FROM
JESUS
TO
PAUL

Studies in Honour of
Francis Wright Beare

Edited by
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Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5-11

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Whoever takes pen in hand to comment on such a frequently-studied passage as Phil. 2:5-11 must offer some justification to readers who already have access to the learned commentary by our honoured colleague, Professor Beare, as well as the contributions of many other scholars. In partial justification, one can say that the very volume and continual flow of scholarly studies on this passage make it evident that the discussion has by no means reached a consensus and that more study is required.

Further, in light of the fact that this volume of essays is devoted to the topic “From Jesus to Paul,” it seems legitimate to give attention to this passage where Jesus is so obviously the centre of attention (though what is said about him is very much still under dispute). It should also be noted here that for many English-speaking students, including the present writer, Professor Beare’s commentary has served as a major tool in wrestling with the significance of the Philippian letter in general and this passage in particular. If in the following pages I take views in disagreement with some of his, nevertheless I offer this treatment of Phil. 2:5-11 with acknowledgement of the stimulus his commentary provided and in tribute to his distinguished example as a New Testament scholar.

The intensity of scholarly labour expended on the study of Phil. 2:5-11 is impressive, the web of issues involved complex, and the mountain of publications on the passage daunting. The limits of this

essay make it impossible to review all the issues or to mention all the
contributions, and the valuable monograph by R. P. Martin makes this
unnecessary. Though scholars have debated questions about the ori­
gin and authorship of the passage (pre-Pauline, Pauline, or post-
Pauline?), its form and structure (hymnic? the number of stanzas?), the
conceptual background of the passage (Old Testament, Gnostic myth,
general Hellenism, wisdom speculation?), and detailed issues involving
its interpretation, the questions before us in the present essay are
whether Jesus is cited as an example for Christians in Phil. 2:5-11, and,
if so, how his example is described. In what follows we shall first
examine major studies that have contributed to the present climate of
opinion on these questions, and then we shall consider the evidence
afresh, noting reasons for viewing Jesus in Phil. 2:5-11 as the "lordly
example."

LOHMeyer AND KÄSEMANN

In his 1959 commentary on Philippians Professor Beare acknowledged
as crucial investigations of 2:5-11 the work of Lohmeyer and
Käsemann, and at this point, many years later, this judgment still must
be echoed. It was Lohmeyer's work that made it practically a scholarly
commonplace that the passage exhibits hymnic characteristics and that
it was likely a liturgical piece from some setting in the early Christian
church. Käsemann made two main contributions: his case for the
Gnostic-mythic background of the passage and his interpretation of
the passage as a soteriological drama. The argument for a Gnostic
background helped to make the study of the conceptual background of
the passage a major line of investigation, and his interpretation of the
passage secured followers, whether or not they agreed with his position
on the background of the passage. For example, in his valuable treat­
ment of the history of interpretation of the passage, Martin adopted
with enthusiasm Käsemann's interpretation and has repeated this
position in his recent commentary. Since Käsemann's interpretation
of Phil. 2:5-11 is the major case against any notion that Jesus is pre­
sented as an example there, it will be important to examine his work
more closely before venturing to offer a dissenting view.

2 R. P. Martin, Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting
(Abbreviations in references are those used by the Journal of Biblical Literature. See
JBL [1976], 331-346.)

3 Beare, Philippians, 74. Ernst Käsemann, "Kritische Analyse von Phil2:5-11," ZTK 47
(1950), 313-360; the English translation referred to in this essay is "A Critical
Analysis of Philippians 2:5-11," in God and Christ: Existence and Province, JTC 5 (New

4 Martin, Carmen Christi, 90-92, 177-182, 287-292.

Käsemann's famous essay on Phil. 2:5-11 included a critique of what were then more recent German studies of the passage, and in this critique the work of Lohmeyer was prominently featured. Though Käsemann acknowledged Lohmeyer's contributions to the modern study of the passage, he nevertheless took issue at important points. For example, he challenged Lohmeyer's view concerning the Semitic and Old Testament background of the description of Christ in this hymn. The major objective that Käsemann was trying to achieve, however, was clearly to refute any idea that Christ was presented as an example in the Philippians "hymn." While his exegetical examination involved arguments on several continuing philological and historical issues, these were but troops he marshalled for the main task. One of the enduring qualities of all Käsemann's work is that, for all his obvious learning in the technical matters of historical-critical exegesis, he always is concerned with the theological meaning of a passage, and in the essay in question here Käsemann clearly was motivated by theological concern. It is not always recognized how very prominent in Käsemann's essay are indications that theological matters heavily determined his interpretation of Phil. 2:5-11. The opening comments express his concern that "the guideline of a firm doctrinal tradition in the church has been increasingly abandoned by Protestant exegesis," and the following pages of his essay are studded with indications of what was at stake theologically for Käsemann. Again and again his comments make it plain that the major reason he opposed any of the varieties of interpretation that presented Christ as an example in Phil. 2:5-11 was that to him they all smacked of "ethical idealism," which seems to be his label for the theology of Old Liberalism. That is, his real problem with the examples that he cites of "ethical" interpretation of the passage is that they all reduce the work of Christ here to being a representative of a generally valid norm of conduct, an example that lowliness and service will be rewarded. Thereby, the soteriological nature of Christ's work is lost from view, and the Christian message of justification for sinners is changed into mere moral exhortation.

Käsemann's description of those he criticizes for this type of interpretation seems accurate, and it is true that Lohmeyer, for example, was a theological heir of nineteenth-century Liberalism. This being so, it is not out of the question to suggest that Lohmeyer's theological position influenced his interpretation of the passage. But if Käsemann was right in accusing Lohmeyer and others of a reductionist interpretation of the passage on account of their theological tendencies, this properly raises the question of whether his in-

7 Ibid., 45.
8 Ibid., 46-50, passim.
9 Ibid., 50, 57.
terpretation was itself unnecessarily constricted on account of his theological commitments. For example, is it possible that in his justifi-
able rejection of the "ethical idealism" of Old Liberalism he came close to rejecting any sort of ethical appeal as a legitimate part of the NT message? With regard to Phil. 2:5-11 specifically, did his commendable kerygmatic theological tendencies make him unnecessarily resistant to indications that Christ may be held forth here in some kind of exemplary role? That his theological reaction against Liberalism (as a representative of the kerygmatic theological emphases made famous by Bultmann and Barth) may have skewed his reading of Phil. 2:5-11 is rendered more likely by the fact that from the Reformation on the passage had been seen as referring to Jesus as a model for Christian life. Only with the kerygmatic theology movement of this century did this view of the passage come under heavy attack. 10

Though further discussion of these matters might prove interesting, the only purpose here has been to describe briefly the theological viewpoint that may help account for some of the exegetical positions taken in Käsemann's influential essay. Others have insisted, against Käsemann, that Jesus is portrayed as an example in Phil. 2:5-11, and have expressed dissatisfaction with his exegesis of this passage on several points, 11 but I do not believe that other critics have seen how prominent the theological concerns are in Käsemann's essay and how much they seem to have shaped his interpretation of the passage. If I am correct that Käsemann's theological views predisposed him against seeing Jesus as an ethical example in Phil. 2:5-11 and that his views were formed in reaction against the moralizing tendencies of Liberal theology, we may be justified in undertaking a re-examination of the question of whether Jesus is presented as an example in this passage. Of course we must have more substantial reasons for disagreeing with Käsemann's view than simply the suspicion that certain a priori theological views skewed his interpretation, and in the following pages I offer what I hope will be seen as reasons of sufficient weight for taking another view of Phil. 2:5-11.

THE QUESTION OF BACKGROUND

We must begin this section of our study by noting that Käsemann placed great importance on a purported Gnostic-myth background for the hymn as the clue to its meaning, and that for him the primary

10 Note that Käsemann applauds Barth's rejection of any idea that Christ is an example in Phil. 2:5-11, though Käsemann differs with him on other matters (ibid. 50-52).

source for this Gnostic background was the Hermetic material. Most importantly, the overall structure of the events in Phil. 2:5-11 was interpreted on the analogy of the descent and ascent of the Gnostic "Urmensch-Saviour," and the Gnostic world view was seen as determinative for every item in the passage. Thus, 2:6-8 refers to the steps in which Christ became subservient to the hostile cosmic powers, and 2:10-11 refers to the conquest of these hostile powers and their recognition of their defeat. Repeatedly Käsemann appealed to this Gnostic background as the proper context in which to interpret Phil. 2:5-11, and argued that the proper context was crucial for the right interpretation of the passage. In this view, the passage makes no reference to the personality or deeds of the earthly Jesus, but is wholly a recital of a cosmic drama of salvation. Because this is so (per Käsemann) the events of the drama, such as the humiliation and servitude of 2:6-8, can have no use as ethical example.

In view of the emphasis upon the Gnostic background of the passage in Käsemann, it cannot be without significance to note that this now seems to be a highly untenable position. In general, and for reasons sufficiently well known as to require no explanation here, the appeal to a pre-Christian Gnostic redeemer-myth has fallen on hard times in recent years; and, with specific reference to Phil. 2:5-11, Käsemann’s Gnostic background is now generally denied.

Though he expressed agreement with the basic drift of Käsemann’s interpretation of the passage, Beare preferred to describe the religious background as simply the syncretism of the hellenistic world. But in general the drift of opinion has been away from analogies in the pagan religious movements of the ancient world and toward preferred roots in Jewish religion of the hellenistic period. Thus Georgi referred to the background of hellenistic-Jewish wisdom literature and the figure of the righteous sufferer. J. A. Sanders criticized Georgi’s proposal as too narrow, and argued that the proper background was in a wide array of Jewish sectarian literature, in which he found ideas similar to those in texts such as the Hermetica.

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13 Ibid., 67.
14 Ibid., 78-80.
15 Ibid., 62, 66, and 72, "Everything depends upon the context into which the exegete places this term."
17 Beare, Philippians, 30-32, 74-75, 76-78.
18 So also the survey of recent opinion in Martin, Philippians, 112-114.
Although the exact description of the religious background for Phil. 2:5-11 remains disputed, two things about the recent scholarly discussion seem worth noting. First, as already pointed out, there is wide agreement that the most important texts and the most likely religious atmosphere have to do with the Judaism of the Graeco-Roman period. This, however, suggests a second noteworthy point, not so well recognized. The various Jewish materials now pointed to all reflect an interest in ethical matters. Jewish wisdom literature, for example, such as Wisdom of Solomon, is concerned mainly with the cultivation of behaviour that reflects the divine will, and the righteous figure of Wisdom of Solomon seems to be a role model for the readers. The Jewish literature preferred by J. A. Sanders also reflects ethical concerns. The fallen watchers in Enoch, or the rebellious angels of Vita Adae et Evae function as examples of the traits to be avoided in the readers and not just as mythical explanations of evil in the world. It is clear that the overall purpose behind the writing of the pseudepigraphical literature of ancient Judaism and the literature of the Qumran community was to secure a style of religio-ethical response, and not just to tell tales of origins. Now, if what is regarded these days as the general background of Phil. 2:5-11 reflects ethical concerns, and if the figures in this literature that are offered by scholars as analogies or contrasts for the description of Christ so function in the Jewish literature as to include their being positive or negative ethical examples, then this raises the question of whether Jesus too so functions in this passage. To say that the figures in the Jewish literature, so often pointed to as the background of the passage, reflect paraenetic concerns is not to suggest that they are nothing but moral examples. Also, to suggest that the description of Jesus in Phil. 2:5-11 includes a description of him as an example for Christian response does not mean that Jesus' actions of self-humbling and obedience are seen as nothing but illustrations or examples of Christian ethical ideals. All that is being claimed at this point is that the nature of the Jewish literature thought to be behind the description of Jesus in Phil. 2:5-11 is such as to suggest that paraenetic concerns may have been involved in Jesus' description.

21 Thus, e.g., J. T. Sanders, The New Testament Christological Hymns, SNTSMS 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 73-74, who expresses some reservations about Georgi's view but agrees that, whatever the ultimate origin of the ideas that may be reflected in the passage, the immediate background is probably Jewish.
22 See the examples cited in J. A. Sanders, "Dissenting Deities," 284-288.
23 It is strange that J. A. Sanders thought that his argument that Jesus in Phil. 2:5-11 is contrasted with the rebellious angels of Jewish literature rendered it less likely that Jesus functioned in the passage as an example (ibid., 289). He seems to have been unable to see that a description of the actions of beings such as watchers, though "mythical," could be intended to reflect real ethical values and could include an intention to provide good or bad examples of these values.
24 Other examples of recent attempts to locate the background of Phil. 2:5-11 in Jewish materials include J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology in Phil. 2:5-
But even more important than the fact that the particular background proposed by Käsemann seems incorrect, we must ask whether his whole emphasis that Phil. 2:5-11 must be interpreted solely on the basis of a pre-Christian background of myths and images is not a serious mistake in exegetical method. What is implicit in the exegesis of Käsemann is raised to the level of an explicit principle in Martin’s otherwise valuable study when he urges, “It is of the utmost importance to isolate the meaning of the terms in the hymn from the use which is made of them by Paul in the verses which precede and follow.” What this kind of exegesis amounts to is the ignoring of the context of a passage and the use of hypothetical constructions of the “background” of thought to interpret what the passage means. With all due appreciation for the necessary historical-critical task of reconstructing the thought-world of the Graeco-Roman era as an aid to exegesis, surely one must insist that such background information must not be used as a basis for ignoring the context of a NT passage. Whatever the origin of imagery, terms, or concepts, the crucial step in exegesis is seeing how such matters are treated in the context of a given NT document and of early Christianity. It is a useful work of historical hypothesis-making to detach a formula expression or a credal or hymnic passage from its present context in the attempt to describe its “tradition-history,” its origin and usage previous to its use in its present location, but such a procedure cannot be called complete exegesis of the present text of Phil. 2:5-11, and it does not necessarily tell us very much about what Paul intended by including this passage in his letter.

Whether prompted by theological concerns (as I suggest above may have been the case with Käsemann) or by an enthusiasm for tradition-historical inquiry (as may have been the case with Martin), setting aside the immediate context of Phil. 2:5-11 with its obvious paraenetic concerns works unnecessary mischief upon the exegetical enterprise. In what follows, then, let us take note of some major evidence from the context and from within Phil. 2:5-11 itself that Paul’s description of Jesus in this passage is intended not only to inspire an ethical response but also to give an authoritative example for that response.


25 Martin, Carmen Christi, 215. Cf. 289, “Once the hymn’s significance in its original form is detached from the use Paul makes of it, we are relieved of these irritating difficulties of interpretation”(!), referring to the evidence that the passage carries a paraenetic function in its present context.

26 G. Strecker, “Redaktion und Tradition im Christushymnus Phil 2:6-11,” ZNW 55 (1964), 63-78, helpfully distinguishes between the previous use of the hymn and its present function, which is clearly paraenetic. I was not able to consult R. Deichgräber, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967), but I understand he makes a similar point. Martin formally allows for the distinction, but seems to ignore it in practice (cf. Carmen Christi, 287).
THE QUESTION OF CONTEXT AND TEXT

As we enter upon this section of our discussion, in which we will examine the passage in question in some greater detail, it may be useful to give first some brief attention to the question of whether Paul elsewhere cites the example of Jesus in paraenetic exhortation. This may be a particularly worthwhile step in view of the fact that it is urged, as an argument against the view that Jesus is cited here as an example, that "Paul never uses the earthly life of Jesus as an exemplum ad imitandum."27 If this rather astonishing statement means what it appears to say, it goes against evidence in the Pauline letters, as others have shown already.28 It is true that Paul's references to the example of Jesus are almost always specifically references to his death, and it is true that, for Paul, Jesus' death had eschatological and cosmic significance and was therefore not simply an exemplary event. Nevertheless the crucifixion was for Paul a real historical event, the most illustrative event to be sure, in the earthly ministry of Jesus. So, though Paul's references to Jesus as example in Rom. 15:3, 8; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 4:8-11; 5:14; and 1 Thess. 1:6 all have to do mainly with the death of Jesus, they are nonetheless evidence that the earthly Jesus in his self-sacrifice could be cited by Paul as pattern for behaviour. The observation, so often urged, that Paul did not distinguish the earthly Jesus from the heavenly Lord is true, if it means that Paul saw the earthly Jesus as in some way the incarnation of the pre-existent and now exalted Son of God, and therefore never merely as a heroic human example. But it is incorrect to think that Paul's awareness of the heavenly significance of Jesus prevented him from citing Jesus as an inspiring example for believers.29 With this in mind, let us turn directly to Phil. 2:5-11.

Käsemann proposed the view that en Christo Iesou (2:5) was not a personal reference to Jesus but in effect a circumlocution for the circle of Christian fellowship, a view that has been taken up with approval by many.30 This understanding of the phrase is disputed by others,31 but

27 Martin, Carmen Christi, 288.
even if we allow it to stand, this does not settle the question of how the following verses are to be understood. In fact, however, even in Käsemann's interpretation of *en Christō Iesou*, a personal reference to Jesus cannot be excluded, for the next words take up events directly connected with Jesus, and the church is in Paul's writings always the circle grounded upon the personal work of Christ. However we translate the somewhat elliptical *ho kai en Christō Iesou*, the following verses determine more fully the interpretation to be given to the passage as a whole.

Though the more popular view that 2:6-7 refers to the pre-existent Christ has been challenged of late, for the present purpose it is not necessary to debate this issue, and we shall assume that the dominant view is correct. On the basis of this view, it is rightly objected both that it is not the earthly Jesus but a heavenly figure who is here described, and that it is difficult to see how the action of such a figure could be an example for believers. In reply, two points must be made. First, while there can be no direct duplication by mere humans of the action of a heavenly being who is seen as enjoying quasi-divine status, it is not impossible that such an action might be described so as to make it exemplary for earthly behaviour, the differences notwithstanding.

Second, in the present instance, though it may be the action of the pre-existent, heavenly one that is referred to in 2:6-7, this action is directly linked with the action of the earthly Jesus in 2:8, for surely *morphēn doulou labōn* is intended to correspond to *etapeinōsen heauton* and *genomenos hypēkoos*. That is, the unseen and ineffable action of heaven is described after the fashion of the observed, historical action. And here again the limited usefulness of the supposed mythological parallels for interpreting this passage is apparent, for surely in Paul's mind it was the action of the earthly Jesus in submitting to crucifixion that provided basis for describing him as a *doulos* and as *hypekoos*, and not some previous mythic pattern.

Further, it is of great importance that this vocabulary used to describe Jesus' actions in 2:7-8 has such obvious connections with two other bodies of teaching: Pauline paraenesis and the Jesus tradition of

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32 See recently J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology"; and J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 114-121, who argue that the earthly Jesus is here likened to Adam in being *en morphē theou*. If this view is correct, then it would make the case even stronger that Paul is citing Jesus here as both basis and pattern for Christian existence.

33 Thus, e.g., Käsemann, "A Critical Analysis," 64-65.


35 Thanatou de staurou makes it plain that 2:8 refers to the earthly Jesus and to the nature of his actions!
the Gospels. As is well known, Paul describes himself as a *doulos* of Christ (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1) and himself and others as *douloi* of the churches (2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 4:12). In addition, he uses the term in moral exhortation of the Roman Christians (Rom. 6:19), and the verb form is a common description of Christian life (Rom. 7:6; 25; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:22; Col. 3:24; 1 Thess. 1:9).

Although the terms *diakonos*, *diakonia*, *diakoneo* can be distinguished from the *doulos* word group (in the latter group there is comparatively more emphasis upon the subjected status of the servant/slave in relation to the one being served)\(^{36}\) the two word groups are used in such close association that it is legitimate to cite the use of the *diakonos* word group as background for the word *doulos* in Phil. 2:7.\(^{37}\) Thus, Paul describes Christ as having become a *diakonos* (Rom. 15:8) in the service of God, and often uses members of this word group to describe himself and others in their work among the churches (e.g., 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; Col. 1:7, 23; 25; 1 Thess. 3:2; Rom. 16:1).

All of this means that, when Paul describes Jesus as having taken the role of a *doulos* in Phil. 2:7, he is using language with rich positive overtones for him and his readers.\(^{38}\) While it is not expressly stated in 2:7 that Jesus was *doulos* to God, neither is it expressly stated that Christ became *doulos* to evil powers (as Kasemann suggests), and there are better reasons for taking the former meaning than the latter. First, as shown above, the *doulos* word group is used more frequently in Paul with reference to Christian life and service than with reference to the unredeemed condition of humans and is *never* used to mean human existence as such.\(^{39}\) Second, in the immediate passage the contrast

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36 H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2:81. Cf. G. Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), 108. A feature distinguishing the *doulos* group from the *diakonos* group that has not been pointed out, so far as I know, is that in Paul the latter group most frequently refers to activities like preaching and other church service, while the *doulos* group is characteristically associated with general Christian life and obedience. In this light, the reference to Jesus as *doulos* in Phil. 2:6 is all the more interesting. Cf. Rom. 15:8.

37 Cf. Col. 4:7 where Tychicus is called both *diakonos* and *doulos*, or 1 Cor. 3:5 and 2 Cor. 4:6 where Paul uses the terms of himself and others as if they are almost interchangeable. The same association of the terms appear in Mark 10:43-45// Matt. 20:26-28.

38 Though Paul uses *doulos* in a negative way in Gal. 4:7 and Rom. 6:17, 20, the verb form negatively in Rom. 6:6; Gal. 4:3, 8, 9, 25, and *doulia* negatively in Gal. 4:24: 5:1; Rom. 8:21, these must be set over against the heavier and more widespread use of these terms positively in Rom. 7:6, 25; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:22; Col. 3:24; 1 Thess. 1:9; Rom. 1:1; 6:19 (twice); 2 Cor. 4:5; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; and Col. 4:12. By "positive" I do not mean to minimize the contrast between *morphē doulou* in Phil. 2:7 and *morphē theou* in 2:6 or *Kyrios* in 2:11. I mean only that the primary *Pauline* association of the term was not bondage to evil powers but servitude to God and to others for his sake.

39 Kasemann wished to have *morphē doulou* mean human existence as such, and argued that the *en homooimati anthrōpōn genomenos* should be taken as a fully synonymous phrase ("A Critical Analysis," 66-67). This is not quite correct, however, for the latter phrase functions rather to explain the medium taken by Jesus in carrying out the
between the *harpagmos* put aside or rejected, *to einaí isá theò*, and the path chosen, *morphèn douloú*, suggests that what is meant is service toward God, or for his sake. Third, and crucially I think, the striking *dio* of 2:9, and the fact that God is the actor in 2:9-11, show that the service of 2:7-8 must be seen as offered to God, and that 2:9-11 is the divine response. Paul does not just contrast God’s act with Christ’s (as *alla* would have implied), but makes God’s act of exaltation a consequence of Christ’s obedience.

The terms used in 2:8, *etapeinòsen heauton* and *hypochoos*, are also attested in Paul’s writings with reference to Paul and the churches. Thus, Paul says he humbled himself (!) in the service of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:7; cf. Phil. 4:12), and refers to the present vehicle of Christian life as *to sóma iè̂s etapeinòsei hémòn* (Phil. 3:21). A cognate term, *etapeinophrosunè*, is urged in Col. 3:12 and Phil. 2:3. The noun “obedience” and the verb “obey” are widely used Pauline terms for Christian existence.

Now the point of all this is that the description of Jesus’ actions in Phil. 2:6-8 is replete with terms whose most customary usage is in connection with paraenesis and references to Paul’s own ministry. The most reasonable conclusion, therefore, is that Jesus’ redemptive work is so described as to make it at the same time something of a pattern for those who call him Lord. If Paul intended the words to be taken in a sense different from their usual Christian semantic associations, why did he not insert modifying phrases to make this plain, especially since, in the opinion of many, it appears that he may have felt free to add other phrases to this “hymn” (e.g., *thanatou de stauroú*, 2:8)?

This brings us to another matter of greater significance than is usually recognized. The easily observable lack of typical Pauline redemptive terminology (e.g., *hyper hémôn*) is frequently cited mainly as evidence that 2:6-11 was not originally written by Paul. However correct this inference may be, the absence of such language may also imply something about Paul’s purposes in this passage. That is, the fact that Paul did not use specifically redemptive language (or did not add it to this “pre-Pauline hymn”) when he apparently did make at least one insertion in 2:8b may signify that Paul’s interest in reciting the acts of Jesus in 2:6-8 was simply to give their dimensions and quality so as to provide both a basis and a pattern for the paraenesis that surrounds the passage and that is its obvious context. Käsemann’s emphasis that the absence of references to the church in 2:6-11 is evidence that every-

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40 I Pet. 5:6 and Jas. 4:10 exhort Christians to humble themselves to God in trust that he will exalt them (*hypsoô!*), further evidence that the terms in Phil. 2:8 bore widely-known semantic association with Christian paraenesis.

41 “Obedience,” Rom. 1:5; 5:19; 6:16; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:5, 6; Phlm. 21; “obey,” Rom. 6:17; Phil. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:8; 3:14.
thing in the passage has to do with Jesus and the cosmic powers not only flies in the face of the evidence amassed so far about the ordinary Pauline use of the language of the passage, but also lifts the passage from its present paraenetic context in Philippians and reads into the passage references to beings that may at most be alluded to in 2:10-11 as partaking in the acclamation given by all creation.\footnote{This is not to deny that "cosmic powers" or angel-beings figured prominently in Paul's thought, or that he saw Christ's death as a deliverance from such powers elsewhere (Col. 2:13-19; Gal. 4:4,8-10). The present point is that there is inadequate reason to see these cosmic powers as implicitly referred to in Phil. 2:6-8, and that the obedience of Christ here is more likely with reference to God.}

In addition to the evidence that the description of Jesus in 2:6-8 draws upon the vocabulary of early Christian paraenesis, there is also evidence that Paul may be reflecting here the Gospel tradition of Jesus' earthly ministry. In all the Synoptic Gospels there is the tradition that Jesus commanded his disciples to be servants of one another after the analogy of his own role (Mark 10:43-45/Matt. 20:25-28/Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:35; Matt. 23:11).\footnote{In these passages doulos and diakonos are used synonymously.} Further, in the well-known foot-washing episode in John 13:5-17 a similar tradition appears, where Jesus uses doulos imagery. We may even note Heb. 5:8-9, where the obedience of Jesus is referred to, as a possible echo of this same sort of tradition. When, therefore, Paul refers to Jesus as he does in Phil. 2:6-8, he may have been drawing upon traditional descriptions of the role of the earthly Jesus, and this tradition is far more likely to have informed Paul's use of the key terms doulos, tapeinoō, hypekoo, than the sources proposed by Käsemann or the "hellenistic background" invoked by others. The obedience of Phil. 2:8 is not the obeying of death, as if death were one of the cosmic powers here, but obedience to the extent of death (mechri thanatou, not thanatoi!).\footnote{Cf. Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 227-228, who seems insensitive to the syntax here and reads colourful meaning into the statement, which unfortunately does not support his notion.}

What is emphasized is the quality of Jesus' action; the action is not limited to the experience of death, but includes a larger obedience that remains steadfast even to the point of death. This being so, it is not strictly true that Paul refers only to death in the earthly career of Jesus, for in this passage Paul seems to reflect traditional language in a summary description of the contour of the earthly career of this obedient one.

Up to this point we have been examining 2:6-8 in the attempt to understand the actions of Jesus described there. It is a major point in Martin's case against the view that Jesus is referred to as an example that 2:9-11, which is crucial for the passage, is not done justice.\footnote{Ibid., 288.} Now it is undeniably true that 2:9-11 is the climax of the whole passage and that any interpretation of 2:5-11 must not minimize the significance of these verses. But, in order to give 2:9-11 its proper importance, one
need not deny that Jesus' actions in 2:6-8 are exemplary and thus fitting for the paraenetic context of the letter. Nor, in order to hold that Phil. 2:5-11 serves Paul's paraenetic purpose, need one advocate some version of "naive ethical idealism," or suggest simplistically that "all that a Christian has to do is to follow in the Master's footsteps." Contrary to Martin's claim that 2:9-11 has "no relevance to Paul's ethical admonition," these verses show that the actions of 2:6-8 received divine vindication and approval, and that the one who took the role of slave is now kyrion, to whom all owe reverence. This means that 2:9-11 is not an epilogue to 2:6-8, but rather serves to evaluate Jesus' obedience in the highest terms. Further, the fact that Jesus is now kyrion (2:9-11) means that his action of self-humbling and obedience has not just exemplary but also fully authoritative significance. What Paul calls for is obedience (2:12), as Christ was obedient (2:8), and the authority of his call to obedience (as the hōste of 2:12 indicates) rests on the fact that the one to whom his readers are summoned to conform is now the kyrion. For Paul's readers the acclamation of Jesus as kyrion was to have definite ethical implications, for the connection between kerygma and paraenesis is clear in Paul.

The interpretation of the passage advocated here is one in which the themes of obedience (2:6-8) and vindication (2:9-11) are both done justice. Neither the simplistic ethicizing interpretations rejected by Käsemann and Martin nor their own "cosmic drama" interpretations are capable of doing justice to the full import of 2:5-11. Here Jesus is certainly presented as the triumphant Lord who now bears cosmic authority and whose humiliation and obedience was unique in kind and soteriological in effect. But here also Jesus' own action in 2:6-8 is described in language designed to ring familiar tones with Paul's readers, language that attributes to Jesus' action the character the readers were to exemplify in their own lives. The unique nature of Jesus' obedience and its cosmic consequences (2:9-11) mean that his action is foundational for all Christian obedience and that the Christian cannot simply replicate the obedience of 2:6-8. To borrow Dahl's terms, it is not strict imitatio but rather conformitas that the passage promotes, by which the believers are called to see in Jesus' action not only the basis of their obedience but also its pattern and direction.48

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 289.
48 N. A. Dahl, Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 34; cf. 20. This "pattern" involves self-humbling service and obedience, based on Jesus' authoritative example and in trust that God will vindicate those who acclaim Jesus as Lord in their obedience. Martin (Carmen Christi, 289) suggests that if Jesus is portrayed as an example to the believers his exaltation in 2:9-11 would have promoted "false motives and the acceptance of unworthy ends," but this is not necessarily so. First, the divine action in 2:9-11 is as unique in significance and nature as Jesus' actions in 2:6-8, and Paul's point is that Jesus was not just lifted from his humiliation but was made Kyrios. Thus, Jesus is not just example but is Lord of the Christian life.
CONCLUSION

We have by no means dealt with all the issues pertaining to Phil. 2:5-11 but have organized our discussion around the question of what Paul's purpose was in citing Jesus in this passage. In summary, it may be helpful to list briefly the conclusions put forth in this investigation.

1. There is reason to think that Käsemann's influential analysis of the passage was an overreaction against particular examples of "ethical idealism" and Pietism, so that he was unable to do justice to the evidence of Paul's paraenetic purposes in including this passage in his letter.

2. The primary consideration in determining the meaning of Jesus' actions in 2:6-8 must be the use of the language in early Christianity. While the larger Graeco-Roman context must not be ignored, the immediate early Christian context of language and ethos is most important.

3. The language used to describe Jesus' actions qualitatively in 2:6-8 is drawn from the language of early Christian paraenesis and possibly from the Jesus tradition of the Pauline period. This suggests that the tradition of the earthly Jesus was influential in shaping both this description of his actions, and possibly early Christian paraenesis. Further, this evidence suggests strongly that Jesus' actions are so described as to present them as a pattern to which the readers are to conform their behaviour.

4. The soteriological and cosmic effect of Jesus' actions of obedience en morphē doulou is not to be denied, and indeed the climactic verses 9-11 show that Jesus is presented here as more than simply a role model or pioneer, for he is kyrios to whom all must bow. But these verses do not forbid one to think that Paul presents Jesus as the authoritative pattern for Christian existence. In fact, these crucial verses emphasize that Jesus' actions were foundational for Christian existence, and at the same time show that his self-denial and obedience have received divine vindication, making Jesus' pattern of service the Lordly example to the readers who acclaim him now.

To conclude, Paul's picture of the cosmic Lord to whom all shall bow is informed by the shape of the ministry of Jesus who was hypēkhoos mechri thanatou. In 2:5-11 there is not only his ultimate glory and authority but also the echo of the tradition of his historical service, to which the Christian, the subject of this Lord, is called to be conformed.