text of Isa 45:23 in both vv. 10-11 and in Rom 14:11. An immediate correspondence to observe is that both passages cite the same textual variant of Isa 45:23 in the LXX. Isaiah 45:[18], 23 LXX reads, [οὕτως λέγει Κύριος ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν ...] κατ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ομνύω ... ὅτι ἐμοὶ καμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τῷ θεῷ ([‘thus says the Lord who made the heaven ...] by myself have I sworn ... that to me will bow every knee and will confess every tongue to God’). Romans 14:11 gives a precise verbal parallel (but with one transposition) to Isa 45:[18], 23: γεγραμμένοι γάρ, ξῶ ἐγώ, λέγει Κύριος, ὅτι ἐμοὶ καμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται τῷ θεῷ (‘for it is written, [as] I live, says the Lord, that to me will bow every knee and every tongue will confess to God’). In our passage, Phil 2:10-11 reads: ἵνα ... πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ κατακλυσμῶν καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός

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1 For the reference to this Appendix in the main body, see p. 95 above.
2 Following the Codex Alexandrinus (MS A) text (also MSS Q, Ἄ) of the verse, rather than Ἄ* and B, which read ἐμείται in place of ἐξομολόγησεται (perhaps due to influence from ομνύω earlier in the verse). Thus, O’BRIEN, Philippians, 241 & n. 48; FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 223 n. 28; followed by OAKES, Philippians, 166.
3 The transposition (from Isa 45:23) of πᾶσα γλῶσσα with ἐξομολογήσεται in Rom 14:11 probably suggests that Paul was citing Isa 45:23 from memory. Thus, FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 223 n. 28; cf. CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 710.
in order that … every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue should confess that the Lord is Jesus Christ’).\(^1\)

The immediate context in Romans 14 suggests that Κύριος (‘the Lord’) in Rom 14:11 could be identified with God, since the end of v. 11 refers (somewhat awkwardly) to God (‘every tongue will confess to God’, τωθεωθ), v. 10 more pointedly states, ‘for we will all stand before the judgment seat of God (τουθεου; that is, if one of two textual variants is accepted),\(^2\)’ and v. 12, repeating the basic thought of v. 10, ‘so then each of us will give an account of himself [to God (τωθεου)]’.\(^3\) However, the repeated use of Κύριος in vv. 7-9 especially (three nouns plus the subjunctive verb, Κυριεύσῃ), but also in vv. 4-6 (four nouns) and v. 14 (one noun), where the referent is clearly Christ,\(^4\) suggests that Κύριος in v. 11 might instead be identified with ‘Christ’ who ‘died and lived [again] (εζησεν), in order that, of the dead and the living, he might be the Lord (Κυριεύσῃ)’ (v. 9).\(^5\)

The three possible references to God in vv. 10-12 (one certain, two uncertain) do not necessarily rule out a christological identification for Κύριος in v. 11. In fact, nine factors make the latter seem more likely:

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\(^1\) A significant textual variant exists for Phil 2:11: while the second aorist subjunctive, Εξωμολογήσῃ (‘should acclaim;’ v. 11a), is most likely original, the MS evidence admits a less probable alternative, of a future indicative verb, Εξωμολογήσεται (‘will acclaim’) (for v. 11a, though there is no variant for the verb ‘to bow’ in v. 10b); for my discussion of the issue, and rationale for accepting the aorist subjunctive as most probably original, see p. 387 n. 1 above.

\(^2\) On the reading θεου, and likely early but subsequent assimilation to Χριστου, see further p. 499 & n. 4 below. Although supporting the former reading, T. R. SCHREINER, Romans (BECNT 6; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 722 notes that it is surprising, given the emphasis on the lordship of Christ in vv. 4, 6-9, that the judgment seat is God’s in v. 10. He comments that the alternation, therefore, between God and Christ is not due to confusion on Paul’s part, but rather signifies the close relationship between them. Paul may well have been very happy to allow such ambiguity.

\(^3\) While the inclusion of τωθεω in the text on balance more likely reflects the original (supported by the combination of witnesses such as ΝΑΚΔΨ3381614 and most versional testimony), it is omitted in some MSS, such as ΒFG1739. If the words were originally absent, it would be easy to understand them being supplied by scribes to complete an otherwise difficult text; the inclusion of square brackets by both UBSGNT\(^4c\) and NA\(^28\) indicates the uncertain balance between the external evidence and internal probability. Thus TCGNT\(^2\), 531-532; MOO, Romans, 834. Those convinced, on balance of the somewhat ambiguous evidence, that Κύριος in Rom 14:11 more likely refers to God than to Christ, include MOO, Romans, 847-848; DUNN, Romans 9-16, 809-810; CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 709-710 (& 709 n. 4); MORRIS, Romans, 483 & n. 37; and SCHREINER, Romans, 722.

\(^4\) Thus, MOO, Romans, 840 n. 61, 847.

(i) The ‘[as] I live, says the Lord’ (of v. 11), while relating both to Isa 45:18 (which mentions ‘the Lord’ as the subject and speaker of Isa 45:23) and probably to Isa 49:18 (‘[as] I live, says the Lord,’ cited verbatim in Rom 14:11),\(^1\) appears also to link back in the immediate context to Rom 14:9 (‘Christ died and lived [again]’) – the verbal link between ζωὴ ἐγέρσαν (v. 11) and ἐξήλθεν (v. 9) is striking, and suggestive of an identification between the one made Lord in v. 9 and the κύριος of v. 11;\(^2\)

(ii) The clear precedent already in Romans for the identification of κύριος in the Old Testament with Christ (Rom 10:13 [cf. 10:9, 12], citing Joel 2:32 [LXX 3:5])\(^3\);

(iii) The probable early-dated assimilation of the text in Rom 14:10 from the more plausible original reading of θεόν to Χριστοῦ, most likely due to influence from 2 Cor 5:10 (‘for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,’ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), attested by many witnesses, including Marcion, Polycarp, Tertullian, Origen,\(^4\) suggests, therefore, that these witnesses may also have understood κύριος in Rom 14:11 christologically;\(^5\)

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1. The phrase ‘[as] I live, says the Lord’ is common elsewhere in the Old Testament (about 22 times in the LXX, especially in the prophets). Thus, MOO, Romans, 847 & n. 108; DUNN, Romans 9-16, 809. CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 710 suggests that Paul, quoting from memory, inadvertently replaced κατ᾽ ἐμαυτόν ὁμοίως from Isa 45:23 LXX with another more familiar Old Testament divine asseverative formula.

2. So also M. BLACK, Romans, 167; and his ‘Christological Use,’ 8; against CRANFIELD, Romans IX-XVI, 710.


4. Supporting the reading of Χριστοῦ include also the following witnesses: K2 C2vid Ψ 33 81 048 0209 and the majority text; HODGE (Romans, 416, 422) also notes that Χριστοῦ is supported by ‘almost all the Fathers’; nevertheless, the reading of θεόν appears much better attested (K* A B C* D G 1739 …). Thus, TCGNT\(^2\), 531; MOO, Romans, 834 n. 29; MORRIS, Romans, 483 & n. 37.

5. In response to the counter-argument that understanding κύριος christologically in Rom 14:11 would then have been based upon a less plausible original reading of v. 10, it may be argued contrarily that the contextual evidence for a christological understanding of κύριος in v. 11 may have helped to persuade these witnesses that Χριστοῦ was more likely to be the original reading in v. 10.
(iv) Related to this is the textual uncertainty pertaining to two of the three references to God in vv. 10-12; the evidence allows the possibility that only τῶ θεῷ at the end of v. 11 (following ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα) might have been original;¹

(v) Although not impossible for Paul (especially in citing the Old Testament),² it would be inconsistent within this passage to use κύριος for both God and Christ, particularly since Christ is clearly the referent of κύριος no less than nine times in vv. 4, 6 [x3], 8 [x3], 9 and 14, with only the one ambiguous LXX κύριος citation in between;³

(vi) Verse 6 already contains a clear interplay between the Lord (κύριος, mentioned three times) and God (θεός, mentioned twice), showing that the same interplay in vv. 10-12 need not imply that the two should be equated; in fact it more likely suggests an apparent differentiation in Romans 14;

(vii) The parallel citation of Isa 45:23 LXX in Phil 2:10-11, where κύριος is clearly used of Christ;

(viii) The similarity, conceptually, of those over whom Christ is Lord in both Romans 14 (‘both of the dead and the living,’ v. 9; and the unqualified ‘every knee’ of v. 11) and Phil 2:10-11 (those ‘in heaven and on earth and under the earth’); and

(ix) The close identification of κύριος as Christ in Phil 2:10-11 (citing the Isa 45:23 text) follows a clear reference to his death and subsequent exaltation (Phil 2:8-9), as does

¹ See p. 498 n. 3 above (v. 12), and n. 4 of the preceding page (v. 10). Although I concur that the two uncertain references are more likely to be resolved in favour of the reading θεῷ in v. 10 and the inclusion of τῶ θεῷ in v. 12, the degree of doubt (respectively rated B and C in UBSGNT⁴c) makes a theo-logical referent for κύριος in v. 11 less certain.

² DUNN, Romans 9-16, 810 mentions that Paul’s usual practice is to refer κύριος in citations from the Old Testament to God (e.g. in Rom 12:19; 1 Cor 14:21; 2 Cor 6:17, 18). See also FOERSTER & QUELL, ‘κύριος,’ 1086-1087.

³ Cf. MOO, Romans, 840 n. 61.
Rom 14:11, referring back to v. 9 in particular and to the asseverative formula (‘[as] I live’)\textsuperscript{1} introducing the citation.

The last point is significant and persuasive, even if not fully decisive given the references to God in vv. 10-12. Dunn explains that Paul’s usual practice in citing a text from the Old Testament is to refer κύριος to God, rather than to Christ (e.g. Rom 12:19; 1 Cor 14:21; 2 Cor 6:17, 18), but notes that ‘in passages where the κύριος of the OT is referred to Christ … it is the status and role of the risen and exalted Christ which is in view.’\textsuperscript{2} Thus, for example, we might read Rom 10:13 in light of the clear christological κύριος, whom ‘God had raised from the dead’ in Rom 10:9; and obviously we can see a similar linkage in Phil 2:9-11.

Dunn also notes that ‘it is characteristic of Paul’s Christology and soteriology that he sees the primary thrust of Christ’s death and resurrection as directed toward his becoming lord of all things.’\textsuperscript{3} Thus Paul highlights Christ’s lordship explicitly as a consequence of his death and/or resurrection or exaltation in passages such as Rom 1:4; 5:21; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:20-25; and Phil 2:9-11.\textsuperscript{4} It can be argued that Paul is also explicitly doing this here in Romans 14, through the reference to Christ’s death and resurrection in v. 9 and use of the formulaic, ‘as I live’ (ζωὴ ἐγώ) introduction to the citation from Isa 45:23 in v. 11. Thus, bringing together vv. 9 and 11 of Romans 14, Matthew Black can conclude, in agreement, ‘it is to the Risen and Living Lord that every knee shall bow.’\textsuperscript{5}

Thus, we may infer that it seems likely (even if not completely certain) that the citation of Isa 45:23 in Rom 14:11 is intended to be interpreted christologically, and this would make it a very close parallel to the citation of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:9-11. However, even if one is not convinced exegetically that κύριος in Rom 14:11 has a christological referent, other contextual similarities mentioned above, such as the preceding mention of the death and

\textsuperscript{1} Using CRANFIELD’s term (Romans IX-XVI, 710).
\textsuperscript{2} DUNN, Romans 9-16, 810; cf. his Theology of Paul, 244-252; FOERSTER & QUELL, ‘κύριος,’ 1089.
\textsuperscript{3} DUNN, Romans 9-16, 808.
\textsuperscript{4} DUNN, Romans 9-16, 808; cf. WITHERINGTON, Letter to the Romans, 337.
\textsuperscript{5} M. BLACK, Romans, 167.
resurrection/exaltation of Christ in relation to his lordship, and this lordship as universal over all people also point to a theological affinity between the two passages, even though the paraenetic aims of each do differ.

To these we must add the presence of a very similar kind of ‘intertextuality’ in both passages, Phil 2:9-11 and Romans 14, in which Paul ‘has purposely picked up the language of an earlier text, bringing with it the basic contextual concerns of that text, and now reapplies it to the present situation.’¹ The intertextual links in Romans 14 to Isaiah 45 and Isa 49:18 demonstrate that Paul understands and has in mind both the immediate context (Isa 45:18-25) and the larger context of the Isaianic oracles when he cites Isa 45:23.²

It is reasonable to suggest that this probably also applies in the citation of Isa 45:23 that is found in Phil 2:10-11.³ The intertextual echoes of both Pauline passages include reference to the same Isaianic text (and indeed to the same textual variant of that text⁴), and the same context of that text, with Yahweh (κύριος in the LXX) as the Saviour of his people (Isa 45:21, 22, 25), the only God (vv. 18, 21, 22), who is rightly exalted as the creator of the heavens and the earth (v. 18), in whom alone are righteousness and strength (v. 24), and to whom, thus, all creation will ultimately bow their knees and declare their allegiance (v. 23).

In Romans 14 Paul uses the idea of the unique and righteous sovereignty of God/Christ to demonstrate that all are accountable to God, who alone is the judge of all, and that therefore believers may not judge or despise one another, for that would be taking a prerogative belonging only to God. In Phil 2:9-11 Paul is concerned to highlight the exalted lordship of the Christ who had emptied and humbled himself, but has now been given the unique status of Yahweh in the Old Testament and is Lord universally over all, with the implicit expected role of believers to submit to that lordship. Hence, both Pauline passages use this common intertextual background to different ends, but with similarities that are clear enough to point towards and not away from common Pauline authorship.

¹ FEE, Pauline Christology, 397 n. 95 (cf. his Philippians [NICNT], 222 n. 24).
² FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 222 n. 24.
³ BOCKMUEHL, Philippians, 147.
⁴ See p. 497 n. 2 above. On the significance of this, see FEE, Philippians (NICNT), 223 n. 28.
Appendix 3: M. J. Gorman’s Narrative Patterns of the Cross

One of the people who have stimulated particular interest in the narrative patterns of Paul is Michael Gorman, through his 2001 book, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*. Gorman defines *spirituality* in Christian context as ‘the lived experience of Christian belief … the experience of God’s love and grace in daily life.’¹ In speaking of a *narrative* spirituality of the cross Gorman describes ‘a spirituality that tells a story, a dynamic life with God that corresponds in some way to the divine “story.”’² Later he adds, ‘by narrative spirituality … I mean a spirituality that is both grounded in a narrative and expressed as a narrative.’³ He defines *cruciformity* as ‘conformity to the crucified Christ’⁴ and notes that for Paul this conformity is ‘a dynamic correspondence in daily life to the strange story of Christ crucified as the primary way of experiencing the love and grace of God.’⁵ It is, in other words, ‘Paul’s oddly inviting, even compelling, narrative spirituality. It is … a spirituality of the cross – the focus of [Paul’s] gospel and life,’⁶ and the focus of his mission in life, which was to seek ‘to order the lives of Christian congregations by pulling everything into the tremendous gravitational field of the cross.’⁷ He goes on to assert, therefore, that ‘for Paul, “to know nothing except Jesus Christ – that is, Jesus Christ crucified,” is to narrate, in life and words, the story of God’s self-revelation in Christ.’⁸

Gorman later sets out some useful lists of narrative texts referring to the death of Christ in the undisputed epistles of Paul. These go beyond explicit mentions of the cross or the verbs ‘crucify’ or ‘co-crucify’ (which Paul uses of himself as much as he does for Christ),⁹ for most references to Christ’s death do not name the cross as such. However, he argues, that it is

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² GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 4.
³ GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 385.
⁴ GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 4.
⁵ GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 5.
⁶ GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 5.
⁸ GORMAN, *Cruciformity*, 7 (emphasis mine).
⁹ GORMAN cites the use of ‘crucify’ for *Christ* as including 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; 8; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 3:1, and for *Paul* (or believers including Paul), 1 Cor 1:13; Gal 5:24; 6:14; and ‘co-crucify’ of Paul (and believers) as including Rom 6:6 (the only explicit reference to Christ crucified in the letter to the Romans, the co-crucifixion of the old person with Christ) and Gal 2:19 (*Cruciformity*, 76 & n. 6).
important to recognize that when Paul thinks and speaks of Christ’s death he always has the mode of that death (crucifixion) in mind, which explains Paul’s reference, ‘even death on a cross,’ in Phil 2:8d.¹

Gorman then identifies 24 narrative texts with Christ explicitly or implicitly as the subject of the sentence, fulfilling the linguistic role of actor, and the narrative role of protagonist.² He detects some 13 narrative texts where God is the subject/actor/protagonist, including passages with passive verbs where the agent is clearly God,³ and finally there are three further texts where both God and Christ are the subject/actor/protagonist.⁴

From these narrative passages of the cross, Gorman surmises that Paul tells the story of Christ in several recognisable patterns, nearly all of which, he argues, correspond, in turn, ‘to patterns of spirituality, to patterns of cruciform existence.’⁵ Thus, he believes the main way that Paul presented his theology of Christ crucified was to show the correspondence between the death of Christ and the life of the Christian community. These patterns of correspondence have been formulated through Paul’s reflections on his own experiences as a follower of Christ.⁶ In every instance there is a close connection between the story of Christ, the story of Paul, and the story of the community to which he writes.⁷

In that sense ‘pattern of correspondence’ is a useful phrase – describing something existing in the character and life-story of Christ, which should somehow be reproduced in the life of the Christian community. Therefore, if Christ in his death exemplifies ‘love,’ as in Gorman’s second ‘pattern’ (see further below), there is an expectation of ‘love’ being embodied in the believing community with its reproduction in the life of the apostle as a mediating life-

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¹ GORMAN, Cruciformity, 76-77.
² Rom 3:21-22, 26; 5:15, 18-19; 6:6, 8, 10; 8:17; 14:9; 15:3; 1 Cor 1:13; 8:11; 2 Cor 1:5; 4:10; 5:14-15; 8:9; 13:4; Gal 1:4; 2:16, 19-21; 3:22; Phil 2:6-8; 3:9-11; 1 Thess 1:6; 5:9-10. Here, and for the following, see GORMAN, Cruciformity, 77-80.
³ Rom 1:4; 3:24-26; 4:25; 6:4, 9; 8:3, 11, 32; 1 Cor 6:19-20; 2 Cor 5:18-19, 21; Gal 1:1; Phil 2:9.
⁴ Rom 5:6-10, 8:34; 1 Cor 15:3-4.
⁵ GORMAN, Cruciformity, 75-76.
⁶ GORMAN, Cruciformity, 75-76.
⁷ GORMAN, Cruciformity, 94.
illustration. Thus, ‘pattern of correspondence’ should be kept in mind as we attend to Gorman’s use of the term ‘narrative patterns.’

Within the Pauline narrative texts of the cross Gorman uncovered thirteen distinct, yet overlapping, patterns of cruciformity, which he grouped into four divisions of spirituality – cruciform faith, love, power, and hope. They represent a significant contribution in Pauline studies, and so I will attempt to re-organize them slightly here with summary descriptions and brief notes about their relevance to Philippians 2. His four divisions and thirteen patterns of cruciformity are:

I. Faithful obedience, or cruciform faith – a pattern of compliance.

1. Obedience / Righteousness / Faithfulness. Christ’s death as an act of obedience, righteousness, and faithfulness, a response to the will of God. This is found in our present passage: ‘obedient to the point of death’ (Phil 2:8). It may also be noted in Rom 5:18-19, Gal 1:4, and in seven πίστις Χριστοῦ expressions (in Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16 [x 2]; 2:20; 3:22; and Phil 3:9) if the subjective genitive interpretation of the phrase is followed, rendering it as the ‘faith’ or ‘faithfulness’ of Christ, and thus referring to Christ’s death as an act of faithful obedience or perhaps as a demonstration of Christ’s faith.

II. Voluntary self-emptying / self-giving, or cruciform love – a pattern of relinquishment.

2. Love. Christ’s death as a demonstration of his (and God’s) love, as found in Gal 2:20; Rom 5:8; and implicitly in 2 Cor 5:14. We may note that this is implicit in Phil 2:6-8, and although the verb ‘love’ does not appear there, it does appear in the context of the passage (2:1-4).

3. Grace. Christ’s death as an act of unmerited generosity on the part of both Christ and God. This may be found in 2 Cor 8:9, Rom 5:15, and implicitly in Rom 5:6-10. Although not explicit, the idea is certainly embodied in the actions of Christ in Phil 2:6-8.

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1 GORMAN, Cruciformity, 177.
2 See further my brief comments on the terminology used following the summary of the ‘patterns’.
3 GORMAN, Cruciformity, 94.
4 For the following, see GORMAN, Cruciformity, 82-87 (descriptions of the thirteen patterns), 93 (GORMAN’s four divisions).
4. **Sacrifice.** Christ’s death (as a sacrifice) ‘for sins,’ both voluntarily (e.g. 1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:4) or at the initiative of the Father (Rom 3:25; 4:25; 8:3; and perhaps Rom 5:9). This is not present in the passage of Philippians 2, although the notion of sacrifice appears in Paul’s subsequent example at Phil 2:17.

5. **Altruism / substitution.** Christ died ‘for’ (various types of) people – for their benefit, also at his own initiative and at the initiative of the Father. The idea of substitution may or may not be present, but the concepts of representation and ‘interchange’ (see no. 10 below) are certainly there, with Paul’s emphasis being on the altruistic motive and effect of the act. Relevant passages include (with Christ as the actor) 1 Thess 5:9-10, 1 Cor 8:11, 2 Cor 5:14-15, 8:9, Gal 2:20, implicitly in 1 Cor 1:13; and (with God taking the initiative) Rom 5:6, 5:8, and 2 Cor 5:21. This motif is implicit in the Christ-story and its immediate context (Phil 2:3-4; recalling the structural parallels between vv. 3-4 and vv. 6-8).\(^1\)

6. **Self-giving / giving.** Christ’s death as an act of self-surrender or self-giving that was also a divine gift, and an act of love, with the verb ‘to give’ or ‘hand over’ followed by a reflexive pronoun as the object of the verb. Clear examples of this may be found in Gal 1:4, 2:20 (initiated by Christ); Rom 4:25, 8:3, 8:32 (initiated by God), and Phil 2:7-8 (‘emptied himself … humbled himself’) is very similar in tone, and should be regarded as part of the same pattern (as well as the next one).

7. **Voluntary self-humbling / abasement.** The death of Christ is seen as an act of self-abasement or condescension, a voluntary ‘descent’ in status. The most notable text here is Phil 2:6-8, but it is echoed in 2 Cor 8:9 and Rom 15:3. The context of the first two passages implies, too, that this is an act of love. In Phil 2:6-8 the pattern is that although Christ had a certain status (equality with God), he did not use it for his own advantage (renunciation), but rather emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and humbled himself (abasement), becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross (a slave’s death). This is a significant pattern in our passage, and it will be given more attention below.

8. **Culmination of a story that includes ‘incarnation’ and suffering.** Christ’s death forms the (initial) culmination of a story involving the idea of ‘incarnation’ and

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\(^1\) Cf. pp. 170-174 above.
suffering, and which is evident in Phil 2:6-11 and 2 Cor 8:9. It is not the final culmination, since the ultimate conclusion to the story is resurrection and exaltation. The noun or verb ‘suffer[ing]’ is linked to Christ in Rom 8:17, 2 Cor 1:5, Phil 3:10, and, by implication, 1 Thess 1:6, and in each case is something in which Paul and (sometimes) others participate (cf. 2 Cor 4:10, where the ‘dying’ of Jesus is both prototype and paradigm of apostolic suffering).

III. Life-giving suffering and transforming potency in weakness, or cruciform power

– a pattern of paradox.

9. Paradoxical power and wisdom. The weakness and folly of the cross are paradoxically described as being both power and wisdom (see 1 Cor 1:24-25; 2 Cor 13:4). This motif is not found in Phil 2:6-11, but divine power is implied in Phil 2:13.

10. Interchange. Christ’s death effected an interchange between himself and believers, which brings about a transformation of those believers: wealth for poverty (2 Cor 8:9) and righteousness for sin (2 Cor 5:21).¹ This concept is not present in Philippians 2.

11. Apocalyptic victory and liberation for new life and transformation. The death of Christ ended the reign of the powers of sin, death (Rom 6:9-10), and the old person (Rom 6:6; cf. 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Cor 6:19), liberating believers from these powers and the present evil age (Gal 1:4), inaugurating the new age or new creation (2 Cor 5:17), bringing life (Rom 6:4, 8), and transferring believers into the sphere of Christ’s lordship (2 Cor 5:14-15; Rom 14:9; 1 Thess 5:9-10). This motif is not found in our present passage.

12. Reconciliation and justification. The cross effects reconciliation with, and justification by, God, through the response of faith. This is seen in Gal 2:15-16; Rom 3:22; 4:25; 5:18-19, but not in Philippians 2 (though cf. Phil 3:9).

¹ Here GORMAN cites HOOKER’s ‘interchange’ articles, ‘Interchange and Atonement’ and ‘Interchange in Christ,’ and we might add two more: ‘Interchange and Suffering’ and ‘Interchange in Christ and Ethics.’
IV. The pattern of reversal, with suffering or cruciformity as a prelude to resurrection and exaltation, or cruciform hope.

13. Prelude to resurrection / exaltation. Christ’s death as the first act of a drama that culminates in God’s resurrection and exaltation of him. The conjoining of death and resurrection is common in Paul (and in early traditional formulae adopted by him), and may be seen in Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:4, 9, 10; 8:17, 34; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Gal 2:20; and in Phil 2:9-11, where resurrection is not mentioned explicitly, but exaltation clearly follows Christ’s death (and the idea of resurrection is implicit). In Philippians 2 the pattern of reversal is seen as the story of Christ’s humiliation, leading to his death on the cross (vv. 6-8), which is followed by the narration of his consequent exaltation by God (vv. 9-11).

In a way I believe a degree of semantic imprecision exists in Gorman’s identification of all of these thirteen as ‘narrative patterns.’ This is a relatively minor quibble. Without wanting to lose the crucial notion of expected correspondence – the being-formed-by-the-cross inherent in Gorman’s term cruciformity, I believe it would be better in some places to use the phrase narrative motifs or themes in place of ‘patterns’ as Gorman has done, and in other places perhaps the phrase narrative paradigm. As we saw before, Gorman has defined ‘narrative spirituality’ as ‘a spirituality that is both grounded in a narrative and expressed as a narrative.’¹ In that sense his ‘narrative pattern’ could be construed as a pattern or way of life, which is grounded in, or expressed as, a particular narrative. But while this matches the ‘pattern of correspondence’ idea, it subtly shifts the pattern away from the text, to the manner or way of life seen in and envisaged by the text. Even though I fully concur with and support Gorman’s ultimate aim to see the story of Christ embodied in the life of the Christian community, so that, as he says, the church might become a ‘living exegesis’ of the master story of Christ (Phil 2:6-11),² I would prefer to reserve the term ‘narrative pattern’ primarily for distinct literary patterns or, if you like, plot patterns in the stories. I seek to demonstrate the presence of such literary patterns in Phil 2:6-11 in Chapter 7, and, of course, these do evince a way of life. Some of the narrative motifs identified by Gorman do include or follow

¹ GORMAN, Cruciformity, 385.
² GORMAN, Cruciformity, 92, 366-367, 385.
particular literary patterns: some encapsulate a simple semantic pattern, such as a reference to Christ’s death preceded or followed by a particular verb; and some include more complex plot patterns. Thus some ambiguity is present in the label Gorman has used. Nevertheless, we share common aims, and there is much value in examining the narrative *motifs* and *paradigms* of the cross, which he has identified, however they are labelled.

As we have noted, when Gorman explored the various ‘patterns’ of cruciformity in Paul’s writings, he correctly observed the relationship between the various stories of Christ, Paul, and the communities he was writing to. The presence of intersecting stories within this letter would certainly appear to confirm Gorman’s insight in the case of Philippians.

One of the specific literary patterns that Gorman has identified in the Christ-story of Philippians 2 is particularly insightful and valuable. I have already referred to it in previous chapters, but let us examine it more thoroughly here. It is sufficiently important, for a narrative approach to the Christ-story, that it cannot be neglected – however, since Gorman himself has been the best expositor of this pattern, I will not seek to duplicate his important exposition of the significance of this narrative pattern.

We may recall the narrative pattern seen in the text of vv. 6-8 (with a concessive reading of the introductory participial phrase of v. 6a), ‘although [x] he was (ὑπάρχων) in the form of God, not [y] to-be-used-for-his-own-advantage (οὖν ἄρπαγμόν) did he regard being equal with God, but (ἀλλά) [z1] he emptied himself … and … [z2] he humbled himself …’.¹

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¹ See above, pp. 307-311.
Following Gorman, though with a few modifications, we may tabulate this pattern helpfully:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:6a</th>
<th>2:6bc</th>
<th>2:7-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Syntactic Pattern</td>
<td>Narrative Pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων]</td>
<td>[concessive participle]</td>
<td>although [x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘although [existing in the form of God]’</td>
<td>negated [noun]</td>
<td>not [y]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>όχι [ἀρπαγμὸν ἔγιναστο τῷ εἶναι Ἰσα θεῷ]</td>
<td>but [z]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘not [as something to be used for his own advantage did he consider equality with God]’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syntactic Pattern</td>
<td>Semantic Pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[concessive participle]</td>
<td>although [status]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>negated [noun]</td>
<td>not [selfish act / selfishness]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>όχι + [affirmed verbs]</td>
<td>but [selfless acts / selflessness]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semantic Analysis</td>
<td>Semantic Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(divine) status</td>
<td>disposition (concerning equality with God)</td>
<td>disposition-rooted activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A3.1, Syntactic, Narrative, and Semantic Patterns in Philippians 2:6-8

In the main body of this work, I refer regularly to this pattern, describing it sometimes as ‘although [x], not [y], but [z]’ and other times as ‘although ..., not ..., but ...’.

It is significant, however, that Gorman, while rightly affirming ὑπάρχων as concessive at the formal, narrative structural level, upon further reflection, went on to argue in 2007 that ‘the participle hyparchōn in Phil 2:6 may also be translated causatively (“because”) since “because he was in the form of God” represents the deep structure of the text.’ Thus, he suggested two years later, the wider context shows that ‘although’ also means ‘because’.

His route to these conclusions is both intriguing and convincing, even though somewhat complicated. I will attempt to summarize it here. Gorman argues that the ‘although [x], not [y] but [z]’ pattern represents an ‘although [status] not [selfishness] but [selflessness]’ story-

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1 Cf. Gorman, Cruciform God, 16-17; ‘Paul’s Master Story,’ 153; I have supplied the Greek text, added the category of ‘semantic analysis’ (for the terminology used, following Fowl, Philippians, 89, 94), altered Gorman’s translation of v. 6bc, and corrected his ‘syntactic pattern’ for Phil 2:6bc (he had written ‘negated [verb],’ but, as we have seen, it is in fact not the verb ἔγιναστο which is negated, but the noun ἀρπαγμόν; nor strictly is it a verbal idea behind the noun ἀρπαγμόν, such as ‘exploit’ or ‘take advantage of’).  
4 Gorman, Cruciform God, 22-25, here 22 (2009), largely reproducing, with minor changes, his 2007 ‘Thesis Nine’ (see the previous note).
line’ in Phil 2:6-11. Yet, he argues, this pattern actually appears throughout the Pauline corpus, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, or in abridged fashion, in three types of texts: christological, apostolic autobiographical texts, and hortatory texts.¹

Thus, he appeals to ‘two key Christological texts that echo Phil 2:6-11 in form, syntax, and vocabulary,’ namely 2 Cor 8:9 and Rom 15:1-3,² which I have discussed in Appendix 1,³ and to two apostolic autobiographical texts, 1 Thess 2:6-8 and 1 Cor 9:1-23, where Paul depicts his own behaviour following the same ‘although [x], not [y] but [z]’ pattern.⁴ In the latter two texts, he observes that Paul claims that

- although [x] as an apostle – by virtue of being an apostle, and only by virtue of this ‘preexisting condition’ – he had certain apostolic rights and could have exercised power in certain ways, he freely chose not [y] to exercise those rights and powers but rather [z] to freely give and spend himself for the good of others (cf. 2 Cor 12:15). He thereby becomes an ‘imitator’ of Christ crucified (1 Cor 11:1), a Christ-like slave (cf. … 1 Cor 9:19 with Phil 2:7 …).⁵

Then he asserts that when Paul describes himself as an imitator of Christ and calls others to be imitators of him and thus of Christ (1 Cor 11:1), he is speaking about exercising his own ‘true identity as an apostle’ and, more generally, one’s own ‘identity … as a Christian.’

From this he posits that ‘when Paul or the Corinthian community lives out or performs the narrative “although [x], not [y] but [z],” this performance is also a matter of “because [x], not [y] but [z].”’⁶ Given, then that the performance of ‘not [y] but [z]’ reveals already present apostolic or general Christian identity and character, he concludes, ‘thus the “[x]” in the narrative pattern is preceded simultaneously, in effect, by both “although” and “because.”’ In other words, ‘the “not [y] but [z]” dimension of the pattern is in fact constitutive of the “[x]” dimension of the pattern’ and ‘glosses, or explicates, “[x].”’⁷ Returning to

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¹ GORMAN, Cruciform God, 22.
² GORMAN, Cruciform God, 22 n. 60. On these two passages, see his Cruciformity, 83-86, 169-172, 173, 243.
³ See above, pp. 489-495.
⁴ GORMAN, Cruciform God, 22-25; cf. also, in more detail, his Cruciformity, 181-192 (on 1 Cor 9:1-23), 192-195 (on 1 Thess 2:5-12).
⁵ GORMAN, Cruciform God, 23 (emphasis his).
⁶ GORMAN, Cruciform God, 23 (emphasis his), illustrating this by appeal to Paul’s actions in both 1 Thessalonians 2 and 1 Corinthians 9, which reveal Paul’s character as being (i) although [x], (ii) in spite of [x], and (iii) because [x], where [x] is his being an apostle (pp. 23-24).
⁷ GORMAN, Cruciform God, 24.
Philippians 2, he sums up, ‘Christ’s status of being “in the form of God” (and thus possessing “equality with God”) – his [x] – was most truly and fully exercised, not in exploiting that status for selfish advantage ([y]), but in the self-emptying and self-enslaving that manifested itself in incarnation and crucifixion ([z]).’

Then he expresses the logical connection between the concessive ‘although’ and the causal ‘because’: ‘Paul’s use of the “although [x] not [y] but [z]” pattern elsewhere confirms that the pattern narrates an existing condition that is not exploited, and it suggests that the one who does “not [y] but [z]” acts in character for one who is [x]; that is, “although [x] not [y] but [z]” also means “because [x] not [y] but [z]”.’ This leads Gorman to the following general conclusion: ‘It is not just although Christ, Paul, and all believers possess a certain identity ([x]) that their story has a certain shape (not [y] but [z]); it is also because they possess that identity.’

Hence, one could say that while the concessive sense of v. 6 is explicit in Philippians 2, the causative sense is certainly also present, but only in an implicit way, or, as Gorman expressed it earlier, the two readings represent respectively ‘the surface structure’ and ‘the deep structure’ of the passage. ‘To tell the story of Jesus is to tell the self-defining story of God’ may truly be applied to Phil 2:6-11, but, more accurately, we might say, to tell the story of Jesus is implicitly to tell the self-defining story of God.

Accepting Hoover’s and Wright’s interpretation of Phil 2:6, Gorman describes it thus: ‘this pattern is theophanic, revelatory of the divine identity.’

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1 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 25 (emphasis his).
2 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 25.
3 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 25 (emphasis his).
4 The cited statement was made apropos of the story of Mark’s Gospel by M. E. BORING, Mark: A Commentary (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) 3, but is also quite appropriate here.
5 GORMAN, Cruciform God, 162, see also pp. 9-39; and cf. his Cruciformity, 9-18; BAUCKHAM, God Crucified, 60-61; CROSSAN & REED, In Search of Paul, 288-291, 334 for similar conclusions.
Appendix 4: Chiasm or Parallelism within Part II of the Christ-Story
(Philippians 2:9-11)?

Here, I note a formal chiastic structure that has been suggested for only Part II or vv. 9-11 of
the Christ-story. Because this structure only deals with half of the story, and because, below,
I finally do not accept the suggested chiasm, I have dealt with the structure here, rather than
in the main body of the thesis.

The case for noting a formal chiasm limited to only vv. 9-11 may have some merit, although
this is not really a narrative structure as such. As noted above in Section 6.2.2, both Bligh and
Manns arrange vv. 9-11 almost identically and, apparently independently of them, so also
does Fee, which is suggestive.1 The proposed structure is thus,

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \text{ διό καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερήφανεν (9a)} \\
B & \text{ καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα, (9bc)} \\
C & \text{ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ (10ab)} \\
D & \text{ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων (10c)} \\
C' & \text{ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται (11a)} \\
B' & \text{ ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (11b)} \\
A' & \text{ εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός (11c)}
\end{align*}
\]

But, in response, the initial pair A-A’ is connected awkwardly, without a clear relationship
between the two phrases (i. one verbal phrase, one prepositional; ii. to exalt, and glory
[purpose] not obviously linked); in the pair B-B’, arguably the name κύριος (‘Lord’) is indeed
tὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα (‘the name that is above every name’),2 though there is in fact
nothing in B’ to match the phrase καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ... (‘and he granted him ...’); likewise,
in the pair C-C’ the opening phrase of line C ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνόματι Ἰησοῦ (‘in order that in the
name of Jesus …’; v. 10a) while grammatically joined to line C’ (... πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ... καὶ
πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται; ‘... every knee should bow ... and every tongue should
acclaim’), is also not matched there; further, line D (v. 10c) has no real significance at the

1 For BLIGH and MANNS, see again J. D. HARVEY, Listening to the Text, 248-250; and also FEE, Philippians
(NICNT), 219 n. 6. In the arrangement that follows (for MANNS, presented exactly), BLIGH instead
separates the middle line (v. 10c) into three lines, while FEE omits it altogether.
2 On the identification of ‘the name above every name’ as ‘Lord,’ see above, p. 369 n. 4 and p. 383 nn. 4 & 1.
centre of the chiasm. Indeed, Fee merely presents the formal chiastic structure (and only in a footnote) without offering further comment on its significance, suggesting that he at least sees little or no interpretative value in mentioning this chiastic form. Deichgräber’s more limited chiastic arrangement (1967) of only vv. 10a-11b is undoubtedly more natural, and indeed followed by others, pairing in lines A-A’ both the two mentions of the name Jesus (vv. 10a, 11a) and in B-B’ the references to ‘every knee’ (v. 10b) and ‘every tongue’ (v. 11b):

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad \text{ίνα ἐν τῷ ὄνόματι Ἰησοῦ} \quad (10a) \\
B & \quad \text{πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ} \ldots \quad (10b) \\
B' & \quad \text{καὶ πᾶσα γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσεται} \quad (11a) \\
A' & \quad \text{ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός} \quad (11b)
\end{align*}
\]

However, syntactically, the clearly parallel lines of v. 10b and v. 11a with the two subjunctive verbs are each subordinate to the introductory ίνα (‘so that’ or purpose) clause of v. 10a, while the phrase ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (v. 11b) itself is clearly subordinate to πᾶσα γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσεται (v. 11a), strongly suggesting instead that the following non-chiastic structure is truer to Paul’s prose sentence and argumentation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ίνα ἐν τῷ ὄνόματι Ἰησοῦ} \quad (10a) \\
\text{πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ} \ldots \quad (10b[-c]) \\
\text{καὶ πᾶσα γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσεται} \quad (11a) \\
\text{ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός} \quad (11b).
\end{align*}
\]

Thus, on balance, I do not believe the case for seeing a chiasmus in vv. 9-11 is convincing, and the non-chiastic structure involving parallelism in v. 10b and v. 11a is a far better arrangement of the text.

---

1 In fact, v. 10c is omitted completely in Fee’s arrangement (Philippians [NICNT], 219 n. 6), apparently because it has no significance in the structure, while lines C-C’ would present a more meaningful centre.
2 Correctly seen by J. D. Harvey, Listening to the Text, 250 (though referring to Schenk, rather than Deichgräber; see the next note).
3 Deichgräber, Gottes hymnus und Christushymnus, 122; cf. W. Schenk, Der Philipp berbrief, 190; Hofius, Christushymnus, 5, 108; J. D. Harvey, Listening to the Text, 250.
4 So O’Brien, Philippians, 248; Bockmuehl, Philippians, 144, 146; Silva, Philippians, 127.


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