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THE PERSON OF CHRIST
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

A Thesis Presented To
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of New Testament Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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indignant attack on gross manifestations of the flesh in a Christian congregation like the first letter to the Corinthians, nor a spirited defence of his apostolic authority like the second letter to the same congregation. It might appear that such a letter would be singularly unfruitful in strictly theological material, and that any attempted theological treatise

THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Close ties had always connected St. Paul with the congregation at Philippi. Here he had founded his first congregation in Europe. From the Philippians alone did Paul accept money to meet his needs - an indication of the close friendship that existed between him and them. This congregation, too, had shown particularly great consideration for the apostle during his imprisonment at Rome. So the letter he wrote to them, most likely the last letter he wrote to any congregation, is one of the most personal and tender of all his letters. In spite of the uncertainty of the outcome of the trial in which he was the accused, the letter is happy and joyful in tone, an epistola de gaudio (Bengel), "ein in Liebe ueberstroemender Dankbrief".¹ Joy is its cantus firmus. As Paul is joyful in the Lord, so he is determined to make the Philippians joyful in their God. Warnings against Judaizing false teachers are thrown in, as are encouragements to unity and true humility, but the undercurrent of joy is always there. his person, a person who passed through

This is no doctrinal treatise like Romans, nor a fiery polemic against perverters of the truth like Galatians, nor an

1. Fuerbringer, Einleitung in das Neue Testament, p. 71.

indignant attack on gross manifestations of the flesh in a Christian congregation like the first letter to the Corinthians, nor a spirited defence of his apostolic authority like the second letter to the same congregation. It might appear that such a letter would be singularly unfruitful in strictly theological material, and that any attempted theological treatise on such a letter would be very scrappy and full of gaps. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that such a deeply religious man as St. Paul could not write to any congregation a letter that was a theological vacuum. Any references to his theology that might come in by the way would, it might be argued with some soundness, be all the more valuable as being unpremeditated, quite natural and unforced, and, accordingly, completely sincere and reliable. As a matter of fact, there are a number of references to Jesus Christ and what Paul thought of Him, among them one of the fullest statements Paul ever made on the subject, Phil. 2:5-11, a passage introduced quite unexpectedly, but at the same time with a certain unmistakable solemnity. These passages are sufficient in number and scope to present all the important truths treated in dogmatics under the heading of The Person of Christ. The letter to the Philippians, like the rest, presents Jesus Christ as truly divine and truly human, and yet truly one in his person, a person who passed through the deepest valley of humiliation for man's redemption, before God exalted him to the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory and excellence.

1. Matt. 10:23 and parallel
3. I Pet. 3:18

2. Matt. 20:18, etc.
4. Matt. 21:30

I. The God - man

Even the casual reader of the epistle to the Philippians must unfailingly gain the impression that Paul everywhere speaks of Christ as a thoroughly divine person. Readers of the letter contemporary with the apostle would have gained that impression even more surely. For one of the stock terms the apostle uses here, as in the other letters, is that of Lord, *Kúrios*. It is true, the word *Kúrios* is used in the New Testament for the master of slaves¹, the possessor of property², the husband³, a father⁴, and so on. But in the absolute way in which the apostle uses the term of Jesus Christ, calling him Lord, the word can have only one meaning, i.e. Lord in a religious sense, a term fit for the deity. This is borne out strikingly by the evidence gathered by Bousset. Although the aim of this eminent scholar was to prove the religion of the apostle to be of heathen origin, and although in that aim Bousset was really endeavoring to destroy the religion of the Bible, yet the evidence he collected is in this particular strongly confirmatory of what Christians have always believed. Bousset has shown that the title "Lord" was a common term for the designation of deity, not only in the worship of Emperors and other rulers, but also in many religions of the

1. Matt. 10:24 and passim

3. I Pet. 3:6

2. Matt. 20:8, etc.

4. Matt. 21:30

East which had made their way into the Greco-Roman world, and which had been adopted in more or less modified form.

κύριος was a common title for divinity, then, throughout the Mediterranean world. The apostle makes use of this fact in I Cor. 8:5,6: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us there is but one God..." In the reference to the many lords it is implied that the word was commonly used of heathen gods by their devotees. Accordingly, when Paul used *κύριος* of Jesus it was evident to his readers, many of whom had been heathen, that he was ascribing nothing less than divinity to him. But more. The same word *κύριος* is the standing translation in the Septuagint for the Hebrew *יהוה*. When we now consider that the Septuagint was used wherever Greek-speaking Jews were congregated, and they were found throughout the Mediterranean world, we can see that Paul's ascription of the term *κύριος* to Jesus would immediately arouse in all his readers the thought: "Paul looks on this Jesus as truly divine."⁵ Accordingly, Stevens is not stating the case too strongly, when he writes: "The titles "Lord" and "Son" and the functions and prerogatives which in connection with them are ascribed to Christ, are not indeed equivalent to a formal definition of his essence; but in any fair estimate of their meaning, they decisively show that in his essential relation to God, Christ was a wholly

5. See Machen, "The Origin of Paul's Religion", pp. 305-308.

unique Being, who before his advent to earth shared the divine nature and glory, and who, in his exaltation after the resurrection only enters in a formal and demonstrative manner upon a dignity which corresponds to his essence and inherent right."⁶

Not only the use of the word by the apostle, but his whole manner and form of speaking of Jesus Christ indicates most clearly that Jesus to Paul was truly a divine person. Paul's whole life in this world and in the world to come is bound up with Christ. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;"⁷ "...having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better;"⁸ "unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;"⁹ "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;"¹⁰ "for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;"¹¹ that Christ be preached, no matter how such preaching affects him is everything to Paul¹². Even the humble things of life are "in the Lord": "I trust in the Lord to send Timotheus shortly unto you;"¹³ "receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness;"¹⁴ Euodias and Syntyche are to "be of the same mind in the Lord."¹⁵ In the Lord only is true rejoicing,¹⁶ in him the Philippians are to stand fast,¹⁷ his grace is to be with

6 6. Stevens, The Pauline Theology, p. 203.

7. Phil. 1:2; 3:7,8

8. Phil. 1:23

9. Phil. 1:29

10. Phil. 2:5

11. Phil. 2:21

12. Phil. 1:15-18

13. Phil. 2:19

14. Phil. 2:29; 4:21

15. Phil. 4:2

16. Phil. 4:4, etc.

17. Phil. 4:1

them,¹⁸ in fact, in him Paul can do all things.¹⁹ Is this the way men speak of other men, be they ever so great and heroic in their eyes? Let the reader take these phrases and substitute in them the name of some man, some great one of this earth who has commanded the ardent devotion of hundreds upon thousands of followers, a Hitler or a Ghandi, and he will see how completely inappropriate they would be in the mouths of these followers themselves, and how impossible it would be for them to express themselves as Paul does here. Only if these men and others have actually undergone an apotheosis in the minds of their followers would such expressions seem right and natural and appropriate in their minds. For the way in which Paul speaks of Christ is the way we can speak of one whom we regard as God, and of no other.

Besides the arguments already advanced, which rather imply than state directly the divinity of Christ there are a number of passages in the letter under discussion which declare that truth expressis verbis. There is, for instance, the phrase in the very beginning of the letter: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ". Here, plainly, the Lord Jesus is placed on the same level as God our Father, spoken of in the same breath, united with him as the source from which grace and peace flow out to the congregation. This sentence, taken together with the implications of the word *Κύριος* mentioned above, is strong direct testimony to the divinity of Christ.

18. Phil. 4:23

19. Phil. 4:13

The more important and striking phrases, however, are found in the famous passage in the second chapter, the phrases: ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ.

According to the first phrase Christ is said to be ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ. The Biblical usage of μορφή does not help us greatly in determining its precise sense. The LXX uses the word to translate the Hebrew מַצֶּלֶת in Job 4:16, where the English Authorized Version reads: "It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes," μορφή is used again by the LXX in Dan. 3:19, this time to translate נִצַּן: "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed...." Lightfoot's study of the words μορφή and ὁμοίωμα in composition,²⁰ as in Rom. 8:29; 12:2; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 3:10 and 21, show convincingly the stability and permanency of the idea in the μορφή group of words over against the other group, but the precise meaning still eludes the searcher. Lightfoot's conclusion is that the word "is used in a sense substantially the same which it bears in Greek philosophy",²¹ and that sense fits this passage very well. μορφή accordingly means "the outward expression of the essence of his deity"²², or "goettliche Gestalt, als der Ausdruck goettlichen Wesens, formale Bezeichnung dessen, was sonst inhaltlich und positiv als εἶδος τοῦ θεοῦ bezeichnet wird".²³ Vincent more fully describes

20. Lightfoot, Philippians, pp. 128, 129.

21. Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 128

22. Wuest, Philippians in the Greek New Testament, p. 64.

23. Cremer, Bibl. -theol. Woerterbuch, sub voce.

μορφῇ as "form identified with the essence of a thing". Not shape, he says, but the setting of the divine essence; it is not identical with essence, but identified with it as its natural and appropriate expression.²⁴ Parallels quoted from Plato, Philo, and Josephus by Thayer sub voce are in agreement with this definition. One of the completest descriptions of this phrase is given by Warfield, who writes: "It is undeniable that in the philosophico-popular mode of speech here employed 'form' means just that body of characterizing qualities which makes anything the particular thing it is - in a word, its specific character. To say that Jesus Christ is 'in the form of God' is then to say not less but more than to say shortly that he is 'God': for it is to emphasize the fact that he has in full possession and use all those characterizing qualities which make God the particular Being we call 'God'; and this mode of expression, rather than the simple 'God', is employed here precisely because it was of the essence of the Apostle's purpose to keep his reader's mind on all that Christ was as God rather than merely on the abstract fact that he was God."²⁵ Bengel in his Gnomon ad locum has the same definition: "Forma Dei non denotat ipsam deitatem sive naturam divinam, sed quiddam ex ea promicans.... Quo ipso hic locus eximie probat Deitatem

24. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III. sub voce, For an extended treatment of the meaning of μορφῇ see International Critical Commentary on Philippians, pp. 79-84.

25. Warfield, Christology and Criticism, pp. 271 f.

Christi". So also Quenstedt: "μορφῇ θεοῦ formaliter et praecise non ipsam divinam essentiam notat, sed proprie divinam conditionem gloriosam seu gloriam et majestatis divinae usum universalem, quae consistere non possunt absque veritate, sed eandem in eadem hypostasi supponunt (III, 333), and Chemnitz: "μορφῇ est, quando natura seu essentia aliqua ita consideratur, sicut idiomatis, attributis et conditionibus vel divinis vel humanis praedita et quasi vestita ac ornata est" (de duabus naturis, 138).²⁶ It is true, some have tried to limit the existence "in the form of God" to the preexistent state of Christ, but that claim is expressly excluded by the phrase itself. The present participle ὑπάρχων stands out in sharp contrast from all the aorist tenses of the passage. Throughout all that historical activity and development indicated by the aorist finite verbs and participles Christ was, remained "in the form of God". As E. H. Gifford truly remarks: "ὑπάρχων involves the continuance of Jesus 'in the form of God' after as well as before he had assumed 'the form of a servant' - one of the chief implications of the whole passage."²⁷ And Quenstedt, in truly complete and careful style, says (op. et loc. cit.): "Ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων. Participium ὑπάρχων hic est ἐμφατικώτατον, indicans: 1. Christum non sumsisse μορφῇ θεοῦ (uti dicitur sumsisse μορφῇ δούλου), sed in ea exstitisse. 2. Christum cum μορφῇ θεοῦ simul vere habuisse ipsam divinam essentiam et

26. Quoted in Schmid, Dogmatik der ev.-luth. Kirche, p. 277.

27. Quoted in a foot-note, Warfield, op. cit., p. 271.

naturam.... 3. Christum Jesum, postquam sumsisset μορφήν δούλου
non deposuisse vel ipsam θεότητα vel ὁμοιωσ et omni
modo a se abdicasse μορφήν Θεοῦ ..."

Even more clear, a statement of the true deity of Jesus Christ is the following phrase οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ. The crucial word here is also the emphatic word, ἄρπαγμόν. That it is a hapaxegomenon does not make the fixing of its meaning any the easier. Many and of great variety are the meanings commentators have given to this word, and to the context determined by it.²⁸ Grammatically, ἄρπαγμόν is the object complement of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ. τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ means either "to be on an equality with God" or "to exist on an equality with God", or to use Meyer's phrase, "the God-equal existence". For the adverbial use of the neuter plural there are classical Greek parallels,²⁹ and this meaning is to be preferred, although it must be admitted the difference in meaning is, in the long run, very slight. This "God-equal existence", then, Jesus Christ did not regard as a ἄρπαγμόν. This word may have the active sense of the μος termination of verbal nouns, "a robbing". The objection to this is that there is no object for the "robbing" indicated. Meyer struggles strongly for the active meaning. In a paraphrase of this sentence he has: "Jesus Christ.... did not permit himself the thought of using his equality with God

28. Consult Meyer's Commentary, pp. 68-72, for a very complete catalogue of different interpretations of this word and its context.

29. Winer, Grammatik...., p.167.

for the purpose of seizing possessions and honour for himself on earth".³⁰ This seems very forced and unnatural. ἄρπαιγμός becomes almost "opportunity for robbery". Besides, the form of the accusative with the infinitive added to the emphatic position of ἄρπαιγμόν seems to suggest a state, and so a passive sense for the noun, in spite of its active ending. Lightfoot shown in his commentary that substantives in μός frequently are used to describe a concrete thing, as θεμμός, χρηδμός, φραγμός with which he compares the English "seizure", "capture". The word ἄρπαιγμός, besides, is so rarely used that usage is not decisive.³¹ A second general meaning given to the word ἄρπαιγμός by exegetes is that of "a thing robbed", praeda, res rapta, a procedure which gives the word a passive meaning, and treats it as if it were a noun ending in μα. This is the view of most of the Greek fathers and of Lightfoot, Luther and many others, but in many variations. Foerster rejects this on the grounds that it can not be understood without a paraphrase. He compares the phrase in Philippians with such phrases as εὐργμα, εἰρηανόν τι ἡγάδα, "sich so zu etwas stellen, wie 'jedermann' sich zu etwas stellt, das sich ihm als zu ergreifende Beute darbietet", "etwas ausnutzen", res rapienda. Two translations are then possible. "Sprachlich^{ist} die Uebersetzung: 'Er sah die Gottgleichheit nicht fuer einen Gewinn an (naemlich, den man sich nicht entgehen laesst)", gleich gut moeglich, wie die andere: 'Er sah die Gottgleichheit nicht fuer einen Gewinn an (naemlich, den man nicht unbenutzt laesst)'" He

30. Meyer, op. cit., p. 78.

31. Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 109.

decided for the latter and gives as the meaning of the passage: "So, wie 'jedermann' erwarten sollte, hat Jesus die Gottgleichheit nicht angesehen, nicht als einen Gewinn, der auszunutzen ist."³² In whatever of the three senses, under which almost all of the explanations of the phrase advanced may be grouped, the passage is actually finally taken, the result as far as Paul's teaching concerning the person of Christ is concerned remains the same. The $\tauὸ \epsilonἶναι ἴσα θεῷ$ is something which Christ possessed, something which he owned as of right. A number of exegetes, it is true, have seen a plus in the $\tauὸ \epsilonἶναι ἴσα θεῷ$ as compared with the $μορφῇ θεοῦ$, and, by means of the res rapienda translation of $\epsilonἰσαχμένος$ have denied to Christ the complete divinity. But we have shown that the $μορφῇ θεοῦ$ already involves the true divine essence, so that the comment of Chrysostom estimates this exegesis very justly: $\epsilonἰ ἡ, θεός, πῶς εἶχεν εἰσαχθεί; ... τίς γὰρ ἂν εἴποι ὅτι ὁ δεῖνα ἀνθρώπος ὢν οὐχ ἡρπάζε τὸ εἶναι ἀνθρώπος; πῶς γὰρ ἂν τίς ὅτι ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπος;$ Meyer adds the observation that Paul would have had to turn the two phrases around, so as "to add to the idea of equality of nature, by way of climax, that of the same form of appearance, of the divine also"³³. We can let Meyer speak, too, for the force of the two phrases just discussed taken together. "Both, therefore, express the same divine habitus; but the $\epsilonἶναι ἴσα θεῷ$ is the general element,

32. Foerster in Kittel, Theo. Woerterbuch.... sub voce.

33. Meyer, op. cit., p. 76.

which presents itself in the divine *μορφή* as its sub-stratum and lies at its basis, so that the two designations exhaust the idea of divinity."³⁴ Which puts the teaching of Paul in this passage on the person of Christ very neatly and completely.

St. Paul, then, by direct statement and by implication, maintains the full and complete divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ also in his letter to the Philippians. A study of the letter shows that, in much the same way, by implication and by direct statement, the true humanity of the Lord is also set forth in this epistle.

First, then, by implication. In Phil. 3:10 we have the words: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death". And in the great passage of the second chapter Christ is said to have "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". It is true, the Gospels were not yet written, but we can still say with perfect validity that these words of the apostle imply all that the Gospels have to tell us about the life of Christ. Whether Paul knew anything of Christ's life from first-hand experience can not be determined, although it is not at all unlikely. However that may be, the apostle Paul still had ample opportunity to find out all about Christ from those who

34. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 68 f., in a footnote.

had been his constant companions, and, what is more, we can not imagine his not making full use of that opportunity. Now the Gospels, the salient features of the contents of which Paul knew too, present to us a true man, and Paul mentions particularly those incidents in Christ's life which display a truly human person: suffering, crucifixion, death. There can be no doubt what Paul thought about Christ. He was not only God, he was true, real, actual man.

Secondly, that Christ was true man is stated directly, in so many words, words found in the same passage in which direct testimony to the divinity of Christ is given. There are two phrases that come into consideration: *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπου γενόμενος* and *ὁμοίωσιν ὡς ἄνθρωπος*. The word *ὁμοίωμα* causes some difficulty. It comes from *ὁμοίος*, meaning 'like', 'similar', 'resembling'. The noun is used to express properly 'that which has been made after the likeness of something', hence 'figure', 'image', 'likeness', 'representation'.³⁵ The word is a very general one and covers a wide field of likenesses. It is used to translate the Hebrew *תְּבִלֵּת, תְּבִלֵּת, תְּבִלֵּת*. In Plato finite things are *ὁμοιώματα*, likenesses in which *τὰ παραδείγματα*, i.e. *αἱ εἰδὲς* or *τὰ εἶδη* are expressed.³⁶ In Ezekiel, LXX, the figures in visions are often called *ὁμοιώματα*. In places the likeness almost amounts to equality or identity,

35. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon...*, *sub voce*.

36. Thayer, *op. cit.*, *ibidem*.

as in Dan. 3:25. According to Trench the resemblance as described in *ὁμοίωμα* may be purely accidental, like that existing between two eggs or two unrelated men.³⁷ In the phrase before us the word *ὁμοίωμα* could, if nothing else at all were to be considered, per se, imply a Docetic view of Christ, viz., that Jesus Christ was not true man at all, but only appeared to be a man. That the phrase does not mean that in this passage and that Paul did not intend his readers to read that meaning out of it, or into it, is plain from its connection with *ἔργων*..... and the action of Christ Paul goes on to relate: obedience unto the death of the cross. For the phrase *ἔργων ἐπέθετο ὡς ἄνθρωπος* refers to the activities of a real man. The meaning of *ἔργων* is not in dispute. The definition of Bengel is everywhere quoted with approval: *ἔργων*, habitus, cultus, vestitus, victus, gestus, sermones, et actiones. So Thayer sub voce: "the habitus, as comprising everything in a person which strikes the senses, figure, bearing, discourse, manner of life." Etymologically, its derivation is the precise counterpart of habitus in Latin, "behavior" in English, and "Haltung" in German. Trench has an enlightening comparison in his Synonyms of the New Testament. To change a Dutch garden into an Italian garden, he says, is a change of the

37. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, p. 48

ὁ γήμια ; to change a garden into a city would be a change
 of the μορφή.³⁸ So, when Christ's contemporaries saw,
 heard, and had dealings with him, they were living with
 what they held to be a true man. So they found him to be
 (εὐρεθείς). Nothing could be further from the mind of
 the apostle than the thought that all the earthly life of
 Lord was an elaborate delusion, a deliberate attempt on the
 part of God to mislead men, a stupendous miracle of bluff
 and hocus-pocus. Accordingly, the use of the equivocal
 ὁμοίωμα can not be Docetic in implication. The explan-
 ation most satisfactory for its use by Paul is the one ad-
 vanced already by the Greek fathers, as, for example, Theo-
 phylact: "οὐκ ἦν δὲ τὸ φαινόμενον μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεός,
 οὐκ ἦν ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος. Διὰ τοῦτο φησὶ ἐν ὁμοιωμάτι
 ἁνθρώπων. ἡμεῖς μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ψυχὴ
 καὶ σῶμα καὶ θεός. and Theodoret: περὶ τοῦ λόγου
 ταῦτά φησιν, ὅτι θεὸς ὢν οὐχ ἑώρατο θεὸς τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν
 περικεκμενὸς φύσιν.
 The term "in the likeness of men" expresses the fact that
 his mode of manifestation resembled what men are. In the
 other side of his person, his divinity, he did not appear.
 The likeness in which he did appear was a real likeness, but
 it did not express his whole self.³⁹ This is a very gener-
 ally adopted explanation among the commentators, although it
 has also been strongly attacked.⁴⁰

38. Trench, op. cit., p. 246

39. Vincent, op. cit., sub voce.

40. Meyer, op. cit., p. 76

It should be clear that the humanity of the Lord is no less clearly maintained by the apostle in the letter under discussion than the divinity. To these truths is now to be added the further statement that Paul's whole way of writing of the Lord is one which takes for granted that he is speaking of one, indivisible person. There is no hint in this letter, as there is none in all of his writings, of any difficulty in presenting Christ as one person, when he at the same time speaks of Him as having two such seemingly incompatible sides. Mountains of literature have been written on the relation of the human and divine down the centuries of the Christian Church's existence, but the apostle is not perturbed by the difficulty. He speaks of Christ, now predicating the most splendid divine perfections of Him, now describing Him in weakness and lowliness, as in Phil. 2:6-11, without any indication of logical embarrassment. The easy and unforced manner in which one wholly human statement is made of Jesus Christ, followed by an equally easy statement predicating the fulness of God is most striking, and shows almost more convincingly than anything else how the Saviour was always to Paul one and the same single, indivisible, unique divine-human person.

The letter to the Philippians also contains the truth that the God-man remains as such, a truly divine-human being, to all eternity. That Christ as the true God, remains true God to all eternity is certainly a mere truism, the baldest and flattest of platitudes. For God does not and can not change. The point of the first statement, however, is just this that the God-man remains what He is to all eternity, that in Christ the human nature enters upon an eternal existence, that Christ remains also man to all eternity. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."⁴¹ The specific treatment of this passage will follow, when we deal with the Exaltation of the God-man. It will be sufficient to mark here that the same Jesus Christ, whose obedience even unto the death of the cross was described in the immediately preceding verse is in this passage given the place of highest honour in the heavens. An eternal song of praise goes up to Him from all created things, be they visible or invisible, be they on earth, or above it, or beneath it. The human name Jesus is made especially prominent, and with it is joined the exalted term *κύριος*, which is the name

41. Phil. 2:9-11.

appropriate just for the exalted Christ.⁴² That the Son of God remains also man to all eternity is clear from another passage in this letter, Phil. 3:21. There the Philippians are shown a glorious prospect awaiting them, for the Lord Jesus Christ, says Paul, "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." This passage is most interesting for the instructive juxtaposition of a *δύσμορφη* compound and a *μορφή* compound, *μεταδύσμορφη* and *σύμμορφον*. The changing of "our body of humiliation" is a changing of its *δύσμορφη*, which is appropriately used, because of the mortality and frailty of it in its present sin-corrupted form, although the apostle might also have written *μεταμορφώσεται*, for which use we have an analogy in the metamorphoses the gods in heathen literature. That Paul writes *σύμμορφον* for the Christian's body being made like Christ's beautifully indicates the state of stability and permanency upon which it enters in glory. The point of the quotation in this connection is, however, a different one. St. Paul speaks of Christ's body, *σῶμα*, and of Christians sharing the form of that body, into the essence and make-up of which we shall not enter here, in the life to come. To all eternity our Lord bears with Him the body of His humanity. He does not

42. See article in Kittel, op. cit., sub voce.

revert to a spirit state. His is no longer purely the spiritual existence of God and the angels. "And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."⁴³

In Christ then God is man and man is God, as it was when Christ walked the earth, is now, and ever shall be. That is the teaching of the Christian Church. That is the teaching of the apostle in the letter to the Philippians.

43. Luke 24:39.

II. The Humiliation of the God-man.

The doctrine that in the person of Christ God and man are united, that "the Word became flesh",¹ that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily",² is one of the profoundest mysteries of our Christian religion. Mysteries so transcending human understanding are there to be humbly accepted in childlike faith, not to be pried into, dissected, analyzed, and reduced as far as possible into acceptable logical categories. Just this is what has happened to the teaching of the person of Christ. Innumerable attacks, some crude and some subtle, upon the doctrine of the Bible have called forth defenders of the truth, long and acrimonious controversies have followed, so that, finally, the locus on the person of Christ has become one of the longest and most complicated in the whole of dogmatics. In the controversies about the question how the divine and the human are related to each other the passage from Philippians, Phil. 2:5-11, has played almost a central role, and has actually furnished two of the technical terms in which one aspect of the relation

1. Jn. 1:14.

2. Col. 2:9.

between the divine and the human has been formulated: the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ (*ἐταπεινώσεν* , v.8, and *ὑπερύψωσεν* v.9.)

The Various Views of the Humiliation of Christ.

There are, essentially, three different views on the humiliation of Christ, defenders of which depend, at least to some extent, on the passage from Philippians just referred to: that of the Kenoticists, the Reformed, and the Lutherans.

The Kenoticists begin from the premise that the humanity of Christ and His true human development must be preserved at all costs. Accordingly, some of them teach that the Son of God, to become incarnate, put aside for the time his operative qualities, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, so that the divine nature actually underwent a change, a diminishing of itself in the incarnation.³ Others, of a more extreme and logical cast of mind, claim that the Son of God in the incarnation divested Himself of all divine attributes, so that His divine personality was replaced by a human one. The Son of God, so reduced, went through the regular process of growth and development, and had all the experiences of normal men, yet without sin. But as the substance of the infant born of the Virgin Mary was the substance of the Logos, it continued to develop, not only until it reached a height of excellence and glory to which no other man ever attained, but until it culminated in full equality with God. This doctrine has been

3. So described, essentially, in Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 289.

well characterized by Pieper as follows: "Um den Druck der Gottheit zu erleichtern und der menschlichen Natur Lebens- und Entwicklungsluft zu sichern, erleichtern die Kenotiker die Gottheit."⁴ Still more vivid is the phrase of Werner Elert that the Kenoticists endeavour to press the Godhead through the eye of the needle of humanity.⁵

There is no unanimity among the Reformed as to the Humiliation of Christ, but the statements of Hodge on the subject will be generally accepted by the Reformed as adequately presenting their teaching. In his Systematic Theology he quotes the standards, declaring that they "wisely content themselves with the simple statements of the Scriptures: Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time." In the enlargement of this short statement Hodge explicitly declares that the particulars enumerated in the standards concern the Eternal Son of God. He insists likewise that the incarnation must be viewed as part of the humiliation.⁶ Reformed writers generally like to divide the humiliation into the two parts of the incarnation proper and the life of humiliation following it. Thus Evans, arguing from the Philippians passage writes: "There are two

4. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, Vol. II, p. 329.

5. Werner Elert, Der christliche Glaube, p. 383.

6. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II. p. 610ff.

stages in Christ's humiliation, each represented by a finite verb defining the central act of the particular stage, accompanied by two modal participles. 1st stage indicated in v. 7. Its central act is: 'he emptied himself'. Its two modalities are: (1) 'taking the form of a servant'; (2) 'being made in the likeness of men'. Here we have the humiliation of the Kenosis, - that by which Christ became man. 2nd stage, indicated in v. 9. Its central act is: 'he humbled himself'. Its two modalities are: (1) 'being found in fashion as a man'; (2) 'becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross'. Here we have the humiliation of his obedience and death, - that by which, in humanity, he became a sacrifice for our sins."⁷

The Lutheran view of the Humiliation of Christ can be simply stated as consisting in this that the God-man, Christ, according to his human nature, did not always nor fully use the divine majesty and attributes, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, communicated to his human nature. These divine attributes the human nature always possessed by communication, but in order to carry out the work of redemption, Christ did not, except in special cases and on special occasions, make use of them. Particularly instructive is Hollaz's detailed description of the humiliation, since he uses the same text as Evans, quoted above as the basis for his definition. "Quattuor

7. Quoted in Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 384.

requisita connectenda sunt ad plene describendam exinanitionem Christi: 1. κένωσις (intermissio, retractio, inhibitio actus plenarii, perpetui et universalis Christo homini realiter communicatae divinae majestatis et excellentiae. Quen.). 2.

λήψις μορφῆς θεοῦ, assumptio conditionis servilis. Fuit namque Christus servi in modum tractatus, venditus, et servili supplicio affectus. 3. ὁμοιώσις ἀνθρώπων, assimilatio cum hominibus tenuioribus et ignobilibus imprimis Israelitis, in nativitate, circumcissione, ablactatione, arte fabrilī, in conversatione et gestu. 4. ταπεινὴς ὑποτακτικῇ, humillima obedientia activa et passiva."⁸

All of these views are supposed to be supported by Phil. 2:5-11. The most immediate task, then, is to present a careful study of this passage to see whether the words there do support the views they are said to support and to what degree.

The Meaning of Philippians 2:5-11.

This passage of Philippians is justly regarded as one of the most exalted in the epistles of Paul. No reader can fail to recognize the spirit, the verve, the lofty style in which it is written. None has described that aspect of the verses better than Meyer, who writes: "The classical passage which now follows is like an Epos in calm majestic objectivity; nor does it lack an epic minuteness of detail."⁹ Lenski speaks of the dramatic $\frac{\epsilon}{\varsigma}$, which, taking the place of the \acute{o} ,

8. Quoted in Schmid, op. cit., p. 277

9. Meyer, op. cit., p. 66.

which we should expect, points to something great and weighty following. "Christ Jesus is the One who is supreme in the thing Paul is urging upon his readers. Paul fixes our eyes on this person as a person".¹⁰ This is certainly hitting the true spirit of the passage, and must be held against those who claim that the passage is purely moral in its implication, and that its use in the controversy on the person of Christ is irrelevant.¹¹ The purpose of Paul is, undoubtedly, to present Christ in his person, and so the passage is entirely relevant to the matter in hand. On the other hand, to use the words of Stewart, "it may be questioned whether the great kenosis passage in Philippians - which again is really a picture - can bear the weight of theory and doctrine loaded upon it."¹² These words are but a gentle warning against reading the ideas and developments of a later age into this comparatively early Christian document, a warning thought which is really of great importance to the proper understanding of the words of St. Paul.

10. Lenski, Epistle to the Philippians, p. 771

11. Baumgarten-Crusius, Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Philipper, p. 46. Still worse is the linking-up of this supposed merely moral implications of the passage with Gnostic ideas, or pagan mythology, e.g. Martin Dibelius in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, Vol. III, p. 55: "Der mit den Worten ausgedruckte Gedanke entstammt letztlich der uralten Erzaehlung von dem Gott, der seine Herrlichkeit ablegt, um in die Tiefen der Unterwelt einzudringen, d.h., dem Hoellensfahrtsmythus. So hat Paulus seiner Christologie eine mythische Einkleidung gegeben, zugleich aber in den Mythos einen sittlichen Zug hineingetragen: nicht, um etwas zu erlangen, "entaeussert sich" Christus, seine Erniedrigung ist die Tat freien Gehorsams. Beides, die mythische Einkleidung, wie die Versittlichung des Mythos, ist charakteristisch fuer die religionsgeschichtliche Stellung des Paulus: er ist gerade dadurch der Bewahrer antiken Erbguts geworden, dass er das Alte mit den lebenskraeftigsten Elementen des jungen Christentums zu verbinden wusste." Machen, Op. cit., chapters VI-VIII gives the complete answer to those who see pagan ideas preserved in Paul's

12. Stewart, A Man in Christ, p. 14.

(theology.)

The student of these words is almost at once overwhelmed by the tremendous variety of interpretations. Pieper declares: "Freilich herrscht in der Auffassung dieser Schriftstelle eine grosse Uneinigkeit unter den Theologen. Das ist aber nicht Schuld der Apostelworte."¹³ Now, it is true, a passage is not necessarily "disputable, because it is disputed", to use a phrase of C. P. Krauth, but the words of the apostle are not really as simple as Pieper would have us believe. The words belong, at least in a measure, to those things of St. Paul, concerning which the apostle Peter writes that there "are some things hard to be understood".¹⁴ Differences among the commentators meet us with respect to the syntax. Are we to make a major break at *λαλῶν*, or *γενόμενος*, or directly before *ἐταπείνωθεν*? What precisely is the point in the contrast between *οὐχ... ἡγήσατο* and *ἀλλὰ... ἐκένωθεν*? There are literally dozens of more or less important turns of thought here, according as one takes *ἄρπαγμός* in an active or in a passive sense, and according as one equates *ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων* and *τὸ εἶναι ἰσὺς Θεῷ* or whether a certain plus is seen in the *τὸ εἶναι ἰσὺς Θεῷ* over against the *μορφῇ Θεοῦ*.¹⁵ Again, of what did Christ empty himself? Of the *μορφῇ Θεοῦ*? or the *τὸ εἶναι ἰσὺς Θεῷ*? or both? or something else? There are differences in the meaning assigned to various keywords: *μορφῇ*, *ἄρπαγμός*, *ἐκένωσε*, *ὁμοίωμα*, *δοῦλος*, *διό*, *ὑπερέψατο* differences which affect the whole interpretation, now in

13. Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

14. 2 Pet. 3:16.

15. See again Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-72

truly large measure, now in but a minor way. Even what exegeses have almost to a man taken for granted, one of the few generally accepted features of the passage, has come under the fire of contradiction. The words of v. 5: "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus", have been taken as setting up an example for humility in Jesus Christ, the following verses elaborating, defining more closely wherein the humility of Christ consisted. The elliptic sentence is usually completed by writers on the passage by the supplying of *ἐφ' ὅποιον* or some similar form. Recently, however, Stewart has criticized that interpretation, writing as follows: 'Reflect in your own minds the mind of Christ Jesus, 'is Lightfoot's rendering. To obtain this meaning, however, involves straining the Greek, and supplying a most unlikely verb in the relative clause. But now, all that is needed, not only to overcome the linguistic difficulty, but also to discover a far richer and more pointed challenge in the words, is to interpret the phrase 'in Christ Jesus' in its strict Pauline sense. The meaning which then emerges is this: 'See that you apply among yourselves, in your community life, the spirit which has been born within you by union with Christ.' Clearly, what Paul is hinting at is the danger - as common to-day as it was then - of a hiatus between personal religion and public relationships. He reminds the Philippians that their own experience in 'Christ'

must be the controlling and directing factor in all their treatment of one another."¹⁶ This explanation has not been so clear to hundreds of commentators, but, if it is correct, it weakens all those arguments which proceed from the assumption that the $\delta \kappa \alpha \iota \epsilon \nu \tau \eta \delta \omicron \nu \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \eta$ introduces a comparison with Christ's mind, not their own. The example of Christ would become only an indirect thought of the apostle, and not the focal point of the passage. All of these differences of exegesis in word, in phrase, in the joining of phrases are found in an almost endless variety of combinations, so that the work of writers on this passage presents an unspeakably variegated patch-work quilt of interpretation. Well has Bruce declared: "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."¹⁷

The most divisive of differences, however, and one which separates the exegesis into two distinct groups lies in the question: "Who is the subject of the passage, at least of the first verses, i.e., of the verbs and verbal forms $\epsilon \pi \omicron \rho \chi \omega \nu, \eta \gamma \gamma \acute{\alpha} \tau \epsilon \epsilon \kappa \epsilon \nu \omicron \mu \epsilon \tau \epsilon \rho, \lambda \alpha \beta \acute{\alpha} \iota \nu$? The Logos $\epsilon \nu \delta \omicron \mu \eta \kappa \omicron \varsigma$ or the Logos $\alpha \delta \omicron \mu \eta \kappa \omicron \varsigma$? Does Paul begin in heaven here in this short epic or on earth? Within the two schools formed by divergent answers to the

16. Stewart, op. cit., p. 158.

17. Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ, quoted Vincent, Word Studies, Vol. III., p. 432, footnote.

question stated, there are numerous differences, but most of the explanations are in essential agreement with that of Lightfoot in the one case and that of Pieper in the other, a summary of both of whose views is now to be presented and criticized.

Lightfoot.

The passage sets Christ up as an example to the Philip-
pians, for ἐφρονεῖτο has to be supplied with ὁ καὶ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων is more decisive for the
divinity of Christ than Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3 and
is the Pauline counterpart for John's ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος in the
prologue of his Gospel. His equality with God Christ did
not hold on to as a prize, but he emptied himself and gave up,
not the divine nature - an impossibility - but his environ-
ment of glory, "the insignia of majesty", the prerogatives
of Deity. This he did by taking the form of a servant. The
emphatic position of ἐαυτὸν points to this humiliation as vol-
untary and self-imposed. The word δοῦλος is used as a strong
equivalent for ἄνθρωπος. The participles aorist λαβὼν
and γεγόμενος in opposition to the present ὑπάρχων mark
the assumption of the new upon the old. In consequence of
his voluntary humiliation in the fulfilling of the law and obed-
ience to death God also exalted him, the words ὑπερύψωθεν and
ἐξορίσθη being used in reference to the subordinate pos-
ition voluntarily assumed by the Son of God. ὄνομα is
not "name", literally, but title, dignity, majesty in its

manifestation to men. To Christ the Lord, then, in his majesty all creatures, all things whatsoever and wheresoever they be bow down; his name they proclaim with thanksgiving.¹⁸

Meyer is in essential agreement, except for his endeavour to keep the active meaning of *ἐπηρρώσ*. His paraphrase of the first section of the passage runs as follows: "Jesus, when he found himself in the heavenly mode of existence of divine glory, did not permit himself the thought of using his equality with God for the purpose of seizing possessions and honour for himself on earth: No, he emptied himself of the divine glory, inasmuch as, notwithstanding his God-equal nature, he took upon him the mode of existence of a slave of God, so that he entered into the likeness of men, and in his outward bearing and appearance manifested himself not otherwise than as a man. He humbled himself, so that he became obedient unto God, etc."¹⁹

Pieper.

Christians should have the same unselfish frame of mind that Christ displayed. But what was Christ's frame of mind? It was revealed in this that he emptied himself. The apostle shows us, both negatively and positively, in what this self-emptying consisted: negatively, in this that Christ made no show or boast of his equality with God, although he was in the form of God; positively, in this that he assumed 'slave-form', became quite like other men and accordingly appeared to other men quite like one of themselves and not like the

18. See Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-113.

19. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 78

God-man he was. After showing what the self-emptying meant for Christ in his person, the apostle continues in the following verses to describe the slave's work to which Christ humbled himself. He humbled himself, according to the Father's will, to death, and that not an ordinary death, but the shameful death of the cross.²⁰

This is the classic Lutheran traditional explanation of this passage. Quenstedt, for example, summarizes the meaning of the passage as follows: "Christum iam inde a primo incarnationis momento divinam gloriam et majestatem sibi secundum humanam naturam communicatam plena usurpatione exserere, et tanquam Deum se gerere potuisse, sed abdicasse se plenario eius usu et humilem sese exhibuisse, patrique suo coelesti obedientem factum esse usque ad mortem crucis." (III, 335)²¹

Criticism of the Traditional Lutheran View.

The first, and perhaps the strongest, objection to the traditional, orthodox Lutheran interpretation is one based on first impressions. Now, there can be little doubt that almost everybody, theologian and trained student included, who reads this section of Philippians thinks (as he does when he reads 2 Cor. 8;9 which almost everybody regards as a parallel to this section), of the preexistent Christ as being referred to at the beginning of the passage. Short

20. Pieper, op. cit., pp. 320 f. - 257

21. Quoted Schmid, op. cit. p. 278

of a world-wide census of Bible-readers, this statement may be difficult to prove. I can only point to personal experience, to many conversations with students, and more important, to the great majority of interpreters who take that view. Especially the phrase *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενομένης* almost forces us to think of the incarnation. Lightfoot, in criticism of the Lutheran position, says: "Even if *μορφῇ τοῦ θεοῦ λαβὼν* does not refer to the incarnation, nothing else can be understood of *ἐν ὁμοιώματι γενομένης*. The whole context implies that the being born as man was the first step in humiliation, as the death on the cross was the last."²² Now, first impressions may be wrong. Look before you leap is as much a rule for sound exegesis and Bible understanding as it is a fitting motto for the practical man of action. But when first impressions are supported by other sound reasons, then first impressions are very likely to be right. And that for the reason that first impressions are more natural, less subtle, less likely to be determined by the sophistications of a neatly-ordered system. The less sophisticated interpretation is likely to be the correct one when dealing with the writings of the early Church, *ceteris paribus*, because it is certain that the readers of the writings, and their writers too for that matter, knew nothing of the controversies and minutely developed systems of later centuries. The question, then, is: What would the Philippians themselves

22. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 130

have been more likely to think as they read the words under discussion? The Lutheran view requires us to make a very careful distinction in thought between the incarnation per se and the way in which the incarnation took place, although the two things happened contemporaneously. Now that distinction is a true one, but the words of Philippians say nothing about that directly, perhaps not even indirectly, but that distinction must have been present in the minds of the Philippians in quite a distinct fashion, if, when reading the words of this passage, they were to arrive easily at the Lutheran interpretation. The easy interpretation is certainly the "Logos ^{λόγος} ~~αὐτοῦ~~ -view", while the other view requires a certain disingenuousness and sophistication. The Lutheran view (I use this term, not as a correct description of it or even as a desirable one, but simply as a short cut) may still be right, but first impressions are against it.

Suspicion and antagonism to this view are, to continue, aroused by an unmistakable dogmatic approach on the part of orthodox Lutheran theologians to the exegesis of the great Philippians passage. For instance, Lenski makes this statement: "The question regarding ^{λόγος} ~~αὐτοῦ~~ , whether this is the ^{λόγος} ~~αὐτοῦ~~ or the ^{λόγος} ~~αὐτοῦ~~ ^{ἐνσάρκωτος} , is by no means innocent. The question it raises is really the old Arian one

23. Lenski, op. cit., p. 772

24. Lenski, op. cit., p. 774

25. Quoted in the Literature of England, Revised Edition, 1941, Scott, Foresman and Co., Vol. I, p. 897.

in a new form: What think ye of Christ? Is he really God's Son, or only partly God's Son, or only a man and not even God's Son?"²³ Similarly, some pages later, that theologian argues that, in this great passage on the humiliation and the exaltation, since both states deal with the human nature, and since the divine nature can undergo neither humiliation nor exaltation, being immutable, the subject must be the *λόγος ἐνσάρκωτος*.²⁴

Traces of this dogmatic approach to the text can be seen also in the works of Philippi and Pieper. Here again, the dogmatic approach does not, in itself, make the exegesis wrong, and the possibility that a correct interpretation may be arrived at, even though approached by a fundamentally wrong way, must be granted. The dogmatic approach, however, is not calculated to arouse any great confidence in the final result; rather has it the effect of predisposing the mind to dissent and to suspicion of the conclusions arrived at in that way, and destroys confidence in the exegetical veracity and reliability of those who use that approach.

The strength of the orthodox Lutheran interpretation is not made stronger by the unfortunate use of a rather great number of really poor subsidiary arguments. As Dean Swift once remarked: "An idle reason lessens the weight of the good ones you gave before."²⁵ Philippi, for instance, urges

23. Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 772

24. Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 774

25. Quoted in the *Literature of England*, Revised Edition, 1941, Scott, Foresman and Co., Vol. I, p. 897.

against the "^{2/}ἀνάρκτος subject-view" the following: "Eben als Mensch ist er uns Menschen ein Muster und Exempel des gottwohlgefaelligen Verhaltens. Um so ferner liegend ist es von vorne herein, Phil. 2:5ff., an die Menschwerdung des Sohnes Gottes selber als Vorbild der Demuth zu denken. Es ist dies ueberdies wie ein in der Schrift unerhoerter, so ein an sich ziemlich barocker Gedanke. Denn das schlechthin Unnachahmliche kann nicht als Gegenstand der Nachahmung aufgestellt werden."²⁶ But, surely, it is the mind of Christ, the attitude of the Son of God, which led him to condescend to become man, that would be the thing to be imitated. What person ever got the idea that we should imitate the incarnation itself? Again, it is stated by Pieper that there is no statement of the incarnation of Christ in the whole chapter.²⁷ Even Lenski dissociates himself from that statement, seeing it clearly in ἐν ὁμοιωμάτι...γενομένος. He avoids the difficulty of being forced on to the Scylla of the ἀνάρκτος subject by translating that phrase: "when he got to be in man's likeness", thus separating the one aorist participle γενομένος, from its evident coordination with the others and the aorist verbs. Thirdly, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ does not fit the divine nature of Christ, according to Pieper, and can not be regarded as a parallel to εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, Col. 1:15

26. Philippi, Glaubenslehre, IV, 1.p. 469

27. Pieper, op. cit., p. 321

or to ἀπαύλαμα τῆς δόξης Hebr. 1:3. He argues as follows: "Diese Stellen sind ungleichartig. Nach diesen Stellen naemlich ist Christus nach der Gottheit nicht 'in Gottes Bild', ἐν εἰκόνι τοῦ Θεοῦ, sondern Gottes Bild selbst, εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ, und nicht 'im Glanz der Herrlichkeit Gottes', sondern Gottes Glanz selbst, ὡς ἀπαύλαμα κτλ. " ²⁸ The reason for the in the one case and not in the others, however, is plainly due to the different words Paul is using. He certainly could not have said that the Logos was the μορφή Θεοῦ without writing heresy. 'The pictures, figurative expressions used in these parallels are different. That convincingly accounts for the use of ἐν in the one case and for its non-use in the others. A fourth argument used smacks a little of dogmatism again. Since the exaltation described in vv. 9-11, introduced by the verb ὑπερύψωθεν clearly describes the exaltation of the human Christ, therefore, it is argued, the previous verses must also describe the humiliation of Christ according to the human nature. ²⁹ Answer: the verbal counterpart to ὑπερύψωθεν is ἐταπείνωθεν, not ἐκένωθεν; and that the ἐταπείνωθεν describes the humiliation of Christ according to the human nature is not in dispute. The argument would hold, if we have to coordinate ἐκένωθεν and ἐταπείνωθεν

28. Pieper, op. cit., p. 322.

29. Pieper, op. cit., p. 323.

as implying approximately the same thing. But that still has to be proved. Finally, it is claimed that the word is used only of men, never of God. So already Quenstedt: Tribuitur ei *φροειν* quod homini proprium.³⁰ This is not at all convincing. That in all other places the word is used of man does not necessarily prove that it could not be used of God, the Logos, in this passage, especially since the passage, granting the Logos *ἄνακτος* to be the subject at the beginning, goes on to speak of him as the incarnate One later one. The apostle had to pick some word to cover both aspects of the Logos's attitude, so why not this one? There is nothing, we could add, about the word derogatory to the Godhead, nothing out of keeping with the many anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms contained throughout the holy Scriptures. It must be stated here again that the arguments examined and shown to be apparently without weight do not in any way overthrow the orthodox Lutheran interpretation. That may still be correct, but that such poor arguments are used at all is an objection, and a very real objection, to that interpretation. Like the dogmatic approach sketched in a previous paragraph, this fact arouses a feeling of uncertainty with respect to the conclusion fortified by such weak defences.

30. Philippi, op. cit., p. 471

It may, finally, be urged against the traditional Lutheran exposition that it is opposed by the vast majority of writers on the subject. Grammarians, lexicographers, commentators, dogmatists - all with the sole exception of the strict Lutheran divines maintain that Paul begins his epic statement in heaven with the preexistent Christ. Mere numbers, of course, are nothing. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay". The array of the opponents of the literal ἐστὶ in the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper is a very formidable one, too, and by all laws of language they are hopelessly wrong. Still, when the great majority of students representing all classes of theological opinion are unanimous in their opposition, the time has come for a serious re-examination of the situation and for a close criticism and scrutiny of a position once taken up.

These, then are some of the arguments and objections that can be raised against the exegesis favoured by strict Lutherans down to the present. The view adopted by the other side, that the Logos ²λόγος is the subject of the ἐκείνου, however, is not thereby shown to be necessarily right.

First, the view of the orthodox Lutherans, although the more sophisticated exegesis, is not at all an impossible one. No word, no phrase, no combination of phrases is thereby

twisted from its normal sense. What is said of the Logos ^{Λόγος}, if the popular view be granted, can be said with equal or even more propriety of the Logos incarnatus. He is and was in the form of God; he acted in the self-denying way described by the text; he was finally exalted and is now exalted to the right hand of the Father. The one phrase which causes real difficulty, the one urged against the Lutheran view by Lightfoot, ^{γερόμενος} ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων, can be readily explained, without artificiality. The phrase, as is claimed by Lightfoot and many others, is not precisely equivalent to the Johannine ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. It can be so interpreted, but it can, with equal validity, be interpreted as referring primarily to the circumstances of the incarnation of Christ. The strict phrase to describe the incarnation per se would have to be, as pointed out already by Philippi, ^{ἀνθρώπου} γερόμενος.³¹ The phrase actually used by St. Paul describes the Lord as becoming just like man, in all his weakness and lowliness, in the form man bears in his fallen state. The parallel to this phrase in Rom. 8:3: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh", still more clearly indicates the precise way in which the Son of God assumed humanity into his person, in such a way that he looked like and conducted himself like a normal human being, his sinlessness alone distinguishing his external appearance among men from that of

31. Philippi, op. cit., p. 472.

others. So the one phrase which tells most against the Lutheran view can easily be explained as supporting it.

Secondly, to take the preexistent Logos as the subject creates the difficulty that Paul seems to make heretical statements of the Son of God, of the Godhead. Can it be said of the Godhead, of the Logos, that he *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν* ? And how can such a strong statement be explained? There seems to be support, if not for Kenotic views, then, at least, for the Reformed view, held by some, that the divine nature, too, of Christ was humiliated. And what becomes then of the unchangeableness and eternity of God? In that case, the argument of Philippi might gain a certain force. "Da wir ueberdies schon erkannt haben, dass die Kenosis des Logos der gesammten Schriftlehre von der Person Christi zuwider laeuft, so muesste man selbst dann, wenn man zugeben wollte, dass die in Rede stehende Auffassung an sich die naechere liegende waere, nach dem Grundsatz des scriptura scripturam docet und der Notwendigkeit der Schriftauslegung secundum analogiam fidei, unsere Stelle dennoch, vorausgesetzt, dass nur die sprachliche und logische Moeglichkeit dazu vorhanden waere, auf den *λόγος ἐνσάρκως* und nicht auf die *ἐνσάρκωσις* des *λόγος* beziehen."³²

32. Philippi, op. cit., p. 471

One hesitates, when the question is such a complicated one and when both sides have such able protagonists, to give, or even attempt to give, what looks like a final answer; and the attempted answer, when given, will not commend itself very readily to the discriminating critic, when it is seen to be an answer that is something of a compromise. However, it is an answer which seems to me, at present, at least, to solve the difficulties of the two rival interpretations, to do full justice to the text and the intended meaning of Paul, and, at the same time, to be in full harmony with the teaching of the whole Bible on the person of Christ.

The explanation is not that suggested by a recent commentary, "Zunaechst bleibt es immer noch eine offene Frage, ob hier die demuetige Gesinnung Christi an seinem Herabstieg aus dem Himmel bis in die Kreuzesnot, oder nur an seinem Verhalten waehrend des Erdenlebens geschildert wird."³³ It rather follows the lines suggested by the paraphrase found in Daechsel's Bibelwerk: "ob er wohl (in seinem vorweltlichen Dasein, Jn. 1:ff.) in goettlicher Gestalt war (in einem seiner Gottgleichheit entsprechenden Herrlichkeitszustande sich befand, Jn. 17:5 und nun, da er Mensch ward, eine seinem gottmenschlichen Wesen entsprechende Gestalt oder Daseinsweise haette in Anspruch nehmen koennen....)"³⁴ We could, accordingly, give the

33. Heinzelmann in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, Vol. 8, p.79

34. Daechsel's Bibelwerk, Vol. VII, p. 511

meaning of the apostle in some such extended paraphrase as the following: "My dear Philippians, you are much concerned about your own glory, reputation, preeminence. You should be concerned about others as well as yourselves. Look at Christ and make his attitude yours. See him in the glory of heaven enjoying full equality with God. See him, for the sake of our redemption, in true humility, putting self aside, thinking not at all of his own will and dignity (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν), in self-abnegation becoming completely obedient to his Father and mindful only of the service he could render man (μορφῇ δούλου λαλῶν)^{34b}. See the same mind in him on earth. He still possessed God's form (ὑπαρχων), but instead of making a show of that as "everybody" would have done, he persistently pursued his way of obedience and service. So as a true man, and everybody could see that he was one by the way he acted and lived, he humbled himself to the death of the cross itself." "Hinab ging Christi Weg, aus goettlicher Hoehe in menschliche Niedrigkeit, innerhalb des Menschendaseins hinab in bescheidene Zurueckhaltung, in den voelligen Zusammenbruch, in den Kreuzes-
tod."³⁵ Attention should be drawn to the following two

34b. The idea expressed here, then, would be that of Paul Gerhard in his famous hymn, Ein Laemlein geht, where he describes an imaginary conversation between the Father and Son in heaven concerning man's redemption. See The Lutheran Hymnal, Hymn 142, vv. 2 and 3. Compare also Milton, Paradise Lost, Book III, pp. 217-280.

35. Heinzelmann, op. cit., ibidem.

points of this explanation. (1) $\bar{\epsilon}\kappa\epsilon\nu\omega\delta\epsilon\nu$ is taken, as Michaelis suggests, absolutely, "Er entleerte sich seines eigenen Willens,"³⁶ not of the $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ or the $\tau\omicron\ \epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$; simply, he made himself nothing, thought not of himself at all. The $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta\ \delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon\ \lambda\alpha\beta\acute{\omega}\nu$ does not describe the incarnation, nor the human nature, but simply the attitude of obedience, complete submission to the will of the Father and to the offices of service, which are the characteristic marks of the slave. (2) I prefer the major punctuation of the period to fall after $\lambda\alpha\beta\acute{\omega}\nu$, agreeing with Tischendorf and Braune.³⁷ This has the advantage of keeping the two phrases describing the Lord's true humanity together, without, as Meyer, punctuates, making a most un-Greek and awkward beginning with $\bar{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\omega\delta\epsilon\nu$. The balance of the main verbs and dependent participles is still as neat and stylistically as satisfying as the more common punctuation, e.g., in Nestle's 16th Edition of the Greek New Testament. It is true, we have two participial phrases with $\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$, joined to one verb, if this punctuation is adopted, but they are well separated and are not at all ugly. Still, the point is a minor one, and the explanation suggested is

36. Michaelis, Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper,
ad locum.

37. Tischendorf, Novum Testamentum Graece, edidit Oscar de Gebhard; Braune in Lange-Schaff, Commentary,
ad locum.

affected hardly at all, however one is inclined to punctuate the long ^{of} clause.

Some words may well be added in defence on linguistic grounds of the explanation just given. For one thing, it suits the context admirably. Hardly any greater contrast can be imagined than the Son of God in glory and dying on the cross. What an attitude of humility and self-abnegation that difference implies, and what a salutary example for the Philippians and all Christians. Again, the words and phrases of the original are all used in senses generally accepted; native, not foreign, natural, not strained and artificial meanings are here given to them. The meaning given to *ἐκένωσεν* may be questioned. No one can deny, however, that in the connection in which it is found it is not at all a definite and unequivocal word. A willing self-denial is as much a real kenosis as giving up, or concealing, or failing to make use of all or some of the divine qualities. Finally, this explanation avoids the rather strained and artificial character of the orthodox Lutheran interpretation which insists that there is no reference to the preexistent state of Christ at all, whereas the whole initial impact of the text is just the opposite. The interpretation here advanced does not, indeed, rule out that explanation as impossible, in fact, it preserves it, but it does find a place for the more natural

interpretation, and to that extent it is sounder, historically and exegetically.

The attempt must be still made to prove that the explanation of the text advanced in this paper is not only exegetically sound, but also that it is not against the doctrinal position of the Lutheran Church and the Bible. This will be done, as we consider now the various teachings on the humiliation of Christ as presented in the beginning of this chapter in the light of the passage studied.

The Various Views of the Humiliation and Phil. 2:5-11.

The teaching of the Kenoticists, both fine and gross, certainly finds no support in the explanation of the Philippians passage just given. For it expressly repudiates any understanding of the ἐκένωσεν which would imply a diminution in any way of the essence or attributes of the Son of God, and explains the word solely by the selfless attitude of the Logos. Even if that explanation were not adopted, the present ὑπαρχων with ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ, which has on a previous page been pointed out as describing that possession of the Christ as an abiding and unchanging one, would make the teaching of the Kenoticists an impossible one judged alone by the teaching of this text. As a matter of fact, the kenotic teaching is quite unreasonable and unthinkable. The kenosis would have to take place before the incarnation, since it would be the condition of

the incarnation. "Ein solcher Akt des Praeexistenten laege aber jenseits der Grenzen jeder Vorstellbarkeit."³⁸ More serious still than this objection, which really amounts to the same as that which points out that the Kenoticists sin against the eternity of God, I say, more serious still is the consideration that, whereas the whole teaching of the Scripture centres in the fact that God became man, Jn. I:14 and passim, the kenosis doctrine really results in the reverse process, the heretical notion, that man became God.³⁹ But a complete discussion of Kenoticism and its refutation does not belong here. Enough has been done, when it has been shown that the kenosis theory has no support in Philippians 2.

As already indicated, there is a certain disagreement among the Reformed in the teaching of the Humiliation of Christ. Hodge makes the statement a number of times that the humiliation concerned the Eternal Son of God and holds that that is the teaching of the Reformed standards.⁴⁰ And that teaching is very largely based on the Philippians passage. A complete refutation of that view is not possible from the Philippians passage alone. Hodge claims that not only the ἐκένωσεν verb and its modifiers, but also the other participles and the ἐταπείνωσεν refer to the Eternal Son of God. For the time, we may allow the former

38. Werner Elert, op. cit., p. 385

39. Werner Elert, op. cit., "Die Lehre von der Entaeusserung".

40. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 610

claim, but the *ἐταπείνωσεν* certainly does not baldly belong to the Son of God, but to the One who is described in the foregoing participial phrases as *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γερόμενος* and *ὁχήματι ἐρεθείς ὡς ἄνθρωπος* i.e., the human Christ.

Some of the arguments advanced against the Kenoticists hold here, too. It is impossible for the eternal God to undergo a change, a humiliation; the *μορφή θωῶ* is not put aside, the present participle *υὑάρχων* forbidding that idea.

The criticism of the Lutherans that the "exaltation" described in verses 9-11 can not and does not refer to the Eternal Son of God, but to the human Christ is certainly most valid, as is the further criticism that if the humiliation consisted essentially in the incarnation, the exaltation would have to include the putting off of the human nature. For a complete view of the Humiliation of Christ, and consequently for a complete criticism of the Reformed teaching, we have to take into consideration a great number of passages and thoughts scattered throughout the Bible. By far the strongest proof for the Lutheran doctrine, and consequently the best way in which to refute the view of the Reformed, is that adopted by Pieper who proves the doctrine from a comparison of two distinct lists of statements concerning Christ's earthly life, from which emerges the truth that the human Christ, while

always in the possession of divine attributes communicated to him because of the personal union, and while occasionally making use of them (miracles), still did not always, nor fully, make use of them.⁴¹

The passage from Philippians then does not teach the Reformed doctrine of the humiliation, but is quite consistent with the Lutheran view. However, the question might be put: Does not your explanation by which the eternal Son of God is the subject of the *ἐκένωσεν* rather support the Reformed view, at least of the incarnation as being part of the humiliation? The answer is a most decided No. The explanation advanced treats the whole section from *ὅς* to *ὑπαβίβω* as expressing Christ's self-denying attitude in his incarnation and, subsequently, in his earthly life. The explanation advanced, accordingly, moves on quite a different thought-plane from the ideas contained both in the technical Reformed and Lutheran definitions of the Humiliation of Christ. One could even grant without heresy that the incarnation itself is a "humiliation", a kenosis, as long as it is not coordinated with and treated as on the same plane as the humiliation of Christ according to the human nature in its technical sense. "The incarnation of the Son of God," as Hodge well declares, "his stooping to take into personal and perpetual union with himself

41. Pieper, op. cit., pp. 317-320

42. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, II, p. 323
 43. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 289

a nature infinitely lower than his own, was an act of unspeakable condescension, and therefore is properly included in the particulars in which he humbled himself. It is so represented in the Scriptures, and that it is such is involved in the very nature of the act, on any other hypothesis than that which assumes the equality of God and man; or that man is a modus existendi of the Deity, and that the highest.⁴² This use of "humiliation" is also recognized by Lutheran dogmaticians. Hollaz, for instance, writes as follows: "Quamvis in sensu ecclesiastico et improprio interdum incarnatio dicatur exinanitio (ubi sumitur pro clementi inclinatione, qua δ $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ se inclinavit ad miserandum nostri et ad succurrendum nobis, ac de coelo descendens humanam naturam assumere est dignatus). Haec exinanitio improprie et in sensu ecclesiastico sic dicta vocatur humiliatio incarnationis..."⁴³ Both Pieper⁴⁴ and Mueller⁴⁵ have similar statements. Apart from dogmatic formulation and precise phraseology everybody must admit that the very idea of God's becoming man immediately conjures up the idea of humiliation, condescension, kenosis, call it what you will, particularly since it was an incarnation, as every Christian knows, for the express purpose of trial and suffering and death. Such a simple and naive approach should not be called heretical. Strictly, of course, if humiliation is taken as

42. Hodge, op. cit., p. 611

43. Schmid, op. cit., p. 276

44. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, II, p. 328

45. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, p. 289

opposed to exaltation, the case is plain. The human nature still exists, and is exalted to the highest place of heaven, without despite to the divinity and honour and glory of the most blessed Trinity. Accordingly, the incarnation per se can not be a humiliation of the Logos. Which fact is admitted also by some Reformed theologians, e.g. Berkhof: "It may be said that the incarnation, altogether in the abstract, the mere fact that God in Christ assumed a human nature, though an act of condescension, was not in itself a humiliation, though Kuyper thought it was. But it certainly was a humiliation that the Logos assumed "flesh", that is, human nature as it is since the Fall, weakened and subject to suffering and death, though free from the taint of sin. This would seem to be implied in such passages as Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6,7."⁴⁶

The explanation given of this great passage on the Humiliation of Christ, then, is both linguistically and dogmatically sound. Which is quite in the nature of the case. For a truly sound exegesis can not be dogmatically unsound, since the Word is sure and one, true and uncontradictory.

46. L. Berkhof, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. I, p. 338.

III. The Exaltation of the God-man

The famous Philippians passage concludes with a glimpse of the Christ in glory. There is nothing really very difficult about the words or the meaning. Exegetes have argued whether the $\delta\iota\omicron'$ expresses a mere temporal connection or a causal one; whether St. Paul is referring to some specific name with the $\delta\omicron\omicron\mu\alpha$, either Jesus or Lord, or, more generally to the dignity and worth of the Christ in his exaltation; whether the $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \delta\omicron\omicron\iota\omega\iota$ refers to the dead in Christ or to the damned and devils in hell. All these are minor points and really affect the meaning of the passage in a very slight way. The general idea is that the Christ, (and it is the human side which is in Paul's mind, the same human side which humbled itself to the death of the cross) has been raised to the very height of all divine honour and glory and majesty. "The highest place that heaven affords is his by sovereign right". Raised to this high eminence of excellence he commands the worship of all created things (or even the grudging recognition on the part of the devils and the damned

in hell, if it pleases this one or that to take *καταχθονίων* in that sense), v.10, and their glad praise and hymns of adoration resound to his name, the Lord Jesus Christ. This description of the glorified and exalted Lord is the parallel of such passages as Acts 2:33; 5:31; Eph. 1:21; Hebr. 1:3, and is foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah, ch. 45:23.

The verbs *ἐπεκύρωσεν* and *ἐχαρίσατο* with the subject *ὁ Θεός* are used from the point of view of the humiliation of Christ and his voluntary subjection to the will of his Father. That the Son during his humiliation on the earth was in a state of subordination to the Father is the consistent teaching of the New Testament. Thus the Son prays to the Father, passim; he does not know the time of the end, although the Father does; the Father at various times openly acknowledges his approval of his Son's work. So the Father is here declared to be the one who bestows the exaltation on the Son. The *διό* might then be well looked on as causative, as marking the exaltation as a reward for the work so well carried out in the humiliation, which would accord well with the purpose of the whole section, in that it would be an additional incentive for the Philippians to similar humility and service of each other. Hollaz does not like that view and says bluntly: "Particula *διό* non notat meritoriam collationem, sed consequentiam ordinis."¹ His description of the exaltation, careful and precise one that it

1. Quoted Schmid, op. cit., p.278

is, deserves repetition here." *ἐπεὶ ὑψώθη*, exinan-
itionem et humiliationem consecuta...infert loco evacuationis
formae Dei plenam formae Dei usurpationem, loco occultationis
eorum, quae sunt aequalia Deo, publicam eorum manifestationem,
loco assumptionis formae servilis eiusdem depositionem et domini
universalis administrationem. Donatio nominis super omne nomen
designat collationem gloriae summae, qua nulla sublimior nomin-
ari potest, quae per exaltationem Christo donata est, quoad
plenissimam Consequens donatae gloriae est subjectio
omnium creaturarum, genuflexione adumbrata. Ps. 97:7, Acts
 5:13; Jn. 14:13; James 2:19"².

With the exaltation the work of Christ reaches quite an unexpected consummation. Instead of putting off the human nature he had assumed, now that the purpose for which he had assumed it was completed, our Lord keeps it with him and the Father and the Son to all eternity. Werner Elert has some fine words, not unmixed with refreshing humour, on this matter. "Die Lehre von der Praeexistenz und von der Menschwerdung des Gottessohnes fuehrte auf die Grenzen unseres Zeit-Raumes und auf die Grenzen alles Menschseins. Mit seinem Tode hat er unseren Zeit-Raum wieder verlassen. Haette Gott uns Theologen um Rat gefragt, wie es nun logischerweise weitergehen

2. Schmid, ibidem.

muesste, so waere die Antwort kaum zweifelhaft gewesen.

Die menschliche Logik liesse erwarten, dass der Sohn Gottes das Gewand, das er in der "Knechtsgestalt" angelegt hatte, so bald wie moeglich wieder ablegte, zumal wenn es ihm im Sinne jener Kapazitaetstheologen doch viel zu klein war.

Es liesse sich dann zeigen, wie die Postexistenz der Praeexistenz genau entspraecht, und wie haetten dann die aesthetische Befriedigung, die man im Durchdenken einer in sich harmonischen Philosophie empfindet. Ja, man koennte dann jenen die Hand reichen, die sich die Weltgeschichte als ewigen Kreislauf vorstellen, weil wir dann doch mit der Moeglichkeit widerholter Menschwerdungen Gottes rechnen koennten."³

Thank God that he did not ask us theologians for advice. For now our truly human Lord has entered upon a complete use of all the divine power and wisdom given him by his Father. Our Brother sits at the right hand of power. Our Brother, who partakes of our flesh and blood, rules all things for the benefit of his Church and controls all history for the good of his purchased flock. So we wait for "the day of the Lord"⁴. We look with earnest expectation for his appearing, for his glorious advent when he will take us, too,

3. Elert, *op. cit.*, pp. 388 f.

4. Phil. 1:6; 1:10; 2:16; 3:20.

6. Phil. 3:21.

7. Rev. 22:20.

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to share his glory, being conformed to his image,⁵ and being fashioned in body like unto his glorious body.⁶ "Even so, come, Lord Jesus",⁷ and let us, too, join in the perfect song of praise raised to Thy name by saints and angels. To Thee be all glory and praise and adoration, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end.

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5. Rom. 8:29.
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