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CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE IN PAULINE SOTERIOLOGY

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[Editor's Note: The author demonstrates that Paul's writings do not support playing down Christ's pre-existence in the interests of a Christology supposedly more firmly anchored in his historical human life. On the contrary, the rhetorical effect of central Pauline texts is seriously eroded if Christ is not affirmed as the Father's pre-existent Son. At stake here is Paul's acute sense of God's love for humanity made vulnerable to the world in the costly gift of the Son.]

CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS of Christology, no matter how variant in other respects, appear to agree on one thing. Virtually all insist that the point of departure for Christology must be not metaphysical speculation about the divine sonship of Jesus but the history of Jesus himself: his life, preaching, and fate (death and resurrection), as portrayed in the total witness of the New Testament. The German scholar Karl-Josef Kuschel in a monumental study goes so far as to speak of an ecumenical consensus in this matter, outlining the work of representative figures such as Pannenberg, Ebeling, Moltmann, Küng, Kasper, Schillebeeckx, Sobrino, and O'Collins, as well as pointing to the emergence of this trend in the later writings of Karl Rahner.[1] While avoiding a false dichotomy between "Christology from above" and "Christology from below," there is clearly a renewed effort to reclaim the significance of Jesus' human history, particularly as presented in the Synoptic Gospels, over against the tradition developed in the great conciliar definitions, which owed so much to the Gospel of John.[2]

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[1] K.-J. Kuschel, *Born before All Time? The Dispute over Christ's Origin,* trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1992; original German 1990) 424–28.

[2] E.g., W. Thüsing states, "It is no longer possible, as it was in the past, to take Jesus' divine nature as a point of departure in Christological thinking. It is more in accordance with contemporary anthropological thought to take Jesus' humanity as point of departure" (in Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing, *A New Christology* [London: Burns & Oates, 1980] 160), and Roger Haight notes, "As a consequence of this historical consciousness, Christology today begins overwhelmingly with a consideration of Jesus and proceeds throughout to underline and even stress the humanity of Jesus" ("The Case for Spirit

In the context of this stress upon the humanity of Christ, the notion of his pre-existence as eternal Son of God which figured prominently in the traditional formulations and found renewed emphasis in the dialectical theology of Karl Barth, has proved to be a grave embarrassment. Kuschel's massive survey of the question from Barth to Schillebeeckx provides ample evidence of this. The British scholar John Macquarrie even dubs the claim that Jesus Christ, prior to his birth, had a conscious, personal pre-existence in heaven something destructive of his true humanity.[3]

Those theologians who are not prepared, as was R. Bultmann, to regard pre-existence as simply a mythological relic in biblical thought and to state bluntly, "We no longer need that particular conception,"[4] face the problem of somehow saving the biblical and early conciliar affirmations of the pre-existence of the Word, on the one hand, without injury to the full humanity of Jesus, and, on the other hand, without belaboring Christian proclamation with concepts meaningless to contemporary understanding.

In the face of this dilemma, many systematic theologians have found blessed relief in a growing tendency among biblical scholars to regard statements of pre-existence as relatively isolated and rare across the broad spectrum of the New Testament. What might be called a full-blown notion of pre-existence—the belief that the one subsequently known as Jesus Christ somehow had a personal history with God prior to his human life—is regarded as more or less confined to the Johannine literature and other late documents. It is notably absent from the three Synoptic Gospels, the chief resource for the human history of Jesus, while the earliest documents, the authentic letters of Paul (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon), if they contain the notion at all, feature it simply in the attenuated, figurative sense of Christ's pre-temporal presence in the mind and purpose of God, without any implication of personal pre-existence. From this perspective the significance of the motif is severely relativized as regards the total witness of the New Testament and its right to exercise so dominant an influence on doctrinal formulations, as in traditional Christology, put in question.[5]

Among biblical scholars, the outstanding representative and indeed champion of this view has been the British exegete James D. G. Dunn,[6]

Christology," *Theological Studies* 53 [1992] 257–87, at 257); see also Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus* (New York: Oxford University, 1995) 16–17.

[3] Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ and Modern Thought* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990) 57; see also Haight, "Spirit Christology" 276.

[4] See Kuschel, *Born before All Time?* 133–34.

[5] This attempt is evident in the entire survey of the biblical evidence offered in the central portion of Kuschel's work (ibid. 222–395).

[6] Dunn's strictures against the idea of Christ's pre-existence are to be found in several places within his extensive writings; the most sustained and express treatment is given

with whom can be associated in particular Jerome Murphy-O'Connor,[7] John A. T. Robinson,[8] and now Stanley K. Stowers.[9] The influence of this tendency is clear in the caution of scholars who adopt more moderate positions, such as John Ziesler.[10]

John Macquarrie offers a notable example of the impact such views have had upon systematic theologians. Macquarrie enthusiastically endorses a Christology from below in the form proposed by Dunn:

> This . . . type of interpretation not only fits well with the modern insistence on the full humanity of Christ . . . , but also dispenses with the mythological idea of a personal pre-existence of Jesus Christ. . . . It is perfectly compatible with (and probably demands) the idea that Jesus Christ pre-existed in the mind and purpose of God. . . . If one wants to go beyond this and claim that Jesus Christ had prior to his birth a conscious, personal pre-existence in 'heaven', this is not only mythological but is, I believe, destructive of his true humanity.[11]

A similar indebtedness to Dunn is illustrated by Roger Haight in his development of a Spirit Christology, to which I shall return later.[12]

It is not my intention here to attempt a new resolution of this issue along systematic lines. Nor do I intend even to review the biblical evidence across the entire range of the New Testament, let alone the wider background in pre-Christian Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. The focus of this article is principally on Paul who, because of the dates of his writings, remains the key figure. I hope to provide

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in *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 113–25; see also *Romans 1–8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988) 278. For critical response to Dunn, see especially the issue of *Semeia* 30 (1985) entitled *Christology and Exegesis: New Approaches,* ed. R. Jewett with contributions from C. Holladay, L. Hurtado, A. F. Segal, R. H. Fuller, D. Juel, and a response from Dunn himself. See further L. D. Hurst, "Re-enter the Pre-existent Christ in Philippians 2.5–11?" *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986) 449–57; C. A. Wanamaker, "Philippians 2.6–11: Son of God or Adamic Christology?" *NTS* 33 (1987) 179–93, esp. 182–83; N. T. Wright, "*Harpagmos* and the Meaning of Philippians 2.5–11," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 37 (1986) 321–52, substantially reproduced in Wright's *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991) 56–98. Dunn has further replied to his critics in the Foreword to the second edition of *Christology in the Making* (1989) xi–xxxix.

[7] Murphy-O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology in Phil. 2.6–11," *Revue biblique* 83 (1976) 25–50.

[8] Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (London: SCM, 1973) 162–66, esp. 166; see also C. H. Talbert, "The Problem of Pre-Existence in Philippians 2:6–11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967) 141–53; G. Howard, "Phil 2:6–11 and the Human Christ," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978) 368–87; M. Rissi, "Der Christushymnus in Phil 2,6–11," in W. Haase and H. Temporini, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt:* Teil II (Principat) 25.4 (1987) 3314–26, esp. 3317–18.

[9] Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995) 220.

[10] Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity,* rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University, 1990) 42–43; see also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996) 162.

[11] Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ and Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990) 55–69, at 57; and 388–92.

[12] Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology" passim.

systematic theologians with what I conceive to be a more accurate reading of Paul's view of the relationship between God and Jesus Christ. My thesis, which clearly runs counter to tendencies I have just described, is not only that the interpretation of certain texts (notably Phil 2:6–8 and 2 Cor 8:9) requires Christ's pre-existence but that, more importantly, the full force of Paul's soteriological thought is undercut if the one whom he, along with the early Christian tradition, came to call Christ did not emerge from the eternity of God in such a way that his personal human history is preceded by this existence with God and plays out an intimate relationship that is prior, in a unique way, to his human history. To neglect the pre-temporal aspect of this relationship gravely erodes, as I wish to show, the sense of the extremity of divine love and grace which lies at the heart of the Paul's gospel. At stake is nothing less than the Pauline view of God who in Jesus Christ has reached out to the world in a costly vulnerability of love (see Rom 8:32, 39). First I offer some preliminary clarifications bearing on pre-existence and the controversy surrounding it.

Pre-existence: Some Clarifications

The notion of pre-existence raises acute problems of a philosophical nature. In what sense can anyone or anything, for that matter, be said to have an existence prior to actual existence—unless it be merely in the foresight or intention of some other party? No one certainly—unless that other party be God, in which case the priority envisaged in the "pre-" is not a matter of time but a priority that has to do with eternity, the timeless existence of God. From the perspective of Christ's personal human life, pre-existence necessarily suggests something of a before and after. But it is misleading to think entirely or even primarily of temporal succession. Gerald O'Collins puts the matter well when he writes: "Pre-existence means rather that Christ personally belongs to an order of being other than the created temporal one. His personal, divine existence transcends temporal (and spatial) categories. . . . Eternity transcends time but without being apart from it."[13]

By the same token, it is important to stress that in speaking of pre-existence, one is not speaking of a pre-existence of Jesus' humanity. Jesus Christ did not personally pre-exist as Jesus. Hence one ought not to speak of a pre-existence of Jesus.[14] Even to use the customary expression of the pre-existence of Christ can be misleading since the word "Christ" in its original meaning simply designates the Jewish Messiah, a figure never thought of as pre-existent in any personal sense. But in view of the Christian application of "Christ" to Jesus,

[13] O'Collins, *Christology* 238.

[14] Haight remarks that "one cannot really think of a preexistence of *Jesus*" ("The Case for Spirit Christology" 276). O'Collins rightly insists over against Haight that the classic doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word never had in view the pre-existence of Jesus in his human nature (*Christology* 243–44).

virtually as a proper name and in a way going beyond his historical earthly existence, it is appropriate to discuss the issue in terms of the pre-existence of Christ, provided one intends thereby to designate simply the subject who came to historical human existence as Jesus, without any connotation that he pre-existed as a human being.

What is allowed for, however, in this concept of pre-existence is the capacity to make choices. Nearly thirty years ago, the Oxford scholar George Caird pointed to this as the crucial factor marking off a pre-existence that is truly personal from one that simply amounts to being elected, as regards role and destiny, in the mind or purpose of God (the attenuated category to which an increasing number of scholars would consign all the Pauline references that seem to imply pre-existence).[15] My contention is that several passages reflecting Paul's soteriological thought involve just such a choice made by Christ pre-existent in the sense here outlined; these bear essentially upon Paul's conception of Christ's self-emptying love as the outreach of God's love for the world.

Let me add further that it is not my intention to treat at any length, in a historical-critical way, the question regarding the origin of the concept of pre-existence nor to consider how its usage with respect to the person of Jesus Christ arose in Christianity without apparent injury to the basic monotheism inherited from Judaism. Suffice it to say that, over the past decade, several studies devoted to the status and function of divine agent figures (personified Wisdom, God's chief angel, exalted patriarchs) within Jewish monotheism have rendered the attribution of pre-existence to Jesus, even at a comparatively early stage, far more credible. I refer in particular to the work of Jarl E. Fossum,[16] A. P. Segal,[17] and L. Hurtado.[18] There is hardly evidence that pre-Christian Judaism in any of its multiple forms understood personifications of Wisdom or other divine attributes to constitute hypostases in any real sense rather than as simple literary personifications of God's own power and activity. There are no grounds for believing that figures such as God's principal angel (the Angel of the Lord, Michael, etc.) or patriarchs (Adam, Enoch, Jacob, Moses, etc.) exalted after their earthly career to angelic status ever became objects of worship in such a way as to introduce a truly binitarian element into Jewish theistic belief of the first century C.E.[19] But the existence of such speculation

[15] G. B. Caird, "The Development of the Doctrine of Christ in the New Testament," in *Christ For Us Today,* ed. N. Pittenger (London: SCM, 1968) 66–80, esp. 78–80.

[16] Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985).

[17] Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977); "Pre-existence and Incarnation: A Response to Dunn and Holladay," *Semeia* 30 (1985) 83–95; *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987) esp. ix–xvii, 1–40.

[18] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

[19] Hurtado convincingly criticizes Fossum for holding the contrary view on both scores

about heavenly figures in the rich variety of first-century Judaism could have served and probably did serve to provide early Christianity with the conceptual and linguistic framework needed to express its distinctive beliefs about Jesus. That the Crucified and Risen One came to be thought of as exalted to God's right hand (see the frequent application to Christ of Ps 110:1), as bearer of the divine name (see Phil 2:9), as Son of Man destined to return in glory (see Mark 8:28; 13:26; 14:62 [each with parallels in Matthew and Luke]; Matt 24:27; Luke 17:24; Acts 7:56),[20] as pre-existent; that he became an object of prayer, invocation, and worship: all this required an impulse (the impact of his life, death, and resurrection; the experience of the Spirit) beyond what the Jewish background could provide. There was undoubtedly a point of discontinuity or mutation.[21] But the carriers were at hand to encapsulate and express that mutation when eventually it did occur, early enough to find reflection in Paul.[22]

The important role that Old Testament and postbiblical Jewish Wisdom motifs are likely to have played in providing the carriers for early christological development, and specifically for the concept of pre-existence, has long been acknowledged.[23] The research of scholars such as Segal and Hurtado has added to this a further dimension that both fills in the picture and allows for the possibility of a much earlier christological development than previously seemed plausible.[24] If, as appears to have been the case, the Crucified One was seen as exalted by God and graced with God's Name, so as to achieve God's principal agent status, and if such a combination of angelic and patriarchal exaltation status was itself joined with identification with God's pre-existent Wisdom, destined to be sent on saving missions (see Wisdom 9:4, 9–10), it is not difficult to account for the attribution of personal

(*One God, One Lord* 37–39, 47, 85–90). Segal also doubts that angelic agents were regarded as sufficiently independent of the deity to constitute heresy with regard to Jewish monotheism before the end of the first century (*Two Powers* 200–01); see also Dunn, *Christology,* 2nd ed., xxv.

[20] See Segal, *Two Powers* 206–08.

[21] This is the terminology of Hurtado whose thesis I am basically following here.

[22] On this see further the interesting reflections of the Jewish scholar Alan Segal in "Pre-existence and Incarnation" 93.

[23] See E. Schweizer, "Zur Herkunft der Präexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus," *Evangelische Theologie* 19 (1959) 65–70; "Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der 'Sendungsformel' Gal 4:4f, Rom 8:3f, Joh 3:16f, 1 Joh 4:9," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 57 (1966) 199–210; art. *"huios, ktl."* in R. Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76) 8.354–57, 363–92, 399; M. Hengel, *The Son of God* (London: SCM, 1976) 66–76; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord* 42–50.

[24] Dunn now acknowledges that he ought to have paid more attention to these aspects than he did when composing the first edition of the work (*Christology,* 2nd ed., xxiv–xxvi), but he is still inclined to date the emergence of a genuine binitarianism in Christianity to the close of the first century, as reflected in the Johannine literature (ibid. xxviii–xxx).

pre-existence to Christ at a period comparatively close to the original impulse that gave rise to the early Christian movement.[25]

EVIDENCE FOR PRE-EXISTENCE IN PAUL

After these preliminary remarks, I now want to address Pauline texts directly. With respect to Christ's pre-existence, the relevant texts fall into different categories. Two texts, Phil 2:6–8 and 2 Cor 8:9, appear to require it. Others, notably the sending statements in Rom 8:3–4 and Gal 4:4–5, as well as Rom 8:32 and 15:3, make good sense in terms of it, once the possibility that Paul entertained the idea of Christ's pre-existence has been established on the basis of the first two.[26] Of equal importance, I hope to show at some length, is Paul's presentation of Christ as the *charisma* of God in Rom 5:15–17, a text not previously considered in relation to this issue.

Philippians 2:6–8

For obvious reasons the Christ-hymn in Phil 2:6–11 has been the chief focus of the debate concerning pre-existence. Whether Paul wrote the hymnic sequence himself or was quoting from some earlier Christian tradition is not really decisive. It is unlikely that Paul would have appealed to a tradition containing Christology at odds with what he himself believed. If there is pre-Pauline tradition here, that renders the dating of the Christology it contains earlier still.[27] In any case,

[25] The attribution of such tendencies to an earlier period makes it even less likely that influence from the non-Jewish Greco-Roman milieu exercised significant influence upon the rise of a high Christology, the thesis characteristic of the History of Religions school dominant in the early part of this century. Greek influence there may certainly have been, but such influence was in all likelihood mediated through Hellenistic Judaism, as reflected, e.g., in the Alexandrian *Book of Wisdom,* Philo, etc., rather than being directly imported; see L. Hurtado, "New Testament Christology: Retrospect and Prospect," *Semeia* 30 (1985) 15–27, esp. 19–20.

[26] I set aside here consideration of what appears to be a citation of a credal fragment by Paul in 1 Cor 8:6, a text often cited in connection with the pre-existence of Christ. It is difficult to contest that what appears at first sight to be an allusion to Christ's protological mediation of creation could equally refer to his soteriological mediation of the new creation (see Kuschel, *Born before All Time?* 285–91). Likewise shaky as a foundation for pre-existence is the midrashic allusion in 1 Cor 10:4 to Christ as the rock which accompanied the Israelites in the desert. It simply applies in a typological way the past experience of Israel to the present situation of the Church: Christ functions for believers as the rock functioned for Israel (see ibid. 280–85). I set aside consideration of the allusion in Col 1:15–16 on the grounds that it stems from a later, deutero-Pauline generation.

[27] Philippians is most plausibly dated around 56–57, composed during Paul's extended stay at Ephesus in the course of what is traditionally known as his Third Missionary Journey (see Acts 19:1–20:1). For considerations against a later dating, during a period of imprisonment in Rome in the early 60s, see B. Byrne, "Philippians," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* 792. If the hymn is pre-Pauline, it is likely that the Apostle first encountered it during the formative period of his association with the vigorous Christian community in Antioch in the early to middle 40s, before the launching of his own more independent missionary career.

Paul in no sense mounts a case for the Christology of the hymn. He simply assumes that it is something his audience has long since come to accept.

The issue of pre-existence turns upon interpretation of the first half of the hymn, vv. 6–8, referring to the pre-exaltation career of Christ, as distinct from vv. 9–11 which treat of his post-Resurrection exaltation as cosmic Lord. The opening verses contain references to choices made by Christ which fundamentally altered the pattern of his existence, culminating in the supreme lowliness of the cross. The question is whether these choices are pictured as operative purely within the span of his human life or whether they actually include a decisive choice to become human in an existence in the divine eternity in some sense prior to the human way of being.

To set out in translation the relevant portion of the text might seem to determine from the start several matters best left open at this stage. However, I offer a provisional translation:

6. Who, though his condition was divine, did not consider being like God something to exploit for selfish gain,
7. But rather he emptied himself, adopting the condition of a slave, taking on the likeness of human beings.
   And being found in human form,
8. he lowered himself further still, becoming obedient unto death, even to death upon a cross.

As regards the status of Christ, much depends upon the interpretation of the clauses in the opening stanza (v. 6). Traditionally, the first phrase ("his condition was divine") has been taken as an indication of Christ's belonging to the divine way of being.[28] However, it is also possible to see here simply an echo of Gen 1:26–27 where human beings are stated to have been created in God's own image and likeness, a reading that lends obvious support to those who state that the hymn consistently compares the behavior of Christ with that of Adam.[29] There are firm grounds for detecting an Adamic aura in the hymn. Whether the Adamic tone begins precisely at this point is another matter. Those skeptical of the Adamic allusion have long since pointed out the considerable variation in language between the Septuagint of the relevant phrases in Gen 1:26–27 and that of the hymn.[30] Apart

[28] See esp. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians,* rev. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903) 127–33. A review of more recent interpretation is given in R. P. Martin's classic survey, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) xx–xxi, 99–133.

[29] See Dunn, *Christology* 114–21; Murphy-O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology" passim; Fossum, *Name of God* 292–97; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 58–59; Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ and Modern Thought* 57–59.

[30] See Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 72.

from whether an Aramaic original may underlie the present text,[31] readers of the Greek text would be hard put to recognize here an intertextual echo of Gen 1:26–27, let alone an allusion to Adam.[32]

The exact sense of the Greek word *morphē* is elusive. In the present context, the meaning must be such as to allow for the contrast which the text seems to offer between the phrase *en morphē theou* in v. 6 and *morphēn doulou* in v. 7b. It seems best to interpret the word not as a reference to essential being,[33] nor to external shape or manifestation,[34] but to the specific form in which the identity and status of someone/something is expressed and can thus come to be known and recognized.[35] Though not precisely equivalent to status, *morphē* indicates the way of being attached to status. Thus the hymn indicates from the outset that Christ enjoyed a way of being that may appropriately be termed divine.

Most discussion down the ages has focused upon the following phrase: "did not consider being like God something to exploit for selfish gain" (v. 6b). It is not necessary to review here all the interpretations proposed, since the British scholar N. T. Wright has undertaken that task in exhaustive detail.[36] As Wright points out, discussion reached a decisive stage with the publication in 1971 of an article by R. W. Hoover.[37] On the basis of a rigorous re-examination of the comparative philological evidence brought forward by previous scholars (especially W. Jaeger), Hoover concluded that the *ouch harpagmon* phrase represents a Greek idiom where *harpagmos* has the sense of something which one might exploit for selfish gain. This analysis (never, as Wright points out,[38] conclusively challenged on philological grounds) cuts right through the old dilemma between *res rapta* (really *res retinenda*) and *res rapienda* explanations. What Christ already possessed, likeness to God (expressed both in the phrases "his condition was divine" and "being like God"[39]), he did not consider something to exploit for selfish gain. Instead, on the contrary (the force of the firm "but")

[31] See P. Grelot, "Deux notes critiques sur Philippiens 2, 6–11," *Biblica* 54 (1973) 169–86, at 185–86, where Grelot sets out a reconstructed Aramaic original.

[32] For a lexical critique of this association with the *eikōn* of Gen 1:26–27, see esp. D. H. Wallace, "A Note on *morphē*," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 22 (1966) 19–25.

[33] So J. Gnilka in agreement with earlier writers such as M. Dibelius, E. Käsemann, and G. Bornkamm (*Der Philipperbrief,* 2nd ed. [Freiburg: Herder, 1976] 114).

[34] So D. Steenburg, "The Case Against the Synonymity of Morphē and Eikōn," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34 (1988) 77–86.

[35] W. Pöhlmann, art. "*morphē*," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,* 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–93) 2.442–43.

[36] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 56–98.

[37] R. W. Hoover, "The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971) 95–119.

[38] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 78, 85–86.

[39] One of the great weaknesses of the explanation along *res rapienda* lines favored especially by those wishing to see a contrast with Adam at this point is that it is forced to make a contrast between these two phrases, which is contrary to the use of the articular infinitive in Paul (see ibid. 83).

he saw likeness to God[40] as involving self-emptying for the good of others. There is a key definition of divinity here, to which I shall return.

The following stanza (v. 7a–c) gives expression to the first deliberate choice of Christ flowing from this perception of what *was* appropriate for one like God: namely, self-emptying to take on the condition of a slave, adopting the likeness of human beings. The emptying is not to be taken in a literal sense, as in the old kenotic christologies, but rather as a strong statement of going to the opposite extreme. The opposite extreme for one in the condition of God was to take on the condition of a slave.[41] It involved a movement from being lord of all to being lord of nothing. In terms of strict logic one might have expected that the double reference to becoming human that follows (v. 7cd: "taking on the likeness of human beings and being found in human form") might have preceded the reference to taking on the condition of a slave (v. 7b). But the hymn simply assumes that, from the divine point of view, unredeemed human life is an existence of slavery (see especially Gal 4:1–7, 8–10),[42] and the divine/slave polarity is more significant than the divine/human polarity which it necessarily presupposes.[43]

The phrases that explicitly point to Christ's becoming human are open to a highly docetic reading. The Greek word *homoiōma* can mean both "identical copy" and "(mere) resemblance," and *schēma* can express outward appearance only. More likely, however, both phrases

[40] The phrase *to einai isa theou* does not express an absolute equality with God in the sense of the conciliar definitions formulated in response to the christological controversies of the patristic era. The use of the neuter plural *isa,* rather than the masculine singular *isos* (as in John 5:18), represents a weakening in the sense of likeness; see P. Grelot, "Deux expressions difficiles de Philippiens 2, 6–7," *Biblica* 53 (1972) 495–507, esp. 498–501; B. Byrne, *"Sons of God"—"Seed of Abraham"* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979) 201 n. 20.

[41] Attempts to take the Greek word *doulos* here in the less pejorative sense of servant and so find a reference to the Servant figure of Isaiah 42:1–7; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13—53:12 are not on the whole convincing. Apart from linguistic problems, the more positive note attaching to the role of such a servant figure gravely weakens the contrast (divine condition/slave condition) which the logic of the hymn requires. On this point I differ from Wright who firmly maintains an allusion to the Isaianic Servant here (*Climax of the Covenant* 59–62). For Wright, the hymn conceives of Christ's role in servant terms because it sees him coming to accomplish the mission marked out for Israel in the Servant passages—that of undoing the sin of Adam (ibid. 61).

[42] See E. Käsemann, "A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11," in *God and Christ: Existence and Province,* ed. R. W. Funk (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) 45–88, esp. 66–67. Käsemann emphasizes too exclusively the Hellenistic context of such a view of human existence; it could be equally at home in certain strains of Jewish apocalypticism.

[43] On the best division of the hymn in terms of structure (that of E. Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, Kolosser und an Philemon,* 6th (13th) edition [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964] 90), the phrases "taking on the likeness of human beings" and "being found in human form" probably belong to separate stanzas, the former concluding the second three-line stanza (v. 7abc [the first stanza being the three lines of v. 6]), the second beginning the third stanza (vv. 7d-8, which is of four lines, unless the final phrase *thanatou de staurou* be regarded as an addition).

express full identification with the human rather than an element of reserve. They highlight the paradox of one whose condition was divine identifying with the human. They also, especially the passive participle "being found," stress how Christ now appeared before God: as one fully identified with the human condition, as a true representative of humanity. This identification in the sight of God paves the way for the divine reaction expressed in the final part of the hymn (v. 9) to the obedience of this (representative) human being.

The second deliberate choice of the God-like subject of the hymn finds expression in v. 8. The main verb of the statement expressing "lowering" corresponds to the main verb expressing "emptying" in the previous verse. There is a strict continuity between the two: the impulse to self-emptying that was appropriate for one in the divine condition now, within the human condition, finds expression in the lowering of oneself to the point of obedience "unto death, even to the death upon a cross." The point seems to be that, even though involved in the slave situation of human existence, Christ could have lived a more or less normal human life not involving further subjection. Instead, in line with his embodiment of the divine generosity, he chose to be subject in the most extreme sense.[44]

The point I wish to make from this analysis of the first part of the hymn is that it makes most sense in terms of an "invasion" from the divine sphere into the human. Restricting Christ's career to his human history alone runs into the crucial difficulty that, according to the language in vv. 6–7ab, the subject adopts an attitude and makes a decision prior to becoming human (v. 7cd).[45] It also ruins the sense of continuity in a divine outpouring of generosity that seems central to the overall argument of the hymn and certainly to Paul's application of it in vv. 3–4.

At the same time, as Wright insists,[46] finding pre-existence in the Philippians hymn in no sense excludes an allusion to Adam. It is not a

[44] This note of self-lowering is the chief point linking the hymn to the exhortation which both precedes and appeals to it; see vv. 3–4: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility reckon others as better than yourselves, looking not to your own interests but to the interests of others," and Rom 15:3: "Christ did not please himself, but . . ." The hymn may imply that Christ served his fellow human beings as a slave; compare Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28.

[45] Murphy-O'Connor's argument against pre-existence is fatally flawed by the weakness of his analysis of v. 7, which, concentrating on comparisons with Wisdom 2–5, fails to recognize how the language signals a radical change in status (from divine to human) ("Christological Anthropology" 40–44); see Byrne, *"Sons of God"—"Seed of Abraham"* 200 n. 17; Martin, *Carmen Christi* xxi; Wright *Climax of the Covenant* 75; Kuschel, *Born before All Time?* 253; O'Collins, *Christology* 35–36. Likewise to be rejected is Fossum's claim that "the aorist participles [the reference is to *labōn* and *genomenos*] plausibly can be taken to convey the meaning that Jesus possessed the 'likeness' and 'fashion' of man also *before* [italics original] his 'emptying' and humbling himself" (*Name of God* 295). Fossum's own rather idiosyncratic punctuation itself suggests that the "emptying" precedes the transformations indicated in the participles.

[46] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 59, 90–94.

matter of choosing between Incarnation and Adamic Christology, as J. D. G. Dunn seems to presuppose.[47] An Adamic allusion can be preserved, indeed seen as central to the hymn, provided one realizes (as is also the case in Rom 5:12–21) that Christ is contrasted with Adam as much as he is compared.[48] Without suggesting that Christ and Adam were like God in precisely the same way (hence the difference in terminology between the language of Gen 1:26–27 and Phil 2:6), the hymn does presuppose that both were like God. The contrast emerges in that one (Adam) reckoned that likeness something to exploit for selfish gain, whereas the other (the pre-existent Christ) considered it meant going against self-interest (see Rom 15:3) to pour oneself out for others, defining thereby the true meaning of being like God. Thus the hymn sees Christ as voluntarily and generously entering the human sphere to pick up the role in which Adam had failed and so to reverse the dire universal consequences that Adam's failure set in train (see Rom 5: 12–21).[49] Christ repairs the damage as a human being, but, for the author of the hymn, Christ is more than a human being. He represents an invasion of divine generosity into the human sphere.

Some authors, while conceding that this hymn embedded in Philippians does contain an allusion to the pre-existence of Christ, nonetheless treat its occurrence as untypical and anomalous, and strive to distance it from Paul as far as possible. Kuschel, for example, remarks: "With its key statements about Christ the hymn stands 'in isolation' in the whole of Pauline theology."[50] But it is quite illegitimate, especially

[47] Dunn, *Christology* esp. 119–20, where the point is not that the text excludes pre-existence but rather that in the light of the Adamic Christology it becomes an unnecessary presupposition; see also Fossum, *Name of God* 296.

[48] The most obvious point of contrast with Adam occurs in the reference to Christ as obedient in v. 8, a point which the explicit contrast in terms of (dis)obedience made in Rom 5:19 confirms. More subtly and more significantly, the language in vv. 6–7 ("... did not consider being like God something to exploit for selfish gain. But...") implies a contrast with one who made the opposite appraisal, and of the possible candidates for that role "only Adam will do and he does very well" (Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* 58, citing G. Caird). But scholarly enthusiasm for Adamic interpretations of New Testament texts has to take into account recent questioning of the existence of a fixed, continuous Adam tradition in Judaism prior to the rise of Christianity; see J. R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988) esp. 160–61.

[49] See L. Hurtado, "Pre-existence," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1993) 743–46, at 745a; earlier, Hurst, "Re-enter the Pre-existent Christ," 453.

[50] Kuschel, *Born before All Time?* 298. In fact, as his survey proceeds, Kuschel becomes bolder in denying belief in Christ's pre-existence to Paul. Contrast the more measured conclusions regarding the Pauline evidence (303–08) with the later statement, "[Paul] manifestly did not present a pre-existence Christology" (447), while Phil. 2:6 is to be regarded as pre-Pauline (447–48). Later he writes: "Paul *as compared to Phil. 2*" [italics mine] did not "develop further an already existing statement about pre-existence." To fit into a preconceived systematic interpretation of the shape of the New Testament evidence as a whole (see 491–92), a wedge is placed between Paul and the hymn which he himself quotes.

in the light of a synchronic reading, to isolate and extrapolate elements which Paul included, which he used in order to bolster important affirmations (in the case of Phil 2:6–11, the exhortation in 2:1–5) and which relate significantly to further statements in the same letter (notably, the christological expression of hope in 3:20–21). Other evidence in Paul, such as the texts to which I now turn, must be read in light of, and not against, the allusions to pre-existence in Phil 2:6–11.

2 Corinthians 8:9

As part of his appeal to the Corinthians for generosity in the matter of the collection, Paul offers in passing a deeply theological consideration: "For you know the generous act (*charis*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). The sentence displays the interchange pattern typical of soteriological statements in Paul: Christ becomes (or is sent by the Father to become) what human beings are, namely "sin" (2 Cor 5:21; see Rom 8:3); "under the law" (Gal 4:4); "under a curse" (Gal 3:13) in order that "we" might become what he is ("righteous," "free from the law," "sons [and daughters] of God," "rich."[51]

The attempts of Dunn[52] and others[53] to argue that Christ's richness refers to his earthly life alone are not convincing. In the light of the clear allusion to his becoming human in Phil 2:7cd, it is far more natural to find in this text a reference to the richness Christ enjoyed pre-existently as one whose condition was divine.[54] The poverty is that of the slave existence characteristic of humanity fallen in Adam (see Phil 2:7b). The richness that believers then acquire is the richness of salvation, which brings them to the state of glory belonging by right to Christ (see 1 Cor 15:49: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], so we shall bear the image of the man of heaven [Christ]"; see also Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).[55]

[51] See M. D. Hooker, "Interchange in Christ," *JTS* n.s. 22 (1971) 349–61.

[52] Dunn, *Christology* 121–23. While Dunn is not prepared to dismiss entirely the idea of Jesus' embracing a life of material poverty (from an earlier life of comparative richness), he appears to recognize the difficulty of harmonizing this with the traditions emerging from the Gospels and ultimately opts for a spiritual understanding of the riches/poverty motif. This would be either in the sense of a contrast between the richness of Christ's pre-passion communion with God as contrasted with the poverty of the passion desolation (Mark 15:34) or else in the sense of the contrast between the richness of being in the image of God in an Adamic sense and freely embracing the poverty of the fallen Adam state which is the lot of human beings, including especially a destiny to physical death. Both explanations are forced, each involving an element of speculation concerning Christ's pre-passion earthly life unparalleled in Paul. See also Wright's critique at this point (*Climax of the Covenant* 95 n. 150).

[53] E.g. Kuschel, *Born before All Time?* 296–97.

[54] See C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1972) 223; V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 417.

[55] For the same salvific sense of riches in Paul, note the statement that "the same Lord

Wider Implications

The grace (*charis*) of Christ to which Paul makes passing appeal in 2 Cor 8:9 is the generous, self-emptying choice implied in his taking on the human lot. It is this clear implication of a choice on Christ's part that rules out for texts such as Phil 2:6–8 and 2 Cor 8:9 any sense of pre-existence in a non-personal way (for example, as expressing simply the envelopment of Christ's career within the saving wisdom of God). The remaining interchange texts taken in isolation may be open to such an interpretation. But, in the light of the pre-existence implied in Phil 2:6–8 and 2 Cor 8:9, it makes good sense to see them, notably the sending statements in Rom 8:3–4 and Gal 4:4–5 (see John 3:16–17; 1 John 4:9), as also presenting the phenomenon of Christ as an invasion of divine grace and generosity into the human sphere from outside.[56]

Even soteriological statements that have Christ as subject without immediate reference to the Father may refer to or at least include a reference to Christ's pre-existent choice. Rom 15:3 ("Christ did not please himself, but . . .") seems to stand particularly close to Phil 2:6–7, the negative allusion to what Christ did not do preceding, as in the latter text, the positive indication of his generous act. Paul appeals to the generosity of Christ in order to motivate the "strong" in faith to bear with the religious scruples of the "weak" even if in terms of a mature faith's perception they are free to act otherwise (to eat what they will).[57] Gal 2:20 ("I live now by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself up for me") probably has primary reference to Jesus' self-surrender to suffering and death but a wider allusion reaching back to a pre-existent choice may not be entirely absent.[58] Significantly, the mention of Christ's self-gift in love is followed by the conclusion, "I do not rebuff the grace of God" (v. 21a); the self-gift of Christ is always for Paul an expression of the grace of God (see 4:25).

Finally, not to be neglected in this context is Rom 8:32, Paul's most poignant reference to the Christ-event in relation to the gift of God:

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is Lord of all [Jews and Gentiles] enriching all who call on him" (Rom 10:12b; see also 9:22; 11:12) and Paul's sarcastic challenge to the Corinthians: "Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us, you have begun to reign!" (1 Cor 4:8).

[56] See W. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (London: SCM, 1966) 112–15. For the contrary view, see Dunn, *Christology* xvii–xviii, 38–47; Kuschel, *Born before All Time?* 272–77 (Gal 4:4), 300–01 (Rom 8:3).

[57] See further B. Byrne, *Romans,* Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996) 424–26.

[58] Kuschel, reacting against Bultmann's reference of this assertion to the pre-existent Christ, goes so far in the opposite direction as to see it referring not to the historical conduct of the earthly Jesus but to the post-existent Christ. The basis for this singular conclusion is that "Paul did not know the historical Jesus and his 'disposition' " (*Born before All Time?* 272). Paul may not have personally known the historical Jesus, but he did believe that Jesus had given himself up in obedience and love for sinful humankind (Rom 5:6, 8, 19; Phil 2:8; Gal 1:4).

"God, who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all." The language echoes the Septuagint version of Gen 22:16: what God did not in the end require of Abraham (the sacrifice of his son, Isaac), God did require of himself for love of human beings.[59] Nothing expresses so vividly as this the extremity of God's costly involvement in the death of Christ, though the same note of divine vulnerability is probably implicit in the reference to the sending of his Son in Rom 8:3 and also in Rom 5:15–17, to which I now turn.

CHRIST THE CHARISMA OF GOD: ROM 5:15–17

Paul's letter to Rome is unique among his writings in being addressed to a community he has neither founded nor visited. As an instrument of persuasion, it presupposes a shared symbolic universe between Paul and his intended audience.[60] Precisely because it is directed to a community not personally shaped by him, though containing some individuals he knows well (see 16:3–16), Paul has to rely upon what he believes to be knowledge common to all communities of believers, whether founded by himself or not. Therefore what Paul takes for granted in Romans, what he does not have to argue for, sheds significant light upon early Christian christological understanding.

The kerygmatic part of Romans (1:16–11:36, as distinct from the paraenesis, 12:1–15:13) is basically a presentation and defense of the Christian gospel in the emphatically inclusive sense distinctive of Paul. The gospel summons the nations of the world (Gentiles) to equal citizenship in the eschatological people of God (1:16–8:39), without this implying the final exclusion of that large part of Israel that has said "no" to the proclamation of a crucified Messiah (9:1–11:36). Paul plays off this inclusive vision against a more restricted view of God's action that would see it centered upon a righteousness established upon the basis of the Jewish law. For Paul there is no possibility of human righteousness, Jewish or Gentile, apart from response in faith to God's faithful action for the world in Jesus Christ. Faith ensures the availability of salvation to all human beings. Faith also implies an acknowledgment on the part of believers that they have no personal righteousness to boast of before God, that they are in fact sinners and that their only hope of salvation lies in submission to the grace of God that comes to them in the crucified Jesus (3:21–26).

Paul pictures the whole career of Christ, culminating in his death upon the cross, as an invasion of God's grace and faithfulness (righteousness) into this morass of sinfulness and alienation on the human side (Rom 1:18–3:20).[61] The Resurrection of Jesus represents an inau-

[59] See Byrne, *Romans* 275.

[60] I employ here terminology taken from the sociology of knowledge. For an explanation of the application of this to the understanding of Paul's rhetorical enterprise in Romans, see Byrne, *Romans* 6–7.

[61] This view of the early chapters of Romans has recently come under challenge from

gural victory of the love and power of the Creator over the sinfulness of human beings. Human beings have only to respond in faith to be justified and so set upon the path to salvation.

"Set upon the path," however, does not mean "finally arrived." In Romans 5–8, Paul deals with an issue that inevitably arises, namely the time-gap that yawns ever more widely between believers' fundamental restoration of right relationship with God (justification) and the arrival of full salvation. Several remnants of the old unredeemed era continue: proneness to sin, trials and suffering of various kinds (Rom 5:3–4; 8:18, 23, 35–36) and the prospect of death (Rom 5:12, 17; 8:10). These challenge the sense that all has radically changed with justification. At the beginning of chapter 5 Paul moves the argument into a new mode to ensure that the hope of salvation stands.

Within this wider argument for hope the sustained contrast/comparison between Adam and Christ mounted in 5:12–21 has a particular role to play. The case for hope now rests upon a contrast between the situations introduced archetypically into human affairs by Adam and Christ, both of whom function as figures of universal significance for humankind. Paul appears to presuppose in his audience a knowledge of a tradition about Adam, which, moving somewhat beyond the narrative of Genesis 3, presents him as bequeathing to the race sprung from him a universal legacy of sinfulness leading to death. Paul employs this belief about Adam as a figure of universal significance for ill as a foil over against which to project, all the more powerfully, a vision of Christ as a figure of universal significance for good. Where Adam functioned as an instrument of sin leading to death for all, Christ functions as an instrument of righteousness, leading to (eternal) life for all who receive it. The contrast/comparison between the two figures and the legacies they bequeathed becomes a strong argument for hope (of salvation leading to eternal life) on the basis that the influences stemming from each are not equal: the weight lies upon the Christ-righteousness-life side of the balance over against the Adam-sin-death side.[62]

A surface reading of the passage gives the impression that Paul

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S. K. Stowers who blames Augustine for setting the traditional interpretation of the Western Church in a false direction in this respect (*Rereading of Romans* 1–6, 176–93). But Stowers has too univocal a view of that tradition, foisting upon every shade of Pauline interpretation an extremely pessimistic view of universal depravity into which humanity has lapsed in an ontological sense. What Paul is proposing in the early chapters of Romans is the universal factual alienation of all human beings from God and the inability of anything other than the grace of God available in Christ to address that situation. Stowers further sees Paul's strictures concerning the law as referring to its ineffectiveness to counter sinfulness on the part of Gentiles only; its role as Torah for the Jews is not being challenged. But this fails to do justice to the repeated assertions of universality (where "all" means "Jews as well as Gentiles" or "Gentiles as well as Jews") that occur throughout the letter (1:16; 2:11; 3:9, 23, 29–30; 4:11–12, 16; 5:12–21; 9:22–24; 10:4, 10–13; 11:30–32; see Gal 3:22).

[62] It is now generally recognized that the purpose of the sequence is primarily to say

picks up the contrast/comparison between Adam and Christ, only to find it too hot to handle. It comes close to dying the death of too many qualifications. Apart from the clarificatory aside in vv. 13–14, the reiterated statements in vv. 15–17 seem designed to ward off the suggestion of any degree of similarity between Christ and Adam going beyond the single point that both are individuals of universal significance.

The function of these verses is not, however, merely preventative in this way. Their role in fact is to stir up the sense of overwhelming superiority on the Christ side that undergirds the argument for hope. I now propose to examine more closely Paul's understanding of this divine-human operation as formulated in the phrases of vv. 15–17.

Detailed Analysis of Rom 5:15–17

Paul sets the stage for what he wishes to achieve in vv. 15–17 with the remark included somewhat ingenuously at the end of v. 14 to the effect that Adam was the "type of the one to come." This first allusion to Christ in the passage suggests a strong measure of comparison between the two.[63] But this false suggestion allows Paul, in typical antithetical style, to weigh in with a firm adversative: whereas Adam is simply a human being, albeit one of universal significance, behind the human person (literally, "man" [*anthrōpos*]) Jesus Christ stands the grace and power of the Creator. It is this divine plus on the Christ side that, after the denial of parity in v. 15a, the more extended formulations in vv. 15b–17 serve to bring out.

Setting out the pericope in schematic form reveals that, along with progression of thought, the passage exhibits a large measure of parallelism:[64]

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something about Christ and the sure effects of the benefits he brings, rather than about Adam. The focus upon Adam and the onset of a legacy of sin that has been so strong in the Western theological tradition stemming from Augustine largely derives from the fact that Paul breaks off his first formulation of the contrast/comparison after the formulation only of the Adam side (v. 12) in order to clear up a problem concerning the onset of death as a punishment for sin in the absence of law (vv. 13–14). This in turn leads him to stress the ways in which Adam and Christ are *un*alike (vv. 15–17), after dubbing the former "a type of the one to come" at the end of v. 14. Only at v. 18 is the contrast/comparison fully stated, to be formulated over and over down to v. 21.

[63] Alternative suggestions for the identity of "the one to come," namely Moses or the person who sins under the law in a generic sense, have not prevailed against the traditional view seeing here an implied allusion to Christ as Last Adam (see 1 Cor 15:45).

[64] Verse 16a echoes the kind of generalized introduction first stated in v. 15. The more expansive formulations making up v. 15b and v. 17 cohere both in form (conditional sentences) and argumentative structure (notably the "much more" logic) and also in the motif of abundance. The (formally somewhat intrusive) observation in v. 16b in fact supplies the premise giving particular bite to the sense of superiority (abundance) on the Christ side expressed so triumphantly in v. 17.

[15a] But it is not a case of, "As (was) the trespass, so (is) the gracious gift."	[16a] And it is not a case of, "As (the effect of) that one man's sin, so the (effect of the) free gift."
	[16b] For the judgment following that one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.
[15b] For if through one man's trespass many died, much more have the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.	[17] For if, through one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who accept the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Verse 15a provides, by way of introduction, a concise statement of a thesis. Adam may be a "type of the one to come" (v. 14), but there is a radical difference between the two figures. In Adam's case Paul speaks in terms of a single act, a "trespass." He does not go on to speak, in strict correspondence, of a righteous act in the case of Christ. Instead, he dubs what happens on the positive side as *charisma.* As the *-ma* ending suggests, this favorite term of Paul refers to a concrete instantiation or effect of (divine) grace (*charis*). Implicit, then, already at this stage is the sense that what stands on the positive side over against the act of Adam is something more than the action for good of a significant human being. The term *charisma* lends the sense that standing behind, accompanying, and making effective the act of Christ is the grace and power of the Creator. This is the grounds for the radical inequality ("But it is not a case of . . .") between the contributions made to human affairs by the First Adam and the Last.

In the long conditional sentence that follows (v. 15b) Paul unpacks the complex situation signaled by the word *charisma.* Whereas on the negative side we have a simple statement that the transgression of Adam led to death for all (literally, "many"), on the positive side there is a bifurcation: "much more have the grace (*charis*) of God and the gift (*dōrea*) in grace of the one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." The "and" is significant. The double formulation is no mere rhetorical flourish but draws attention to the divine involvement in the act of Christ, making a stark contrast with the solitary status of Adam.

More precisely, the second phrase specifies the concrete "gift" which God's grace promotes through Christ. The "gift" is almost certainly the gift of justification (see v. 17), a gift which only God, as Judge of the world, could bestow (see 3:5–6). There is a distinct echo here of the description of God's justifying action given earlier in the letter: "For all have sinned and stand deprived of the glory of God. They are being justified as a gift (*dōrean*) by his grace (*tē autou chariti*) through the redemption which has come about in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a means of expiation" (3: 23–25). In the present passage (Rom 5:15), however, the specification attached to "the gift" suggests

that the second reference to grace is precisely to the grace of Christ. Paul did not write, as we might have expected, "the gift in grace *of* the one man Jesus Christ" but "the gift in grace, that of the (*tę̄ tou*) one man Jesus Christ." Though all springs ultimately from the grace of God and Christ is always an instrument of God's grace, Paul seems to want to signalize Christ's act as in itself an act of grace.[65] In the wider context of Paul's Christology, this can only allude to Christ's death as an act of self-emptying love, in line with the soteriology present in texts such as Phil 2:6–8; Rom 5:6, 8; 15:3; 1 Cor 8:11; 2 Cor 5:14–15; 8:9; Gal 1:4; 2:20. The full, double formulation is, then, in no sense an expression of redundancy[66] but a carefully framed statement expressing the divine-human continuity involved in the act of Christ.

The final word in v. 15, "abounded," brings in the note of exuberance and prepares the way for the development contained in the following parallel formulation, vv. 16–17. Once again there is a concise introductory statement of dissimilarity (v. 16a), though with a slight change of terminology. The participle "one man's sinning" corresponds to "one man's trespass," the participial phrase with the preposition *dia* followed by the genitive stressing agency. On the positive side, the word "gift" (*dōrēma*) brings out the more specific sense of *charisma* that has been introduced in v. 15b: the gift proceeding from God's grace, namely, justification in Christ (see 3:24).

This sense of justification becomes explicit in v. 16b, a formally somewhat intrusive phrase but one which makes a key contribution to the whole argument. Playing with even greater intensity upon words with the *-ma* ending, Paul points to the totally different circumstances of the acts which preceded God's response. Adam's act of trespass provoked a negative judgment (*krima*) that entailed "condemnation" (*katakrima*) for all his descendants (contrast the positive announcement "There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" in 8:1). But the sin of Adam took place on neutral terrain, as it were, prior to the existence of any surrounding milieu of sin that might have exercised an influence upon it. Such was not the case with respect to the Last Adam. The act of grace (*charisma* again) that came about through

[65] C. E. B. Cranfield rightly criticizes an earlier commentator, O. Michel, for not paying sufficient attention to the article following *chariti* and so taking the phrase as simply meaning "the gift of grace on the part of Christ" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* 2 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979] 1.285–86). However, Cranfield himself does not go far enough in appreciation of the force of the article, simply identifying the gift in the end with the grace of God, understood as righteousness, and failing to appreciate that the article really does signal a grace specifically tied to Christ. See O. Kuss: "because, however, there is express mention of the 'gift' (*dōrea*) one can—in a way parallel to what is intended by the 'grace of God'—think here also (as indeed in the case of 2 Cor 8:9) of the goodness and love of Jesus Christ, which, as it manfests itself in the saving act, is, together with the goodness of God, the source of the gift of salvation" (*Der Römerbrief übersetzt und erklärt,* 3 vols. [Regensburg: Pustet, 1957, 1959, 1978] 1.235; translation mine).

[66] Dunn's use of this expression is inappropriate (*Romans* 1.280).

Christ took place "following upon many transgressions," the entire torrent of sin unleashed by Adam (v. 12; see 3:23). Christ did not perform his act on neutral terrain; he had to swim against and counter the dark current of human sin that had swelled up and engulfed the world following upon the sin of Adam. In place of the condemnation that might justly and properly have been the final divine verdict upon the mass of human sin, there came justification or acquittal.[67]

My sense is that the indication of the circumstances of Christ's act given by the simple phrase "following many trespasses" in v. 16b is crucial to Paul's argument. What occurred was an act of human love that was at the same time a divine outpouring of love and grace so great in its generosity as to be able to counter and wipe out the sum total of human selfishness and hostility to love expressed in the accumulated sinning of humankind. Only a divine act of love could have achieved so massive an effect. In it, according to the formulation in 3:25–26, God provided a means of expiation that could deal with those sins of the past, as well as with all sin of the "present time," that is, the time of the preaching of the gospel until the second coming of Christ.[68] The phrase "following many trespasses" essentially continues an argument stated repeatedly in the preceding section, 5:6–11: what shows God's love for us is that it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for the ungodly (v. 8); while we were enemies, God reconciled us through the death of his Son (v. 10a). This, then, is what demonstrates the abundance or overflow of grace: the fact that grace had by far the harder task, had to swim so mightily against the current, in order to achieve its effect and overcome the fatal legacy of sin.

Though formally parallel to v. 15b, the long, triumphant statement in v. 17 actually draws the consequences that arise out of this statement of circumstances in v. 16b. If one man's act of trespass has brought about the reign of death, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Presupposed here, as indeed throughout Romans 5–8, is the axiom that righteousness (being found righteous at the judgment) is the essential prerequisite for the gaining

[67] Paul probably uses the ambiguous term *dikaiōma* not simply for purposes of euphony, but to hold together the double aspect of the Christ event. It was at one and the same time both a supreme act of righteousness and an instrument of divine acquittal, justification (see the two aspects brought out with regard to the display of God's righteousness through the Christ event in 3:26: "to show that he is both righteous and 'rightwising' ").

[68] As is now widely recognized, the total statement of redemption formulated in Rom 3:24–26, including the specific term *hilastērion,* has to be interpreted in a way that does full justice to Paul's strong affirmation of the divine initiative ("God put him forward"), not in a way that drives a wedge between the action of God and that of Christ, as in the satisfaction model of the redemption; see further Byrne, *Romans* 126–29; O'Collins, *Christology* 199–212.

of eternal life.[69] The gift of righteousness transposes the reign of death into the prospect of reigning in life for those who receive it. Having so powerfully brought out the inequality, the abundance on the Christ-grace side, Paul can now go on in the remainder of the passage to formulate the contrast/comparison in a more strictly parallel fashion (vv. 18, 19, 21), repairing the break in the argument that occurred at v. 12d.[70]

Conclusion from Rom 5:15–17

The conclusion arising out of this detailed analysis is that central to Paul's argument is a sense of Christ's act as an exercise of self-emptying love sufficient to overcome the mass of selfishness involved in human sinfulness of all time. Christ's act is capable of this because it is not only the act of a human figure, albeit one of universal significance, but is also the expression and indeed the conduit of divine grace and generosity. This is what Paul's argument in Rom 5:15–17 brings out and what it essentially presupposes. If Christ's love is not at one and the same time the divine love, then the whole soteriological schema falls or is at least gravely weakened. The love of the human person Jesus who became obedient unto death must be strictly continuous with the love of the divine being who emptied himself and took on the slave existence of unredeemed humanity. Further back still, that generous gift of the divine being must be continuous with God's costly giving up of his own Son (8:32; see 5:8–10; 8:3; Gal 4–5) for the reconciliation of an alienated world.[71] The entire trajectory of love behind the Christ event and the benefits it brings, the fact that Christ's self-gift is also *charisma,* implies a divine invasion of grace and love into a human morass of selfishness and sin. The sense of Christ as the

[69] Romans 8:10c provides a neat Pauline formulation of this axiom "the Spirit means life because of righteousness." For copious references in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition presupposed by Paul, see Byrne, *Romans* 58, 240–41.

[70] There is no need to pursue the contrast/comparison in detail through the remainder of the passage. Verse 18 offers what is perhaps the most accurate formulation, with an explicit exploitation of the openness of *dikaiōma* to double meaning. Verse 19 speaks of both acts, that of Adam and that of Christ, in terms of "(dis)obedience" in a way reminiscent of the reference to Christ's "obedience unto death" in Phil 2:8. Verse 20 points to the role of the law on the negative side in a way which again underlines the supremacy of grace: where sin "abounded," grace "hyperabounded." Verse 21 sums up the contrasting consequences in a final expression of hope: where the prevalence of sin caused death to "reign" (see vv. 14, 17), now the gift of righteousness causes grace to reign "leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

[71] Paul's lack of interest in the details of Jesus' life prior to his death—more accurately, the lack of appeal to those details in the arguments deployed in his letters—may be explained on the basis of his acute sense of the overwhelming love of God displayed in the self-gift of Christ (Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14–15). In Paul's eyes, this consideration of itself provided believers with all the motivation needed to confront generously any pastoral or ethical challenge.

pre-existent Son whose entrance into the world represented a costly giving up on the part of the Father is an essential element of Paul's soteriological vision.

REFLECTIONS ON FEMINIST CHRISTOLOGY AND SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY

In recent years feminist theology has argued the case for preferring a Wisdom Christology over the Son Christology that has traditionally held sway. Elizabeth Johnson, in particular, has rightly drawn attention to the prevalence of Wisdom categories in biblical literature and especially in the presentation of the person and work of Jesus in the Gospels.[72] The advantage of such a Christology is that it avoids retrojecting upon the Godhead, specifically upon the Second Person of the Trinity, the maleness of the human Jesus—something which the Son Christology inevitably tends to do, at least in popular imagination.[73] The Wisdom Christology preserves much better the mystery and incomprehensibility of the divine person.[74] It opens up new possibilities for a systematic theology attempting to grapple with the androcentric nature of the tradition.[75]

As noted earlier, the centrality of the Wisdom categories as the carriers for early christological development has long been acknowledged and is not here in question.[76] Nor do I wish to dispute or seek to reverse the possibilities such a Christology holds out for a more inclusive sense of God.[77] At the same time, in line with the overall tenor of this study, I would argue that neglect of the Son of God category also entails considerable loss, specifically in connection with the contribution of Paul (though much the same could also be said with respect to John). What Wisdom Christology brings out less explicitly is the sense of God's familial involvement in the work of redemption, the sense of the cost to God in the giving up of God's own Son expressed in texts such as Rom 8:4 and 8:32. With this is lost or at least severely weakened the sense of divine vulnerability in love that speaks far more powerfully to contemporary human beings than the omnipotence stressed in earlier times, a revisioning of the divine which Elizabeth

[72] E. Johnson, "Jesus, the Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Christology," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovaniensis* 61 (1985) 261–94, esp. 276–89; *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 94–98. See also the sympathetic treatment given to this by Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 57–62.

[73] Johnson, "Jesus, the Wisdom of God" 289; *She Who Is* 152–54, 165–66.

[74] See Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God* 60; Johnson, "Jesus, the Wisdom of God" 280.

[75] Johnson, "Jesus, the Wisdom of God" 291; see also 280, 284.

[76] See n. 23 above.

[77] Elizabeth Johnson observes: "The metaphors of Word and Son most often used to articulate the relation between Jesus the Christ and God's absolute mystery signify not maleness in God but a certain divine relationality that can be superbly reprised in the symbol of Sophia" (*She Who Is* 166).

Johnson is at pains to present.[78] Moreover, though Wisdom is personified in certain biblical presentations (most notably Prov 8:1–9:6), the christological Wisdom strains in the New Testament do not bring out so clearly the sense of loving personal choice expressed in formulations such as Paul's "the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal 2:20; see 2 Cor 8:9).

Spirit Christology as proposed recently by Roger Haight[79] appears vulnerable to the same critique. Haight rightly indicates the firm biblical basis to which such a Christology can lay claim and indicates its more dynamic sense of the divine presence and power operative in Jesus. In this respect of more forthrightly bringing out the truth that God's very self acted in Jesus, it has for Haight an advantage over the symbols of God's Word and Wisdom which, "insofar as they became personified and then hypostasized, tend to connote someone or something distinct from and less than God that was incarnate in Jesus even though it is called divine or of God."[80] From a Pauline and Johannine perspective, however, one may query whether the personification and hypostasization really does undercut the sense of God's personal presence in Jesus and ask whether it does not, in fact, preserve more adequately than the Spirit Christology the sense of a costly outreach of divine love so central to Paul's gospel.[81]

My point would be then that the sense of Christ as "God's own Son" (Rom 8:3, 32) and as pre-existent Son is truly central to the biblical revelation of God and cannot be downplayed without serious loss. The witness of Paul, in which the Christology of Phil 2:6–8 must be included rather than excluded, indicates the remarkably early presence of this conception in the post-Easter Christian community. What the impulse for this may have been remains a central question for Christology, as well as for historical inquiry into the rise of Christianity.

[78] Ibid. 265–72.

[79] R. Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," *TS* 53 (1992) 257–87.

[80] Ibid. 272.

[81] Haight's article, while in general admirably comprehensive in its consideration of critical issues raised by its central thesis, is notably lacking in attention to the salvific role of Jesus' suffering and death.