



The Interpretation of *to einai isa theo* in Phil 2:6: "Equality with God"?

Thèse

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RÉSUMÉ

Phil 2.6-11 figure parmi les passages bibliques les plus étudiés. Les exégètes ne cessent pas d'examiner l'extrait du point de vue de son origine, sa structure, son arrière-plan conceptuel, sa doctrine christologique, et son vocabulaire. La majorité des traductions anglaises rendent la phrase grecque τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ dans Phil 2.6b « to be equal with God » ou « equality with God » comme commentaire sur la nature de la relation de Jésus Christ avec Dieu le Père. Toutefois, bon nombre de facteurs suggère que cette interprétation n'est pas conforme au sens du discours. La littérature secondaire avant les années 70 démontre une tendance de lire τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ comme commentaire sur les circonstances du Christ plutôt que sur son essence ontologique. Toutefois, dans la littérature plus récente, la phrase est moins traitée, et le sens présumé est souvent celui d'égalité d'essence plutôt que circonstance. Cette thèse se veut un nouveau regard sur le sens de τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ dans son contexte et vise à avancer l'étude scientifique par une approche interdisciplinaire.

Pour bien entamer l'étude de Phil 2.6, nous considérons tout d'abord le grec néotestamentaire dans le contexte de la littérature grecque générale de l'époque. Ensuite vient un survol des questions d'arrière-plan majeures nécessaire pour une compréhension juste de l'Épître aux Philippiens. Le troisième chapitre introductif décrit l'état de la recherche et de la traduction de τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ dans Phil 2.6b.

Ces chapitres introductifs sont suivis d'un examen de la manière avec laquelle les Pères grecs de l'Église emploient τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ jusqu'au cinquième siècle de notre ère. Ensuite le mot grec ἴσα est étudié du point de vue morphologique, syntaxique, et sémantique avec exemples tirés de la littérature grecque. Troisièmement, nous nous penchons sur un bon nombre d'exemples de la phrase comme expression courante dans la littérature grecque à partir d'Homère jusqu'à la période byzantine. En dernier, nous considérons la manière avec laquelle ces données peuvent influencer la lecture de Phil 2.6-11 dans le contexte de la lettre.

Notre conclusion affirme en bonne partie ce que disait la littérature secondaire concernant τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ avant les années 1970, tout en offrant une gamme de données patristiques et linguistiques beaucoup plus considérable qu'auparavant.

ABSTRACT

The interpretation of Phil 2:6-11 has occupied exegetes as much as any other passage in the New Testament. Scholars continue to study the passage's origin, strophic structure, conceptual background, Christology, and vocabulary. The majority of modern translations render the Greek phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6b as "to be equal with God" or more commonly "equality with God" as a comment on the nature of Jesus Christ's relationship to God the Father. A number of factors, however, would suggest that this interpretation misses the meaning of the Greek phrase. The secondary literature from before the 1970s shows a more frequent tendency to read τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as a comment on Christ's circumstances rather than his ontological being. In the more recent literature, the phrase is treated less extensively, and the assumption is often for τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as equality. This dissertation revisits the question of the meaning of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in its context and casts new light on the scholarly discussion.

To set the stage for the study of Phil 2:6, we consider the nature of the Greek of the New Testament in relation to wider Greek literature. Then we survey the major background questions necessary to an accurate understanding of the letter to the Philippians in its context. Third, we survey the state of research and English translation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6b.

These introductory chapters are followed first by an examination of the way that the Greek Fathers employed τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ during the second through fifth centuries. Second, the Greek word ἴσα is considered from morphological, syntactic, and semantic points of view with examples from the wider literature. Third, we examine an extensive set of occurrences of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς as a common collocation in Greek literature from Homer on down. Lastly, we apply the data of these areas to Phil 2:6-11 in the context of the letter.

Our conclusions confirm much of what was offered in the older secondary literature, while presenting a wider range of patristic and linguistic data than had been previously brought to bear on the question of the meaning of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ.

THE INTERPRETATION OF τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ IN PHIL 2:6: “EQUALITY WITH GOD”?

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CONVENTIONS

In citing works we have generally followed the stylistic conventions of the Society of Biblical Literature presented in B. J. Collins, B. Buller, and J. F. Kutsko, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2014). This format required full documentation at first mention of a reference, with the exception of the following standard reference works, which are noted simply by their abbreviations.

DBS	Pirot, L. <i>Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément</i> . Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1928-.
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott. H. S. Jones, R. McKenzie, P. G. W. Glare, A. A. Thompson, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Ninth edition with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
NA ²⁸	B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger, eds. <i>Nestle-Aland – Novum Testamentum Graece</i> . 28th revised ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
NPNF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
PG	Patrologia Graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]
PGL	Lampe, G. W. H. <i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien

REB *Revue des études byzantines*

SC Sources chrétiennes

When citing critical editions of ancient texts, we first give the ancient author and title of the work, followed by the last name(s) of the editor(s), or the name of the critical series, in square brackets, after which we indicate the last name of the text's translator.

Biblical citations in English are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

FOREWORD

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the teachers who have given me a love for learning Greek:

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on a particular Greek phrase in the Epistle to the Philippians: τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in Phil 2:6. Phil 2:6-11 has been studied extensively with regards to its authorship/origin, structure/genre, conceptual origins, vocabulary, and theology. In the area of lexical studies, the scholarly output has focused largely on the terms ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, ἀρπαγμός, and ἐκένωσεν. But a fourth element, our focus phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in v. 6b, is rarely treated extensively in the publications of the last fifty years.

The grammars and lexicons agree that the accusative neuter plural ἴσα found in v. 6b (from the adjective ἴσος) is a form that can belong to the word class of adverb with meanings such as “equally,” “in an equal manner,” or “in the same way.” Yet the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ is most often translated “equality with God” or “being equal with God,” as if the adjective ἴσος were being used. We would like to explore, based on a broad range of ancient textual and modern linguistic data, the possibility that the adverbial sense of ἴσα as it appears in the expression ἴσα θεῷ in Phil 2:6 has been insufficiently considered in the secondary literature.

This study can be of particular benefit to exegetes, translators, and theologians. An adverbial interpretation of ἴσα θεῷ in Phil 2:6, if valid, might minimize confusion about the interpretation of the hymn as a whole and lead to a better English translation. We wonder whether orienting thoughts toward the ontological being of Christ with a translation such as “being equal with God” may be inviting unnecessary confusion if the sense is actually adverbial. The rendering “being equal with God” leads one to believe that the author of the passage is making a comment about how Christ’s divine nature measures up to that of God the Father. This metaphysical understanding becomes particularly challenging when trying to make sense of the key words ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν.

In much of the literature, commentators attempt to define ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν with the understanding that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ means ontological equality. Thus they are asking whether, for example, Christ possessed or did not possess *equality*, and whether for Paul it is a question of not seizing or not retaining that *equality*. Hence the understanding of ἀρπαγμόν itself may be unnecessarily skewed within that framework, for the word ultimately needs to be defined in relation

to its immediate context. The same is true with ἐκένωσεν. If interpreters are thinking of ontological equality, then they may logically ask whether Christ literally gave up that equality or did so only metaphorically.

But what if the semantic framework used to address ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν is itself misguided from the start, as some adverbial interpreters of ἴσα θεῶ have argued? An interpreter risks misunderstanding all three elements. The lens through which ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν are read might change significantly if τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ does not speak of equality of divine nature with the Father. If the adverbial translation of ἴσα θεῶ is warranted by the context, it may rather direct readers to understand τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in terms of preincarnate circumstances instead of ontological equality or even divine attributes. In other words, readers may not be led to wonder in what way Jesus Christ forfeited his equality of nature, if in fact τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ describes preincarnate divine honor, as some commentators have suggested. If this latter reading is accurate, the passage becomes easier to understand, directing readers' thoughts toward the simple change of circumstances similarly described in 2 Cor 8:9 and often cited by the Fathers: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (NRSV). But this question of adjectival versus adverbial meaning remains to be judged based on the textual evidence of the following chapters in this study.

The study will take a multidisciplinary approach. The opening chapters validate the linguistic comparison of the Greek found in Philippians with the wider Greek literature of the time. The middle section of the dissertation presents an historical approach to the interpretation of our focus phrase in the Greek Fathers. The last chapters are a linguistic analysis of our phrase in Greek literature over the course of two millennia.

Chapter 1: The Greek of the New Testament Authors and the Epistle to the Philippians

This chapter will give an introduction to the nature of the Greek of the New Testament authors in the development of the Greek language, with a particular attention to the Greek of the Epistle to the Philippians. Not all characterizations of the Greek of the NT authors have been accurate or helpful, and some clarifications are needed. This theoretical foundation will not only give the necessary background for understanding the linguistic milieu of the Epistle to the Philippians, but will also show that comparing the language of Paul in Philippians with non-biblical Greek texts is a linguistically valid exercise, for the language of the NT authors reflects to a considerable degree the language of its time. These biblical to non-biblical textual comparisons will become important later in this study in determining the meaning of the expression ἵσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6.

1.1 The Greek of the NT Authors

Is the Greek of the NT authors really Greek? Some have considered their Greek to be a different language or dialect than non-biblical Greek. If the Greek of the NT authors is indeed of a linguistically different nature than non-biblical Greek to a significant degree, then comparative studies such as the one we will propose are of questionable value. For a thorough response to this question, we will begin with a brief historical survey of the Greek language.

1.1.1 Survey of History of the Greek Language to 529 AD

Around the end of third millennium BC, various Indo-European peoples came to occupy what was later called the Greek mainland.¹ Though scholars posit the existence of a “fairly unified Greek language” at this early period,² the records we have for Greek only testify to the stage at which numerous dialects had developed.³

¹ B. Metzger, “The Language of the New Testament,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7 (New York: Abingdon, 1951), 43.

² H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 2.

³ Metzger, 16.

For example, the earliest written records of a Greek dialect are the administrative tablets of the Mycenaean civilization from the thirteenth century BC. The burning of Mycenaean palaces as the civilization collapsed around 1200 BC had the effect of baking and thus preserving these tablets. Sir Arthur Evans remarked three scripts on Mycenaean tablets he discovered at the turn of the twentieth century: one pictographic system and two syllabic scripts. The latter two scripts came to be called Linear A and Linear B. While Linear A has never been decoded, Linear B was deciphered by the English architect Michael Ventris in the 1950s, with the collaboration of John Chadwick and Alice Kober. In studying the various types of signs of the script, most of them non-pictorial, these scholars recognized Linear B as a Greek dialect, thus identifying the oldest written record of the Greek language. In this way Greek established itself as the European language with the longest recorded history, given that modern Greek can be viewed in continuity with ancient Greek.⁴

After the Mycenaean tablets, however, we have no extant examples of a written Greek dialect until the inscriptions dating from the latter half of the eighth century BC. Local Greek alphabets developed in the latter part of the ninth century BC as an adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet. The traditional historical division of the Greek dialects into Aeolic (as seen in Sappho), Doric (Pindar) and Ionic (Herodotus) is useful for studying Greek literature, but in reality, many more spoken dialects existed which never attained the literary status of the others.⁵

In the fifth century BC, Athenian authors ceased writing in the Ionic dialect and wrote in Attic.⁶ Because Athens was the most important city-state politically, culturally, and economically, its dialect became the most prominent in what is called the classical period (from the eighth century BC to the death of Aristotle in 322). An official alphabet that had been developed in Ionia (western Asia Minor) was then recognized in Athens in 403-2 BC and has been the standard alphabet since.⁷

Philip of Macedonia made Attic his court language, and when his son Alexander spread Greek culture and language with his own military conquests, there emerged a common speech

⁴ For more specifics on the Mycenaean dialect, see G. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers* (New York: Longman, 1997), 3; W. Moleas, *The Development of the Greek Language* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2004), 2-6.

⁵ "We know the dialects mainly from inscriptions, not from Greek literature, which shows only a few of them." C. Buck, *Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 20.

⁶ F. R. Adrados, *A History of the Greek Language* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 176.

⁷ Horrocks, xix.

combining elements of the different dialects. This Koine descends from Attic, though in a complex way,⁸ retaining some Ionic elements (e.g., the double sigma (σσ) instead of the double tau (ττ) of Attic). Koine (a term used by most scholars interchangeably with the term Hellenistic) became the Roman Empire's lingua franca by the first century AD from Spain to India and is considered to have continued to AD 529, when Justinian closed the academy of Plato in Athens.

The Greek dialects other than Koine remained in written use until 200 BC.⁹ After perhaps the second or third century AD, dialect use other than Koine had ceased at the spoken level. They were all replaced by the written and spoken Koine, with the exception of the present-day endangered Tsakonian language in Laconia.¹⁰

It is in this same Koine that the NT authors wrote. Or is it? Where does the Greek of the NT authors fall with reference to the history of the Greek language? In terms of time period, that is easily enough established. But is the Greek of the NT authors qualitatively different than that of its contemporaries to a point that it can no longer be called Greek, or should be identified as a separate Greek dialect? Is the language of the NT authors exceptional among other examples of Koine Greek from the latter part of the first century AD?

Stanley Porter explains that the nature of the Greek of the NT authors has been a “contentious issue, because the complex theological, ethnic and cultural issues related to its composition has clouded linguistic analysis.”¹¹ Before the twentieth century, the idea was widespread that the NT was a special biblical dialect. At the beginning of the twentieth, A. Deissmann and J. H. Moulton showed how the papyri found in Egypt evidenced syntax and vocabulary like the NT, as we will explain below. After their deaths, however, there occurred a backlash to emphasize the Jewishness of the Greek found in the NT, i.e., its Semitic influence: the

⁸ A. Meillet, *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 2004), 317: “Les faits linguistiques concordent donc avec les données historiques pour établir que la *koiné* repose sur l'ionien-attique en général, sur l'attique en particulier. Mais la *koiné* n'est pas de l'attique évolué. Elle s'est constitué par des actions et réactions complexes.”

⁹ Buck, 20.

¹⁰ According to Buck, we don't know how long oral use of the dialects continued (20). P. S. Costas cites Suetonius' comment that Doric was still spoken in Rhodes in the first century of our era. See his *An Outline of the History of the Greek Language: With particular emphasis on the Koine and the subsequent periods* (Chicago: The Ukrainian Academy of Sciences of America, 1936), 48.

¹¹ S. E. Porter, “Greek of the New Testament,” in C. A. Evans, S. E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, Illinois-Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 430.

Bible was considered so affected by the Aramaic language that a new kind of creole was thought to have been created joining Greek and Aramaic. Porter believes this backlash occurred because people wanted to emphasize the uniqueness of the NT documents in the larger body of Greek literature. The last 20 years of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first have witnessed a return to emphasizing that the NT writings can legitimately be identified as Koine Greek.

1.1.2 Validity of Diachronic and Synchronic Characterizations

For our purposes it will be helpful to distinguish between diachronic characterizations of a language and synchronic ones. Linguists use a diachronic approach to study the use of a language through time; the synchronic approach considers language use at a given point in time. This distinction was taught by Ferdinand de Saussure and published posthumously in 1916 in his *Cours de linguistique générale*.¹² Both the diachronic and synchronic angles have a valid place in understanding a language. We will show that in the study of the Greek of the NT, however, the diachronic has been emphasized to the neglect of the synchronic. The diachronic and synchronic approaches are complementary, and an adequate synchronic account is actually a prerequisite to the diachronic: “Sur ce point, il est évident que l’aspect synchronique prime l’autre,” taught de Saussure.¹³ This is because in order to understand the development of a language over time, one must first truly understand the features of that language at a given point in history. Once an accurate portrait of a language is established for a given point in time (synchronic), only then can the features of the language be compared with features at another point in time (diachronic).

We would like to show that differences between the Greek of the NT authors and non-biblical Greek authors have sometimes been exaggerated, both on a diachronic and synchronic level. We will first address common diachronic characterizations, followed by synchronic ones. While it is true that some comments in the secondary literature make both types of characterization at the same time, we believe dividing the discussion in two sections is more clear and helpful, though there will necessarily be some overlap between the two.

¹² F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1972), 124ff. The *Cours* is a compilation of notes taken by his students.

¹³ *Ibid*, 128.

1.1.2.1 Diachronic Characterizations

Several different kinds of unhelpful characterizations fall into the diachronic category. First of all, the language of the NT authors is sometimes compared almost exclusively to Attic Greek. Indeed, much of what we find in the scholarly literature about the nature of the Greek of the NT authors is dominated by steady reference to classical standards.

For example, Porter gives the illustration of the classical philological approach of Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, which prioritized the “studying of a few select literary texts as the benchmark for evaluating other Greek.”¹⁴ Or take the example of James Hope Moulton and Nigel Turner. Moulton himself authored the first two volumes in his four-volume series on Greek grammar, while Turner authored the third and fourth volumes after Moulton’s death. Moulton, along with Deissmann, had emphasized the similarities between the language of the Egyptian papyri and the NT writings. In authoring the third volume of the series, however, it is obvious that Turner parted ways with Moulton by emphasizing differences between the Greek of the NT authors and so-called “classical standards.”¹⁵ Both of these grammars (Blass/Debrunner and Moulton/Turner) exercised considerable influence throughout the twentieth century, and with them their espousal of classical texts as standards of comparison for the NT writings.

These comparisons between the Greek of the NT and classical texts are understandable in light of the immense data of the classical period and the large corpus of the NT, but this type of predominantly diachronic characterization has been qualified as an “increasingly unsatisfactory tendency”¹⁶ because it is “manifestly insufficient to examine Koine Greek only from the classical side, as our ancestors mostly did.”¹⁷ Our own temporal distance from these time periods encourages

¹⁴ Porter, “Greek of the New Testament,” 431. Blass and Debrunner, while admitting that the “higher unity to which the language of the NT belongs is the Greek lingua franca of its time,” nonetheless make the qualification that nothing of “proper classical education appears” in the NT authors, even if they allow that Paul, Luke and the author of Hebrews had some kind of grammatical and rhetorical training. In F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 2.

¹⁵ J. H. Moulton, N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 3: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 2-9.

¹⁶ T. V. Evans, *The Language of the Papyri* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

¹⁷ J. M. Moulton, “New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery” in S. E. Porter, *The Language of the New Testament: Classic Essays* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 63.

us to lump the classical and the Koine together as if they were in the same time period. Yet one would find it odd to characterize the language of twentieth-century authors with reference to those of the sixteenth, e.g., Albert Camus exclusively with reference to Jean Calvin, or Roald Dahl exclusively with reference to John Donne. Yet these are precisely the spans of time with which we are dealing when comparing classical and biblical Greek.

Interestingly enough, this phenomenon of nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors evaluating NT Greek on the basis of classical Greek texts of the fifth and fourth centuries BC is not a new reflex. The Atticism of the first century BC and following used the language of fifth- and fourth-century Athens as a standard by which to evaluate acceptable Greek expression in the imperial era.¹⁸

Comparing first-century AD Greek with fifth-century BC Greek is legitimate for understanding language change, but does not give us a complete understanding of the language as it functioned as a tool for its first-century users. We will observe in the next section that the Greek texts contained in the corpus known as the NT are most fruitfully compared with texts of the first century AD, not those of the fifth century BC.

Descriptive not Prescriptive

And while diachronic descriptions are legitimate, to be accurate and helpful they must respect certain basic axioms of modern linguistics. First, they must be scientifically *descriptive* based on linguistic criteria, not *prescriptive* based on value judgments about what constitutes good Greek. A scientific diachronic description of a language will examine historical changes in its constituent levels: phonology (sound system), morphology (anatomy of words), semantics (meaning of words and larger units of language), and syntax (sentence patterns), as well as literary elements such as genre, register, and rhetoric (persuasive features). At the end of this section we will give examples of these changes that did indeed take place in the Greek language.

¹⁸ See L. Kim, “Atticism and Asianism” in *The Oxford Handbook to the Second Sophistic*, eds. Daniel S. Richter and William A. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 41-66.

Language as Function of a Communication Context

A second axiom pertinent to a diachronic analysis is that language use is a *function* of a given communication context. Language is most fruitfully described when it is not separated from language users and their goals in context, because language “exists for the community, is maintained by it, and refers to the culture of the community.”¹⁹ We will observe in the next section on synchrony that the objectives of the NT authors in their first-century AD communication contexts were significantly different than the authors of fifth-century BC Athens.²⁰

Language Adequacy

A third axiom directly following this second one is that any language is capable of serving well the needs of its speakers. Sturtevant describes a language’s capacity in terms of *adequacy* for meeting its users’ needs, rather than superiority or inferiority in relation to another language or the same language at different periods of its history:

There is no general agreement as to what constitutes aesthetic excellence in language; but, whatever the standard, we do not find that the languages of the most highly civilized peoples are the most beautiful, or that languages tend to approach the standard more closely with lapse of time. The numerous vowels of Ancient Greek have been considered an element of beauty; but the language contracted many of its vowels while Greek civilization was still advancing, and Hawaiian has a larger proportion of vowels than the Greek of any period. In two directions, however, a progressive improvement of human speech may be observed; languages tend to become more adequate and convenient tools for the expression of thought.²¹

¹⁹ R. Antilla, *An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 193.

²⁰ Moulton insists that the language seen in the NT was not less fitted for a communication task than was Attic, whether in the morphing of the use of *ĩva* or the loss of the optative: “we are not belittling the masterpieces of Hellas when we say that their language was far less fitted than Hellenistic for the work that awaited the missionaries of the new world-faith” (“New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery,” 94).

²¹ E. H. Sturtevant, *Linguistic Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 160.

This notion of language adequacy was a basic axiom that emerged from the early modern linguistics movement nearly one hundred years ago. The view that the Greek of the Koine period (NT or other) is a degeneration of an earlier form of the language does not fit with this basic axiom.

Language Change

Fourth, *language change* should not come as a surprise. Because a language is an adequate tool for its users, and because the elements of communication contexts of users change, languages change. These changes can be documented at every one of the basic constituent levels (i.e., phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax). The Greek language did change with time. But the language that we find in the NT or in the extra-biblical Greek texts of the first century AD may still be called Greek, because the fundamental changes that took place were historically derived from earlier forms of the language, and new languages were not formed as a result. In our study of the Greek of Philippians, we will show that the linguistic changes that are witnessed in the Greek of the NT are also witnessed in extra-biblical Greek, showing them to be the same language.

When the Greek of the NT authors is compared with earlier forms of the language descriptively and in keeping with the axioms of linguistic functionality, adequacy, and historical change just invoked, the language can no longer be considered a degenerate form of earlier Greek. The changes that occurred in Koine in general can also be witnessed in the Greek of the NT authors.²² For example, at the phonological level, the long-short vowel distinction disappeared; diphthongs ending in iota lost the iota sound; and initial aspiration (rough breathing) was lost. At the morphological level, first declension noun endings were regularized; the inflection of οἶδα changed; and ἐλεύσομαι was used for the future of ἔρχομαι instead of εἶμι. At the syntactic level, we recognize less use of the optative. Porter suggests that the optative mood was close enough to the subjunctive mood that its frequency was declining in the first century.²³ Another cause could be iotacism, a phenomenon in which the pronunciation of certain vowels and diphthongs shifted toward the [i] sound in post-classical Greek. The fact that verbal endings in eta (ἦ) and omicron-iota (οῖ) belonged to both the subjunctive and the optative introduced confusion between the two, perhaps further contributing to the optative's decline. T. V. Evans, in

²² For a thorough catalogue of changes, see Moleas, 18ff.

²³ S. E. Porter, J. T. Reed, M. B. O'Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 41.

his study on syntax in the Greek Pentateuch, posits that the optative was already in decline in the third century BC and mostly disappeared by the late Koine period.²⁴ The use of the optative to mark historic sequence in subordinate clauses declined first, while the uses expressing potentiality and volition in main clauses lingered on. We still see instances of the volitional use in the NT epistles, particularly in some stock prayer-wishes, but not in all of them. Evans suggests that ongoing use of stereotyped phrases containing the optative (such as the Apostle Paul's *μη γένοιτο* "may it never be") as well as the Atticist tendency²⁵ to bring back the optative obscured this decline that was nonetheless real. We also note the loss of the dual, which is absent from the NT. The dual grammatical number used for pairs "died out in the living speech of Attica by 300 B.C.";²⁶ it is "nearly gone in the late Attic inscriptions, while in the Koine it is only sporadic and constantly vanishing in the inscriptions and papyri."²⁷ We further note a greater frequency of prepositions²⁸ rather than use of the dative or genitive cases, and more periphrastic constructions. These changes largely attested in the NT writings are not degenerate examples but instead are unsurprising developments, for they took place in the wider Koine as well.

1.1.2.2 Synchronic Characterizations

We have briefly considered some major periods of Greek language history up to the Koine period and suggested that the Greek of the NT authors reflects normal changes that occurred in the development of the language. But what happens when we compare the Greek of the NT with extra-biblical Greek of the same period? Is the Greek of the NT authors fundamentally different or similar to first-century extra-biblical Greek? We will argue that while there are differences between NT and non-NT Greek, NT Greek is easily recognizable as the Koine of its time; differences are accounted for by variables in authorial background, intention, and audience situation.

²⁴ T. E. Evans, *Verbal Syntax in the Greek Pentateuch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 175-176.

²⁵ NT scholars are generally hesitant to ascribe Atticist tendencies such as this one to the NT authors. Moulton, for example, believed that the optative in Luke and Acts is literary but not artificial ("New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery," 75).

²⁶ Smyth, 269.

²⁷ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd edition (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), see ch. 7.

²⁸ For characteristic prepositions of one second-century Koine writer, the physician-philosopher Galen, see R.J. Durling, "Prepositional Idiom in Galen," *Glotta* 64 (1986), pp. 24-30.

As we observed with diachronic characterizations in the secondary literature, synchronic characterizations of the Greek of the NT authors have also been plagued by inaccurate and unhelpful elements. A first type of characterization broadly speaking involves Semitisms (sometimes called Aramaisms or Hebraisms). NT scholars use the term Semitism to describe various signs of Jewish influence on the NT writings. Below we will detail the different kinds of Jewish influence proposed. But for the moment, our concern is to mention that Semitic elements in the NT texts are sometimes judged sufficient to label the Greek of the NT a different dialect.²⁹ Or in a similar area, the linguistic background of the NT writers themselves in their multilingual context is considered to preclude them from writing in a language that can be considered true Greek. For example, C. C. Caragounis examines the multilingual situation in Palestine and the Greco-Roman world and concludes that the NT cannot be considered as representative of “main-line Greek among Greeks” because it was written by what he calls non-Greeks.³⁰

A second type of synchronic characterization accentuates the theological nature of the Greek of the NT. In one old form of this characterization from the nineteenth century AD, the Greek of the NT authors is a “Holy Ghost language” in which the divine influence enabled authors to write in a Greek better adapted to divine communication than other forms of contemporary Greek and other languages.³¹ And in the mid-twentieth century, Turner called attention approvingly to the fact that “many are finding their way back to the Bible as a living book and perhaps are pondering afresh the old question of a Holy Ghost language.”³² Such a characterization one does not see in print today, having been countered by the great grammarians at the turn of the twentieth century and the modern linguists of the twenty-first (on which see below). But a related idea survives, if only at the popular and anecdotal level, that the Greek of the NT authors was the language perfectly suited to the divine message of the Apostles, over against other languages of the time. These characterizations are often subtly expressed but nonetheless unhelpful for an accurate understanding of the NT.

²⁹ C. C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament. Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, erste Reihe, 167, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004)*, 44. Caragounis emphasizes that the NT is “tainted” with Semitisms and therefore is not a true example of the Greek of the period; “the NT cannot be taken as a reliable representative of spoken Greek in Greece in the first century A.D., but only as one branch of *Koine* Greek, one that represented Semitic influence” (123).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

³¹ R. Roth, *Zur Dogmatik* (Gotha: Perthes, 1863), 238.

³² J. Moulton, N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 3: Syntax*, 9.

A third type of synchronic characterization involves the terminology used to describe the Greek of the NT authors and how the authors can be characterized in relation to each other. The terms “biblical Greek” or “NT Greek” can be either inaccurate or acceptable depending on how they are used, in two areas in particular. Using the expression “biblical Greek” is acceptable if by that we mean simply the Greek of the biblical texts, but inaccurate if we mean that that Greek is fundamentally different from the extra-biblical Greek of its time. The term “biblical Greek” is also inaccurate if by it we assume that the Greek of the NT authors is uniform in terms of such factors as authorial background and audience dynamics. Below we will detail the significant variety among authors within the corpus known as the NT.

In regard to these three types of characterizations we have just given, it is possible to speak of a paradigm shift with the writings of Adolf Deissmann (1866-1937). His contribution was monumental in drawing attention to actual texts that exemplify Greek that is contemporary with that of the NT authors. His *Licht vom Osten*³³ (translated into English as *Light from the Ancient East*)³⁴ highlighted the similarities between the language of the non-literary papyri found preserved in Egypt (dating from 311 BC to the seventh century AD) and that of the NT authors. We will presently discuss his proposals in more detail, along with those of others who have followed in his steps, in reference to the three broad areas of synchronic characterization given above: 1) Semitisms and the NT, 2) the idea of superior Greek in the NT, and 3) terminology used to describe the Greek of the NT writers.

1.1.2.2.1 Semitic Characterizations

While the issue of Semitisms in the NT is complex enough for a dissertation in itself, we will give a cursory sketch of the historical contours of the debate in order to understand better this important area of NT Greek characterization. Earlier we said that NT scholars use the term Semitism to describe various signs of Jewish (or Aramaic or Hebrew) influence on the NT writings. Categories of potential Semitic influence upon the Greek of the NT authors include those resulting from 1) the fact that the original behind the Greek is in another language, such as is sometimes proposed for the Gospels, of which the translation results in a less than native Greek; 2) deliberate

³³ A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923).

³⁴ Ibid, *Light From the Ancient East. The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint, 1965).

(or sometimes subconscious) imitation of the Greek Old Testament for stylistic effect, resulting in a Greek that is perceived as non-native; and 3) unintentional linguistic interference upon syntax, lexical semantics, or some other aspect due to a writer's Jewish background. It is particularly this third category that is of interest in the proposal about a separate Jewish Greek dialect.

Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Turner believed that the Semitisms in the NT were sufficient to label the language of the NT as a whole "Jewish Greek," even though he could at the same time also affirm that "biblical Greek is Greek."³⁵ For Turner, the Greek of the NT writers was a Jewish Greek dialect distinct from classical and Koine Greek. He considered the Septuagint (the Greek translation of Israel's Scriptures) to be an example of that spoken Jewish dialect of Greek—a spoken dialect also reflected in a number of canonical gospel sayings of Jesus which Turner believes only work well in Greek. As an example of an originally Greek saying, Turner cites the play on words in John 3:3,7, where Jesus says that a man must be born "again," which can also be translated "from above." This play on words wouldn't work in Aramaic. Turner believes that

Biblical Greek is so powerful and fluent, it is difficult to believe that those who used it did not have at hand a language all ready for use. This, I submit, was the normal language of Jesus, at least in Galilee—rather a separate dialect of Greek than a form of the Koine, and distinguishable as something parallel to classical, Hellenistic, Koine and Imperial Greek.³⁶

His brief arguments in *The Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3 are largely based on the frequency of certain NT features when compared with extra-biblical Greek. For example, he perceived that in the NT there are less verbs in the perfect than there are in the popular language of the time, yet the NT has more in the optative, since the optative is a "form of speech well fitted for pious lips."³⁷ He observed that while certain frequent NT prepositions hardly occur in the papyri, the preposition ἐν occurs more frequently in the NT than in the papyri. It is important to note what we learn about Turner's reasoning through his examples. He does not here attribute the perceived differences in frequency of occurrences between NT and extra-biblical Greek directly to occasional

³⁵ N. Turner, "The Language of Jesus and His Disciples," in *The Language of the New Testament*, 181, 188.

³⁶ Ibid, 185. We will provide other points of view concerning the language of Jesus as this chapter develops.

³⁷ J. Moulton, N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3: *Syntax*, 5-6.

bilingual interference in the thought process of Jewish writers per se, but rather more globally to the fact that “not only is the subject-matter of the Scriptures unique but so also is the language in which they came to be written or translated.”³⁸ The differences in frequency that he finds are perceived as characteristic of that separate dialect that was specific to Jews who spoke Greek.

In the historical flow of the discussion about Semitisms in the NT, Turner is actually a hold-out from an older debate that had reached a turning point a half-century earlier, particularly in the writings of Deissmann. Deissmann’s research did not deny the presence of some Semitisms at the lexical level (i.e., the sayings of Jesus), but many posited Semitisms he actually found in the Greek papyri of Egypt which were composed in the course of everyday affairs. One example of a formerly perceived Semitism in the Gospels was the frequent coordination of sentences with the conjunction καί “and.” Deissmann compared this tendency in the Gospel of John with texts found among the papyri in Egypt and found the same paratactic phenomenon (stringing sentences together with conjunctions) in both. In addition, Deissmann believed that parataxis had always been a prevalent feature:

Parataxis appears to be not Greek only from the orthodox point of view of the Atticists, who laid it down that the periodic structure with hypotaxis was good, beautiful, and Greek *par excellence*. As a matter of fact, parataxis is the original form of every primitive speech, including the Greek; it survived continuously in the language of the people, and even found its way into literature when the ordinary conversation of the people was imitated.³⁹

In light of the papyrus he analyzed, Deissmann preferred to minimize the relevance of Semitisms for an accurate understanding of the Greek of the NT. His way of helping students of the NT to keep Semitisms in perspective was to call them “birthmarks,”⁴⁰ i.e., surface elements that showed the writer’s or speaker’s background.

Deissmann’s English friend J. H. Moulton also rejected a large number of posited

³⁸ Ibid, 9.

³⁹ Deissmann, *Light*, 132, 134-136.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 113.

syntactical Semitisms,⁴¹ asserting that the total amount of “non-Greek elements” is “astonishingly small,” particularly outside of the texts of the Gospels.⁴² He defined Semitisms as a deviation from “genuine Greek idiom due to too literal rendering of the language of a Semitic original.”⁴³ He observed two types of Semitisms in reading through the NT authors: conscious or unconscious imitation of the Greek of the Septuagint (thus making this type of Semitism the imitation of the Greek of a Semitic original), and literal renderings of oral or written Semitic sources, with “source” including the writer’s own Aramaic interfering with the writing of Greek.⁴⁴

Moulton believed that Luke (taken as author of Luke and Acts and thus the largest single contributor to the NT in terms of volume) did not know Aramaic at all, so Semitisms in his writings would be conscious retention of Aramaic patterns for stylistic purposes. Paul, the second largest contributor to the NT, uses Semitisms only rarely, and ones which are “defensible as Greek, and natural to a Greek ear,” since Paul would have spoken Greek from the first along with Aramaic.⁴⁵ In Romans, for example, he writes in the language of the ordinary people.

For the Epistle to the Hebrews, Moulton finds it striking, given the name of the writing, that its author only quotes from Greek, and “knew no Hebrew.”⁴⁶ He quotes from the Septuagint even more than Paul does. Moulton evaluates the language of 1 Peter as steeped in that of the Septuagint, but free of Semitisms otherwise. In the Epistle of Jude we cannot detect any Semitism at all; 2 Peter has little Semitisms to speak of.

With the Gospels according to Mark and Matthew, still in regard to Semitisms, we are in different territory, for Moulton argues that these writings were “virtually translated from Aramaic oral or written sources.”⁴⁷ The Gospel according to Matthew “betrays Semitic authorship only in its range of ideas and its sympathetic understanding of the Jewish-Christian point of view.”⁴⁸ Moulton traces the Semitisms in the Gospel according to Mark to a Gospel based on catechetical

⁴¹ J. Vergote, “Grec biblique,” in *DBS*, 1339.

⁴² Moulton, “New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery,” 70.

⁴³ J. M. Moulton, W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 2: *Accidence and Word-Formation with an Appendix on Semitisms in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Aramaic lessons given as Mark accompanied Peter on tours. He considers the language of the Gospel according to Mark to be extremely vernacular but having parallels in the papyri.

Moulton believes that the Greek observed in the Gospel according to John and the Epistles of John is not that of a mother tongue speaker. Moulton draws this conclusion by the simplicity of style found in those writings and not from grammatical problems. But these writings, argues Moulton, are not marked by Semitisms. For example, the commonly evoked parataxis of the Gospel according to John is reflected in the papyri that Deissmann highlighted.⁴⁹

Revelation differs greatly from the Gospel according to John and the Epistles of John: the final book of the canon demonstrates copious vocabulary and apparent disregard for grammar. But Moulton suggests that the style can be attributed to factors such as literal “transference of Semitic idioms,” imitation of everyday speech, and the constraints of the apocalyptic idiom.⁵⁰

In his survey of these NT texts, Moulton was concerned particularly with the question of Semitic influence; shortly we will bring to bear the perspectives of other modern authors on the Greek of the NT authors. The value of Moulton’s survey at this juncture is to suggest that significant Semitic influence among the NT writings (other than deliberate imitation when Luke wants stylistically⁵¹ to give an impression of antiquity in his first two chapters⁵²) is not uniform, and is largely limited to the Gospel texts, especially the Gospel according to Mark. In his study of Semitisms in Mark’s Gospel, for example, E. Maloney concluded that while indeed some Marcan constructions once perceived as Semitisms turned out to be present in Hellenistic Greek in general, there are nonetheless frequent examples of Semitic language influence, such as ἄνθρωπος “man” in the place of τις “someone,” a greater frequency of the demonstrative pronoun ἐκεῖνος “that” or “that one,” and the occurrence of οὐρανοί “heavens,” instead of the expected οὐρανός in the singular.⁵³ In following Moulton’s comparison of the different NT writings, we are encouraged not

⁴⁹ Ibid, 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 34.

⁵¹ M. Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meanings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 52: “The influence of the LXX on New Testament language should be understood as largely restricted to stylistic elements.”

⁵² Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 2, 453, 482. See also G. J. Steyn, “Intertextual Similarities Between Septuagint Pretexts and Luke’s Gospel,” *Neotestamentica* 24 (2) (Bloemfontein: New Testament Society of South Africa, 1990), 231.

⁵³ See E. C. Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981), 244-252.

to take the Gospel according to Mark alone as indicative of 1) whether the whole of the NT corpus is thus influenced by Semitisms, and beyond that, 2) whether the whole should be considered as representative of a Jewish Greek dialect.

In our short survey of the historical debate on NT Semitisms, we have thus far mentioned notable viewpoints from the beginning as well as the middle of the twentieth century. But where has the discussion turned more recently at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Authors like Horsley and Silva have approached the question from other angles. In his lengthy 1989 essay, “The Fiction of ‘Jewish Greek’,” Horsley explains that “Semitisms do not establish the existence of Jewish Greek.”⁵⁴ He specifies what it would take to call the Greek of the NT writers a distinct Jewish dialect:

To speak of a dialect as a coherent grammatical subsystem of a language it must be possible to demonstrate that it has a consistent syntax, morphology and phonology, which is definably distinct from and yet related to that language.⁵⁵

Horsley prefers to speak of expected bilingual interference:

The edifice of Jewish Greek lacks foundation in reality, neither does it have any cogent linguistic framework. Accordingly, it is built largely using weak arguments and assertions. While it is not denied that certain Semitic features obtrude into Greek written by Jews and Christians in antiquity, where this occurs it is to be understood as the expected phenomenon of interference which manifests itself in varying degrees in the speech and writings of bilinguals.⁵⁶

Though phonological differences in the Greek spoken by Jews in Palestine as opposed to speakers elsewhere were likely generalized, phonological differences do not make the Greek spoken and written in Palestine a separate dialect.

⁵⁴ G. H. R. Horsley, in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, vol. 5: Linguistic Essays (N.S.W., Australia: Macquarie University, 1989), 31.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

Moises Silva also approaches the question from the angle of bilingualism, particularly by highlighting the relevance of Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* for the characterization of the Greek of the NT authors.⁵⁷ *Langue* (language) is the collection of abstract rules of the language held by tacit agreement in the consciousness of the community, and *parole* (speech) is actual utterances by speakers or writers of that community in the context of a communication act.⁵⁸ Silva suggests that this *langue/parole* distinction is very important in the discussion of the nature of the Greek of the NT. Thus we may say that the *langue* of the NT authors is Koine Greek (in its abstract state) but in its *parole* contains Semitic influence, i.e., lexical borrowings or syntactic interference from Hebrew or Aramaic. These borrowings did not eventually change the *langue* of that particular Greek-speaking Christian community into another distinct *langue*; their utterances did not ultimately change the shared mental structure of the Greek in which the NT authors wrote. In a similar vein, Porter speaks in terms of language register:

One is able to overcome much of the dichotomous thinking regarding Semitic influence on the Greek of the NT through the use of register analysis. Rather than thinking in terms of whether Greek is or is not Semitized, one can consider a variety of contextual factors that may result in shifts of features of register, some of which may involve, for example, drawing upon features of the Greek of the Septuagint . . . Register is concerned with variety of language according to its use.⁵⁹

Following Silva and Porter we propose that the major characterizations that attempt to make a significant synchronic distinction between the Greek of the NT writers and extra-biblical Greek can be more helpfully explained as issues of *parole* owing to the communication situation surrounding the speech act in question, whether the educational and linguistic background of the author, the social situation of the target audience, or the literary register of the particular writing. Discussing these factors in terms of *parole* clears the path to then see the considerable similarities between biblical and non-biblical writings at the level of *langue*. It is particularly then that we may observe that the NT is written in Greek.

⁵⁷ M. Silva, "Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek" in *The Language of the New Testament*, 223.

⁵⁸ de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 37-38.

⁵⁹ Porter, "Greek of the New Testament," 432.

Parole: Author Background

Following Deissmann's "birthmark" characterization, we suggest that it is to be expected that Jewish writers should use certain terms from the Semitic world, for these are part of their background. But what about the related characterization cited above, i.e., that the Jewish background of certain NT authors hampered their ability to write in Greek? Caragounis, while at times affirming that the Greek of the NT authors is the same Koine used by non-NT authors, also suggests that the Greek of the NT is not a good example of the Greek of the time because the NT was largely written by Jewish authors.⁶⁰ We would suggest that this characterization does not take into account the widespread vitality of the Greek language among first century Jews. This vitality and interaction with the broader Greek world suggests that an author's Jewish background did not equate to inferior Greek, as if any Jew who undertook writing a document in Greek were doomed from the start. Put in terms of *langue* and *parole*, we will propose based on historical evidence that a Jewish author had sufficient access to the *langue*, or grammatical structure of the Greek language, for such a writing to be considered true Greek. Again, differences we observe in relation to non-NT authors is a matter of *parole*: communication situation factors such as authorial and audience background and literary intent.

The multilingual situation in Palestine is well represented by the three languages placed on the cross of Christ: Aramaic,⁶¹ Latin, and Greek. And at Qumran the same three were found. As to a fourth—Hebrew—epigraphic and literary evidence points to its ongoing use at the time of Jesus in certain social strata and perhaps in certain regions.⁶² Specialists are fairly confident that Latin was used mainly by the Romans for official use, while Aramaic was likely Jesus' mother tongue. But what about Greek? To what extent was Greek known? Historical studies have shown that Jews in first-century Palestine and the diaspora had considerable access to Greek and in some cases did not even speak Aramaic, but only Greek.

In the second century BC, the Seleucids had policies for Hellenizing the Jews of Palestine, and by the first century AD "the country was Hellenized to the extent that the usual way of

⁶⁰ Caragounis, 123.

⁶¹ The reference to Hebrew in Luke 23:38 and John 19:20 should be understood as Aramaic.

⁶² J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine," in Porter, *Classic Essays*, 159.

communication between the different population groups can only have been Greek . . .”⁶³ Metzger affirms that the Greek language was “widely understood in Palestine,” especially in Galilee.⁶⁴ Sevenster adds that Greek was known at all levels of Jewish society, not just the upper class.⁶⁵

Textual and archeological evidence supports these claims. NT references suggest that Aramaic and Greek were the two main languages used by Jewish Christians, and that Hebrew was sometimes used. Further, Porter affirms that there have been “a number of papyrus texts (including a number of fragments) found in Palestine written in Greek by Jews.”⁶⁶ These Greek language papyri of the Judean Desert range from commercial to legal to literary. Notable among them are two letters from the early second century AD between the revolutionary Simon Bar Kokhba and his officials, surprisingly written in Greek at the height of Jewish nationalist aspirations. Porter points out that while one might primarily think of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Egyptian finds when it comes to Greek papyri (apparently because of the influence of Deissmann’s writings), the discoveries from Palestine are also significant and instructive as to the vitality of Greek in the Roman East.⁶⁷

What is more, Jewish literary compositions like 1 Esdras and 2 Maccabees are thought to have been originally written in Greek in Palestine.⁶⁸ The writings of the Jewish historian Josephus certainly show the degree of Greek literary learning available to a Jew at that time, and in a linguistic comment he gives details of how his own mastery of Greek pronunciation was limited by his native tongue, and that he had recourse to literary assistants. It can be surmised therefore that any Jew of any social rank who applied himself could learn Greek well. And Rabbinic sources suggest that at least the upper class Jews did indeed teach their children Greek.⁶⁹

Geographically speaking, there is evidence of significant Greek language use in Galilee,

⁶³ G. Mussies, “Languages (Greek),” in D. N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 4* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 202.

⁶⁴ Metzger, “The Language of the New Testament,” 43.

⁶⁵ J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How much Greek could the first Jewish Christians have known?* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 70.

⁶⁶ S. E. Porter, “Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee,” in B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden/New York: Brill, 1994), 138; 123-154.

⁶⁷ Ibid, “Papyri, Palestinian,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 766. See also S. E. Porter, “The Greek Papyri of the Judean Desert and the World of the Roman East,” in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. S. E. Porter and C. A. Evans (RILP 3, JSPSup 26; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997).

⁶⁸ Ibid, “Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee,” 140.

⁶⁹ Sevenster, 65-70 referring to Josephus *Ant.* 20:262-265.

Judea, and of course the Jewish diaspora. The likelihood that Jesus spoke Greek is evidenced by the fact that he came from an area well influenced by Hellenism. Nazareth was on the same trade route as the Greek city Sepphoris (where both Greek and Aramaic were spoken) and near the mostly Gentile region of Decapolis. His trade as carpenter would have put him in Greek language situations, as well as his travels as a teacher. He interacted with diaspora Jews in John's gospel and, according to Josephus, had many Greek followers.⁷⁰ Porter even suggests that five or ten gospel pericopes may have originally been presented in Greek.⁷¹

Caesarea Maritima, built by Herod the Great as a Hellenic town, and one in which Greek was the main language, was the administrative center for Judea. Jews of that town would have necessarily spoken and written Greek, because that was where the Roman administrators operated their base. Other Hellenistic towns in which Jews lived alongside Greek speakers include Joppa, Tiberias, Scythopolis and Marisa.⁷²

Not only were the great majority of these Hellenized towns within a 200 km radius of Jerusalem, but influence of the Greek language even touched Jerusalem itself.⁷³ Sevenster affirms that even Jews in the heartland of Palestine were affected directly by Greek. All official government announcements were in Greek, with Latin appended. Coins were minted in Greek. Synagogue inscriptions are often in Greek, and not just in Hellenized towns. While many of these discovered inscriptions are post-first century, the synagogue at Ophel in Old Jerusalem with its Greek inscription probably dates to the first half of the first century AD.⁷⁴ This shows that even in Jerusalem itself, synagogues were frequented by Greek-speaking Jews in the first century AD. Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions have been found among Greek inscriptions in certain synagogues, testifying again to the multilingual character of the region. Mussies adds that most ossuaries (bone containers) found around Jerusalem are inscribed in Greek, with a minority in Hebrew-Aramaic.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Mussies, 202 cites Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63.

⁷¹ Porter, "Greek of the NT," 433.

⁷² Sevenster, 114.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁵ Mussies, 197-202. He adds that the tomb of the so-called Goliath Family found in the Jericho hills contained coffin inscriptions in both Greek and Hebrew.

Furthermore, Jerusalem was a center for Greek learning, and it is even possible that Paul received training in the language there in his youth. Mussies suggests that even though the Letter of Aristeas concerning the origin of the Septuagint is a fiction, the central premise saying that Jerusalem priests knew Greek is probably true.

As for the Jewish diaspora, i.e., Jews living outside of Palestine, Sevenster asserts that archeological evidence indicates that diaspora Jews used Greek, and for many it was their first language, since they did not know Aramaic and Hebrew at all or very little. Greek must have been spoken in Palestine as well, in order for the Diaspora Jews to have made successful trips to the mother land.⁷⁶ “Pronunciation apart, it seems clear that a Hellenist like Paul would have provoked no comment whether he preached in Tarsus or in Alexandria, in Corinth or in Rome.”⁷⁷ Moulton is asserting that a Greek speaker like Paul, born outside of Palestine, would have had no problem communicating with other Greek speakers in the major cities throughout the Greco-Roman world.

We find another example of diaspora Greek language use recorded in Acts 14. When the crowd at Lystra (Central Anatolia) sees Paul heal a lame man, their exclamations are made in the local Lycaonian language. But up to that point, Paul had apparently been addressing the crowd and interacting with the lame man in Greek. It is possible that during the main period of Paul’s life in which he traveled extensively on his missionary journeys, he may have only rarely spoken his native Aramaic. And Luke and the author of Hebrews may not have even known Aramaic at all.⁷⁸

These evidences for the vitality of Greek language use among Jews in Palestine and in the diaspora help us understand the linguistic background of the NT writers. It is inaccurate to think that Jews in Palestine could not have had access to Greek at the level of *langue* which we have been discussing. Mussies affirms that it should not “come as a surprise that some of the NT authors were able to write excellent Greek.”⁷⁹ And Moulton adds that we should never doubt that the first Jewish Christians could write in a language they knew from childhood, “not as foreigners painfully expressing themselves in an imperfectly known idiom.”⁸⁰ Their education would determine the

⁷⁶ Sevenster, 95.

⁷⁷ Moulton, “New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery,” 64.

⁷⁸ Ibid, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 1: Prolegomena, Third Edition with Corrections and Additions* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 8, 10.

⁷⁹ Mussies, 202.

⁸⁰ Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 1*, 8.

quality of their Greek. In the case of the book of Revelation, for example, it is not necessary to say that there is Semitic influence, because the papyri from Egypt offer similar examples of a disregard for grammatical agreement. The high level of Greek language vitality in the first century at all socioeconomic levels means a greater likelihood that Jews expressing themselves in Greek did not do so in a “hybrid” language.⁸¹

Parole: Audience Background

In addition to Jewish background, another element at the level of *parole* contributing to differences in the Greek of the NT authors from those of their contemporaries concerns the audience to which the authors addressed their writings. One of Deissmann’s primary propositions in *Light from the Ancient East* was that Christianity was a movement of the lower and middle classes.⁸² Although this idea has subsequently been refined to see the Christian movement as including the upper class as well,⁸³ Deissmann’s argument in this vein remains helpful in the discussion of the Greek of the NT authors as it pertains to audience. His proposal encouraged scholars to take into account the socioeconomic diversity of the Christian movement and thus consider the extent to which audience affects *parole*. Again, we are suggesting that NT authors could maintain the same Greek grammatical structure (*langue*) as their non-biblical contemporaries but write distinctively at the level of *parole* because their audiences differed from those of their contemporaries. While a detailed accounting of the social situation of NT audiences (including whether their socio-economic diversity differed significantly from audiences of non-biblical writers)⁸⁴ would require considerable nuancing and is beyond the scope of this chapter, the fact remains that audience affects the type of writing an author chooses yet does not fundamentally change the language used at the level of constituent structure.

⁸¹ Silva, “Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek” in Porter, *Classic Essays*, 223.

⁸² Deissmann, 7.

⁸³ W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Yale, 1983), 52, nuances that the movement extended across social classes, including representatives in the upper class, though not the extreme upper class. Even the idea of socioeconomic class is misleading, argues Meeks, and the early Christian movement is better analyzed from the standpoint of multi-dimensional status. D. W. J. Gill argues from Acts (contra Meeks) that there were even members of the extreme top of the Greco-Roman social scale among early Christians, and that in the eastern provinces these urban elite were in fact instrumental in establishing Christian communities. See “Acts and the Urban Elites” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 117.

⁸⁴ On which see S. Freyne, *The World of the New Testament* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1980), xiv.

Parole: Literary Intent

If the NT authors in general targeted their writings to a broader range of social classes, such a difference in audience would likely affect the type of Greek written. This leads us to another, related area of contribution from Deissmann at the level of the *parole* of the NT authors, that of literary versus non-literary Greek. He classed the papyri finds as “non-literary,” which for Deissmann meant various legal documents, school exercise books, diaries, lists, and the like. Literary texts, on the other hand, were “written for the public and cast in a definite artistic form.”⁸⁵ Deissmann believed that the NT contains both of these types, both “non-literary” and “literary.” For example, he calls all of Paul’s writings non-literary letters, because they were written for the persons to whom they were addressed to be read aloud, and not to the public in general. Blass had isolated the NT as being peculiar Greek, but Deissmann called the NT a monument to the “popular colloquial language” of the time as opposed to the “refined literary language.”⁸⁶

Though one may dispute the ultimate usefulness of the terms “literary” and “non-literary” in this context,⁸⁷ Deissmann’s observations about literary intent help us think about audience situation and language in use. Nearly a century later, Rydbeck has advanced Deissmann’s discussion about proper characterization of the literary intent of the NT authors by arguing that the words “popular” or “vernacular” are not useful. He instead places the NT texts in a contemporary category he calls an *intermediate-level non-literary technical prose of the pre-classicizing Imperial era*. Under this category he includes 1) “papyri of demonstrable linguistic competence” (and he adds that most of the papyri are just that); 2) “popular philosophical literature”; 3) “technical prose writers”; and 4) the NT.⁸⁸

Langue

When we compare the Greek of the NT with the Greek of its time at the level of *langue*, we

⁸⁵ Deissmann, 29, 145.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 62.

⁸⁷ Rydbeck, for example, while appreciating the helpfulness of Deissmann’s comparisons between the papyri and the NT, believes that comparing the NT with spoken Greek was misleading. Deissmann should have said that in general (except some parts of Mark) the Greek of the NT is the same as that of the literary Koine of its time. In L. Rydbeck, “The Language of the New Testament,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.2 (1998): 361-368.

⁸⁸ Rydbeck, “On the Question of Linguistic Levels and the Place of the New Testament in the Contemporary Language Milieu” in Porter, *Classic Essays*, 199.

are now bringing the discussion to the level of the constituent structures of the language (phonology, morphology, syntax) rather than variable factors in the communication situation at the level of the *parole* that we have examined above. We have already suggested in the section on diachrony that changes that took place in the Koine at large after the classical period can also be witnessed in the Greek of the NT. Approaching the question of *langue* from the synchronic angle now, we suggest that the grammatical structure found in the Greek of the NT reflects to a considerable degree that of extra-biblical Greek.

Deissmann is again helpful at the lexicographical level. He estimated that out of nearly 5,000 words in the NT, only about 50 prove to be uniquely biblical. That means the rest come from the Greek of the time.⁸⁹ Once again the papyri have helped us in this area of the uniqueness of biblical lexicography. The noun ἀρχιποίμενος “chief shepherd” from 1 Pet 5:5, for example, was found to identify an Egyptian mummy. Deissmann gives 32 such examples of words formerly thought to be Jewish-Christian inventions that are found in the Greek of the time. He also believes that scholars such as Hermann Cremer exaggerated the extent to which common words received new meanings in the NT.⁹⁰

As to the syntax of NT authors, not only is there significant variety, but Voelz has shown that this diversity of syntax is easily placed in parallel with diversity in extra-biblical writings of the time.⁹¹ Voelz suggests the following syntactical categories with regard to sentential complexity in the NT writings:

1. “very straightforward structure” with few participles (1 John 1-2)
2. “different simple structure,” with some participles before a main verb (Matt 2:11-12)
3. “much higher degree of complexity” with participles in a variety of situations: modifying an object, subject, verb (Luke/Acts; Acts 23:26-30)

⁸⁹ Deissmann, 74.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 107.

⁹¹ J. W. Voelz, “The Greek of the New Testament: its Place within the Context of Hellenistic Greek,” in C. Caragounis, ed., *Greek: A Language in Evolution: essays in honour of Antonios N. Jannaris* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2010), 181-188.

4. “impressive level of complexity” with varied uses of participles, multiple genitive absolutes, multiple relative clauses, and appositional structures (Heb 9:6-10)
5. “variety of infinitive uses” with participles and genitive absolutes (Luke 2:1-7)

After highlighting syntactical variety among the NT authors themselves by use of these five categories, Voelz then goes on to illustrate the same examples of ascending syntactic complexity from non-biblical first-century texts. From a non-biblical letter, Voelz demonstrates a *very straightforward structure*.⁹² From Diodorus Siculus, he shows a structure like Matthew, which he calls a “different simple structure.”⁹³ From another passage of Diodorus, he finds a *much higher degree of complexity*, like the Acts passage shown.⁹⁴ From a satire of Lucian, he notices an *impressive level of complexity*, like in Hebrews.⁹⁵ Another passage from Diodorus resembles Luke’s use of infinitives.⁹⁶ Voelz concludes that NT syntax “is fully congruent with the linguistic usage of other Hellenistic authors,” and its language in general “fully representative” of Hellenistic Greek.⁹⁷

Moving now from syntax to the analysis of entire texts, we find it is also helpful to compare the genres and literary forms of the NT with non-biblical Greek of the time. Genre is a “major literary convention, forming a ‘contract’ between author and reader; it provides a set of expectations for the reader about the author’s intentions, which helps in the construction of the meaning on the page and the reconstruction of the author’s original meaning, as well as in the interpretation and evaluation of the communication contained within the work itself.”⁹⁸ Scholars have found many parallels between the varying genres of the NT works and contemporary texts.

For example, the Gospels can be compared fruitfully to (not to say reduced to) the ancient

⁹² *P. Oxy 744*.

⁹³ *Bibliotheca historica* 2.1.4.6 – 2.1.5.4.

⁹⁴ *Bibliotheca historica* 2.2.1.1 – 2.2.3.1.

⁹⁵ *The Passing of Peregrinus* 19-20.

⁹⁶ *Bibliotheca historica* 2.1.7.7 – 2.1.8.4.

⁹⁷ Voelz, 188, 195.

⁹⁸ R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 255.

bioi,⁹⁹ and their language analysed as a result. This flexible Greco-Roman literary form¹⁰⁰ focused on a particular subject’s life from birth to death (βίος means “life”), particularly his memorable words and remarkable actions, and mostly in prose narrative form. The Gospels show a significant resemblance to these *bioi* of the time with regard to both internal features (e.g., setting, characterization) and external features (e.g., length, types of literary sub-genres used). Votaw, for example, notes parallels and differences between the Gospels and *bioi* such as the *Discourses of Epictetus* by Arrian (c. 125-150 AD) and the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus (c. 217 AD).¹⁰¹

The epistles of the NT have been fruitfully compared with those of the time,¹⁰² such as the parallels between the ancient friendly letter and the Epistle to the Philippians, or the ancient letter of mediation and the letter to Philemon. Besides these similarities in broad letter categories, the NT epistles also display many examples of specific terms common to a broad range of ancient Greek letters. For example, καλῶς ποιήσεις (seen in 3 John 6) “you will do well” or “please” was common in letters of the time as a polite request, as well as ἐρωτῶ σε (found in 2 John 5) “I beseech you.”¹⁰³ And in Paul we find the common βούλομαι γινώσκειν “I want you to know” at the beginning of the letter body, as well as language typical of prayer-wishes of that era. Our second chapter will allow a closer look at such common genre markers found in Philippians.

In conclusion, Horsley’s study of bilingual interference and Silva’s distinction between *langue* and *parole* allow us to nuance the discussion about the degree of influence of Semitic

⁹⁹ Ibid, 258; B. Witherington III, *New Testament History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2001), 20.

¹⁰⁰ For a recent discussion about *bios* and potential parallels with the Gospels, see Justin Marc Smith, *Why βίος? On the Relationship Between Gospel Genre and Implied Audience* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2015).

¹⁰¹ C. W. Votaw, “The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies,” *American Journal of Theology* 19.1 (1915): 45-73. G. W. Bowersock believes that the Gospel material about Jesus gave rise to a narrative form in both Christian and non-Christian circles which he calls “romantic scripture.” But his discussion is less pertinent here because he is comparing the Gospels with later literature, not contemporary. See G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 123, 143.

¹⁰² See, for example, J. L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle* [*Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series*, 2] (Missoula, Montana, Scholars Press, 1975); S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986); J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Good News Studies, 41; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995); H.-J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006); S. E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, eds., *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (PAST 6; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010); E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); and Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016).

¹⁰³ Evans, 99, 108.

elements and author background in our synchronic comparison of the Greek of the NT with that of its time. Semitic influences primarily affected *parole* and not *langue*. And Semitic elements that are present do not qualify the NT as a separate Jewish dialect of Greek that is distinct from the Koine of the time.

1.1.2.2.2 Superior Greek Characterizations

What about the second common type of synchronic characterization of the Greek of the NT we brought up, namely that it is a superior form of language especially fitted to express the theological richness of the apostolic message? Does its theological nature lend credibility to its Greek being superior to other Greek of the time?

Much of this issue has already been addressed in the preceding comments on the significant similarity between the Greek of the NT and that of its time at the level of *langue*. And certainly the fact that diachronic changes in the era of Koine show Greek to be a language descended from more ancient Greek suggests that the Greek of the NT authors is fully a human language. But a third principle, one that we have already cited from modern linguistics, also helps clarify this issue. If languages should be described in terms of adequacy for their users and not superiority over other linguistic forms,¹⁰⁴ the excellent language fallacy does not hold up under examination. These different angles show that the Greek used by the NT authors was a normal human language of its time and was widespread in its use.

1.1.2.2.3 Homogenous “NT Greek” Characterizations

A third type of synchronic characterization mentioned at the beginning of this section involves the terminology used to describe the Greek of the NT authors. The terms “biblical Greek” or “NT Greek” need to be nuanced if there is an underlying assumption that all the writings in the NT canon are essentially the same. Rather than being a matter of over-definition, this kind of nuancing contributes to a proper understanding of the Greek of the NT, as did clarifying that Semitic influence did not ultimately affect *langue* and that the Greek of the NT authors was not more excellent in quality than the Greek of its time.

¹⁰⁴ Sturtevant, 160.

One obvious way to account for differences among NT writings is by comparing the literary genres contained in the canon. With the Gospels we are in a completely different ancient genre than the letters, just as the apocalyptic of Revelation is a different literary world than the narrative of Acts. And even among NT letter types there is significant genre diversity. Add to genre distinctions in idiolect (the language of an individual language speaker influenced by factors such as education and multilingualism), authorial objectives, and audience education, and one has sufficient variables to account for significant differences encountered when reading through the NT in Greek.

For example, when we consider the Gospels together, the Gospel according to Luke stands out because of its denser syntax and greater variety in vocabulary,¹⁰⁵ while the Greek of the Gospel according to Mark seems simpler in comparison on both these counts.¹⁰⁶ This may be accounted for not only by differences in the two authors' educational and linguistic backgrounds, but also in intended audiences. Among the NT letters, Hebrews presents a highly sustained and supported linear argument with greater sentential complexity than most other NT texts, while the author of 1 John appears to value syntactic simplicity to convey his message. Finally, letters like 1 Peter, Jude, and especially 2 Peter present a considerable variety of vocabulary intended for artistic effect,¹⁰⁷ while the Pauline epistles in general exhibit a more familiar register. Again, as with the Gospels, intended audiences must also be considered for these epistles, as well as idiolect. Voelz's article comparing NT syntax with first-century syntax at large already helped us understand syntactic diversity among the NT authors, and many other helpful resources compare the Greek of the NT writers among themselves.¹⁰⁸ The differences they present remind us that "NT Greek" or "biblical Greek" is best understood as *the varied Greek found among authors in the NT canon* and not *the homogenous language demonstrated by the NT authors* as compared to Greek of the same era.

¹⁰⁵ Saïd writes concerning Luke: "La maîtrise de l'écrivain a produit certains des plus beaux passages de la Bible chrétienne et de la littérature universelle, par exemple le récit fameux de l'apparition aux disciples d'Emmaüs (Luc 24, 13-35)" in T. M. Saïd, M. Trédé, A. Le Boulluec, *Histoire de la littérature grecque* (Paris: Quadrige, PUF, 2010), 568.

¹⁰⁶ Vergote comments that in Mark "la parataxe avec *kai* remplace presque complètement l'hypotaxe," 1343.

¹⁰⁷ Moulton and Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 2, 27-28.

¹⁰⁸ See for example R. Penna, "Les lettres de Paul et la tradition paulinienne" in B. Pouderon, E. Norelli, *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne: De Paul apôtre à Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2013); see also Costas, Deissmann, Metzger, Saïd, and Vergote.

Our conclusion from this synchronic study is that the Greek of the NT authors is the Greek of the time, with different factors of the communication situation affecting *parole* and not *langue*. Concerning the NT authors Meillet posits that

les auteurs savaient le grec de leur temps: la comparaison avec les papyrus et les inscriptions montre que ces textes ont été en général rédigés dans le grec courant de l'époque où ils ont été composés et qu'ils fournissent pour l'étude de la grammaire et du vocabulaire de la *koiné* des documents de grande valeur.¹⁰⁹

1.2 The Greek of Philippians

In the following section we will present a brief synchronic overview of the Greek of Philippians as a specific test case of our argument in this chapter. We will suggest that the language of Philippians reflects to a considerable degree the language of its time and will also highlight the areas in which the letter is unique in the first-century context.

1.2.1 The language of Philippians as reflecting to a considerable degree the language of its time

1.2.1.1 Phonology and Morphology

Browning and others note that Koine generally followed the Ionic phonological innovation of -σσ and not the Attic innovation -ττ.¹¹⁰ Paul follows this pattern in 1:16, κηρύσσουσιν “they preach”; 2:11, γλῶσσα “tongue”; 4:9, πράσσετε “put into practice”; 4:18, περισσεύω “I have more than enough.” In Koine morphology, the future form ἐλεύσομαι “I will come” (2:24) replaced εἶμι (the latter of which was a present with a future force).¹¹¹ We also note in Philippians the ongoing tendency from Attic down to Koine to proliferate words with συν + substantive or verb (though the extent of this proliferation in Philippians is surely also related to the message of the letter):¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Meillet, 276.

¹¹⁰ R. Browning, “Von der Koine bis zu den Anfängen des modernen Griechisch,” in Nesselrath, H.-G., ed., *Einleitung in die griechische Philologie (Einleitung in die Altertumsphilologie)* (Stuttgart-Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1997), 157.

¹¹¹ Costas, 64.

¹¹² A statistical accounting of the use of συν in the creation of new words in Christian circles vs. non-Christian circles would be interesting in this regard, but is beyond the realm of this study.

συγκοινωνός (1:7; 4:14) fellow sharer
 συνεργός fellow worker (2:25; 4:3)
 συστρατιώτης fellow soldier (2:25)
 συμμορφιζόμενος fellow sufferer (3:10)
 συμμιμητής fellow imitator (3:17)
 συλλαμβάνω assist (4:3, also found in Dio Chrysostom 1.22)
 συναθλέω contend (4:3)

1.2.1.2 Lexical Semantics

In regard to lexical semantics, some of the key terms that Paul used in Philippians would have been easily recognizable to extra-biblical authors of his time. For example, the verb πολιτεύεσθε “conduct yourselves” (1:27) is used in Dio Chrysostom 3.20. Paul’s oft-repeated key term φρονεῖν “to think,” “to have a mindset” (1:7ff) was known at the time, and Dio Chrysostom 14.20 even uses Paul’s key admonition τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε (2:2).¹¹³ The word μνεῖα “remembrance” or “mention” appearing in Phil 1:3 concerning Paul’s prayer for the Philippians is also found in the context of a short letter from 6 AD in which the author appeals to his reader thus: “If there is any remembrance of my friendship . . .”¹¹⁴ In Phil 3:7-8, the Apostle writes that whatever was previously to his gain (ἄτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη) he now considers loss in order that he might gain Christ (Χριστὸν κερδήσω). We find the same term in a private letter dated from sometime in the second century AD in which a woman appeals to a man for legal help and declares that if they experience a gain in the lawsuit, the profit will be his (ἐὰν δὲ κερτήσομεν ὑμῶν ἐστὶν τὸ πρᾶγμα).¹¹⁵ Paul’s verb μεμύημαι “I have been initiated” (4:12) is used in Dio Chrysostom 4.31, 36.33¹¹⁶ and was a key term in the mystery religions. The expression ἴσα θεῶ (2:6) was well known from Homer well into the Koine period, as the heart of our study will demonstrate in

¹¹³ G. Mussies, *Dio Chrysostom and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 190.

¹¹⁴ εἴ τις ἄρα μνηῖά ἐστιν παρὰ σοὶ τῆς ἐμῆς φιλίας, where μνηῖά = μνεῖά, found in the papyrus P.Nyu.2.18. See K. A. Worp and B. Nielsen, "New Papyri from the New York University Collection: II," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 136 (2001), 137-9 (No. 18).

¹¹⁵ Where κερτήσομεν = κερδήσωμεν. See P.Mich.8.507 in R. S. Bagnall and R. Cribiore, with contributions by E. Ahtaridis, *Women’s Letters from Ancient Egypt 300 BC-AD 800* (Grand Rapids: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

¹¹⁶ *Idem*, 193.

ensuing chapters. Costas suggests that παρακαλῶ (4:2) with the meaning “entreat” increased in the Koine period.¹¹⁷

Another documented Koine tendency present in Philippians is Paul’s use of the relative ὅστις. In pre-Koine usage, ὅστις replaced an indefinite antecedent or was used to refer to an entity or idea when there was no antecedent given. When a definite referent was present, ὅς was used. However, with time Koine used ὅστις even when a definite referent was present in the context.¹¹⁸ Phil 4:2-3 appears to be just such a Koine usage: ὅστις is used even though there is a definite referent in the context (in this case, αὐταῖς, which refers to Εὐδοσίαν and Συντύχην):

Εὐδοσίαν παρακαλῶ καὶ Συντύχην παρακαλῶ τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ. ναὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε σύζυγε, συλλαμβάνου αὐταῖς, **αἴτινες** ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς.

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

1.2.1.3 Syntax

Philippians has several instances of typical Koine hypotaxis (subordinating one clause to another), with subordinates of the substantival (2:2), adjectival (2:6) and adverbial variety (2:27). We may note in Koine a multiplication of syntactic functions for the particle ἵνα,¹¹⁹ which Paul can use to introduce a purpose clause (1:10, 1:26, 2:27), as well as a subordinate clause in apposition to a substantive (1:9, 2:2).

¹¹⁷ Costas, 70.

¹¹⁸ Idem, 71. For further descriptions of the difference between the two pronouns, see Smyth, 564; P. Létourneau, *Initiation au grec du Nouveau Testament* (Montreal, Québec: Médiapaul, 2010) 242; D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 344. For other occurrences of ὅστις in Philippians, see 1:28 (ἥτις) and 2:20 (ὅστις).

¹¹⁹ Caragounis, *The Development of Greek*, 121.

We witness in Philippians the paratactic structure μέν . . . δέ that continued to be common in the Koine period:

Τινὲς **μὲν** καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν,
τινὲς **δὲ** καὶ δι' εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν· (1:15)

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry,
but others out of goodwill.

οἱ **μὲν** ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαὶν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι,
οἱ **δὲ** ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν (1:16-17)

The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.
The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition.

ἐν δέ, τὰ **μὲν** ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος
τοῖς **δὲ** ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος,
κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.
(3:13-14)

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind
and straining toward what is ahead,
I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward
in Christ Jesus.

An additional feature of these three paratactic μέν . . . δέ structures is Paul's repetition of certain sounds for persuasive effect in the contrasts he presents. Each gives evidence of careful attention to the oral features of the letter as it was to be read aloud (with sound repetition in italics):¹²⁰

¹²⁰ We will discuss further elements of rhetorical repetition in Philippians further on in chapter 7.

*Τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ . . .
τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι' εὐδοκίαν . . .*

*οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης . . .
οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας . . .*

*ἔν δέ, τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος . . .
τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος . . .*

Besides the μὲν . . . δέ structure, we also observe the common intercalation of a prepositional phrase or other element between a substantive and its article:

*Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε
τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν (4:10)*

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me.

ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀδελφοί (4:21)

The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings.

One might also point out the lack of an optative verb¹²¹ in the prayer-wish of 1:2 as indicative of the decrease in that mood form in the time period:¹²²

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:2)

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These multiple syntactic phenomena observed in Philippians show that Paul's language reflects to a considerable degree that of its time.

¹²¹ See section 1.1.2.1 for further details on the decline of the optative.

¹²² Cf. 1 Pet 1:2 and 2 Pet 1:2, which retain the optative.

1.2.1.4 Genre

Moving now from linguistic to literary categories in our goal to understand Philippians in its milieu, let us first examine the notion of genre (i.e., socially-agreed upon conventions of a written work). Many genre elements in the letter to Philippians are easily situated among the Greek letters of the time, which contained a prescribed type of opening, body, and closing.¹²³ Each of these sections had specific terms that were expected. In other words, the elements we highlight below are common to many different kinds of letters of the time according to specialists in ancient epistolography.¹²⁴ We will first give the typical element, and then an example from Philippians:

A. Opening

possible elements:

author(s) (1:1)

Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος

Paul and Timothy

status of author(s)

δοῦλοι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

servants of Christ Jesus

recipient(s) (1:1)

description of recipient(s)

πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons

greetings¹²⁵ (1:2)

¹²³ Here we are not arguing for a three-part letter model for the Pauline epistles (versus four or five parts when the thanksgiving and parenesis sections are added), but rather that Philippians has three recognizable parts that correspond to ancient Greco-Roman letters. For a discussion, see “Pauline Epistolography: An Introduction” in Porter and Adams, 3.

¹²⁴ Credit to Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, as well as to D. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), for the basic elements of this model.

¹²⁵ This is where NT letters will often diverge from the extra-biblical, with words like χάρις (from Christian influence) and εἰρήνη (from Jewish influence). P. J. Achtemeier, J. B. Green, and M. Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 279.

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

prayer wish or thanksgiving to god(s) (1:3)

Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ μνησίᾳ ὑμῶν
I thank my God every time I remember you

B. Body

possible elements:

declaration of thankfulness/joy for the recipient(s) (1:4-5)

πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος, ἐπὶ τῇ
κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν
In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel
from the first day until now

calling divinity as witness (1:8)

μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεός, ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

transitional phrase toward the center of the body (1:12)

Γινώσκεις δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι¹²⁶
I want you to know

autobiographical comments (1:12-14)

ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν
that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel

comments about author's presence and absence (1:27, 2:12)¹²⁷

εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς εἴτε ἀπὼν ἀκούω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν
whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence

¹²⁶ White, 3, gives many other examples of these transition formulae.

¹²⁷ Klauck, 319

requests (4:3)

ἔρωτῶ σέ¹²⁸

I ask you

health issues (2:26-27)

διότι ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἠσθένησεν. καὶ γὰρ ἠσθένησεν παραπλήσιον θανάτῳ·

because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died

practical aspects (4:14)

καλῶς ἐποιήσατε¹²⁹

it was good of you

paraenesis: exhortations/warnings/examples

See positive exhortations (1:27-2:4, 12-18; 3:1; 4:1, 4-8); warning (3:2); autobiographical examples (1:12-26; 3:4-17), Christ example (2:5-11), negative examples (3:18-19; 4:9)¹³⁰

travel (1:26; 2:19-30)

Ἐλπίζω δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Τιμόθεον ταχέως πέμψαι ὑμῖν

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon

comment about letter writing (3:1)

τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές.

It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

C. Closing

possible elements:

last comments (doxology, 4:20)

τῷ δὲ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ ἡμῶν ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

¹²⁸ Cf. 2 John 5.

¹²⁹ Cf. 3 John 6.

¹³⁰ Aune, 210.

greetings

Author greets recipient

author asks recipients to greet someone on their behalf (4:21)

Ἀσπάσασθε πάντα ἅγιον ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus.

someone greets you (4:21-22)

ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἀδελφοί. ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι, μάλιστα δὲ οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας.

The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

The preceding outline has juxtaposed typical epistolary elements of the time detailed by specialists like Klauck, Aune, and White with actual textual examples from Philippians. That these textual elements place Philippians squarely in the Hellenistic letter genre is undeniable, including employment of the exact Greek terms used in extra-biblical letters of the time. This shows to what extent the language of Philippians is the same as that of its time.

1.2.1.5 Register

Register considers the way in which levels of formality in a communication situation affect language use (e.g., political speeches, academic settings, casual friendly conversation, family language). Register can be more succinctly defined as “what a person is speaking, determined by what he is doing at the time.”¹³¹ A description of register takes into account such factors as social class, relationship between author and recipients, and physical setting.

Deissmann's emphasis on the Christian movement as a phenomenon of the lower classes, along with Meeks' more recent appreciation for upper class elements, have helped biblical interpreters understand the potential class diversity of a given NT audience. We know from the background story of the Philippian church's founding that at least one businesswoman, Lydia, was

¹³¹ M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 110.

part of the assembly (Acts 16). Her ability to house Paul and his companions likely testifies to her economic status. While extensive internal evidence from the writing itself is lacking, if the Philippian audience displayed the same traits of socioeconomic diversity that have been suggested for the NT movement in general, it might be worthwhile to consider cautiously this factor in the language register Paul used.

A second factor that can be brought into consideration in determining the language register of the Epistle to the Philippians is the relationship between Paul and his recipients at Philippi. We know that he is writing to a church which he and his colleagues themselves started (3:17, cf. Acts 16),¹³² and that the assembly was concerned enough about him to send him Epaphroditus (2:25) and to assist him financially (4:14-18). It is likely that this relationship affected the tone of the letter.

A third factor to consider regarding register is the relationship between language use and the physical setting of the first Christian assemblies. Luke recounts how early Christians would meet in the temple and would break bread in private houses (Acts 2:46, 5:42). R. Krautheimer suggests that the earliest Christian meetings up to the year 150 were centered around a meal in an upper room of a home which was outfitted for dining.¹³³ The meal was the focal point of the meeting and furnished the context for the formal or informal communication of the apostolic teaching. Indeed, it appears from the description in Acts 16:15 and especially 16:40 that Lydia's house was the first site of a Christian gathering in Philippi.¹³⁴ It is possible that the house church settings of the earliest Christians, i.e., a familiar setting largely reserved for family life, affected the language register of the apostolic correspondence which would be read in such contexts.¹³⁵

¹³² Paul went to Philippi to preach the gospel with Silas, Timothy, and Luke on his second missionary journey, sometime between 49 and 52. See Chapter 2 for more details on the setting of Philippians.

¹³³ R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 24. See also E. Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London: T & T Clark, 2015).

¹³⁴ B. Blue, "Acts and the House Church," in *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, 186.

¹³⁵ We are not aware of any study on the relationship between the house church setting and language register of oral or written forms of early church instruction. For more on house churches from other angles, see also R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (rev. ed., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994); L. Chamberland, "Le rôle des familles dans l'expansion du Christianisme au cours des deux premiers siècles: une étude socio-historique," Thesis (M. A.), Université Laval, 2000; and P. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

One might thus cautiously argue that the existence of a socially stratified audience at Roman Philippi¹³⁶ that enjoyed a personal trust relationship with the Apostle and gathered in the typical social setting of the house-church would elicit a language register targeting neither the socially elite exclusively nor the lower class. The register adopted by the Apostle would present syntactic and semantic elements of a sufficient complexity to challenge and please the ear, as the letter was read aloud in homes, but of an accessibility that would not inhibit clear comprehension by all. As we consider the question of how the language of Philippians fits into its first century linguistic milieu, the foregoing description of the register dynamics in the Epistle to the Philippians fits well with the register described in Aune's¹³⁷ "documentary" (i.e., non-literary, private) Greek letter more so than either the "official" letter or the published "literary" letter.¹³⁸ In this regard one may cite the way that Paul freely emphasizes the warm relationship he enjoyed with his readers:

I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel (1:4-5)

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart (1:7)

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus (1:9)

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you (2:19)

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you had been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it (4:10)

"Documentary/non-literary" is an acceptable term for Philippians, if by these terms we intend to refer to its register and genre features rather than its adequacy as a piece of written communication. We will have occasion to touch upon the question of the genre of Philippians more extensively in the next chapter.

¹³⁶ If what has been posited for the NT audiences by Meeks and others applies to Philippi.

¹³⁷ Aune, 162.

¹³⁸ As Achtemeier et al (278) concludes, adding that the unusual length of the Epistle to the Philippians can then be explained in terms of its didactic content.

1.2.1.6 Rhetorical Notions

Scholars have pointed out that though Paul seemingly eschews rhetorical techniques in his writing, he nonetheless makes use of such persuasive means known at the time (an ironic procedure in itself recognized as rhetorical), without necessarily following strict structures or having been extensively trained therein. Three categories drawn from the persuasive techniques of the time are helpful in understanding Philippians.

First, Hansen has classified the letter as **deliberative**¹³⁹ to the extent that it essentially aims to recommend one course of action and argue against another in its call to unity, for instance:¹⁴⁰

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord (4:2)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (2:1-5)

Second, **ethos** in ancient persuasion theory is an accounting of the moral qualities of the speaker, of which Paul shows evidence particularly in 3:4-8ff:

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless (κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν

¹³⁹ The other two ancient speech types being judicial (judgment of a past action) and epideictic (praise/blame).

¹⁴⁰ G. W. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 12.

νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος). But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ . . .

Third, **pathos** is authorial awareness of how an audience could be motivated, and Paul also demonstrates considerable employment of this tool (1:8, 1:30, 2:17, 2:20, 2:26, 3:18).¹⁴¹ Here are two examples of Paul's language highlighting his emotions and a third example of his personal sacrifice for his readers:

μάρτυς γάρ μου ὁ θεός, ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (1:8)

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus

πολλοὶ γὰρ περιπατοῦσιν οὕς πολλάκις ἔλεγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω, τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:18)

For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ

ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν (2:17)

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you

Hansen believes that attempts at imposing upon the letter a known rhetorical structure, however (locating the exordium, narratio, propositio, partitio, probatio, and peroratio), have been contradictory and less helpful.¹⁴² Nonetheless, the scholarly discussion has been extensive enough to show that by virtue of its rhetorical features, Philippians is well situated in its first-century milieu. We would agree with Hansen that Philippians exhibits persuasive techniques as seen above,

¹⁴¹ J. Bailey and L. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 31.

¹⁴² Hansen, 14.

but that outlining a known rhetorical structure in the progression of the letter is much less obvious.¹⁴³

1.2.2 The language of Philippians as unique in its time period in certain aspects

In the previous sections we have argued that the language of Philippians reflects to a considerable degree the language of its time as regards phonology and morphology, lexical semantics, syntax, letter genre, register, and rhetoric. But there are also some unique features in the language of Philippians in the broader context of first-century Greek.

1.2.2.1 Unique elements in lexical semantics

Most scholars discussing the type of Greek found in the NT point out that there are indeed lexical items that already existed but whose meaning was shaped by the Christian experience and/or the use of the LXX as Scripture.¹⁴⁴ Among those items in Philippians we find the following:

ἐπίσκοπος overseer (1:1)
διάκονος deacon (1:1)
εὐαγγέλιον gospel (1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27; 2:22; 4:15)
ἡμέρα day (of Christ) (1:10; 2:16)
χάρις grace (1:2, 7; 4:23)
ἀδελφός brother/sister (1:12, 14; 2:25; 3:1; 3:13; 4:1)
ἐν Χριστῷ in Christ (1:13, 26, 3:3; 4:7, 19)
τὸ ὄνομα name (2:9-10)
leitourgós minister (2:25)
leitourgía minister (2:30)
λατρεύοντες servants (3:3)
ἐκκλησία Christian assembly (3:6)
νόμος law (3:6)
δικαιοσύνη righteousness (3:6, 9)
κοινωνία partnership (1:5, 3:10)
βίβλος ζωῆς book of life (4:4)

1.2.2.2 Unusual letter length

¹⁴³ Furthermore, one could argue, as Weima most recently does, that epistolary analysis of Paul's letters (see discussion on Genre above) is ultimately more fruitful than rhetorical analysis in that clear parallels between Pauline and Greco-Roman letters are more easily established for the former than for the latter.

¹⁴⁴ Voelz, 179.

As mentioned above, a first-century hearer of Philippians would have found many of its letter traits familiar, but the longer length would have likely stood out as unusual to those not familiar with the Apostle's didactic intent. J. T. Fitzgerald highlights the relationship between Paul's purposes and length of his letters:

The mixed character of Paul's letters is due not only to their length and complexity but also to the fact that the apostle invariably writes with more than one purpose in mind. Theorists, by contrast, were concerned primarily with the identification of simple letters written for a single purpose. In addition, Paul's letters indicate that he was a skilled epistolographer fully capable of combining in one letter a wide variety of styles.¹⁴⁵

One might thus propose for Philippians that the letter is longer than was typical for what we will term a letter of friendship (on which see ch. 2) because Paul did not set out to limit himself to that genre alone, but also sought to exhort and instruct his readers in the faith.

1.2.2.3 Traits of the author

Sociolinguists refer to unique traits of an individual speaker of a given language as *idiolect*. Features of idiolect include individual ways of pronouncing a language, patterns of vocabulary use, and grammatical tendencies. Idiolect as language at the level of an individual speaker is helpfully compared with the more familiar notion of *dialect*, which refers to the linguistic characteristics particular to a specific group of speakers, whether a region or a social subset. Of course, it is a given that two authors writing in the same language will differ considerably because of their language background, education, writing style, personality, and worldview. But in a discussion of the relationship of Philippians to its contemporary language, Paul's idiolect is nonetheless a helpful factor to consider. The uniqueness of the man and his experiences certainly are factors in setting the language of the letter to the Philippians apart in its literary milieu.

¹⁴⁵ J. T. Fitzgerald, "Philippians as a 'Letter of Friendship,'" in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech*, edited by J. T. Fitzgerald (Novum Testamentum Supplements 82, Leiden: Brill, 1996), 142.

Some believe that Paul's mother tongue was Aramaic,¹⁴⁶ while others suggest that it was Greek.¹⁴⁷ In either case, most believe that he had a familiarity with Greek from a young age.¹⁴⁸ Penna points out that Paul was not used to writing ("See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!" (Gal 6:11); "I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way" (2 Cor 11:6)). His Pharisaic education would have trained him to read and report orally, not particularly to write extensively.¹⁴⁹ While he would have learned at Tarsus, and then at Jerusalem, at least the basics of rhetorical oratory,¹⁵⁰ the Apostle did not write to show his rhetorical abilities,¹⁵¹ and his letters resist easy epistolary classification. Nonetheless it is clear that his writings are real letters addressed to actual people as substitutes for an in-person exchange, in the style of familiar preaching.¹⁵² His letters in general are longer than what one would have expected in the first century AD, betraying his didactic intent and distinctive temperament.¹⁵³ Though he defies simple categorization at the level of rhetoric and genre, Baslez is able to affirm that

le grec de Saül est celui des gens cultivés de son temps . . . la langue des gens d'affaires, plutôt que celle des philosophes et des rhéteurs: c'est dans ce registre qu'il puisera des noms pour les institutions de l'église nouvelle, tel celui d'*épiscopus* (« évêque »), qui appartenait au vocabulaire administratif; c'est ce milieu qui lui inspirera volontiers images et comparaisons . . . l'apprentissage de la langue semble avoir bien réussi dans le cas de Saül, car aucun puriste ne lui reprochera jamais, même à Athènes, ni fautes de grec, ni atticisme affecté – trait fréquent de parvenu.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁶ D. A. Carson et al, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 318.

¹⁴⁷ S. Légasse, "Paul et l'universalisme chrétien," in J.-M. Mayeur, *Histoire du christianisme*, Tome 1: *Le Nouveau Peuple* (Paris: Desclée-Fayard, 1990), 149.

¹⁴⁸ Légasse, 99.

¹⁴⁹ R. Penna, "Les lettres de Paul et la tradition paulinienne," 283.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 292.

¹⁵¹ While it is not impossible that Paul's downplaying of his own rhetorical abilities was in itself a conscious persuasive strategy of feigned modesty, the observations here of both Penna (that Paul's training was largely Pharisaical and not Greco-Roman in background) and Baslez (that Paul wrote at the level of businessmen of the time and not of rhetors) would cast some doubt upon this idea.

¹⁵² Légasse, 149-150.

¹⁵³ Penna, 287.

¹⁵⁴ M.-F. Baslez, *Saint Paul* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 40-41.

If it is true that Paul's letters are the window on his personality, then Philippians is a foremost example, in which we see him as:¹⁵⁵ passionate,¹⁵⁶ confrontational,¹⁵⁷ transparent,¹⁵⁸ earthy,¹⁵⁹ ambitious,¹⁶⁰ and joyful.¹⁶¹ All of these traits are fuelled by the sense of wonder he feels at “being laid hold of” (κατελήμφθην)¹⁶² by the one whose mission he had first persecuted, then proclaimed, and eventually died for. The finest summary of his essential worldview from Philippians, in an epistle so concerned with training his hearers to think about life as he himself does, is the carefully balanced line at 1:21:

ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

¹⁵⁵ Achtemeier (391) notes that Philippians “is by turns irenic, autobiographical, and polemical. It reveals Paul in all his multidimensional reality, by turns stern teacher, beloved friend, and personal confidant. It gives us perhaps our most intimate glimpse at the apostle to the Gentiles.”

¹⁵⁶ Phil 1:8: “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus” (μάρτυς γὰρ μου ὁ θεός, ὡς ἐπιποθῶ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐν σπλάγγνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ).

¹⁵⁷ Phil 3:2: “Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh” (Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν). One notes the persuasive effect of the repetition of the imperative.

¹⁵⁸ Phil 1:22: “If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!” (εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου—καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω).

¹⁵⁹ Phil 3:8: “What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω).

¹⁶⁰ Phil 3:13-14: “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατελιφέναι· ἐν δέ, τὰ μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος, κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).

¹⁶¹ Phil 1:18: “But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice” (τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω· ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι); 2:2: “Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες, σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες); 3:1: “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord!” (Τὸ λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ); 4:1: “Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends” (ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι, χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου, οὕτως στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ, ἀγαπητοί); 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἐρῶ, χαίρετε); 4:10: “I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it” (Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε ἡκαιρεῖσθε δέ).

¹⁶² Phil 3:12.

1.2.3 Conclusion on the Greek of Philippians

The language of Philippians reflects to a considerable degree the language of the time in its phonology, morphology, lexical semantics, and syntax. It is also at home in terms of its genre, register, and the rhetorical notions exploited by the author.

The language of Philippians is, however, unique in its time period in certain aspects of its lexical semantics, owing to Jewish cultural influence and Christian theology. Secondly, the letter's length would have surprised audiences who expected a shorter missive given the letter genre with which it has affinities. Lastly, its language would have stood out because of the unique combination of traits of its author. We do not believe that these uniquenesses should be situated at the level of *langue*. Thus our survey of the language of Philippians in its first-century context suggests that its Greek can be legitimately considered an example of the Greek of its time.

This chapter has examined the Greek of the NT writers diachronically (language use through time) and then synchronically (language use at a given point in time). We observed that though some inaccurate characterizations have appeared in the literature, Deissmann and his followers rightly situated the Greek of the NT authors both with regard to the historical progression of the language and in relation to the Greek of the first century AD. A more specific study of some of the linguistic features of Philippians confirmed the proposal that the NT writings reflect to a considerable degree the language of their time. While communication situation factors at the level of *parole* account for differences observed, they do not ultimately affect the *langue* of the NT authors.

This more nuanced characterization of the nature of the Greek of the NT authors sets the stage for a more thorough contextual understanding of the specific passage in Philippians that we will examine and also validates an approach by which we will compare an expression in Philippians with occurrences of the same expression in the wider literature. Before we proceed to that lexical study, we will first turn to an exposition of the background features of the Epistle to the Philippians generally and Phil 2:6-11 particularly.

Chapter 2: Introduction to the Epistle to the Philippians and the Carmen Christi

2.1 Introduction

The Epistle to the Philippians is noteworthy among the Pauline correspondence for its joyful tone and the warm autobiographical approach adopted by its author, the Apostle Paul. Paul probably writes from prison in Rome at the beginning of the sixties AD. While many Pauline epistles were occasioned by doctrinal or community conflict, such tensions as can be detected in Philippians are relatively minimal.

The author is instead occupied with the progress of the gospel through his life and those of his readers—a progress assured by God himself (1:6; 2:13). This progress is presented as a race, and readers ancient and modern are encouraged to participate in the gospel adventure with unselfish enthusiasm by the indwelling power of the living Christ.

2.2 Background Issues to the Epistle

2.2.1 Author and Authenticity

That Paul along with Timothy is the author of the letter, as suggested in 1:1, has not been seriously contested by modern authors. One exception is F. C. Bauer, who in the 1840s found what he judged to be un-Pauline elements in repetitiveness and rhetoric, as well as an uncharacteristic reception of money for ministry. These arguments have not been retained by the majority, for the style of the writing as well as the circumstances behind it have convinced most that Paul is the author.¹⁶³ Hawthorne documents the same conviction among Church Fathers:

Polycarp of Smyrna (d. *ca.* AD 155) addresses himself to the Philippians and directly mentions Paul as having written them (3.2). Irenaeus (d. *ca.* AD 200), Clement of Alexandria (d. *ca.* AD 215), Tertullian (d. *ca.* AD 225) and the later Fathers not only quote from Philippians, but assign it to Paul as well. Philippians appears in the oldest extant lists of NT writings—the Muratorian Canon (later

¹⁶³ P. T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 10.

second century) and the special canon of Marcion (d. *ca.* AD 160). There apparently never was a question in the minds of the Fathers of the Church as to the canonical authority of Philippians or about its authorship.¹⁶⁴

Thus we can safely accept Pauline authorship for the purposes of this study.

2.2.2 Philippi

The Philippi to which Paul and his companions brought the message about Jesus Christ in 50/51 AD had already known its share of significant changes over the centuries.¹⁶⁵ While various tribes had already inhabited the area earlier, in 360/359 BC a group of colonists from the island of Thasos led by a certain Kallistratos founded a settlement they called Krenides. Perceiving the threat of Thracian invaders, in 356 BC the settlers from Thasos appealed for help to King Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great.¹⁶⁶ Philip obliged, being drawn to the local gold mines, from which he was able to mint coins to pay his mercenaries, eventually exhausting the supply nearest the city. Also of interest was the fertile land and strategic placement along the road eventually called the Egnatian Way. As to the city itself, Philip renamed the settlement Philippi, building a theater and fortifications and sending more settlers. When Aemilius Paulus defeated and divided up Macedonia into four regions in 167 BC, Rome's control of Philippi became a valuable venue for contact with the East.¹⁶⁷

A battle on Philippi's western plain in October of 42 BC saw Mark Antony and Octavian defeat Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius.¹⁶⁸ At that point Philippi became a Roman colony, further peopled with an influx of army veterans, with Roman municipal law as well as citizenship obtaining for a portion of the population. Roman military veterans received squares of land to farm,

¹⁶⁴ G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (edition revised by R. P. Martin, Grand Rapids: Thomas Nelson, 2004), xxviii. For the question of whether Paul himself wrote the material found in 2:6-11, see our section 2.5.1.

¹⁶⁵ For a consideration of Philippi from an archeological perspective, see M. Sève, "De la naissance à la mort d'une ville: Philippi en Macédoine (IV^e siècle av. J.-C. – VII^e siècle ap. J.-C.)," *Histoire urbaine*, n° 1, June 2000, p. 187–204. Sève divides the urban history of Philippi into three periods: the first few centuries after its foundation by Philip II in 356 B.C., the period of the Roman colony (from 42 B.C.) which Paul visited, and the paleo-Christian period from the fourth to seventh centuries A.D., which saw the erection of various church edifices.

¹⁶⁶ C. Koukouli-Chrysantaki, "Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis," in *Philippi at the Time of Paul and After His Death*, eds. C. Bakirtzis and H. Koester (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 5-6.

¹⁶⁷ P. Oakes, *From People to Letter*, SNTS Monograph Series 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12.

¹⁶⁸ C. Koukouli-Chrysantaki, 8.

further affecting the character of a historically Greek-speaking town. Little more than a decade after Antony and Octavian's victory over Brutus, Octavian defeated his former ally Antony at Actium. Octavian, now as Roman emperor, refounded Philippi, apparently in an effort to erase the memory of Antony's connection to the colony and to present himself in the public record as the sole victor a decade previous.¹⁶⁹ This refounding further solidified Philippi's Roman status politically.

We cannot say exactly how many veterans were settled in Philippi in 42 and 31 BC (500-3,000 altogether?), but these former soldiers may have made up a quarter of the total population of Philippi¹⁷⁰ or even less. The majority was still Greek and non-citizens.¹⁷¹ If this makeup also represents that of the church in Philippi to whom Paul would later write, then Phil 3:20's reference to the Philippian Christians' "citizenship in heaven" is less likely to be an allusion to Roman citizenship than has sometimes been thought.

These estimations about the demographics of Philippi do not undermine but rather nuance its Roman character, which was disproportionate to the number of Roman settlers. Judging by Roman colonization in other areas, settled veterans would have been locked into an embittered relationship with the indigenous landowners they had dispossessed, the latter of whom would have been forced to move to the center of the town into the service industry, if they did not leave the area altogether. Since land ownership was a key element to holding office and thereby influencing the ideology of the day, Roman conceptions of social status trickled down to the Greek majority with time.¹⁷² Thus Philippi's Roman character on the political level also led to changes in social values that may indeed be reflected in Paul's address to the Philippians in the second half of the first century AD.

We have mentioned Octavian's desire to rewrite Philippian history to minimize the memory of Antony. He also did so to promote his own image among colonies like Philippi. Octavian (or Augustus, as he would be named in 27 BC) minted coins connecting himself with the goddess Victoria in order to emphasize his role in the victory at Philippi. Actions like these served to

¹⁶⁹ J. H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum*, SNTSMS 132 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁷¹ Oakes, 54.

¹⁷² Hellerman, 71.

publicize his dominant role in the new emerging empire. Inscriptions found at Philippi dating from after Octavian's refounding show several monuments to the emperor or the imperial family. This suggests that Octavian succeeded in establishing a special relationship of honor between Philippi and the succession of Roman emperors.¹⁷³

Though the first-century makeup of Philippi included Greeks, Thracians, and Romans, the honorific relationship Augustus had cultivated in the city, along with the influence of the Roman landowners, proved fertile ground for the significant development of the emperor cult.¹⁷⁴ The veneration of the emperor as a figure connected with divinity was both public and collective, acting as a social bond reinforcing political structures. Hellerman points out three particular ways this reinforcing was accomplished. First, surviving calendars record ten different annual festivals highlighting either Augustus himself or one of his successors and their families. These festivals were a matter of public demonstration in which residents paraded in order of social rank. Second, from tombstones we learn of the special public honor ascribed to Roman officials charged with the affairs of the emperor cult. Third, emperor veneration was reinforced through the geographic layout of the city. A temple devoted to the emperor cult was built next to the forum, i.e., the political center in the middle of the city. The placement of this temple contrasts with other places of worship outside the city center (such as that to Silvanus) or outside the city itself (such as the cult to the Thracian Horseman on a local mountain, or the Jewish gathering outside the gates cited in Acts 16:13).¹⁷⁵ In our last chapter we will consider the ways in which emperor veneration and its connection with social status may have influenced Paul's presentation of Jesus Christ in 2:6-11.

Further, there is evidence to suggest a significant preoccupation with public honor among both elite and non-elite at Philippi. The disproportionate number of honorific inscriptions found at Philippi versus other centers in the eastern empire gives the impression that publicizing one's achievements was of particular importance there. Inscriptions found in the vicinity of the forum and marketplace at Philippi show that among the elite there was a great interest to make known one's contribution to the military and civic well-being of the colony. Hellerman suggests that the

¹⁷³ Ibid, 68.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 80, following L. Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

¹⁷⁵ Hellerman, 81-87.

Republic's old practice of *cursus honorum* ("race of honors") was replicated to a high degree at Philippi.¹⁷⁶

The *cursus honorum* originally marked a series of honors for civic contribution set out for the senatorial class in the period of the Roman Republic. Increasing prestige accompanied the passage from quaestor to aedile to praetor to consul to censor, and each office had specific accessibility restrictions. Though modified in the transition to the Empire, the tradition of *cursus honorum* survived and was applied in various forms at different levels of society. Inscriptions at Philippi suggest that even the non-elite had great concern for public recognition within their various spheres of influence. This was true for those distinguishing themselves through offices held in voluntary associations such as cults to Isis or Sylvanus. Based on the significant inscriptional evidence, Hellerman believes that at Philippi "everyone who could scrape together the resources necessary to erect an inscription of some kind apparently felt the need to publicly proclaim his achievements."¹⁷⁷ Beyond individual social recognition for those honored, these contributions served to reinforce what was considered virtuous behavior for the wellbeing of the greater population. In our consideration of Paul's exhortation to the assembly of Christians in Phil 2, we will consider the implications of this widespread concern for publicizing personal achievements contributing to the civic and religious life of the colony.

2.2.3 Paul's Contact with Philippi and the Philippian Church

Around 50/51 AD Paul's night vision of a Macedonian man calling for gospel assistance led him to leave Troas in what is modern-day Turkey to cross the Aegean. After arriving in Neapolis in what is modern-day northern Greece, Paul and his companions walked the Egnatian Way for about 15 kilometers to Philippi, which Luke identifies as "the leading city of that district of Macedonia" (according to Acts 16:12). After some days inside Philippi, the men left the gate and went to the river, finding an audience of women, including a prominent businesswoman named Lydia (Acts 16:14). This first attempt at Christian evangelization in that region succeeded, as Lydia embraced Paul's message and received the missionaries into her home.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 51.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 109.

Trouble ensued, however, when Paul ruined a well functioning fortune-telling business by casting out an obnoxious spirit from a slave girl. Indignant, her owners brought Paul and Silas before the local authorities and had them beaten and imprisoned. The disarray brought about by a strong earthquake around midnight had the jailer ready to take his own life, when Paul intervened with the gospel message, and yet another family unit believed. An interesting cultural note is added by Luke at this point, who relates that Paul insisted on a formal escort out of the prison, in light of his ignored Roman citizenship.¹⁷⁸ After returning to Lydia's home one more time, Paul and his companions left the city for Thessalonica to continue what has become known as Paul's second missionary journey.

Regardless of which location one prefers for Paul's writing of the letter (on which see the next section), it is worthwhile to note that not much more than 10 years could have elapsed between the time that Paul met Lydia and wrote Philippians. In the space of those 10 years or less, the Philippians had sent at least four gifts: first when Paul left the area after being thrown out of Philippi, twice when he was in Thessalonica, and then again when Epaphroditus brought Paul a gift during his incarceration. They believed in Paul's gospel efforts enough to invest in his ministry several times, and the letter makes clear that Paul treasured their partnership with him. Besides the gifts, it is quite possible that Paul visited Philippi at least two other times after his initial evangelization (based on Acts 20:1-2, 6, which mentions Paul's travel through Macedonia to encourage the people there, as well as his departure from Philippi after an intervening three months in Greece). Thus beyond the Philippians' financial contributions, the Apostle's visits served to further cement the bonds of affection between them that are so evident in the letter.

2.2.4 Date and Provenance

But when and where did Paul write this friendly letter of thanks? Three possibilities have been put forward in light of the fact that the Apostle appears to be in prison: Caesarea, Rome, and Ephesus.

¹⁷⁸ For a detailed explanation of Paul's trial and imprisonment in Philippi and the timing of his claim to Roman citizenship, see B. Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 115-134.

Caesarea and Rome are of interest, because Acts mentions Paul's imprisonments in those two places (Acts 23:33, 24:27, 28:16). Of these two possibilities, Rome fits well with the mention of the Praetorium (1:13), Caesar's house (4:22), the number of people preaching the gospel in the city at the time (1:14-17), and the Apostle facing either release or execution (1:20), whereas outside of Rome a further appeal to Caesar would be possible. Further, the certain range of gospel activities pictured in Paul's autobiographical sections in Philippians would fit well with his living in a rented house with a guard (Acts 28:16, 30-31).¹⁷⁹

Caesarea has been suggested because it is specifically mentioned as one of Paul's more lengthy imprisonments. The Praetorium would then be Herod's, and Caesar's household would be travelling diplomats.¹⁸⁰ But in general Caesarea is considered less likely than Rome because of the secondary meanings one must assign to these two terms.

The most common counter-argument invoked against Rome (and Caesarea) is that the distance between either one of them and Philippi would preclude the number of trips the letter presumes: someone brought word of Paul's imprisonment to Philippi (or at least of Paul's preceding appeal to Caesar); Epaphroditus set out towards Paul with a gift; someone informed the Philippians that their messenger had become ill; and someone told Paul that the Philippians were worried about Epaphroditus.

If one calculates six to eight weeks for the 2,000-kilometer journey between Philippi and Rome, a total of four to six months of travelling would be necessary. Some commentators believe this period of time is too long. They further accentuate Paul's desire to send Timothy "soon" (2:19) and for he himself to come "soon" (2:24) as being impossible considering the distances. But in our judgment these temporal references are not of sufficient precision to dismiss Rome. "Soon" might easily be understood in a contextual way, as in "as soon as possible given the travel time" and "given my circumstances" (2:23). And apart from Paul's future plans, the past trips presumed in Philippians would simply mean that a number of months had gone by between the Philippians' learning of Paul's appeal or imprisonment and the writing of the letter. There is no exact time

¹⁷⁹ D. A. Carson, D. Moo, and L. Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 318.

¹⁸⁰ I. H. Marshall, S. Travis, and I. Paul, *Exploring the New Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001-2002), 131.

period into which we must fit those travels. It is for this reason that Silva believes the geography argument for precluding Rome should be eliminated from the scholarly conversation altogether.¹⁸¹ Further, in our opinion, Paul's comment that the Philippians had no opportunity to show their interest in him through financial means (Phil 1:11), taken by some to preclude the imprisonment at Rome in the early 60s AD given the considerable lapse of time of about a decade, should not necessarily be understood in an absolute sense. We know little of the life context of the Philippian church at the time, and Paul's "you had no opportunity to show it" could have had several causes unknown to us or could be used in a diplomatic fashion.

Given that Paul apparently experienced other imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23) besides the aforementioned two related in Acts, other commentators have suggested Ephesus as a third possibility. We know that Paul experienced difficulty there that may have led to imprisonment (1 Cor 15:32; cf. 2 Cor 1:8-11). Ephesus has the advantage of being close to Philippi (100 miles), allowing more back-and-forth trips in a shorter time. Again, as with Caesarea, we believe the question of the Praetorium and Caesar's household pose difficulty for Ephesus. Bruce argues that we have no examples of the term Praetorium used in the context of a senatorial province such as Asia at that time,¹⁸² and Caesar's household must again be taken as representatives of Caesar in Ephesus.

We believe Rome to be the most likely option, though not a conclusive one. We adopt Rome for the sake of having a unified exegetical approach to the text. In this case Paul wrote to the Philippians while under house arrest in Rome at the beginning of the 60s AD.

2.2.5 Occasion

One can find several factors that appear to have prompted Paul to write to the Philippians, namely finances, upcoming visits, and pastoral warnings. Foremost is his desire to thank the assembly warmly at the end of the letter for sending him a financial gift (4:10-20).

¹⁸¹ M. Silva, *Philippians*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 5-8.

¹⁸² F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989),

Yet commentators have puzzled over what they perceive as “thankless” thanks in which Paul recognizes their gift but never actually appears to thank them overtly. Consider these statements in which Paul acknowledges the gift without a word of thanks directed at his audience:

Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν (4:10).
I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me.

πλὴν καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει (4:14).

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

οὐχ ὅτι ἐπιζητῶ τὸ δόμα, ἀλλὰ ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν (4:17).

Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.

ἀπέχω δὲ πάντα καὶ περισσεύω· πεπλήρωμαι δεξάμενος παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν (4:18).

I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.

Various solutions have been proposed for explaining the perceived awkwardness. Perhaps Paul had already communicated his no-gift policy to the Philippians, and now he is forced to thank them for a contribution he did not really want. This view holds that what Paul communicated to the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:9) was his general policy, and now his resulting embarrassment with the Philippians is betrayed by the awkwardness of his wording in Philippians:

And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. (2 Cor 11:9)

Or perhaps he had sent a previous thank-you letter in which he had expressed his appreciation in a clearer way; this present letter would thus be only a partial reiteration of thanks.

Or maybe Paul appears to be less sincere simply because he retains a light and joyful tone all the way to the end of the letter; his positive and friendly relationship with the Philippians did not demand a formal thanks.¹⁸³ If indeed Phil 4:10-20 communicates less than a sincere thanks, the idea of Paul's expressing appreciation for the gift as a principal motivation for writing may be in jeopardy.

In his study of Phil 4:10-20, Peterman has suggested that these approaches have ignored the inner workings of social reciprocity in the ancient world and what constitutes appropriate language to reinforce them. The absence of the word εὐχαριστῶ as a direct word of thanks is in fact not remarkable at the time. Paul's expression of personal contentment in any circumstance is not a mitigation of this appreciation, but rather an occasion the Apostle seized to teach his readers what a Christian mindset towards social reciprocity should look like. Paul departs from Greco-Roman values of obligation on this point in three ways. First, rather than admitting that he owes the Philippians something for their gift as might be expected, he asserts his independence in financial matters:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (4:12-13)

Second, though he himself has received a benefit, he instead emphasizes the benefit that the giving has brought to the Philippians as partners with him in the advance of the gospel:

Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. (4:17)

They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. (4:18)

¹⁸³ G. W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of gift-exchange and Christian giving*, SNTS 92 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12-13.

Third, true to the same motif in the Scriptures of Israel, Paul believes that it is God who will reward the Philippians for their sacrifice, not he himself:

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (4:19)

We will later demonstrate that through this sacrifice, the Philippians themselves exhibit a key quality that Paul seeks to promote all the more in the Philippian correspondence.¹⁸⁴

In other words, Paul's comments surrounding the gift should not be evaluated in light of modern methods of showing appreciation, where the very words "thank you" are often considered essential, but should rather be read in terms of adherence or deviance from Greco-Roman understandings of social obligation in light of Paul's background in Israel's Scriptures and the new reality of the Christian community. In this light, 4:10-20 is indeed a socially "appropriate" form of thanks if one takes into account Paul's background and his objectives for the Philippians, and as such, we propose, still constitutes a principal reason that Paul wrote the letter.

A second motivation for the writing of Philippians was to announce the return of the gift's messenger, Epaphroditus, with an explanation of his delayed return (2:25-30). Following on Epaphroditus' heels less immediately is, hopefully, Timothy, whom Paul will send to find out how his friends are faring (2:19-23). Finally, the Apostle himself hopes to make the trip in short order (2:24); in the meantime he feels compelled to reassure the Philippians by placing his own prison situation in gospel perspective.

Finally, besides recognition of their generosity and announcements about imminent visits, there are the pastoral concerns Paul had about his friends' situation. One pastoral area of concern is the Philippians' suffering. In 1:29-30 he gathers up the Philippians' sufferings in his own as constituting the same combat of which both parties were mutually aware. Perhaps conditions for them are similar to when he himself experienced opposition in their town (Acts 19:23-20:1):

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 157-160.

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. (1:29-30)

Another area of pastoral concern is the threat of negative leadership models. While Paul's approval of the Philippians' gospel progress is high, he makes sure to discount the message of the "dogs," those teachers who propose a rival gospel:

Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. (3:2)

He is also concerned enough about the negative effects of internal conflict in the group that he addresses the conflict between two women who had been his co-workers for the gospel:

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel . . . (4:2-3)

The calls to a unified mindset in 2:1-5 may suggest that Paul was concerned about the threat of partisan thinking in general:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (2:3-5)

2.3 Textual Questions

2.3.1 Integrity of the Letter and Manuscript Tradition

Perceived breaks in the flow of the text of Philippians have led some to speculate about the present form of the letter. Some have seen in 3:1 the beginning of the end of the letter ("Finally, my brothers . . ."), with 3:2 taking a different and unexpectedly harsh direction with the warning

about the “dogs” who mutilate the flesh. Similarly, the peace wish in 4:9 seems to begin to draw the letter to a close (“And the God of peace will be with you”), while in 4:10 Paul begins the new subject of his gratitude for the Philippians’ gift. Thus in his commentary Collange espouses the combination of three different correspondences.¹⁸⁵ Philippians as we now have it would contain on this view a Thanksgiving Letter now found in Phil 4:10-20, a Friendship Letter (roughly the present letter without ch. 3 and 4.8-20), a finally a Conflict Letter (3:1-4:1, 4:8-9) in which Paul more directly confronts the opponents referenced in 1:28. While at first glance it is understandable that Collange would propose multiple letters based on the apparently sudden change in 3:2 and the apparent letter closing in 4:8-9, we believe with Klauck that “the arguments for the literary integrity of the letter carry greater weight.”¹⁸⁶ Marshall, too, is representative of many recent commentators in arguing that it is “unnecessary and unconvincing” to argue for more than one original letter.¹⁸⁷ Paul is known to make abrupt shifts in his extant writings, and terms and themes in Philippians are coherent throughout the sections that some have divided into multiple letters, as we will show in section 2.4 below.

Further, O’Brien affirms that manuscript attestation for Philippians in its present form is abundant and early. One papyrus containing most of the Pauline epistles (P46) is dated to the early third or late second century AD—one of the oldest NT Greek manuscripts.¹⁸⁸ Discovered in 1930 in Cairo, leaves of this manuscript are housed in the University of Michigan and the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin, Ireland. Neither P46 nor the manuscript tradition for Philippians in general attests to multiple letters later combined. Thus commentators on Philippians have little to say about the manuscript tradition of the epistle because we do not have examples of significant differences. While it is of course not impossible that multiple letters existed at one time, we believe that the argument for the essential unity of the extant text from both external and internal evidence carries significant weight.

2.3.2 Letter Genre

¹⁸⁵ J.-F. Collange, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1973), 21-30.

¹⁸⁶ Klauck, 320.

¹⁸⁷ Marshall, 139.

¹⁸⁸ O’Brien, 12. See also J. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians. Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*. JSNTSS 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), and Y. K. Kim, “Palaeographical Dating of P46 to the Later First Century,” *Biblica* 69 (1998): 248-257.

There are considerable affinities between Philippians and what the ancients called the “letter of friendship” (a type given in the ancient letter manual by Pseudo-Demetrius, *Epistolary Types*).¹⁸⁹ One of the arguments for a letter of friendship is that Paul does not identify himself as an apostle, but seeks out terms emphasizing his equality with his readers, such as words for co-workers and mutual suffering.¹⁹⁰ Hansen finds several other examples of friendship language, but nuances:

Of course, Paul’s letter is not merely a friendly letter that fits a Hellenistic pattern. He transforms the meaning and experience of friendship by redefining each of the essential ideals of friendship given by Hellenistic essays on friendship in terms of communion with Christ and empowerment by Christ . . . Nevertheless, after recognizing Paul’s transformation of Hellenistic patterns and concepts, we can still gain a basic understanding of the form and function of Paul’s letter to the Philippians by viewing it as a letter of friendship.¹⁹¹

In other words, the friendship letter genre is a helpful category for understanding Philippians, even though there are some exceptional elements. Stowers agrees with the letter of friendship identification, and adds along with several other commentators a strong hortatory, or exhortational, element. Thus Stowers’ “hortatory letter of friendship”¹⁹² label combines the two elements. He finds the letter to be full of ancient friendship motifs from the world of politics and business. Motifs in the ancient friendship letter and their presence in Philippians include:

presence/absence

Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit . . . (1:27)

expressions of affection

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and

¹⁸⁹ Hansen, 6-7. For the Greek text and English translation of Pseudo-Demetrius, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta, Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988).

¹⁹⁰ B. Thurston and J. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 35.

¹⁹¹ Hansen, 11.

¹⁹² S. K. Stowers, “Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven,” in J. M. Bassler, ed., *Pauline Theology, vol. 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 107.

<p>the language of partnership in trials, accomplishments, and sufferings¹⁹³</p> <p>the threat of enemies</p>	<p>confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. (1:7-8)</p> <p>Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. (4:15-16)</p> <p>For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. (3:18)</p>
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The preceding table shows that common friendship letter themes such as presence/absence, expressions of affection, partnership in trials, and the threat of enemies are easily discernable in the language of Philippians. Thus Stowers suggests, for example, that enemies are mentioned in Philippians in part because that was expected in the friendship letter genre of the time; talk of enemies served to reinforce the relationship between sender and recipients. As to the second element of Stowers' characterization of Philippians as a "hortatory letter of friendship," the letter is most evidently hortatory in that Paul uses his own life actions as an example to follow as well as other, contrastive models:

The fundamental architecture of the letter is one of antithetical models, most often contrasting Paul with his enemies. The letter urges the reader to emulate one kind of behaviour and avoid or oppose another kind . . . self-seeking envy of the enemies

¹⁹³ Klauck (320) confirms: "Especially conspicuous in 4:10-20 but also elsewhere is Paul's borrowing of the Hellenistic language of friendship. But he also uses family metaphors, so that among the letter types, none of which is ideally realized in Philippians, one can consider next to the friendly letter also the family letter, and perhaps even the administrative letter."

stands in contrast to Paul’s unselfishness . . . how friends behave versus how enemies behave constitutes the core of the letter and the key to its architecture.¹⁹⁴

Our treatment of the content of the letter in the following section (2.5), as well as in our final chapter, will allow us to develop amply this key motif of both positive and negative models, particularly in relation to the place of Phil 2:6-11 in the context of the letter. Stowers argues that this passage about Christ’s suffering and exaltation fits perfectly well in the “hortatory letter of friendship” genre in that Christ is described as both sovereign and friend.¹⁹⁵

It is worthwhile to cite in full Cicero’s letter to the younger Curio in 53 BC as an extra-biblical example of some of the essential feature of the friendly letter. Commonalities shared between Cicero and Philippians include the language of longing, affection, rejoicing, absence, and mutual accomplishment, which we highlight in bold:¹⁹⁶

M. Cicero to C. Scribonius Curio. Though I am sorry you should have suspected me on the score of “neglect,” still I am more pleased that you missed my attentions than put out that you should accuse me of any remissness, especially since in so far as your charge went, I was in no sense to blame, while in so far as you implied that you **longed** for a letter from me, you openly avowed an **affection** for me, which, well as I knew it before, is none the less delightful and desirable. As a matter of fact I have not let a single carrier pass, if I thought he would reach you, without giving him a letter for you. Come now, who so indefatigable a correspondent as I? As for you, I have only had two or three letters from you at the most, and those very short ones. Therefore if you judge me harshly, I shall find you guilty on the same charge; if you don’t want me to do so, you will have to be lenient with me. But no more about correspondence; I am not afraid of failing to give you your fill of letters, especially if you show a proper appreciation of my efforts in that line.

I have grieved at your long **absence** from among us, because I have not been able to enjoy your most agreeable society, but at the same time **I rejoice** that while

¹⁹⁴ Stowers, “Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven,” 115, 117.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 118.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 64.

absent you have attained all your objects with the greatest honour to yourself, and that in all your affairs fortune has answered my prayers. There is a little piece of advice which my extraordinary **affection** for you compels me to offer you. So much is expected of your courage, or, it may be of your capacity, that I do not hesitate to beg and beseech you to return to us in such a frame of mind as to be able to uphold and justify all the expectations you have excited. And while it is true that no forgetfulness will ever efface the memory of what you have done for me, I beg you to remember that, **whatever enhancements of fortune or honour may accrue to you in the future, you could never have secured them, had you not in the old days of your boyhood hearkened to the advice given you in all sincerity and affection by myself.** And that is why your **feelings** towards me should be such, that, burdened as I am with the increasing weight of years, I should find repose in your love and in your youth.¹⁹⁷

Cicero uses the themes of longing, affection, rejoicing, absence, and mutual accomplishment to reinforce the bonds of friendship just as Paul does with his friends at Philippi.

Consider also this letter of friendship written to a physician from Egypt around 58 A.D., known as *P.Merton 12*.

Χαιρᾶς Διονυσίωι τῶι φιλτάτῳι πλείστα χαίρειν καὶ διὰ παντὸς(ς) ὑγιαίνειν. κομισάμενός σου ἐπι[στολ(ήν)] οὕτως περιχαρῆς ἐγενόμη[ν ὡς εἰ] ὄντως ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐγεγόνειν, ἄ[νευ] γὰρ ταύτης οὐθέν ἐστιν. γράφειν δέ σοι μεγάλας εὐχαριστίας παρετέο(ν)· δεῖ γὰρ τοῖς μὴ φίλοις οὐσι διὰ λόγων εὐχαριστεῖν. πείθομαι δὲ ὅτι ἐν γαληνείᾳ τινὶ ἐνεισχύω, καὶ εἰ μὴ τὰ ἴσα σοι παρασχεῖν, βραχεία τινὰ παρέξομαι τῇ εἰς ἐμὲ φιλοστοργίᾳ . . .

Chairas to his dearest Dionysius, many greetings and continual health. I was as much delighted at receiving a letter from you as if I had indeed been in my native place; for apart from that we have nothing. I may dispense with writing to you with a great show of thanks; for it is to those who are not friends that we must give thanks

¹⁹⁷ Text and translation W. G. Williams.

in words. I trust that I may maintain myself in some degree of serenity and be able, if not to give you an equivalent, at least to show some small return for your affection towards me . . .¹⁹⁸

In this short correspondence we note again the same phenomenon of expression of affection observed in Philippians. Also of interest is the author's comment about a great show of thanks being unnecessary between friends. We have already observed from Peterman that the lack of overt thanks in Paul's appreciation of the Philippians' gift was in fact not unusual for letters of the time.

2.3.3 Canon

Philippians figures in the earliest extant versions of the Muratorian and Marcionite canons. If these two sources are a reliable indication, then the letter was included without controversy in the New Testament canon by the second half of the second century AD. Thus commentators have little to say about the letter's place in the canon when compared to other NT writings for which the testimony is less clear.

2.4 Content

2.4.1 Summary

In Philippians Paul wants to help his readers acquire a certain mindset (using especially φρονέω, but also other verbs of thinking like ἡγέομαι and λογίζομαι). This is a mindset in which gospel progress (ἡ προκοπή τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) comes through God's work in people, as well as through proactive, voluntary, sacrificial actions people make in the interest of others. Aletti describes the key verb φρονέω as being more than an intellectual process or the holding of an opinion on a subject; in Philippians it is a fundamental attitude that manifests itself in different ways.¹⁹⁹

In order to illustrate this others-oriented thinking, Paul makes extensive use of examples

¹⁹⁸ Greek text J. Schneider, "La lettre gréco-latine, un genre littéraire?" *Collection de la maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée* 52; *Série littéraire et philosophique* 19 (2014): 113-117. Translation Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 63.

¹⁹⁹ J.-N. Aletti, S.J., *Saint Paul Épître aux Philippiens* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 2005), 127-128.

woven throughout the letter, both positive and negative, whose choices illustrate the kind of mindset he would encourage. This includes several autobiographical sections in which the Apostle relates his own experiences (past, present, and future) and how he views them in light of the advance of the gospel, including the source of power for his gospel perspective and his desire to know better that source, Jesus Christ. The other models mentioned set themselves apart by being notably rare in their respective classes (as emphasized in the case of Timothy and the Philippian readers) and unusual in their generosity (Jesus, Epaphroditus, and the Philippians).

It is fairly probable that Paul senses a competition in this area of models: he presents several positive examples first before confronting the danger of negative ones he has in mind. The false teachers, for example, are only concerned about themselves, thinking about (φρονοῦντες) earthly things (3:19). The two church women who are quarreling over an unspecified issue are also negative examples of the kind of mindset Paul espouses, especially in light of his exhortation to unity in the letter (φρονεῖν, 4:2). He thus urges his readers in 3:17 to follow the apostolic example (τύπον ἡμᾶς) and to observe those who do so in order to assimilate the right way of thinking. That, says Paul in 4:1, is how to stand firm, i.e., by thinking as these positive models think.

The Philippian readers have already demonstrated this gospel-advancing, others-oriented approach to life by giving to Paul, and he would like to encourage it even further with his letter of thanks to them, so that they might share in his joy even in the midst of opposition and adversity and continue as participants with him in the gospel (1:7, τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου).

2.4.2 Formal Outline

Opening 1:1-2

Thanksgiving 1:3-11

Body 1:12-4:20

 Encouragements 1:12-3:1

 Warning against false teachers 3:2-4:1

 Exhortations and thanksgiving 4:2-20

Closing 4:21-23

2.4.3 Outline by Section Content

Our following twelve points show the essential content of divisible passages in the letter and point out the progress of Paul's key themes.

1. God has begun a good work that he will complete in the Philippians, and Paul prays for its continuity in the form of more fruit (1:1-11).
2. Paul perceives the gospel as advancing in his circumstances, despite appearances to the contrary (1:12-18).
3. Paul chooses a less personally advantageous future for himself in favor of the progress of his readers (1:19-26).
4. The advancement of the gospel in the Philippians will, as it does for Paul, involve a struggle best confronted as a team (1:27-30).
5. Jesus Christ, like Paul and hopefully his readers, chose the less personally advantageous future for himself in favour of other people (2:1-11).
6. Paul encourages the Philippians to work out their salvation process happily, knowing that God is the motivator, that others will see a difference in them, and that Paul has sacrificed to get them there (2:12-18).
7. Timothy chose others' gospel interests, which is to say the affairs of Jesus Christ (2:19-24).
8. Epaphroditus also looked to others' gospel interests even to the point of death (2:25-30).
9. Warning: the Judaizers in the Philippian context are placing their confidence in the flesh, whereas Paul places his confidence in Christ (3:1-14).
10. Paul admonishes his audience to follow the apostolic example instead of that of the false teachers: the two paths have completely different destinies (3:15-4:1)
11. Two women in conflict are urged to think (φρονεῖν) the same thing in the Lord; the whole group is called to help them and to think upon (λογίζεσθε) what is true and right. Paul again holds himself up as a model in all aspects of his life: whatever is learned, received, heard, or seen in the Apostle should be practiced (4:2-9).
12. Paul thanks his readers for their gift, highlighting the fact that they are a rarity among churches because of their generosity, and closes the letter (4:10-23).

2.5 Introduction to the Carmen Christi

Phil 2:6-11, which has become known as the *Carmen Christi*, or “Hymn of Christ,” is the most commented on passage in the entire epistle, if not in the entire New Testament. The passage relates how Christ made the unexpected choice to forego a high position in favor of a very low one, even dying on a cross, after which he is exalted by God the Father to the point of universal recognition. Research has focused on five areas of inquiry: authorship/origin, structure/genre, conceptual origins, lexical studies, and theology. The rest of this chapter will give a basic introduction to the passage through the angles of these research trends. Our final chapter will further situate the hymn thematically in the context of the letter.

2.5.1 Authorship/Origin: Is the Passage a Pre-Pauline Composition?

A handful of NT passages are interpreted by some as being traditional pieces of early Christology that were then incorporated into a NT text, among them John 1:1-18, Heb 1:3-5, Rom 1:3, Eph 2:14-16, Col 1:15-20, Phil 2:6-11, and 1 Pet 3:18-22.²⁰⁰ There are five typical reasons cited in the literature for suggesting that Phil 2:6-11 is pre-Pauline.²⁰¹ The first is that the flow of Paul’s exhortation is interrupted by a suddenly more rhythmic prose.²⁰² The focus was upon the readers, but as Paul turns to an illustration, it appears that this reader-focus is broken by the sustained consideration of Christ’s career. This leads to a second reason invoked in arguing for a pre-Pauline piece: once Paul begins his illustration, he outlines the whole of Christ’s experience of humiliation and exaltation over the course of what for us now constitutes six biblical verses. The length of the illustration is thus for some a sign of a pre-Pauline piece. A third area is the purposeful structure with which the illustration about Jesus Christ is communicated. Some judge the carefully balanced lines and the clear progression of the piece by means of lexical parallels to be

²⁰⁰ For discussions of these passages, see M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 359ff; J. T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), and S. E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

²⁰¹ Hansen, 127ff.

²⁰² For a recent study of the subject of rhythmic prose, see G. O. Hutchinson, *Plutarch’s Rhythmic Prose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Though Greek literature is divided into poetry and prose, this does not mean that all prose lacks rhythmic features. Hutchinson pays particular attention to sentence endings through statistical analysis and finds that rhythmic prose is clearly evident (though in varying degrees) among certain Greek authors of the Imperial period. From a detailed study of Plutarch, Hutchinson concludes that rhythm in prose serves to highlight certain lexical items and figures at crucial junctures of a narrative.

uncharacteristic of Paul's writing in general. Fourth, multiple lexical items are not found elsewhere in Paul's writings: the terms μορφή, ἀπαγγέλον, and ὑπερυψώω encourage some to believe that the piece is not from Paul's hand. Lastly, there are theological notions that seem to stand out among Paul's letters: Christ is nowhere else in Paul called a slave or said to be exalted by the Father. Further, typical Pauline themes like Christ dying for sins of people, the importance of the resurrection, or the confession of Jesus' lordship as unique to the church are not present in the piece.

These arguments are of a lexical, structural, and theological nature. We do not believe that the lexical argument is decisive. Feuillet can just as easily identify terms in the hymn that *are* Pauline or find other uncontested Pauline pieces that contain rare lexical items, such as 1 Cor 13.²⁰³ The theological argument relies heavily on what is not said, so in and of itself is not decisive. We believe that the structural argument is the most weighty of the three types, particularly the fact that the piece goes into great detail in describing Christ's career in a comprehensive fashion and in a way that is suddenly highly poetic, suggesting the insertion of a previous composition. However, Paul and other NT authors show an ability to move from prose to a tighter parallel structure in order to highlight a point by setting it apart from its surrounding context.²⁰⁴ Their Hebrew Scriptures often do the same, in which poetic passages interrupt the flow of narrative, and the change in genre signals an illustration of the essential message of the broader context. So even the change in structure and the length of the piece is not decisive.

Ultimately the reality of a pre-Pauline composition inserted by Paul is possible but not decisive. As we will demonstrate at length in our last chapter, the example of Christ's voluntary self-sacrifice, and even the notion of exaltation after sacrifice, fits perfectly in the series of examples that Paul presents in the letter. These examples held before the Philippians function like reinforcing steel rods to solidify the cement of Paul's vision of how the gospel progresses. In this regard it is of note that these examples are not mentioned quickly without comment. In Paul's use of himself as an example of voluntary self-sacrifice, for example, he goes to considerable lengths to describe the logic behind his choice for staying the course to help the Philippians in their progress

²⁰³ A. Feuillet, *Christologie paulinienne et tradition biblique* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1973) cites the Pauline Adam-Christ comparison, the obedience of Christ, the centrality of the cross, and the triple structure of heaven, earth, and under the earth at the end of the hymn (100).

²⁰⁴ For example, Mt 5:3-12, Lk 1:46-55, Rom 11:33-36, 1 Tim 3:16, 1 Jn 2:12-14.

(Phil 1:19-26):

For I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Paul wants his readers to know not only the definitive choice he made to stay on for their benefit, but his thought process as well. We note a similar pattern in the case of the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30):

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less

anxiety. So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

The length of these three examples caution us not to rule out a Pauline *Carmen Christi* on the basis of its length alone.

In light of the use of these examples throughout Paul's letter as part of his essential message to the Philippians, we do not accept the idea that the *Carmen Christi* is a later addition from a different hand than Paul's after he had finished his letter. It is not impossible that he used a previous piece and incorporated it himself, but it is not absolutely necessary to come to that conclusion either. There is utility in considering the question of composition, however, for at the least it serves to highlight what is unique about the piece among the apostolic teachings and to help us further understand the message of Philippians as a whole. We agree with Wright, who argues that

the passage fits its present context so well that it is very hard to see it in any way as a detached, or even detachable, hymn about Christ. It belongs exactly where it is. It is of course possible that Paul, realizing that it was going to be appropriate to quote the hymn (assuming that there was one) worded 2.1-5 accordingly, and then continued to echo the same themes later on in the letter.²⁰⁵

While proponents of a pre-Pauline piece have gone on to suggest interesting possibilities for the source of the hymn, we believe they involve too much speculation to be of help, whether a Gnostic redeemer myth, an Aramaic original, or the martyr Stephen. We are on more solid ground to affirm that what Paul chose to include in Phil 2:6-11, whether original to him or not, becomes his own as a useful and key element of his message.

2.5.2 Structure/Genre

Closely tied to the question of the origin of the passage is its structure and genre. We will first consider the question of the passage's strophic structure, followed by the best way to describe

²⁰⁵ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 98.

its genre. All commentators notice a shift between verses 5 and 6 from a direct exhortation of Paul's audience to an illustrative narrative account of the career of Jesus Christ, as well as a return to exhortation in v. 12:

Exhortation Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: (2:3-5)

Illustration Who, being . . . to the glory of God the Father. (2:6-11)

Exhortation Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (2:12-13)

In reading the Greek of the *Carmen Christi*, one also notices the more balanced poetic lines in verses 6-11 (see below), as well as a basic indicator of contrast in the narrative at v. 7 (ἀλλά “but”) and a consequence at v. 9 (διό “therefore”).

It is instructive to note that although the structure of the passage has been divided in different ways on thematic and syntactic grounds, all see a thematic turning point between verses 6-8 (humiliation) and verses 9-11 (exaltation). Interpretive differences emerge about how to further divide up the two sections, particularly verses 6-8. The objective of scholars in placing the passage in lines is to identify in the most accurate way possible the intended pattern of the piece and thus to understand fully its intended meaning.

Using the common division of the passage into two movements (6-8 and 9-11, reflecting two stages in the itinerary of Christ), a helpful example of a division of the Greek text on the basis of lexical, syntactic, and narrative cues is the following by Aletti, followed by the NIV translation:²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Aletti, 142.

Humiliation of Christ (6-8)

⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,
⁷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν,
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·
καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ⁸ ἑταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ·

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Exaltation of Christ (9-11)

⁹ διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ
τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα,
¹⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ
ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων,
¹¹ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται
ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him
the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Lohmeyer further divided these two movements into six strophes, with each movement having three strophes and each strophe having three lines.²⁰⁷ Excised words are given in square brackets:

⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο
τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,

⁷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν,
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·

καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
⁸ ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου [θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ]·

⁹ διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν,
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα,

¹⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ
πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη
ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων,

¹¹ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται
ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

In examining Lohmeyer's structure it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he has simply further divided the generally accepted two-part structure on the basis of the verbal structure of the piece, i.e., the majority of the lines have their own verbal form, whether finite, participial, or

²⁰⁷ E. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961), 5-6.

infinitival, with a few exceptions where a line includes some other verbal complement. He believed that θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (“even death on a cross”) disrupted the symmetry of the piece and thus was not part of the original. Nonetheless, we believe that in general his structural proposal proves helpful insofar as it highlights verbal forms. Much of the scholarly discussion on the structure of the piece has been measured against Lohmeyer’s seminal work.

In 1963 Jeremias proposed dividing the piece into three strophes, highlighting the narrative movements of preexistence (6-7b), incarnation (7c-8), and exaltation (9-11).²⁰⁸ He felt that this division better accounted for parallels that Lohmeyer had not represented (with excised words in parentheses):

I

⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,
⁷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν,

II

ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·
καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
⁸ ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ)·

III

⁹ διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν,
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα,
¹⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη
(ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων)
¹¹ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
(εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς).

²⁰⁸ J. Jeremias, “Zu Phil II 7: ‘Ἐαυτὸν Ἐκένωσεν,’” *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963): 186. See also L. Cerfaux, “L’hymne au Christ-Serviteur de Dieu (Phil. II, 6-11 = Is LII,13-LIII,12),” in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 6-7, Louvain: Éditions J. Duculot, S. A., 1954), 426.

By dividing the piece into three movements, Jeremias has the interesting advantage of bringing out the contours of Christ's itinerary, and in so doing was able to emphasize what he viewed as key parallels, such as ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος ("being made in human likeness") with καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ("and being found in appearance as a man").²⁰⁹ However, these advantages come at the price of removing even more material than did Lohmeyer: not only θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ ("even death on a cross"), but also ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων ("in heaven and on earth and under the earth") and εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς ("to the glory of God the Father") as non-original parts of the piece.

Talbert (1967)²¹⁰ and Martin (1967)²¹¹ proposed four strophes with three lines each and six strophes with two lines each, respectively, but again needed to excise at least a phrase in order to achieve balance in the lines. More recently, Gundry (1994)²¹² based his analysis on finite and participial phrases that form a chiasm, rather than looking for division into strophes.²¹³ His and other more recent structural proposals tend to divide the piece without excising any elements.

The challenge in the study of the structure of the piece is that commentators are looking for *the* definitive structure. But we believe that considering the multiplicity of lexical and conceptual correspondences in the text, this is an elusive goal. In matters of structure we prefer a distinction between what is highly likely versus possible and therefore potentially helpful. For example, Lohmeyer's granular breakdown is helpful in allowing us to observe more easily each verbal phrase and other complements. Jeremias' three-part division is useful in highlighting what he perceived as the narrative temporal contours of the composition. But the helpfulness of their analyses is limited, especially because they had to excise sections of the piece. We believe that ultimately the most helpful structural analyses of the piece will include all of its present elements, rather than excising words or phrases to establish a pre-Pauline form.

²⁰⁹ G. P. Fewster, "The Philippians 'Christ Hymn': Trends in Critical Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Research* 13 (2015): 196.

²¹⁰ C. H. Talbert, "The Problem of Pre-existence in Philippians 2:6–11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86.2 (1967): 143.

²¹¹ R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, (SNTSMS 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, revised edition 1983), 36–37.

²¹² S. Gundry, "Style and Substance in 'The Myth of God Incarnate' according to Philippians 2:6–11," in S. E. Porter, M. D. Goulder (eds.), *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 272–273.

²¹³ Fewster, 196.

When all parts of the current text are included, highly likely is a structure in two main parts (6-8, 9-11), whose division is signalled by διό (“therefore”) and indicated by the change in subject and the direction and length of the narrative. We agree with Lohmeyer’s sense of continual progression and Siméus’ notion of a narrative account, particularly an itinerary that includes humbling and exaltation. Siméus argues that Phil 2:6-11 is a story (“récit”) because it fits with norms for that genre, such as a succession of events and a character who undergoes change. There are two main characters, Christ and God the Father. The others evoked are characters for the sake of comparison: men and slaves.²¹⁴ This narrative emphasis encourages us to see the broader contours of the piece, which follow a parabola from exalted status to utter humiliation and then back to exalted status. In this parabolic pattern the phrase θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ “even death on a cross” can easily be viewed as part of the hymn in its present as well as its original form, standing at the lowest point of humiliation in Christ’s itinerary.

The foregoing discussion of structure brings us to the question of genre. Both the qualifiers “poetic” and “hymnic” are used often to describe Phil 2:6-11. Hansen points out that in literary studies, poetry is characterized as having features of rhythm, parallels between words and phrases (such as couplets), and rhetorical devices such as alliteration and antithesis.²¹⁵ Phil 2:6-11 has these features in abundance.²¹⁶ Thus we believe that there are sufficient grounds for describing the piece as “poetic” in the way that Hansen defines the term.

Phil 2:6-11 is also called a hymn, or hymnic in quality. If by “hymn” one has a particular liturgical context, such as antiphonal singing at the occasion of baptism (Martin) or the celebration of the Lord’s supper (Lohmeyer), we believe the term is on less solid ground, for these contexts are speculations at this point. If by “hymn,” however, one means theological creed²¹⁷ with narrative movement, we believe the sense is easily enough understood, and the term appropriate.

²¹⁴ A. Siméus, *Philippiens 2, 6-11 dans la recherche récente: Les approches exégétiques de l'hymne au Christ entre 1985 et 2010*, M.A. thesis, Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses, Université Laval, Québec, 2011.

²¹⁵ Hansen, 122.

²¹⁶ See J.-B. Édart, *L'Épître aux Philippiens* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 2002), 129, for an extensive discussion of these poetic features.

²¹⁷ O'Brien, 188.

Further, M. W. Martin and B. A. Nash have recently argued that the piece fits well in the ancient Greco-Roman hymn genre, but in unexpected ways. “In the case of the Christ-hymn, we see the hymnist meeting genre expectations at every turn, only in a subversive manner: nearly every generic feature attested by the theorists is taken up in a way that turns on end conventional, Greco-Roman notions of what is worthy of honor and status, and what is not . . .”²¹⁸ Specifically, Phil 2:6-11 fits into the hymn genre in that it “is epideictic in content, it takes as its subject a divine being, it is in contrast to *epainos* a complete composition, and perhaps most importantly, it is shaped beginning to end in both its form and content by epideictic *topoi* . . . At every turn, stations of shame are refurbished as stations of honour because they were taken up selflessly, in service to others, by one existing in the form of God.”²¹⁹ Martin and Nash identify key *topoi* for the Greco-Roman hymn for which there are some parallels in Phil 2:6-11: origin, birth, body, mind, virtues, deeds, manner of death, posthumous events, names and titles, and *synchysis* (comparison).

Thus in addition to calling the hymn “poetic” in a broad sense, one could also qualify the piece as a hymn, not only in the sense of theological creed, but also by virtue of similarities with the ancient Greco-Roman hymn genre.

2.5.3 Conceptual Origins

Below we detail seven different conceptual backgrounds that have been put forth against which the hymn should be understood.²²⁰ Some are specifically biblical allusions, while others are of a cultural nature. In our last chapter we will have the chance to reconsider whether any of these conceptual origins are elucidated by our conclusions about the meaning of τὸ εἶναι Ἰσα θεῶ in the context of the *Carmen Christi*.

The Parallel with Adam

According to this interpretation, the *Carmen Christi* should be understood as presenting a contrast between Adam and Christ. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26)

²¹⁸ M. W. Martin and B. A. Nash, “Philippians 2:6–11 as Subversive Hymnos: A Study in the Light of Ancient Rhetorical Theory,” *JTS* 66 (2015): 110.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 135.

²²⁰ For a helpful summary of some of the major backgrounds, see B. de Boissieu, et al, *L’hymne au Christ (Philippiens 2,5-11)*, Supplément Cahiers Évangile 164, June 2013, 5-7; also O’Brien, 193-198.

but had one restriction placed upon them regarding what they could eat: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden was off limits (Gen 2:16-17). The serpent encourages them to doubt the reality of God's prohibition and his warning about the consequence for its disobedience. God's real motive, says the serpent, is to prevent them from becoming like Elohim in the knowledge of good and evil. When the couple succumbs to the temptation, they experience shame before God for the first time (Gen 2:10).

The four principal allusions from Gen 1-3 found in the *Carmen Christi* by proponents of this Adamic view are: the image of God, the serpent's words "you will become like Elohim," the disobedience of Adam, and the resulting shame experienced by the first couple.²²¹ The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ in Phil 2:6 is thus understood as a reference to Christ being the image of God; in the same verse, with the phrase οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγῆσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ Paul would be contrasting Jesus' humble refusal to rival God as Adam did; the reference to Jesus' radical obedience in Phil 2:8 undoes Adam's disobedience; and finally the ensuing glory given to Christ in Phil 2:9-11 stands in distinction to the shame that Adam experienced. The heart of the contrast between the first and second Adams is that the second succeeded in truly representing the image of God in man where the first had failed.

While passages like Rom 5:12-19 and 1 Cor 15:45-47 do draw explicit parallels between Adam and Christ, and thus the parallel was an important part of Paul's understanding of Christ's place in the redemptive story, we remain unconvinced that Paul made an effort to highlight these parallels in Phil 2. Chief among the criticized parallels is that which equates image of God from Gen 1:26 with μορφή in Phil 2:6. If Paul had wanted us to catch the parallel, he might have at least included a single word from Genesis (other than God) to signal an allusion to his audience.

Suffering Servant

Commentators have detected close parallels between the series of experiences of Christ recorded in the *Carmen Christi* and those of the figure of a suffering servant in Isaiah, particularly

²²¹ See J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making. An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), 114-116; M. D. Hooker, "Adam Redivivus: Philippians 2 Once More," in S. Moyise, ed., *The Old Testament in the New Testament. Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (JSNT 189, Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000), 220-234; E. Di Pede and A. Wénin, "Le Christ Jésus et l'humain de l'Éden. L'hymne aux Philippiens (2,6-11) et le début de la Genèse," in *Revue théologique de Louvain* 43 (2012): 225-241.

in Isa 52:13-53:12. In that passage, a righteous servant suffers as a guilt offering by the plan of Yahweh. In comparing the two passages, one notes that both are called servants (Phil 2:7; Isa 53:11), were humbled (Phil 2:8; Isa 53:8), and were willing to die (Phil 2:8; Isa 53:7,12). Both receive exaltation that results in high status (Phil 2:9-11; Isa 53:12). And the connection between humiliation and exaltation in both is explained in causal terms: “for this reason” (Phil 2:9; Isa 53:12). Aside from this connection with Isa 53, one hears in Phil 2:10-11 a clear citation of the Septuagint (ancient Greek) version of Isa 45:23, where every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge God.²²²

Suffering Servant	Philippians	Isaiah
Servant	(2:7) Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant (μορφήν δούλου), being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man	(53:11) After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.
	...	
Humbled	(2:8) he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ)!	(53:8) By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.
Willing to die	(2:8) he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!	(53:7,12) He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

²²² Boissieu, 6

. . . he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Exaltation resulting in high status	(2:9) Therefore God exalted him to the highest place (διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν) and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.	(53:12) Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong
Causal connection between humiliation and exaltation	(2:9) Therefore God exalted him . . .	(53:12) Therefore I will give him . . .
Every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge	(2:10-11) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων,	(45:23) ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τῷ θεῷ because to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall acknowledge God ²²³

²²³ Translation by A. Pietersma and B. G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα
ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος
Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν
θεοῦ πατρὸς).

Cerfaux argued that the Servant Songs of Isaiah (Isa 42, 49, 50, 52-53) were a principal source of inspiration for the *Carmen Christi*.²²⁴ We agree with the possibility of that conceptual background, for already in Phil 2:10-11 we have a clear citation of Isa 45:23. While Isa 45 is not considered one of the Servant Songs, the reference does place us in the general context of the section of Isaiah where the Servant Songs are found. Further, the additional “contacts littéraires”²²⁵ between Phil 2 and Isa 53 touching the common trajectory of humbling causing exaltation, as well as the lexical parallels in words referring to servant and humiliation are also highly suggestive. At least the level of intentionality of the author of the *Carmen Christi* to lead readers to such a parallel seems stronger to us than in the case of the Adam parallel suggested above.

The Righteous Sufferer

A third suggestion for a conceptual background of the *Carmen Christi* is the figure of the Righteous Sufferer in post-biblical Judaism, drawn particularly from martyrs of the Maccabean period and after.²²⁶ This righteous sufferer humbly and willingly accepts suffering in exchange for later vindication. Paul would be portraying Christ as the righteous sufferer *par excellence*, presented in the *Carmen Christi* as taking on suffering and death but afterwards being exalted by God. Thus the background of δοῦλος is not to be retraced to the Servant Songs of Isaiah but rather more to the righteous servant of the Maccabean period.

A strength of the Righteous Sufferer proposal is that the obedient servant in Phil 2 does experience vindication after suffering on a grand scale, so that pattern is similar. But beyond that parallel, to us it seems difficult to find clues in the *Carmen Christi* that indeed Paul intended to present Christ against such a conceptual background. The pattern of righteous suffering and divine

²²⁴ Cerfaux, 425-437.

²²⁵ Ibid, 426.

²²⁶ See for example, Eduard Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1962), 35-44, 51-54.

vindication is a common enough biblical theme that we believe that locating the pattern in the Righteous Sufferer motif from the Maccabean period does not have enough textual support. A citation or more literary or thematic contacts in Phil 2 with writings of the Maccabean period would give more support to this particular conceptual background. Additionally, commentators who see the *Carmen Christi* as presenting a preexistent figure criticize the Righteous Sufferer conceptual background as missing the element of preexistence in the proposed background texts.²²⁷

The Jewish Wisdom Figure

Also proposed as conceptual background to the *Carmen Christi* is the Wisdom of Solomon, where the Righteous One who suffers was with God in the form of Wisdom. Thus, when the preexistent figure in Phil 2 is described as existing ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, the allusion is to Wisdom that was with God and descended to indwell the Righteous One. As in Wis 5:1,16, the death of the Righteous One is a turning point, not an end.²²⁸ It is questionable, however, whether Hellenistic Jewish mystical texts identified the Righteous One with Wisdom. Further, the *Carmen Christi* does not evoke Christ in connection with the creation or wisdom.²²⁹

As Antitype to Earthly Kings Usurping Divine Authority

This conceptual model holds that Jesus Christ is compared positively to biblical, Jewish, and Hellenistic rulers who arrogantly usurp divine authority. S. Vollenweider argues that unlike, for example, the kingly figures in Ez 28 or Isa 14, “Christus gehört nicht zum Typ der Gewaltherrscher, welche Gottes Würde usurpieren.”²³⁰ In reading these backgrounds in Phil 2:6, he believes that the word ἀρπαγμόν should thus be understood as a robbery or illegitimate seizure that Christ did not make. We agree that these traditions of usurping authority do exist in biblical, Jewish, and Hellenistic forms. The question is whether the author of the *Carmen Christi* intended to make allusion to them. Vollenweider does not interact with Greek texts containing ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς as Phil 2:6 does, but rather jumps prematurely to what he calls “the vocabulary of ἰσοθεΐα.” The

²²⁷ O’Brien, 194.

²²⁸ D. Georgi, “Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil 2,6-11,” in *Zeit und Geschichte. Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Dinkler (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964).

²²⁹ O’Brien, 195.

²³⁰ S. Vollenweider, *Horizonte neutestamentlicher Christologie. Studien zu Paulus und zur frühchristlichen Theologie, (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 144)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 283.

idea that “Das Vokabular der ἰσοθεΐα haftet speziell an diesen Gestalten”²³¹ in Hellenistic literature is, in our opinion, too vague of a connection to Phil 2:6b: the lexical connection between them is never clearly demonstrated in specific terms. Another potential problem with this conceptual background is that one wonders whether the theme of rulers who usurp divine authority is sufficiently present in the Old Testament so as to make Phil 2:6b an expected and effective contrast.

The Cursus Honorum; Attack Against the Emperor Cult

We have already mentioned Hellerman’s suggestion that the narrative contours of the *Carmen Christi* are patterned as a contrast to the Roman succession of honors (*cursus honorum*) replicated throughout the empire. Our chapter on ἰσα θεῶ will discuss the possibility of an additional cultural background in which that expression should be understood as a subtle attack against emperor worship. We will wait upon more textual analysis to examine these two Greco-Roman background proposals.

The Background of the NT

More recently, Hurtado has suggested that while potential allusions to the Greco-Roman context should not be ignored, the most fruitful approach to understanding the conceptual background to the content of the hymn is to place it in the context of the early church’s apostolic terminology.²³² He particularly focuses on the meaning of Jesus’ actions as a servant in the life of the early church and its proclamation, particularly that of Paul as seen in his letters. Rather than discovering in the hymn a background either from another historical time period or from the ambient culture, we should first of all understand Jesus’ actions in their immediate historical Jewish- and Hellenistic-Christian context as the supreme pattern of humble service. The simplicity of Hurtado’s suggestion is attractive, encouraging us to first situate the hymn in the immediate faith context of its audience. We will also observe this reading to have support in our chapter covering the primary ways in which the Fathers of the very first centuries quoted Phil 2:6, i.e., with an ethical intent.

²³¹ Ibid, 273.

²³² L. Hurtado, “Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5-11,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, eds. P. Richardson, J. C. Hurd (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 113-126.

Summary of Conceptual Origins

Situating the conceptual features of the hymn in their immediate faith context as Hurtado suggests does not of course preclude the possibility that the hymn's composer drew on the rich background of the Jewish Scriptures and on prevalent themes of the ambient culture. Of the proposed backgrounds we have surveyed, the biblical background that seems most plausible, but not conclusive, is the reference to the Servant Songs of Isaiah; the quotation of Isaiah 45, though not considered a Servant Song, is likely. In the area of Jewish or Greco-Roman backgrounds, Hellerman's contrast with the Roman *cursus honorum* offers promise for highlighting cultural overtones that would have resonated with the Philippian readers in a context where the publicizing of progressive civic and military achievements held a significant place in public life. The following chapters may serve to elucidate these potential parallels.

2.5.4 Lexical Studies

Lexical studies and commentaries on Phil 2:6-11 have focused on the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, the rare noun ἀρπαγμόν, and the verb ἐκένωσεν. In this section we will briefly survey the issues surrounding each of these to give the necessary background but without suggesting solutions. It is our final chapter that will define each of these in the process of ascertaining the meaning of the key expression of our study, the much less examined τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in v. 6b.

The expression ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ has been translated “in the form of God,” “in divine condition,” or “in very nature God.” Outside of Phil 2:6-7, the lexeme μορφή itself only appears in the NT in the longer ending of Mark (16:12). Classical usage tempts us to read “perceivable form,” but the overall biblical context, with its sensibilities to the physical appearance of God, has led many since Lightfoot to specify the nuance of recognizable “essential attributes” of deity; still others have argued contextually for status or condition in relation to God, sometimes in the sense of glory. The type of translation one chooses depends largely on the kind of narrative progression

one sees between, on the one hand, the “existing” (ὕπαρχων) in the state signified by ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ in v. 6a, and on the other hand, Christ’s self-lowering (ἐκένωσεν) in v. 7a and the participles “taking” (λαβών) and “becoming” (γενόμενος) in the latter part of v. 7. Is Paul’s objective to speak of a pre-temporal state of the one who came to be known as the Christ, or is he speaking of the earthly experience of Jesus Christ? The answer to this question in turn will depend partly on what theological presuppositions one is ready to allow the Apostle in this context. We will argue in our final chapter that studies have too often focused on the lexeme μορφή itself while disregarding the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, as well as the importance of its relationship to μορφήν δούλου in v. 7. In our final chapter we will argue that these contextual clues, as well as the proper understanding of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ, help us define ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ with reasonable confidence.

In v. 6b the one who was existing ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ did not consider (οὐχ . . . ἡγήσατο) being ἴσα θεῶ as ἀρπαγμόν. In ἀρπαγμός we have a word appearing in neither the NT nor the LXX. Suggested definitions have included “grasping” for something, “something to be grasped” either already possessed or not, and “something to be exploited/retained” that is already possessed.²³³ Obviously, the translation we will give to τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in our final chapter will be crucial to defining ἀρπαγμός with confidence, for the two stand as accusatives of the same verb.

Lastly, and closely connected to the historical discussions regarding the theology of the passage that we will discuss in the next section of this chapter (2.5.5), scholars have wondered whether ἐκένωσεν (v. 7) signals a literal emptying in which Christ gave up something described as his possession in the previous verse. Or does the word rather communicate a metaphorical emptying in which he “made himself nothing,” as some translations have suggested? It will be important in our final chapter to consider the participles used in conjunction with ἐκένωσεν and to take into account our decisions about ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, ἀρπαγμός, and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ.

2.5.5 Theology

Four particular theological questions have circulated in the secondary literature. First, was Paul’s intent behind Phil 2:6-11 ethical or kerygmatic? In other words, is Christ’s humiliation and exaltation presented primarily as an example to follow or is it mainly meant as a proclamation of

²³³ On which see ch. 7 for a fuller discussion.

Christological belief? Second, what is the nature of the divinity of the figure described as existing ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, and how does τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ play into this understanding? Third, is the figure existing ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ described in a preexistent or earthly state in Phil 2:6? Fourth, what is implied by the words ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν in 2:7? Did Christ empty himself of divinity in becoming a man (or to a lesser extent its prerogatives), or should ἐκένωσεν be taken in a metaphorical sense?

As to the ethical/kerygmatic question, it is common to see the hymn as predominantly ethical in pedagogical intent. We have already suggested that the use of models is a significant element in Paul's exhortation in the letter, and this intent will be further detailed in our last chapter. The encouragement to have the same mindset as Christ in 2:5 does not mean that the piece cannot also be an elaborate Christological confession. But the broader context of the hymn suggests that this piece is easily inserted into a series of examples to highlight a certain way of thinking that will advance the gospel. Käsemann and Martin have nonetheless argued that Paul's pedagogical intent was first and foremost kerygmatic, commending to his readers an early Christian confession of Christ's accomplishments.²³⁴

Regarding the nature of the divinity presented in terms of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, scholars have wondered from what theological perspective these terms should be understood, e.g., the mediatorial figures of late Judaism or the monotheism of Paul. A somewhat related theological question is whether the language of the hymn and its narrative movement serve to present Christ in a preexistent state before his incarnation (on which see the discussion on ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ above). We believe that the neglected expression ἴσα θεῷ detailed in our final chapter will shed considerable light on this question of preexistence, as well as on the issue of the theological issue of kenosis.

2.6 Conclusion

This concludes our introduction to the general background and textual issues relating the Epistle to the Philippians, as well as the key research concerns that have exercised scholars

²³⁴ E. Käsemann, "A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11," *Journal for Theology and Church* 5 (1968): 45-88; Martin, 287ff.

regarding Phil 2:6-11. This survey sets the stage for a multi-faceted study of the expression ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6.

Chapter 3: Modern Research and English-language Translations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ

3.1 Statement of the Problem

The end of the preceding chapter gave a basic introduction to Phil 2:6-11 through the lens of some fundamental research trends (authorship/origin, structure/genre, conceptual origins, lexical studies, and theology). In the area of lexical studies, the scholarly output has focused largely on ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, ἀρπαγμός, and ἐκένωσεν. But a fourth element, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in v. 6b, is rarely treated extensively in the publications of the last fifty years.

The grammars and lexicons agree that the accusative neuter plural ἴσα found in v. 6b (from the adjective ἴσος) is a form that can belong to the word class of adverb with meanings such as “equally,” “in an equal manner,” or “in the same way.”²³⁵ Yet the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ is most often translated “equality with God” or “being equal with God,” as if the adjective ἴσος were being used. We would like to explore, based on a broad range of ancient textual and modern linguistic data, the possibility that the adverbial sense of ἴσα as it appears in the expression ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6 has been insufficiently considered in the secondary literature.

An adverbial interpretation of ἴσα θεῶ, if valid, might minimize confusion about the interpretation of the hymn as a whole and lead to a better English translation. We wonder whether orienting thoughts toward the ontological being of Christ with a translation such as “being equal with God” may be inviting unnecessary confusion if the sense is actually adverbial. This confusion applies to both academic and theological settings. The rendering “being equal with God” leads one to believe that the Apostle Paul is making a comment about how Christ’s divine nature measures up to that of God the Father. This metaphysical understanding becomes particularly challenging when trying to make sense of the key words ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν.

In much of the literature, commentators attempt to define ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν with the understanding that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ means ontological equality. Thus they are asking whether, for example, Christ possessed or did not possess *equality*, and whether for Paul it is a question of not

²³⁵ E.g., Blass and Debrunner, sect. 434, no. 1; “ἴσος,” LSJ, 839. For more on adverbs derived from adjectives in general, see H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 236. For the moment we are not discussing the neuter plural as a noun (τὰ ἴσα, “the equal things,” or ἴσα without article, “equal things”).

seizing or not retaining that *equality*. Hence the understanding of ἀρπαγμόν itself may be unnecessarily skewed within that framework, for the word ultimately needs to be defined in relation to its immediate context. The same is true with ἐκένωσεν. If interpreters are thinking of ontological equality, then they may logically ask whether Christ literally gave up that equality or did so only metaphorically.

But what if the semantic framework used to address ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν is itself misguided from the start, as some adverbial interpreters of ἴσα θεῶ have argued? An interpreter risks misunderstanding all three elements. The lens through which ἀρπαγμόν and ἐκένωσεν are read might change significantly if τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ does not speak of equality of divine nature with the Father. If the adverbial translation of ἴσα θεῶ is warranted by the context, it may rather direct readers to understand τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in terms of preincarnate circumstances instead of ontological equality or even divine attributes. In other words, readers may not be led to wonder in what way Jesus Christ forfeited his equality of nature, if in fact τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ describes preincarnate divine honor, as some commentators have suggested. If this latter reading is accurate, the passage becomes easier to understand, directing readers' thoughts toward the simple change of circumstances similarly described in 2 Cor 8:9 and often cited by the Fathers: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."²³⁶ But this question of adjectival versus adverbial meaning remains to be judged based on the textual evidence of the following chapters in this study.

And then beyond the understanding of the immediate context, there are the potential implications for Christian theology. If τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ does not speak directly of ontological equality, does that change how theologians might understand the relationship between the Son and the Father in early church proclamation, and if so, in what way? In this regard it will be important to consider also the much discussed ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ of 2:6a, particularly in its juxtaposition with the μορφὴν δούλου of 2:7. Taken together, how do τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ and ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ in the context of the hymn contribute to the theological understanding of Jesus Christ? Does Paul through the hymn aim to touch ontological questions about Christ at all in the context of the letter?

²³⁶ NRSV.

So while this study will focus on τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ throughout, other key issues in the passage will need to be examined more fully in order to grasp the place of the whole hymn as it used in the letter, as P. Henry laid out: the point of Paul’s paraenesis; whether v. 6 presents the preincarnate or incarnate Christ; the meanings of, and connection between, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου, and their connection with τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ; the meaning of ἀρπαγμόν; and the meaning of ἐκένωσεν.²³⁷ We will bring these elements into the discussion in Chapter 7, after closely considering in the intervening chapters the interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ from historical and linguistic angles. We will begin presently by surveying the secondary literature and then some translations.

3.2 Modern Interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6 in the Secondary Literature Since the Reformation

Our survey of modern commentaries, periodicals, and monographs led us to place interpretations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ into six different categories. We believe the following categories represent the diversity of interpretations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in the secondary literature accurately.²³⁸ The scope of the investigation was of necessity limited to what has been said concerning τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in particular, and not the *Carmen Christi* in general or its other major points of discussion. Here are the categories we created:

- 1) No explicit grammatical discussion of our phrase or its adverbial function; “equality with God” or similar is retained as a translation;
- 2) As neuter plural of ἴσος, ἴσα is posited to mean “equalities,” i.e., plural attributes of Jesus Christ;
- 3) The presence of εἶναι makes ἴσα mean “equal” as a predicate adjective;
- 4) ἴσα is recognized grammatically to be adverbial, yet “equality with God” is retained as a translation;

²³⁷ P. Henry, “Kénose,” *DBS* 12-13.

²³⁸ The few authors whose positions on our phrase we judged to be ambiguous or contradictory were left out of this categorization process.

- 5) No grammatical discussion, but our phrase is specified to mean circumstantial²³⁹ and not ontological equality; “equality with God” or similar is retained as a translation;
- 6) ἴσα θεῶ is an adverbial construction and needs to be translated, or at least understood, differently than the traditional translation “equality with God” or similar.

3.2.1 Categories of Interpretations

Category #1: No explicit grammatical discussion of our phrase or its adverbial function; “equality with God” or similar is retained. A good number of commentators fall into this category.²⁴⁰ The lexical items ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and ἀπαγαγόν are almost always treated in grammatical detail by these authors, but ἴσα is not touched upon at all by this group. The translation “equality with God” or similar is taken for granted as valid. A question that arises is why τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ is left uncommented. Granted, all commentaries on Philippians cannot offer a significant treatment of every word in the text, but it would seem that ἴσα is crucial to understanding the hymn. Are these authors unaware of the previous discussion of the phrase? Has a particular treatment of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ convinced them of the adjectival rendering?

Category #2: As plural of ἴσος, ἴσα may mean “equalities,” i.e., attributes of Jesus Christ. This understanding of ἴσα as a plural substantive was only found in a few commentators. For example, C. J. Vaughan translates the neuter plural as the “being equal things with God,” and posits that perhaps the masculine singular, if used, “might have seemed to involve a risk of ‘dividing the

²³⁹ In contexts relating to Phil 2:6, we employ the word “circumstantial” throughout this study to mean relating to preincarnate circumstances, with an implied contrast made with later incarnate circumstances.

²⁴⁰ G. Barth, *Der Brief an die Philipper* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979); M. Bockmuehl, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (London: A & C Black, 1997); J. M. Boice, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971); F. F. Bruce, *Philippians* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1983); D. Flemming, *Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2009); S. E. Fowl, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); G. W. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); G. F. Hawthorne; D. E. Johnson, *Philippians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013); E. S. Little, *Joy in Disguise* (Harrisburg-New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2009); H. Marshall, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (London, Epworth Press, 1992); R. R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991); O’Brien (216) does have a footnote mentioning the possibility of an adverbial meaning; S. P. Saunders, *Philippians and Galatians* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001); T. D. Still, *Philippians & Philemon* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth and Helwys, 2011); B. B. Thurston and J. M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005); F. W. Weidman, *Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012); B. Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); *Ibid*, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994); K. S. Wuest, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942): Wuest qualifies “equality” here as meaning not the possession of the divine essence, but the expression of divine essence.

substance’ of the Godhead.”²⁴¹ His comments seem to indicate that he is unaware of adverbial ἴσα in the Greek language, and he calls the plural neuter form a “peculiarity”; his final translation is “the being equal.” Similarly, J. B. Lightfoot believes that the

examples of the mere adverbial use of ἴσα accumulated by commentators do not throw much light on the meaning here. Between the two expressions ἴσος εἶναι and ἴσα εἶναι no other distinction can be drawn, except that the former refers rather to the *person*, the latter to the *attributes*. In the present instance ἴσα θεῷ expresses better the Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ, than ἴσος θεῷ; for the latter would seem to divide the Godhead. It is not the statement either of the Lord Himself or of the evangelist, but the complaint of the Jews, that He “made Himself ἴσον τῷ θεῷ (John v.18).”²⁴²

Category #3: The presence of εἶναι makes ἴσα mean “equal” as a predicate adjective. These scholars propose ἴσα as “equal” and not the adverb “equally” or similar, despite its adverbial form, defending their position by saying that because εἶναι is present, ἴσα functions as a predicate adjective (with the meaning “to be equal”) and not an adverb giving us additional information about the infinitive verb. For example, Gordon H. Clarke disagrees with Müller’s argument for an adverbial usage (on which see below), and agrees with Rienecker’s *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* that the “neuter plural can be used as an adverb which in turn is used here as an adjective.”²⁴³ Clarke adds that if ἴσα were adverbial that would mean “equally God,” and in that case θεῷ would have to be, he argues, in the nominative and not the dative. So without saying that ἴσα is a predicate adjective in so many words, that appears to be what Clarke concludes. Gordon D. Fee translates our phrase as “being equal with God;” ἴσα is footnoted as being used as a predicate.²⁴⁴ For support, Fee mentions John 5:18, as well as Lightfoot’s allusion to Job 11:12. Fee appears to posit ontological equality from our phrase. Blass and Debrunner state that already in classical Greek adverbs could be used as attributive or predicate adjectives, and cite Phil 2:6 as an

²⁴¹ C. J. Vaughan, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (London, Macmillan, 1885), 47.

²⁴² J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963, originally London: Macmillan, 1913), 111-112. See also J. MacArthur, Jr., *Philippians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001).

²⁴³ G. H. Clarke, *Philippians* (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1996), 57.

²⁴⁴ G. D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 207.

example.²⁴⁵ We will later investigate whether the presence of εἶναι automatically signals a predicate construction.

Category #4: ἴσα is recognized grammatically to be adverbial in form, yet ontological “equality with God” is retained. Moisés Silva was the only author we found who discussed ἴσα grammatically, called it a “weakened” adverbial form, but still concluded (against Gnilka, Grelot, and Wanamaker) ontological “equality with God.”²⁴⁶

Category #5: No grammatical discussion, but our phrase is specified to mean circumstantial and not ontological equality; “equality with God” or similar is retained as a translation. C. Eerdman represents this category of a non-grammatical argument nicely:

Not only was Christ “in the form of God,” but he was also “on an equality with God.” The latter phrase refers not to nature but to relation. He was the eternal Son of God and as such he shared the glory of the Father. His divine nature he could never lay aside; his glory, however, he might relinquish. He ever would be essential deity; but he might assume a humbler mode of being. Thus, he “counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself.”²⁴⁷

Similarly, Hargreaves believes that “‘equality’ refers to the equal status and dignity and glory which Jesus had with God. It does not mean God’s nature. Jesus never let that nature go.”²⁴⁸ Hellerman retains “equality with God,” but downplays ontology and specifies status, power, and prestige.²⁴⁹ Martin eschews “metaphysical dogma,” preferring the “exercise of an office, the office of Lord.”²⁵⁰ Calvin admits that by τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ Paul does not mean the divine essence of Christ, but rather, along with ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, his equal majesty; he believes nonetheless that majesty and essence are inseparable.²⁵¹ Grudem also does not have an adverbial translation of the phrase, but recognizes nonetheless that the hymn is speaking of circumstantial privilege and honor, citing

²⁴⁵ Blass and Debrunner, sect. 434, no. 1.

²⁴⁶ M. Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 114.

²⁴⁷ C. Erdman, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1932), 73.

²⁴⁸ J. Hargreaves, *A Guide to Philippians* (London: SPCK, 1983), 55.

²⁴⁹ Hellerman, 133.

²⁵⁰ R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 151.

²⁵¹ J. Calvin, *Commentaires sur le Nouveau Testament, tome sixième, Épîtres aux Galates, Ephésiens, Philippiens et Colossiens* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1965), 270.

Christ's riches to poverty change of status in 2 Cor 8:9 and his glory shared with the Father before the world was made in John 17:5.²⁵²

Category #6: Grammatically, ἴσα in the collocation ἴσα θεῶ is adverbial and needs to be translated, or at least understood, differently than if it were ontological equality. Suggested adverbial nuances among these authors include a comparison of experiences of honor, position, status, rank, treatment, or equal rights. Aletti, for example, agrees with Grelot that our phrase means—and that the context in general discusses—not ontological equality but rather circumstantial treatment owing to Christ's divine condition.²⁵³ Amiot argues that Paul is not thinking of being “égal à Dieu, mais d'être à l'égal de Dieu, sur le même rang que lui. Il avait droit aux mêmes honneurs, à la même gloire que Dieu . . . il a renoncé à l'égalité de traitement avec Dieu . . . il renonce à sa gloire extrinsèque et aux honneurs dus à la divinité par les creatures raisonnables; il ne prend pas, comme homme, la condition glorieuse à laquelle sa divinité lui donnait droit.”²⁵⁴ Cerfaux writes that “Le Christ n'a d'autre manière d'être en dehors de son humanité qu'une manière d'être divine. C'est en Dieu qu'il a son être et ceci lui donne d'être comme Dieu, à l'égal de Dieu; par conséquent d'avoir le droit strict, un droit de nature, aux privilèges de Dieu, la majesté, la gloire et la puissance dans le cosmos.”²⁵⁵ Collange emphasizes the adverbial function: “il s'agit de l'équivalence de deux pouvoirs, de deux fonctions.”²⁵⁶ Eadie observes that the neuter singular and plural are often used to make adverbs. Disagreeing with ἴσα as essence, he instead argues for an adverb of measure or degree. Christ did not consider that *exhibiting* the divine form in a measure equal to the Father was a thing of which to lay hold.²⁵⁷ Edart affirms with Grelot that our phrase points to “position concrète” and not an attribute or his essence—otherwise he would have used ἴσος.²⁵⁸ Feuillet believes that Paul is not thinking of “d'être à l'égal de Dieu, en mot à mot pareillement à Dieu (*isa* au neutre), ce qui est beaucoup moins précis qu'être égal à Dieu et peut donc, *si le contexte l'exige*, se rapporter à la simple égalité d'honneurs et de traitement de la part des hommes.”²⁵⁹ Focant argues on the basis of the widely used expression ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς that we should understand our phrase in Phil 2 adverbially. Since in his examples of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς drawn

²⁵² W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 551.

²⁵³ J.-N. Aletti, 156.

²⁵⁴ F. Amiot, *L'enseignement de Saint Paul*, Tome I (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1946), 91.

²⁵⁵ L. Cerfaux, *Le Christ dans la théologie de saint Paul* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1951), 291.

²⁵⁶ Collange, 90.

²⁵⁷ J. Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1859), 106-107.

²⁵⁸ J.-B. Edart, *L'Épître aux Philippiens, Rhétorique et Composition Stylistique* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 2002), 157.

²⁵⁹ A. Feuillet, *Christologie paulinienne et tradition biblique* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1973), 125.

from Greek literature, the “visée n’est évidemment pas ontologique” but rather a matter of the treatment of someone like a god, “ce pourrait bien être les honneurs rendus comme à un dieu dont il est question en Ph 2,6b et dont le Christ ne veut pas profiter.”²⁶⁰ Fontaine argues not for ontological being, but circumstantial treatment.²⁶¹ Gifford understands preincarnate circumstances or conditions that accompany sharing the divine nature.²⁶² Grelot writes: “Elle ne se rapporte pas à une speculation sur la *nature* divine du Christ . . . elle se rapporte au *traitement* qui manifeste la *condition* reconnue à quelqu’un;” and later (505), “le *traitement* qui eût manifesté son appartenance à la sphère divine.”²⁶³ Jones translates “to be on an equality with God,” and paraphrases that he “did not regard His being on an equality of outward glory and majesty with God as a prize and treasure to be tightly held, but of His own will emptied Himself thereof.” Jones explains that the phrase has been interpreted in three ways:

- (1) As equivalent to “being in the form of God” and denoting the very essence of Deity and supporting, therefore, the theory of the “kenosis” which maintains that at the Incarnation Christ did actually divest Himself of some of His divine attributes;
- (2) it denotes the outward glory and manifestation of the Godhead, which the Son surrendered at His Incarnation: those associations of His Divinity which are separable from His essential nature; or
- (3) a dignity and prerogative which were to be His in the future as the reward of His humiliation.

Jones chooses the second interpretation.²⁶⁴ Meyer argues that εἶναι as an “abstract substantive verb does not suit the clearly adverbial use of ἴσα here, and thus εἶναι should be understood as “to exist,” as in the phrase *God-equal existence*, existence in the way of parity with God. Paul might have written ἴσων (as masculine) θεῶν (John 5.18), or ἰσόθεον; but, as it stands, he has more distinctly expressed . . . the *divine mode of existence*, of the pre-human Christ.”²⁶⁵ Morlet comments:

²⁶⁰ C. Focant, “Philippiens 2,5-11 face à la pluralité des lectures,” in de Boissieu, 12.

²⁶¹ D. Fontaine, *L’égalité avec Dieu en Philippiens 2.6* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2010), 103.

²⁶² E. H. Gifford, *The Incarnation. A Study of Philippians II.5-11* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1897), 49.

²⁶³ P. Grelot, “Deux expressions difficiles de Philippiens 2.6-7,” *Biblica* 53 (1972), 500.

²⁶⁴ M. Jones, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Methuen, 1918), 29.

²⁶⁵ H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983, original edition, 1883), 72.

Toutefois l'emploi d'un neutre adverbial, et non pas d'un adjectif qualificatif, met l'accent sur la condition concrète du Christ comme Dieu, plutôt que sur l'essence de cette égalité. La Bible de Jérusalem a sans doute raison de traduire par "le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu." On peut donc proposer comme traduction pour l'ensemble de l'expression: "il n'a pas considéré son rang d'égalité avec Dieu comme un avantage à exploiter," montrant ainsi que dans l'incarnation le Christ est resté l'égal de Dieu mais qu'il a renoncé à sa gloire (Jn 17.5), à sa richesse (2 Co 8.9), tout en conservant la totalité de ses attributs divins, il les a tenus cachés.²⁶⁶

Müller argues that our phrase must be translated "to be in such a manner as God" or "to exist in a manner equal to God, or in a manner like unto God" and not "to be equal to God." He writes: "It does not, therefore, denote equality of being, which is already expressed by μορφῆ θεοῦ, and in which case ἴσον would have been substituted for ἴσα. Where this difference is not noted, the two expressions ἐν μορφῆ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ are wrongly considered identical in meaning. For this reason the Vulgate rendering *esse se aequalem Deo* cannot be deemed correct." He continues:

Christ could have existed and have appeared only as God, only in a manner equal to God: it was a right which was due to Him; He need not have gone into another manner of existence. But as such a valuable possession, or a thing grasped which desperately had to be clung to at all costs, He did not regard it. In His adorable love and grace He was willing through His incarnation to enter into another—a more humble—manner of existence and to take the form of a servant. The expression "equality with God" (which is not a very literal or accurate rendering of the original) does not therefore here denote His essential equality with God or His identity of being with God, but describes His manner of existence as God, by which is meant His divine "existential glory, the majesty of His revelation, the greatness and splendour of His manner of being" (Greijanus).²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ R.-M. Morlet, *L'Épître de Paul aux Philippiens* (Vaux-sur-Seine: EDIFAC, 1985), 102.

²⁶⁷ J. J. Müller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 79-80.

Osiek writes that our phrase is grammatically a “neuter plural used adverbially with a dative of comparison, a usage attested in classical authors”; it is not a “metaphysical but a social statement” about Christ’s status or importance.²⁶⁸ Reumann decides on the simple translation “to be like God,”²⁶⁹ along with Schenk²⁷⁰ and Synge.²⁷¹ Taylor argues, “Le mot *isa* est adverbial: il signifie ‘sur un pied d’égalité’” and does not refer to the person.²⁷² Vincent believes that εἶναι should be taken as “to exist” and “not as the abstract substantive verb ‘to be’; ἴσα is adverbial, ‘in a manner of equality.’”²⁷³ Welch comments that

this neuter plural cannot denote the *one* unchanging essence of Deity, but rather refers to the modes, states, manifestations and accompaniments of Deity. The Saviour could once have been “rich” and then for our sakes He could have become “poor,” but this would not have touched His essential nature. “Rich” and “poor” are modes of being that can be taken up and laid aside. The LXX of the book of Job uses the plural for ἴσα a number of times and mostly with the thought of “like” rather than identity . . . In none of these references equality of nature or essence is implied but likeness to some quality or attribute . . .²⁷⁴

For still further adverbial interpretations, see Brückner,²⁷⁵ Heriban,²⁷⁶ Van Hengel,²⁷⁷ and Zerwick-Grosvenor.²⁷⁸

Part of our research will attempt to understand the reasons for this curious set of divisions exhibited among scholars in these six categories, with many older publications (1970s and before) insisting that the accepted translation is inadequate, while many more recent commentators seem unaware of the issues. We believe that the great majority of those scholars who do examine the

²⁶⁸ C. Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 61.

²⁶⁹ J. Reumann, *Philippians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 333.

²⁷⁰ W. Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), 189.

²⁷¹ F. C. Synge, *Philippians and Colossians* (London: SCM Press, 1951), 29.

²⁷² V. Taylor, *La Personne du Christ dans le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 74. See also original English edition (1958).

²⁷³ M. R. Vincent, *Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), 58ff.

²⁷⁴ C. H. Welch, *The Prize of the High Calling* (London: The Berean Publishing Trust, 1950), 107.

²⁷⁵ B. B. Brückner, *Epistola ad Philippenses* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1848), 21-37.

²⁷⁶ J. Heriban, *Retto Phronein e Kénosis. Studio esegetico su Fil 2,1-5.6-11* (Rome: LAS, 1983), 270.

²⁷⁷ W. A. Van Hengel, *Commentarius Perpetuus in Epistolam Pauli ad Philippenses* (Leiden and Amsterdam: Luchtmans and Müller, 1838), 143-147.

²⁷⁸ M. Zerwick and M. Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 5th revised edition, 1996).

phrase grammatically to any significant degree conclude that ἴσα θεῷ in Phil 2:6 needs to be rendered in terms of circumstances, and yet this rendering has not established itself in the translations (for details, see the next section on English translations).

At this point, however, the reader may wonder why, if such a significant number of scholars have already argued for the pertinence not just of an adverbial understanding of our phrase (Category #6), but a different translation, there is a need to open the discussion once again. We believe that if indeed we find solid ground for their conclusions, the case can be argued much more exhaustively. Only a portion of the authors in our Category #6 support their conclusions with examples of ἴσα outside of Philippians, and none offer what could be qualified as *extensively* analyzed evidence from ancient Greek texts that cite Phil 2:6b or use ἴσα θεῷ as a common collocation. Further, none offer a full-fledged grammatical analysis of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from a linguistic perspective. Even the work of Pierre Grelot, who of all authors has argued the most pointedly and extensively that the phrase should be understood and rendered adverbially, could be expanded, enriched, and updated from the angles of historic citation, grammatical analysis, and collocation.

3.3 Modern English-language Translations

A necessary implication of the possibility of an adverbial reading of ἴσα θεῷ in Phil 2:6 will be how the verse should be translated. With the exception of a few translations at the turn of the twentieth century, English-language translations have been dominated by the rendering “equality with God,” and to a lesser extent, “to be equal with God.” Exceptions to this pattern are in bold script:

Douay–Rheims Bible, 1582, “to be equal with God”

Authorized (King James) Version, 1611: “to be equal with God”

English Revised Version, 1881: “**to be on an equality with God**”

Darby Translation, 1890: “**to be on an equality with God**”

American Standard Version, 1901: “**the being on an equality with God**”

Revised Standard Version, 1946: “equality with God”

Jerusalem Bible, 1966: “equality with God”

New American Bible, 1970: “equality with God”

New International Version, 1973: “equality with God”

New Revised Standard Version, 1989: “equality with God”

English Standard Version, 2011: “equality with God”

New American Bible, Revised Edition, 2011: “equality with God”

It appears that at the end of the nineteenth century a few translations (*English Revised Version*, *Darby Translation*, *American Standard Version*) took into account the adverbial sense of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ and wanted to avoid the rendering “equality” on its own. “On an equality” was apparently an effort to orient the reader towards preincarnate circumstances and not nature. C. H. Welch comments that while the “Authorized Version looks to the being and essential nature of God, the Revised Version looks to the accompanying glory.”²⁷⁹ This suggests that at the time of these three translations (*English Revised Version*, *Darby Translation*, and *American Standard Version*), there existed in the scholarly literature an argument that was convincing enough to prompt translators to update previous translations.

A different type of recognition of the adverbial nature of our phrase is found in footnotes of two English editions. Though the *Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (RSVCE, 1965, 1966) translates our phrase “equality with God,” as most others, the editors nuanced in a footnote of Phil 2:6 that “equality with God” means “equality of treatment.”²⁸⁰ Similarly, the *Jerusalem Bible* footnotes Phil 2:6b with the explanation that our phrase “refers not to his equality by nature . . . but to his being publicly treated and honoured as equal to God”²⁸¹

Though an eventual by-product of our conclusions about the meaning of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ will be to focus particularly on modern English translations of Phil 2:6, it is also helpful nonetheless to consider trends in the French translations. The Roman Catholic Church experienced a translation controversy in the 1970s that served to clarify the rendering of Phil 2:6. While the official lectionary approved for French-speaking countries (*Traduction Officielle Liturgique* or *Bible Liturgique Officielle en Français*) since 1964 had read, “Étant de condition divine, il ne retint pas jalousement

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 107.

²⁸⁰ The footnote for 2:6 reads: “*in the form of God*: The Greek shows that divine attributes, and therefore nature, are implied here. It is not the divine nature he set no store by, but equality of treatment and recognition of his divinity.” A later footnote for 2:7 says that he emptied himself “of this external recognition, which was his right.”

²⁸¹ *The Jerusalem Bible*, ed. A. Jones (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966), 339.

le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu," in 1969 this reading was changed to "Le Christ Jésus est l'image de Dieu; mais il n'a pas voulu conquérir de force l'égalité avec Dieu." In addition to the change in v. 6a, the rendering of ἀρπαγμόν went from retaining to conquering, and that of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from what is more easily understood as preincarnate circumstances to a phrase directing hearers to ontological equality.

Protesters interrupted a mass on Palm Sunday of March 22, 1970, to declare this 1969 translation heretical, believing it undermined the divinity of Jesus Christ by implying that he was not equal to the Father and did not seek to be. Since the lectionary translation aims not only for faithfulness to the original language, but comprehensibility for the public, a series of changes was introduced in the ensuing years. In 1971, the lectionary read, "Le Christ Jésus, tout en restant l'image même de Dieu, n'a pas voulu revendiquer d'être pareil à Dieu." When the controversy did not abate, in 1972 a footnote corrected the previous year's rendering with "lui qui, étant de condition divine, ne retint pas jalousement le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu." And finally in 1975, the actual text was changed to "Le Christ Jésus, lui qui était dans la condition de Dieu, n'a pas jugé bon de revendiquer son droit d'être traité à l'égal de Dieu."²⁸²

We note that the corrections made to the 1971, 1972, and 1975 translations all appear to reflect an adverbial, not an ontological interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ("être pareil à Dieu," "le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu," "d'être traité à l'égal de Dieu"). Thus the translators, while ostensibly issuing a new translation to *avoid* Christological misunderstanding, were nonetheless not willing to keep the 1969 ontological rendering which at first glance might serve their Christological purposes well. They apparently judged the adverbial reading truer to the original Greek (and, we might imagine, perfectly acceptable in the Church's Christology once properly understood). They additionally calmed the controversy by modifying the rendering of ἀρπαγμόν from the idea of conquering to the idea of retaining or exploiting something already possessed, as well as, eventually, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ from "l'image" to "condition de Dieu." We add that the most recent official liturgical translation, *Traduction Liturgique de la Bible* (2013) follows exactly the 1964

²⁸² H. Delhougne, "L'hymne dans la liturgie romaine avant et après Vatican II," in de Boissieu, 93-95. The location of the celebration of this interrupted mass is not given. Among other French translations, only *La Bible de Jérusalem* (1956) has "le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu;" consider also the "être en égalité avec Dieu" of the Nouveau Testament Interlinéaire: Grec-Français (2015). In the others, a non-adverbial reading dominates: *Bible en français courant* (1982): "demeurer de force l'égal de Dieu;" *Bible du Semeur* (1992): "l'égalité avec Dieu;" *Bible Segond 21* (2007): "son égalité avec Dieu;" *Traduction oecuménique de la Bible* (2010): "d'être l'égal de Dieu."

edition of the *Bible Liturgique Officielle en Français* with the words “ne retint pas jalousement le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu.” The term “égalité” of the 1969 translation continues to be avoided.

So the editors of the official liturgical translations (as well as those of *La Bible de Jérusalem*) adhered to the adverbial sense of our phrase to the point of integrating changes in the text itself after 1969, while the English versions since the beginning of the twentieth century have not.²⁸³ Either English translators are unaware of the data suggesting an adverbial meaning, or they are unconvinced by the arguments for such a reading.

3.4 Summary and Angles of Investigation to be Presented in Chapters 4-7

Our survey of the secondary literature reveals an ongoing divide between the ontological and circumstantial readings of Phil 2:6. The latter appears to have been a widely held interpretation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As for English translations, our survey suggests they have been largely unaffected by the adverbial interpretation, with the exception of a few translations at the turn of the twentieth century and explanatory footnotes in two mid-twentieth century translations. The portrait of the French translations is less uniform, with two major translations offering a non-ontological rendering.

We believe that a complete study of the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from the standpoint of historical citation, grammar, and collocation has not yet been undertaken. If such a study concludes that ἴσα is adverbial, then as a consequence there would be reason to bring the adverbial reading into the mainstream of English-language translations. Our more exhaustive treatment proposes first of all, in Chapter 4, a survey of Latin and especially Greek Fathers' citations of ἴσα θεῷ from Phil 2:6. Chapter 5 will then study the word ἴσα from a grammatical point of view at the level of morphology, syntax, and semantics. Chapter 6 will examine a collocation that is well known in archaic, classical, and Hellenistic Greek, ἴσα θεῷ/θεοῖς, and seek to determine how its use in Phil 2:6b relates to historical uses. Chapter 7 will examine other key terms and the general context of

²⁸³ In the older German versions such as Luther's, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ is rendered “Gott gleich zu sein.” While more recent versions like the Einheitsübersetzung and the Gute Nachricht Bibel render the phrase “wie Gott zu sein,” replacing “gleich” with “wie,” it is difficult to tell whether this decision is meant to reflect an adverbial interpretation or is rather an effort to translate with the method of dynamic equivalence rather than the literal approach. For example, in both of these latter translations, the word “gleich,” used for ἴσα by Luther at the end of the verse, is instead used in the phrase “Gott gleich” at the beginning of the verse to translate μορφῇ θεοῦ.

Phil 2:5-11 in order to better evaluate τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ and, if necessary, suggest improvements to existing English translations. The overall goal of this study is to determine from a broad base of ancient textual and modern linguistic data whether τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ of Phil 2:6b is ontological or circumstantial, insofar as the passage will allow such a distinction.

Chapter 4: τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in the Fathers

The purpose of this chapter will be to survey how the Fathers, particularly the Greeks, interpreted and used the quotation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from Phil 2:6 in their writings. P. Henry surveyed the use of the *Carmen Christi* in general in the Fathers.²⁸⁴ Only P. Grelot has specifically targeted τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, and his study was limited to the Latin Fathers. We are the first we know of to focus specifically on τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in the Greek Fathers—a study we will undertake after consideration of what has been said concerning the Latins.

4.1 The Latin Fathers

Two twentieth-century authors have undertaken detailed surveys of the Latin Fathers' interpretation of Phil 2:5-11, though with different emphases. Rather than undertake such a survey anew, we will briefly summarize their findings here. P. Henry's 1957 article titled "Kénose"²⁸⁵ surveyed both Latin and Greek Fathers with the specific goal of critiquing the kenotic theory.²⁸⁶ In order to do so, Henry sought out patristic quotations of the *Carmen Christi* in general, without focusing on a particular verse. Though his conclusions are less helpful to us here because he was studying the whole passage and was specifically evaluating the kenotic theory, we will mention for the moment what he concluded about the Latins. Henry interprets most of the Latin Fathers (as well as the Greeks) as understanding ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ as two phrases which both describe at the same time "l'être et la condition divine de Christ," though with slightly different emphases.²⁸⁷ The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων speaks more of Christ's *interior* divine quality which cannot be lost. The phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, on the other hand, speaks more of Christ's equal *exterior* position, situation, or condition, which could be renounced.²⁸⁸ And while Henry himself recognizes that ἴσα does not have the same meaning as does ἴσος in John 5:18, calling ἴσα "almost adverbial" and εἶναι "almost modal" in Phil 2:6b,²⁸⁹ he admits that Latin Fathers like Ambrose who were affected by the Arian controversy ascribed to ἴσα and ἴσος the

²⁸⁴ P. Henry, 7-161.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ The modern kenotic theory (mid-19th century) says that to become human, Christ had to empty himself of some or all of his divine attributes. The term *kenotic* comes from the first verb of Phil 2:7, κενόω.

²⁸⁷ Here it is sometimes difficult to follow Henry because his use of the word we translate "synonymous" to compare these two phrases seems exaggerated to us, based on his further distinctions between the two. Compare his comments, for example, on p. 130 with those of p. 28.

²⁸⁸ Henry, 27-28.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 27.

same meaning. This Arian conflict was in reality a series of church controversies beginning in the fourth century, the most well-known of which was led by Arius, who taught that the Son was created and not of the same substance as God the Father.

Some fifteen years later, however, P. Grelot studied certain Latin Fathers' quotations with a specific focus on their use of Phil 2:6-7, including a close look at τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ. Grelot concluded that some Latin Fathers before Ambrose (Novatian, Hilary of Poitiers, Marius Victorinus, and Jerome) made a greater distinction between ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ than the survey of P. Henry had shown.²⁹⁰ In Grelot's understanding of these particular Fathers, the former phrase referred to divine pre-existence, highlighting the form of Christ which manifested his *essence*. The latter spoke of circumstantial equality of *condition* (glory or power). Grelot does not argue his point on the basis of these early Fathers' translation of our phrase, for it is typically *aequalem se Deo esse* or similar (with the exception of Gaius Marius Victorinus,²⁹¹ who explicitly chose the adverbial *aequalia* for ἴσα on at least one occasion).²⁹² Grelot's argument is rather a piecing together of the logic of these Fathers' comments on v. 6's ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, ἀρπαγμόν, and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ, and their relationship to v. 7's ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν.

Grelot believes that the Arian controversy encouraged Ambrose and the *Ambrosiaster* to read τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ ontologically as a way to argue against the Arians. If τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ was read to mean "equality with God" in the way of essence rather than circumstances, as it was previously understood, then here was an excellent occasion to argue against the Arians' attack on the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. The Arians themselves also read τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in terms of equality of essence, but attacked Christ's divinity by their interpretation of ἀρπαγμός (Latin *rapinam*), saying that Christ did not possess and did not seek after that equality with God they believed was communicated by τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ. The Ambrosian interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ

²⁹⁰ P. Grelot, "La traduction et l'interprétation de Ph 2,6-7," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 93 (1971): 897-922, 1009-1026. Grelot, while in reality not proposing an altogether different interpretation of the Latin Fathers' use of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ than Henry, felt that Henry too easily grouped ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ together in meaning to emphasize their unity over against Arian readings which tended to see in τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ an element superior to ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ that Christ did not possess (899). Grelot observed more of a distinctly adverbial use of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ by the authors unaffected by the Arian controversy than Henry's broader survey had allowed (1009).

²⁹¹ Gaius Marius Victorinus, *Contra Arium* 1.23 [Locher].

²⁹² Grelot, "La traduction et l'interprétation," 1021 notes the various translations: *pariari Deo* (Tertullian); *aequalem se Deo esse* (Novatian); *parem Deo se esse* (l'Ambrosiaster); *aequalia Deo se esse* (Marius Victorinus); *esse se aequalem Deo* (Ambrose et Jerome).

as synonym of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, argues Grelot, became afterwards dominant in the Western church (Augustine, Thomas) down to our time. He specifies:

En fait, l'accusatif adverbial du grec *isa* invite à traduire: “le fait d’être à l’égal de Dieu,” et non pas “le fait d’être égal à Dieu.” Sur ce point, la fixation de la Vulgate a eu pour effet d’entraîner encore l’interprétation latine postérieure à saint Ambroise et à l’*Ambrosiaster* dans un contresens, d’où ses survivances modernes ne sont pas sorties. En effet, les deux expressions ne sont pas du tout équivalentes en français: la première vise la *condition concrète* du Christ comme fils de Dieu fait homme, tandis que la deuxième oriente la pensée vers son *essence* et sa *nature*. Les traducteurs français s’enferment dans le contresens, quand ils parlent d’“être égal à Dieu” ou de “l’égalité avec Dieu,” car ces expressions orientent spontanément la pensée du lecteur vers la *nature* divine du Christ.²⁹³

4.2 The Greek Fathers

The same kind of specific survey that Grelot undertook for the Latin Fathers’ use of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ has until now been lacking for the writings of the Greek Fathers. Grelot notes that “cette enquête ne me semble pas, pour l’instant, avoir été poussée plus loin que le point où l’a laissée P. Henry dans son article ‘Kénose’ . . . Je m’abstiendrai d’entrer dans ce domaine, en raison de l’abondance des matériaux qu’il faudrait examiner.”²⁹⁴ Grelot saw a further need for research because Henry’s survey was not specific to τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, but rather general for the *Carmen Christi* as a whole; furthermore, Grelot wanted to know whether the change in interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from particular condition to essence of nature that he observed for the Latins during the Arian controversy could be witnessed in the Greeks.

Our own survey of the Greek Fathers involved reading and analyzing the context of every citation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in every author writing in Greek between the Apostle Paul and 451

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ P. Grelot, “Deux expressions difficiles,” 496. Henry concluded for the Greeks what he observed in the Latins: ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ as two phrases which both describe at the same time “l’être et la condition divine de Christ,” though with slightly different emphases; the former emphasizes an interior quality, and the latter, an exterior one.

A.D.²⁹⁵ We estimate having read 240 citations in all, containing at a minimum ἴσα θεῶ and showing evidence of being a citation of Philippians 2:6. In the interest of presentability, we will highlight generalities from select authors by century and give pertinent examples, rather than mentioning each citation of every author. At the end of the survey, we will propose a few major categories of usage under which these patristic citations through the centuries can be classified.

4.2.1 Second Century (Letter from the Church of Lyons and Vienne and Clement)

Our earliest citations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ of Phil 2:6 come from the second century: a *Letter from the Church of Lyons and Vienne* to the churches in Asia and Phrygia²⁹⁶ and **Clement of Alexandria's** *Exhortation to the Greeks*.²⁹⁷ In the *Letter from the Church of Lyons and Vienne*, second-century Christians in Gaul who had borne witness to Christ while being tortured are said to be zealous in their imitation of Christ, who is identified as ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ. The connection that the author makes between this characteristic of Christ and the torture is that even though these Christians had attained the honor (δόξα) of being witnesses (μάρτυρες), yet they did not call themselves such and even rebuked other Christians who called them witnesses. Later on in the text, they prefer the lesser title “confessors” (ἡμεῖς δὲ ὁμολογοὶ μέτριοι καὶ ταπεινοί). In other words, the quotation of Phil 2:6 shows the attitude of Christ, that though he had the legitimate honor of a certain name or treatment, he insisted upon not being named or treated according to his stature. Thus these Christians, like Christ, refused an honor appropriate to the stature they had achieved.

In a second text from the second century, Clement of Alexandria quotes Phil 2:6-7 in a treatment of God's eagerness and multi-faceted approach to the salvation of men through time. “The Savior,” he writes, “has many voices and many methods for the salvation of men” (Πολύφωνός γε ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ πολύτροπος εἰς ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίαν). The humbling of Christ as presented in Phil 2:6-7 then serves as an example of the extreme action God would take to save men—“He, the merciful God, striving to save man” (ὁ φιλοκτίμων θεός, σῶσαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον

²⁹⁵ The date of the Council of Chalcedon, a turning point in the Christological debates of the time, which affirmed the union of the two natures of Christ, human and divine.

²⁹⁶ The considerable length of the letter precludes full citation here, but see *Epistula ecclesiarum apud Lugdunum et Viennam*, preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1 [SC 41:6].

²⁹⁷ Clement, *Protr.* 1.8 [GCS 12:9].

γλιχόμενος). Thus the two extant quotations of Phil 2:6 from the second century are used in contexts of humility.

4.2.2 Third Century (Origen, Hippolytus, Phileas, Methodius of Olympus)

While **Origen** quotes our phrase apologetically once to argue against Christ's mutability,²⁹⁸ and on another occasion to argue against a false idea concerning the soul of the Son,²⁹⁹ the majority of his dozen quotations of our phrase concern Christ's humility as seen in the incarnation. For example, in one particular text, Christian humility is distinct in being God-oriented, as was the humility of the incarnation.³⁰⁰ Here Origen argues against Celsus' idea that Christian humility is actually borrowed from Plato's teaching. A major difference, says Origen, is that a Christian humbles himself not randomly, but *to* God, under his mighty hand.

Μᾶλλον γὰρ τοῦ κατὰ Πλάτωνα ταπεινοῦ καὶ κεκοσμημένου “ταπεινὸς καὶ κεκοσμημένος” ἐστὶν ὁ κεκοσμημένος μὲν διὰ τὸ πορεύεσθαι “ἐν μεγάλοις” καὶ “θαυμασίους” ὑπὲρ αὐτόν· ταπεινὸς δέ, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν τούτοις ὧν ταπεινοῦται ἐκὼν, οὐχ ὑπὸ τὸν τυχόντα ἀλλ’ “ὑπὸ τὴν κραταιὰν χεῖρα τοῦ θεοῦ,” διὰ τοῦ διδασκάλου τῶν τοιούτων μαθημάτων Ἰησοῦ·

More humble and orderly than the man whom Plato regards as humble and orderly is the man who is orderly because he ‘walks in great matters which are too wonderful for him’, and who is humble because even when his mind is uplifted by these insights he voluntarily humbles himself, not under any ordinary man but ‘under the mighty hand of God’, through Jesus who teaches him these doctrines.³⁰¹

Phil 2.6-8 is then quoted at the climax of his argument, without any detailed exegesis, to show that Jesus Christ is the greatest teacher of this kind of God-directed humility.

Origen's *Homilies on Luke* has another example of the use of Phil 2:6 to teach humility.

²⁹⁸ Origen, *Cels.* 4.18 [SC 136:226].

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, *Fr. Prin.* 36.7 [PG 83:197C].

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, *Cels.* 6.15 [SC 147:216].

³⁰¹ Translation Chadwick.

Here Origen gives a commentary on Luke’s verses about Jesus’ growing from Luke 2:40: “the child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom” (Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἠϋξανεν καὶ ἐκραταιοῦτο πληρούμενον σοφία).

Ἡϋξανε τοίνυν, ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγησάμενος τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἐταπεινώσεν ἑαυτόν· ἐκραταιοῦτο μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν καὶ τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν φέρων· ἐπληροῦτο σοφία, ἐπεὶ ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτόν· πρὸ γὰρ ἐτῶν δώδεκα ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος οὐ χωρεῖ πληρότητα σοφίας· τὸ δὲ αἴτιον τοῦ αὔξειν καὶ κραταιοῦσθαι αὐτὸν ἦν τὸ πληροῦσθαι σοφίας.³⁰²

He was growing indeed, not then considering existing as God something to be retained, he humbled himself. He was being strengthened, taking the form of a servant and bearing our weaknesses. He was filled with wisdom, then he humbled himself. For before his twelfth year, barely a man, he did not reach the fullness of wisdom. The cause of his growing and becoming strong was his being filled with wisdom.

In this way Origen explains that it was Christ’s being filled with wisdom first that made him subsequently grow and led to his humbling. Origen describes this humbling by quoting Phil 2:6-7. It is interesting to note that Origen places the attitude of Christ described in Phil 2:6 as ongoing during his youth.

Our third illustrative humility text of Origen is an extensive discussion of Matt 19:14, where Jesus commands the disciples to let the children approach him.³⁰³ On this verse Origen comments that Jesus wants the disciples to condescend to the level of children so that the former might learn from the humility of the latter. He then cites Phil 2:6 to say that Jesus himself, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, was also humbled as a child along with his family at the hands of Herod (Matt 2). It is through just such a humbling, argues Origen, that Christ was able to implore people to come and learn from him—he himself being gentle and humble of heart. Origen’s argument emphasizes that if Christ, the Savior and Lord, could humble himself as

³⁰² Ibid, *Hom. Luc.* 19.20 [GCS 49:114], translation ours.

³⁰³ Ibid, *Comm. Matt.* 10-17 15.7.11 [GCS 40:368].

a young child and be learned from, then the disciples could do the same and learn from the humility of the children coming to Jesus.

Our fourth and final text illustrative of Origen's humility-related use of Phil 2:6 is found in his commentary on 1 Cor 13:5, in which Paul wrote that "love does not seek its own interests."³⁰⁴

ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ. Οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς· οὐδεὶς ἀγάπην ἔχων ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ· οἷον μήτηρ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν τὸν υἱὸν ἢ πατήρ οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἴδια ὡς τὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ· τὸ γὰρ ἔχειν ἀγάπην οὐ φίλαυτον. εἰ ἐζήτει τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ὁ Σωτὴρ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων καὶ ὢν ἴσα θεῷ, ἔμενεν ἂν ἐν τῇ μορφῇ ἐκείνῃ· νῦν δὲ σῶσαι κόσμον ἀπολλύμενον θελήσας ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν· καὶ σχήματι εὔρεθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

Love is not rude, it does not seek its own things. No one having love seeks their own things. For example, a mother or a father loving a son does not seek his own things like he does the things of his son. For to have love is not selfish. If the Savior was seeking his own things while being in the form of God and existing like God, he would have remained in that form. But now wanting to save a dying world, he made himself nothing by taking the form of a servant, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death, even a cross-death.

In this way, Origen cites Phil 2:6 as an illustration of true love's selflessness. Humility is not emphasized as much in this fourth example we give, but rather the closely related virtue of selflessness. Of note for our later discussion of Phil 2:6 is that Origen here describes Jesus as ὑπάρχων ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ καὶ ὢν ἴσα θεῷ, leaving out any question of οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο. In other words, ὢν ἴσα θεῷ is, according to Origen, not a potential status or condition, but taken for granted as the case in his argument, with the participle ὢν replacing τὸ εἶναι.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, *Fragmenta e catenis in Epistulam primam ad Corinthios* 51.19 (C. Jenkins, "Origen on I Corinthians," *Journal of Theological Studies* 10 (1908): 35. Translation ours.

At the beginning of the third century, (Pseudo-)Hippolytus argues briefly against the Sethians' interpretation of Phil 2:6-7, which claims that the servile form the Apostle Paul envisions in the passage is the Son taking the form of a serpent and entering into a womb.³⁰⁵ Another author, Phileas, quotes Phil 2:6-8 in asserting that the Christian martyrs of the past had been able to persevere in suffering because they had learned from the humiliation that Christ had endured as described in the *Carmen Christi*. Here is Phileas:³⁰⁶

Wherefore also, desiring earnestly the greater gifts, the Christ-bearing martyrs endured every kind of suffering and all manner of devices of torture, not once, but even a second time in some cases; and though their guards vied in all kinds of threats against them, not only in word but also in deed, they refused to give up their resolution, because perfect love casteth out fear.

Lastly, in a similar way to Phileas, Methodius of Olympus quotes our phrase in what survives as a brief fragment in order to emphasize that the humility of Christ recorded in the *Carmen Christi* served as motivation to the martyrs.³⁰⁷

Taken together, the extant quotations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ we possess from two authors of the second century and four authors of the third century are overwhelmingly used in discussions of Christ's humility, whether as exhortations to the imitation of Christ or as patterns for the ancient martyrs. The text is rarely quoted in apologetic presentations related to Christ's deity.

4.2.3 Fourth Century (Athanasius, Basil, Marcellus of Ancyra, Ephrem the Syrian, Eusebius, Apollinarius of Laodicea, Gregory of Nyssa, Ephiphanius, Didymus, John Chrysostom)

A notable shift in the use of the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ occurs in the fourth century. Not only do we possess more citations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ; the way the phrase is used also shifts from the preponderance of exhortations to humility to that of apologetic arguments related to the deity of Christ. Guinot explains:

³⁰⁵ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 10.11 [GCS 26:272].

³⁰⁶ Phileas, *Epistula ad Thmuitanos* 2.9, preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 8.10 [Oulton].

³⁰⁷ Methodius, Fragment of *De martyribus* [GCS 27:520].

Fortement doctrinale déjà chez Origène, la lecture de Ph. 2,5-11 le devient davantage encore au IV^e siècle en raison de la crise arienne. Contre Arius qui conteste au Fils une divinité égale à celle du Père, en faisant de lui un Dieu inférieur et un être créé – la première de toutes les créatures –, ses adversaires utilisent massivement Ph 2,6-8 pour démontrer que le Fils est bien de même nature que le Père et partage avec lui la puissance et la gloire, autrement dit les attributs d'une nature divine parfaite.³⁰⁸

While we would not describe Origen's use of Phil 2:6 as "fortement doctrinale" in a Christological way as Guinot posits, but rather primarily ethical, his description of the effect of the Arian crisis upon the use of Phil 2 in the fourth century will prove sound as we survey the quotations of the Greek Fathers. This theological crisis of the early fourth century AD revolved around the figure of Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria. Though we know little of Arius' life, we do know that around AD 318 he became embroiled in a controversy with Bishop Alexander of Alexandria over Christ's essence in relation to the Father. It is fairly clear that Arius taught that Christ was a created being in order to emphasize his commonality with those he would redeem. Arius was condemned at Nicaea (AD 325), and the ensuing controversy led to the Church's Trinitarian formulation at Constantinople (AD 381).³⁰⁹ For our purposes, as Guinot states, we will note among the fourth- and fifth-century Fathers we cite strong reactions to this controversy about Christ's nature.

The Doctrinal Background: Christological Controversies of the Fourth Century

In order to fully understand these strong reactions about Christ's nature, it will be worthwhile to outline the contours of these doctrinal controversies of the fourth century more fully, particularly those surrounding Arius. However, it is first essential to recognize that these controversies did not arise suddenly, but were the fruit of centuries of discussion about key Christian beliefs. Before surveying the fascinating events surrounding the articulation of these doctrines in the fourth century, we will begin by giving a very brief and broad summary of the first three centuries in regards to beliefs about the unity and plurality of the Christian God.

³⁰⁸ J. N. Guinot, "Lectures patristiques de Philippiens 2,5-11: Les Pères grecs," in de Boissieu, 19.

³⁰⁹ D. E. Groh, "Arius, Arianism," in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York : Doubleday, 1992), 385-386.

First Century

The early church was convinced of the monotheism it inherited from its Jewish context. But within this monotheism, the belief that God is one, there was early on a sense of plurality within unity. We note what Rusch calls “twofold and threefold patterns” in the various NT writings. For example:

Rm 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

2 Cor 4:14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

Eph 1:20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

1 Tim 1:2 To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Pet 1:21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Mt 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .

1 Cor 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Gal 3:11-14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Heb 10:29 How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

1 Pet 1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

These various biblical authors write of God the Father and Jesus Christ, of Jesus Christ and the Spirit, and of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit. While there is no doctrine of the Trinity in the NT as would be explained at Nicaea,

the threefold pattern is evident throughout, in spite of the fact that there is usually nothing in the context to demand it. The conclusion seems obvious: the idea of the triadic manifestation of the Godhead was present from the earliest period as part of Christian piety and thinking. But no steps were taken to work through the implications of this idea and to arrive at a cohesive doctrine of God. The triadic pattern supplies the raw data from which the more developed descriptions of the Christian doctrine of God will come.³¹⁰

Second Century

In the second century, the so-called “Apostolic Fathers” do not give evidence of articulating a doctrine of the Trinity as we see at Nicaea, though again the threefold pattern is evident as it was in the NT among such authors as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and in the *Letter of Barnabas*. With the Apologists, however, we do see certain developments regarding the eternal plurality within

³¹⁰ W. G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 2.

unity of the Christian God, particularly by way of the Logos concept. As they defended the new Christian faith against charges of atheism, these thinkers appropriated the Logos (λόγος) that had been discussed in Stoicism and Judaism. This appropriation was facilitated by the prologue of the Gospel according to John:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.³¹¹
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

The meanings “word” and “reason” for the Greek word λόγος were used to speak of the preexistent Christ. Rusch explains how these second-century Apologists thought:

According to the apologists, Christ is the Logos, preexistent before the incarnation as the Father’s mind or thought. In Christ the Logos became incarnate, but the incarnation was not the beginning of his being. As revealed in creation and redemption, Christ is the Father’s expression or extrapolation. By this concept the Apologists were able to maintain both the pretemporal unity of Christ with the Father, and the Son’s manifestation in time and space. They found the Stoic distinction between the *Logos endiathetos* (the immanent Word) and the *Logos prophorikos* (the expressed Word) helpful in this regard and even used this terminology.³¹²

For Justin Martyr, for example, converted to Christianity around 130 A.D., the Logos is distinct from the Father but is nonetheless divine. This reasoning was possible through the use of the notion of generation, analogous to human speech. Thus Christ, as the Logos, is an expression put forth, or generated, by the Father. In this way the eternal unity of the Godhead was upheld along with plurality by using a category familiar to Greek philosophy.

³¹¹ Jn 1:1-3, NA²⁸.

³¹² Rusch, 4.

Irenaeus of Lyon also used the Logos concept in his discussion of the plurality within the unity of the Christian Godhead, though in a different way than Justin Martyr. Irenaeus steers clear of emphasizing the generation or expression of the Logos from the Father, preferring to speak of the Logos, Christ, as eternally with God. The Logos and the Spirit are with the Father, eternally existing as his self-disclosure. This process of self-disclosure he called the *economy*, and thus Irenaeus' explanation became known as economic trinitarianism.³¹³

Third Century

The third century witnessed a reaction to the use of the Logos doctrine, with authors emphasizing the unity of the Christian God. Dynamic monarchianism (seen, for example, in Paul of Samosata, whose views will be discussed further below) held that Christ was only a man who became Spirit-endowed with divinity, but was certainly not eternal. The Son and the Spirit are not persons of the Christian God, and thus the unity of God rather than true plurality was emphasized. Modalist monarchianism (seen, for example, in Noetus of Smyrna) understood the Christian God as a singular monad without plurality. The terms Father and Son and Spirit are merely differing names of the monad, or in the case of Sabellius, three operations or modes of God. In these explanations we witness an attempt to preserve the unity of God in a way that minimizes or essentially obviates the divine essence of the Son.³¹⁴

Other third-century authors, however, sought to preserve the plurality within unity explored by the second-century Apologists. Tertullian, writing in Latin, introduced the word *trinitas* and described as one in substance the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is definite plurality of persons within definite unity of substance. In this regard Tertullian's articulation would pave the way for the fourth-century formulation found in the Nicene creed.³¹⁵

In the East, Clement of Alexandria and Origen also significantly advanced discussions of the nature of the Christian God's plurality within unity. Clement emphasized that the Son is the mediator who makes known the Father. Origen accentuated an eternal relationship between God

³¹³ A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1. Translated by John Bowden (Mowbrays: London, 1975), 101.

³¹⁴ M. Simonetti, "Arianism," in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 99, L. F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero, eds. (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010), 74.

³¹⁵ Grillmeier, 117-131.

the Father and the Son, who is again the Father's Logos. This emphasis on the eternity of the divine plurality and thus of the Son would also play an important part in the later creed formulated at Nicaea. At the same time, Origen's belief that the Son was of a different hypostasis or essence may have influenced the thinking of Arius on a key point of the fourth-century Arian controversies. The writings of these third-century theologians served to advance the articulation of the plurality within unity of the Christian God that was to be expressed at Nicaea and Constantinople.³¹⁶

Fourth Century

For the sake of better understanding the reasoning and method behind the Greek Fathers' citation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ from Phil 2:6, we will now focus particularly upon the momentous events and patristic sources dating from 318 to 381. For it was during these years that the questions about the divinity of the Son and his relationship to the Father came to public prominence.

AD 318-325 The Controversy Surrounding Arius and the Council of Nicaea

During the period surrounding the Council of Nicaea, the theological questions we have begun to describe occupied a significant place in the intellectual and even popular discussions of the time.³¹⁷ So much so that in Constantinople, for example, "all classes, even mechanics, bankers, frippers, market women, and runaway slaves took lively part in the questions of Homousion and sub-ordination, of the begotten and the unbegotten."³¹⁸

But what are these matters of Homousion, subordination, and the begotten/unbegotten, and how did they come to be such popular subjects of discussion at that time? To answer those questions, we must mention potential direct influences upon Arius and the debates surrounding his teachings. Some find a source of the Arian controversy in the teachings of Origen (A.D. 184/5-253/254), for whom Christ had divine attributes such as eternity, but was of a separate essence

³¹⁶ Rusch, 16.

³¹⁷ For details on the sociology of the public reaction to the debates, see R. MacMullen, *Voter pour définir Dieu: Trois siècles de conciles* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008).

³¹⁸ P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, vol. III, Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, 5th revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 601.

from God the Father. For Origen, the Son was eternally generated (or begotten) from the Father and was also subordinate or secondary to the Father, making the Father the root of the Godhead.³¹⁹

Another potential influence upon Arius' theology is Lucian of Antioch. This Lucian (240-312) was priest at the church of Antioch and held a school for biblical interpretation there.³²⁰ His method of interpretation became known as literal and rational rather than allegorical and mystical as in the Alexandrian exegetical school.

Though no certainly authentic examples of his writings are extant, we do possess ancient references to Lucian's students, among them Eusebius of Nicodemia, Theognis of Nicaea, and Asterius of Cappadocia.³²¹ Bouларand believes that the similarity of Arian doctrine between these and other church leaders connected to the master at Antioch make it difficult to think that Lucian would not be the source of their Christological tendencies: "Cependant les 'Lucianistes' forment un groupe si uni d'esprit, de cœur et d'action qu'il est bien difficile de ne pas imputer à leur maître le fond de leur mentalité, voire leur doctrine commune."³²² The tendency shared between these authors to consider Christ a created being, along with the fact that Arius calls Eusebius of Nicodemia a "co-Lucianist" has led some to believe that Lucian had taught his pupils that Christ was created.³²³

Besides Origen and Lucian, a third potential influence upon Arius' theology is that of Paul of Samosata (200-275), bishop of Antioch from 260 until 268 when he was deposed. In Paul's day there was a concern to preserve the unity of the Godhead from internal distinctions. This so-called monarchianism reacted to second century distinctions made between the divine Logos (where the Logos is equated with Christ) and the Father. Monarchianism is a form of what theologians have called adoptionism, in which Christ was only a man with divine inhabitation of the Spirit.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Ibid, 620.

³²⁰ E. Bouларand, S. J., *L'Hérésie d'Arius et la « Foi » de Nicée*, première partie: *L'Hérésie d'Arius* (Paris: Éditions Letouzey & Ané, 1972), 144.

³²¹ Ibid, 161.

³²² Ibid, 163.

³²³ R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 30, urges caution on this point of relationship between Arius and Lucian.

³²⁴ Rusch, 8, clarifies that it is nonetheless "difficult to arrive at an accurate picture of what Paul taught. He probably held to a strict Unitarian view of God, believing that Son and Spirit were merely names for the inspired person Jesus Christ and the grace given to the apostles. There are many similarities between Paul's teaching and economic trinitarianism. Yet his starting point was not the unfolding of an eternal Trinity. It appears that for Paul the Logos is an impersonal communication from God, without individual subsistence so that God is one person, and the

Boularand understands Paul's belief that Jesus was not born divine but was subsequently inhabited by divinity as influencing Arius through the thought of Lucian:

C'est donc un monothéisme de caractère judaïsant que professe l'évêque d'Antioche . . . Qu'une telle doctrine annonce la théologie d'Arius, c'est chose manifeste . . . à savoir une conception de la monade divine excluant toute procession d'hypostases consubstantielles. Comme le Samosatéen, le "Collucianiste" admettra un Verbe aussi éternel que l'Inengendré et identique à son essence; et il ne verra dans le Christ qu'une créature, un fils adoptif de Dieu. Seulement, sous l'influence du platonisme et de Philon, Arius détachera davantage le Logos créé de l'ensemble de la création, pour en faire l'instrument, formé avant tous les siècles, de la production de l'univers. Paul de Samosate, lui, regardait Jésus né de Marie comme un homme ordinaire, quoique plus juste que les autres.³²⁵

While the certainty of the influence of Lucian and Paul on Arius is still debated, we may cautiously consider that the effects Origen's teachings had in fact extended to two leaders in Alexandria—one a bishop and the other a presbyter—with very different results.³²⁶ The Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander (died 326), taught as Origen did that the Son was eternally generated from the Father, but unlike Origen, Alexander held that the two persons were of the same substance. The presbyter Arius (256-336), of the district of Baucalis in Alexandria, taught that the Son is indeed creator of the world, but had himself been created by the Father. Thus the Son is not, according to Arius, equal in attributes to the Father, since the Son has been created. The created is not of the same substance in his essence as the Father.

threefold distinctions refer only to abstractions except as they are used as traditional terms as Son and Spirit with reference to the man Jesus and the grace of God in the church."

³²⁵ Boularand, 172.

³²⁶ W. A. Löhr (129) describes the conflict between the two leaders as "a rather technical dispute between two theologians who both formulated their positions within a largely Origenist framework." Löhr believes that in light of their proposed common Origenist source, Alexander and Athanasius' reaction to Arius' teaching was exaggerated. However, we would suggest that the difference between the created Son of Arius' teaching and the uncreated Son of Alexander's teaching were considered a significant enough divergence at the time to warrant such a debate. See W. A. Löhr, "Arius Reconsidered (Part 2)," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10 (2006): 121-157.

In the patristic writings this distinction about divine substance represented by Alexander and Arius came to be labeled first by two Greek words, and then eventually a third:

Homoousion came to identify the doctrine of those who, like Alexander, believed that Christ is ὁμοούσιος, “of the same essence,” as God the Father. This stance is also sometimes called Homoousianism. Those who held this position became known as the Nicene, Homoousian, or Athanasian party, and among them were Hosius of Cordova, Athanasius, Eustathius of Antioch, and Gregory of Nazianzus.

Heteroousion came to identify the stance of those who, like Arius, believed that Christ is ἕτεροούσιος, “of a different essence,” from God the Father. This belief has been called Heteroousianism. Those who held this position became known as Eunomians, Heterousiasts, Anomoeans, and Exukontians, and among them were Eudoxius of Antioch, Eunomius of Cyzicus and Paemenius of Constantinople.

Homoiousion came to identify the perspective of those who believed that Christ is of a similar, but not the same essence, as the Father, that is, ὁμοιούσιος. This belief has been called Homoiousianism. Those who held this position became known particularly as Eusebians, and among them were Eusebius of Nicomedia, Macedonius of Constantinople, and George of Laodicea.

It is quite possible that Arius was Libyan, based on references to his origin in both Epiphanius (*Panarion* 69.1) and in a lost letter from the hand of Arius preserved in Constantine’s *Letter to Arius and His Companions* (333). Arius was ordained deacon in Alexandria in 311 when Peter was bishop of that city. One or two years later, he was ordained priest after Achillas had become bishop.³²⁷ If Arius did indeed don the sleeveless tunic of philosophers and ascetics as Epiphanius describes, he would have been identified as a kind of spiritual ascetic teacher.³²⁸ Arius would have already been an older man (in his sixties?) by the time he began to criticize openly the

³²⁷ “Arius” in *Oxford Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. F. L. Cross, third edition revised, edited by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105. We know about Arius’ life primarily through Athanasius, and secondarily through the writings of the historians Epiphanius, Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen, and Philostorgius.

³²⁸ Williams, 32, cites Epiphanius, *Haer.* 69.3, 154.12-16.

next bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, around 319.³²⁹ However, he must have begun to spread his understanding about the Son of God well before that time through his work in the church.³³⁰ To better understand Arius, we will first detail what he and his supporters taught, and then outline the historical events surrounding these doctrinal differences that led to the Council of Nicaea.

What Arius Taught That Led to Conflict with Alexander

While it appears that the presbyter of Baucalis had a considerable literary output in his day, what has remained of his writing is comparatively meager.³³¹ While his remaining extant works do not allow us to establish all the details of his teaching, what survives does allow us a fairly good working portrait. We have, cited in other authors, three of Arius' letters and select quotations from a fourth. These include, with approximate dates:

Arius' Letter to Eusebius of Nicodemia (318)

The Thalia (319)

Arius' Profession of Faith to Alexander (320)

Arius' Profession of Faith to Constantine (327)

Besides these four works from his hand, to understand what Arius taught we may also reservedly have recourse to summary accounts of his teachings in the writings of his opponents, such as Athanasius and Alexander. Unfortunately, subsequent Arian writers rarely quote Arius himself.³³²

An example of an opponent's account of Arius' teaching, and likely the earliest written testimony to the Arian controversy, is the Encyclical that Alexander sent around 319 to all the bishops of the church in order to explain why it was fitting for Arius to be excommunicated. Here is how Alexander explains the details of Arius' teaching about the Son and his relationship to the Father:

³²⁹ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 3-5.

³³⁰ Boularand, 25.

³³¹ Boularand believes that imperial edicts would have ordered Arius' writings to be burned (39-40).

³³² Hanson, 5-6.

God was not always Father, but there was a time when God was not Father. There was not always a *Logos* of God, but he derived from non-existence. For God who existed made him when he did not exist out of non-existence. There was a time when he did not exist. For the Son is a creature and a product. And he is not like in substance to the Father nor is he the Father's true *Logos* nor the *Logos* by nature, nor his true Wisdom, but he is one of the products and of the things which came into existence, and is only called *Logos* and Wisdom loosely; he came into existence himself through the proper *Logos* of God and the Wisdom which was in God, in which God also made everything and him (the Son) with it. Therefore he is mutable and alterable in his nature as are all rational beings. The *Logos* is alien and different and separated from the substance of God, and the Father is invisible to the Son. For the *Logos* does not know the Father fully and exactly, nor can he fully see him. Indeed, the Son does not know the nature of his own substance. For he was made for our sake, in order that God should create us through him as through an instrument. And he would not have come into existence if the Father had not wished to make him.³³³

Thus by 319 Arius' controversial teaching must have gained enough traction through his work at the Baucalis church in Alexandria to have been noticed and caused serious concern for Alexander.³³⁴ The earliest letter that we possess from Arius's hand is addressed to the bishop Eusebius of Nicodemia, probably also in 319, and is preserved in Theodoret. Arius therein decries the injustice that bishop Alexander has done in excommunicating him. In attacking his opponents' doctrine regarding the Son, Arius counts among his supporters Eusebius of Caesarea, Theodotus of Laodicea, and most bishops of the East.³³⁵ He also sets forth his belief in this letter that before the Son was begotten, he did not exist, as Alexander's letter had said. Arius further insists that the Son is not "part of God":

³³³ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 6 and Gelasius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II.3.1-21 [Opitz]. Translation Hanson, 16.

³³⁴ "Arius," ed. F. L. Cross, 105. R. Williams (*Arius*) believes that the stage for a conflict was already set as a result of the multiplicity of churches and church leaders in Alexandria: "The beginnings of Arianism lie, as much as anything, in the struggles of the Alexandrian episcopate to control and unify a spectacularly fissiparous Christian body—and thus also in a characteristic early Christian uncertainty about the ultimate locus of ecclesiastical authority itself . . ." (46). While throughout Egypt Alexander would have had ultimate authority, "the Alexandrian pope remained, in his own city, a *primus inter pares*" (42).

³³⁵ Hanson, 5-6.

(1) To a most longed-for lord, a faithful man of God, orthodox Eusebius; Arius, who is unjustly persecuted by Pope Alexander on account of the all-prevailing truth which you also protect, sends greetings in the Lord.

(2) Since my father Ammonius was coming into Nicomedia, it appeared to me reasonable and fitting to address you through him and in like manner to remind your innate love and disposition, which you have toward the brothers because of God and his Christ, that the bishop greatly pillages us and persecutes us, and invoking all things moves against us, so that he might drive us as godless men from the city. All this is because we do not agree with him when he states in public, “Always God always Son,” “At the same time Father, at the same time Son,” “The Son ingenerably coexists with God,” “Ever-begotten, ungenerated-created, neither in thought nor in some moment of time does God proceed the Son,” “Always God always Son,” “The Son is from God himself.”

(3) And since Eusebius, your brother in Caesarea, and Theodotus, Paulinus, Athanasius, Gregory, Aetius, and all the bishops throughout the East, say that God without beginning exists before the Son, an anathema was pronounced against them—except Philogonius, Hellanicus, and Macareius—heretical and ignorant men, who speak about the Son. Some of them say that he is a belching, others an emanation, and still others alike-ingenerate.

(4) If the heretics should threaten us with myriads of deaths, we are not able even to hear these impieties.

But what do we say and think? What have we taught and what do we teach? That the Son is not unbegotten or a portion of the unbegotten in any manner or from any substratum, but that by the will and counsel of the Father he subsisted before times and ages, full of grace and truth, God, only-begotten, unchangeable.

(5) And before he was begotten or created or defined or established, he was not. For he was not unbegotten. But we are persecuted because we say, “The Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning.” Because of this we are persecuted because we say, “The Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning.” We are persecuted because we say, “He is from nothing.” But we speak thus inasmuch as he is neither part of God nor from any substratum. On account of this we are persecuted. You know the rest. I pray that you are strong in the Lord, recalling our afflictions, fellow pupil of Lucian, truly “Eusebius.”³³⁶

Around 320, Arius and his colleagues then sent a doctrinal confession to Bishop Alexander in the hopes of clarifying their position and being reinstated. At different junctures Arius seeks to identify his position with what Alexander himself has taught as bishop in Alexandria:

To Our Blessed Pope and Bishop, Alexander, the Presbyters and Deacons send health in the Lord. Our faith from our forefathers, which also we have learned from thee, Blessed Pope, is this:—We acknowledge One God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unbegun, alone True, alone having Immortality, alone Wise, alone Good, alone Sovereign; Judge, Governor, and Providence of all, unalterable and unchangeable, just and good, God of Law and Prophets and New Testament; who begat an Only-begotten Son before eternal times, through whom He has made both the ages and the universe; and begat Him, not in semblance, but in truth; and that He made Him subsist at His own will, unalterable and unchangeable; perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures; offspring, but not as one of things begotten; nor as Valentinus pronounced that the offspring of the Father was an issue; nor as Manichæus taught that the offspring was a portion of the Father, one in essence; or as Sabellius, dividing the Monad, speaks of a Son-and-Father; nor as Hieracas, of one torch from another, or as a lamp divided into two; nor that He who was before, was afterwards generated or new-created into a Son, as thou too thyself, Blessed Pope, in the midst of the Church and in session hast often condemned; but, as we say, at the will of God, created before times and before ages, and gaining life and being from the Father, who gave subsistence to His glories together with Him.

³³⁶ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* I, 4 [Rusch].

For the Father did not, in giving to Him the inheritance of all things, deprive Himself of what He has ingenerately in Himself; for He is the Fountain of all things. Thus there are Three Subsistences. And God, being the cause of all things, is Unbegun and altogether Sole, but the Son being begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and founded before ages, was not before His generation, but being begotten apart from time before all things, alone was made to subsist by the Father. For He is not eternal or co-eternal or co-unoriginate with the Father, nor has He His being together with the Father, as some speak of relations, introducing two ingenerate beginnings, but God is before all things as being Monad and Beginning of all. Wherefore also He is before the Son; as we have learned also from thy preaching in the midst of the Church. So far then as from God He has being, and glories, and life, and all things are delivered unto Him, in such sense is God His origin. For He is above Him, as being His God and before Him.

As with the previous letter, Arius here again denies that the Son is eternal. He seeks to establish common ground with Alexander on this point by reference to what Alexander has taught the church. Just as Alexander has taught, for example, that the Father is before the Son, so Arius declares that the Son was created before the eons and thus there was never a time during which he was not being generated of the Father. Arius seeks to show that they are both saying that the Father is “before” the Son.³³⁷

Arius then goes further in this correspondence to explain why the Son cannot be of the same essence as the Father:

But if the terms ‘from Him,’ and ‘from the womb,’ and ‘I came forth from the Father, and I am come’ (Rom. xi. 36; Ps. cx. 3; John xvi. 28), be understood by some to mean as if a part of Him, one in essence or as an issue, then the Father is according to them compounded and divisible and alterable and material, and, as far as their belief goes, has the circumstances of a body, who is the Incorporeal God.³³⁸

³³⁷ Löhr, “Arius Reconsidered (Part 2),” p. 129.

³³⁸ Athanasius, *De Synodis 16* and Epiphanius, *Pan 69.7* [NPNF].

Arius is concerned that God be considered divisible if the Father is really of the same essence as the Son; he does not accept the thought of God having a body. This letter is particularly helpful to us in explaining why the Greek Fathers who quoted Phil 2:6 were so concerned both with the question of the Son's ontology and with God's immutability.

The third letter we have from Arius' hand is shorter and less theologically specific. It was sent to Constantine by Arius and his bishop friend Euzoius of Antioch at the end of 327 with a solely practical objective: that Arius be reinstated to his office in the church.

Arius and Euzoius, presbyters, to Constantine, our most pious emperor and most beloved of God.

According as your piety, beloved of God, commanded, O sovereign emperor, we here furnish a written statement of our own faith, and we protest before God that we, and all those who are with us, believe what is here set forth.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, and in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, who was begotten from Him before all ages, God the Word, by whom all things were made, whether things in heaven or on earth; He came and took upon Him flesh, suffered and rose again, and ascended into heaven, whence He will again come to judge the quick and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Ghost, in the resurrection of the body, in the life to come, in the kingdom of heaven, and in one Catholic Church of God, established throughout the earth. We have received this faith from the Holy Gospels, in which the Lord says to his disciples, "Go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." If we do not so believe this, and if we do not truly receive the doctrines concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as they are taught by the whole Catholic Church and by the sacred Scriptures, as we believe in every point, let God be our judge, both now and in the day which is to come. Wherefore we appeal to your piety, O our emperor most beloved of God, that, as we are enrolled among the members of the clergy, and as we hold the faith

and thought of the Church and of the sacred Scriptures, we may be openly reconciled to our mother, the Church, through your peacemaking and pious piety; so that useless questions and disputes may be cast aside, and that we and the Church may dwell together in peace, and we all in common may offer the customary prayer for your peaceful and pious empire and for your entire family.³³⁹

It is interesting to note the lack of theological detail and the striking appeal to their own conformity with what is “taught by the whole Catholic Church and by the sacred Scriptures.” This text shows that Arius was intent upon reinstatement and was ready to either see his own doctrine as somehow conforming to the standard established by the Nicene Creed or at least to present his doctrine in that light. A last letter, quoted by Constantine in the year 333, is further instructive as to Arius’ objective: “What then am I to do if nobody thinks me suitable for acceptance?” queried the presbyter regarding his disqualification from officiating the Eucharist.³⁴⁰

What we can gather from Athanasius about what Arius taught

While Arius also published a poetic doctrinal work, the *Thalia*, around 319, this sole theological work we know of is only available in two different writings of Athanasius, who was bitterly opposed to Arius’ Christology.³⁴¹ The first (*Orationes con. Arianos* I.5-6) is a summary by Athanasius itself, and the second (*De Synodis* 15) appears to be a summary from someone favorable to Arius, which Athanasius quotes. Nonetheless, Hanson is confident that at the points where the text is reducible to metric form, we are getting some idea of what Arius taught. We can also gain insight by comparing these two works in order to establish common themes.

In Athanasius’ account of Arius’ teaching in *Orationes con. Arianos* I.5-6, we note again that the Son is not considered eternal, and was created out of nothing. There was a time when God existed as a solitary being and was not Father. There are two Wisdoms: one existing eternally with God, and a second that is non-eternal. This non-eternal wisdom is also known as Word and Son. Furthermore, this Word is not unchangeable:

³³⁹ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 2, 27 [LPNF].

³⁴⁰ Constantine, *Letter to Arius and His Companions* [Opitz]. The English is found in Hanson, 9.

³⁴¹ Namely, Athanasius’ *Orationes con. Arianos* I.5-6 and *De Synodis* 15.

God foreknew that he would be good and in anticipation granted this glory to him which at the Incarnation he possessed also because of his virtue thereafter, so that God made him to be the sort of person that he was (i.e. possessing glory) because of his actions which God foreknew. The Word is not true God, even if he is called God, but he is not true, but God by being sharer of grace, just as all other people are (sharers), so he is called God only in name.³⁴²

So the Son is both created and changeable, and he is also, according to Athanasius' presentation of Arius' writing, different in substance (οὐσία) from the Father at all points. Not only is the Son of a different substance; he also cannot know the substance of the Father.³⁴³ In fact, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have a different substance (οὐσία). Thus Arius' teaching about the Son's relation to the essence of the Father has come to be known as Heterousianism, or a Christology that views Christ as having a different ontological essence than the Father.

Arius' teaching in the *Thalia* appears to have gone beyond these points about the Son's creaturely finiteness, mutability, and substance. According to Athanasius' account in *De Synodis* 15, Arius also touched upon questions of glory and equality. The extensive passage is worth quoting in Greek with interlinear English translation for its pertinence to the citation of Phil 2:6 in the Fathers:

Αὐτὸς γοῦν ὁ θεὸς καθὼ ἐστὶν ἄρρητος ἅπασιν ὑπάρχει.
God himself, therefore, remains inexpressible to all.

ἴσον οὐδὲ ὅμοιον, οὐχ ὁμόδοξον ἔχει μόνος οὗτος.
He alone has no equal, none like him, none of equal glory.

ἀγέννητον δὲ αὐτὸν φάμεν διὰ τὸν τὴν φύσιν γεννητόν·
We call him unoriginated in contrast to him who is originated by nature

³⁴² Athanasius, *Orationes con. Arianos* I.5-6 [Bright].

³⁴³ Löhr (136) believes regarding the *Thalia* that “whereas the two letters to Eusebius of Nicomedia and Alexander of Alexandria stressed the origin of, and the difference between, the begotten Son from the unbegotten Father, the redactor of this collection of fragments is particularly interested in the transcendence of the unbegotten Father and the inability of the begotten Son fully to reveal the Father.”

τοῦτον ἄναρχον ἀνυμνοῦμεν διὰ τὸν ἀρχὴν ἔχοντα,

We praise him as without beginning because of him who has a beginning,

αἰδίον δὲ αὐτὸν σέβομεν διὰ τὸν ἐν χρόνοις γεγαότα.

We worship him as eternal because of him who came into existence in time.

ἀρχὴν τὸν υἱὸν ἔθηκε τῶν γενητῶν ὁ ἄναρχος

He who was without beginning made the Son a beginning of all things which are produced,

καὶ ἤνεγκεν εἰς υἱὸν ἑαυτῷ τόνδε τεκνοποιήσας,

and he made him into a Son for himself, begetting him.

ἴδιον οὐδὲν ἔχει τοῦ θεοῦ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ιδιότητος,

He (the Son) has nothing peculiar to God according to the reality of that which is peculiarly his,

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔστιν ἴσος, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὁμοούσιος αὐτῷ.

and he is not equal; far less is he consubstantial to him (God).

σοφὸς δὲ ἔστιν ὁ θεός, ὅτι τῆς σοφίας διδάσκαλος αὐτός.

And God is wise because he is the teacher of wisdom.

ικανὴ δὲ ἀπόδειξις ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀόρατος ἅπασιν,

As a sufficient proof that God is invisible to all,

τοῖς τε διὰ υἱοῦ καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ υἱῷ ἀόρατος ὁ αὐτός.

that he is invisible to the Son's people and to the Son himself

ῥητῶς δὲ λέξω, πῶς τῷ υἱῷ ὁράται ὁ ἀόρατος·

I will declare roundly, how the invisible can be visible to the Son:

τῇ δυνάμει ἧ δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἰδεῖν. ἰδίῳις τε μέτροις

by the power by which God can see, in his own degree

ὕπομένει ὁ υἱὸς ἰδεῖν τὸν πατέρα, ὡς θέμις ἐστίν.

the Father according to his individual capacities as is determined.

ἤγουν τριάς ἐστι δόξαις οὐχ ὁμοίαις,

Again, there exists a Trinity of unequal glories;

ἀνεπίμικτοι ἑαυταῖς εἰσιν αἱ ὑποστάσεις αὐτῶν,

their individual realities do not mix with each other;

μία τῆς μιᾶς ἐνδοξοτέρα δόξαις ἐπ' ἄπειρον.

The sole glory is of the Sole, infinitely more splendid in his glories.

ξένος τοῦ υἱοῦ κατ' οὐσίαν ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι ἄναρχος ὑπάρχει.

The Father is in his substance alien from the Son because he remains without beginning.

σύνες ὅτι ἡ μονὰς ἦν, ἡ δυὰς δὲ οὐκ ἦν, πρὶν ὑπάρξει.

Understand therefore that the monad existed, but the dyad did not exist before it attained existence.

αὐτίκα γοῦν υἱοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὁ πατήρ θεός ἐστι.

At once, then, the Father is God when the Son does not exist

λοιπὸν ὁ υἱὸς οὐκ ὦν (ὑπῆρξε δὲ θελήσει πατρώα)

So the Son having not existed attained existence by the Father's will.

μονογενῆς θεός ἐστι καὶ ἑκατέρων ἀλλότριος οὗτος.

He is only begotten God and he is different from any others.

ἡ σοφία σοφία ὑπῆρξε σοφοῦ θεοῦ θελήσει.

Wisdom became Wisdom by the will of the wise God . . .

δόξα θεοῦ, ἀλήθειά τε καὶ εἰκὼν καὶ λόγος οὗτος.

He is God's glory and truth, and image and word.

σύνες ὅτι καὶ ἀπαύγασμα καὶ φῶς ἐπινοεῖται.

Understand too that he is apprehended as reflection and light.

ἴσον μὲν τοῦ υἱοῦ γεννᾶν δυνατός ἐστιν ὁ κρείττων,

The greater one is able to beget someone equal to the Son,

διαφορώτερον δὲ ἢ κρείττονα ἢ μείζονα οὐχί.

but not someone more important or more powerful or greater.

θεοῦ θελήσει ὁ υἱὸς ἡλικὸς καὶ ὅσος ἐστίν,

It is by the will of God that the Son has his stature and character

ἐξ ὅτε καὶ ἀφ' οὗ καὶ ἀπὸ τότε ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπέστη,

when and whence and from what time he is from God.

ἰσχυρὸς θεὸς ὢν τὸν κρείττονα ἐκ μέρους ὑμνεῖ.

For he is the mighty God and worships the greater with partial effectiveness.

συνελόντι εἰπεῖν τῷ υἱῷ ὁ θεὸς ἄρρητος ὑπάρχει·

To summarize, God is inexpressible to the Son . . .

δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι τὸ ἀρχὴν ἔχον, τὸν ἀναρχον, ὡς ἔστιν,

ἐμπερινοῆσαι ἢ ἐμπεριδράξασθαι οὐχ οἷόν τέ ἐστιν.³⁴⁴

For it is clear that that which has a beginning could not possibly comprehend or grasp the nature of him who is without a beginning.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Athanasius *De Synodis* 15.218-250 [Opitz].

³⁴⁵ Athanasius *De Synodis* 15.218-250 [translation Stead adapted] cited in Hanson, 12-13. See also the translation in Williams, *Arius*, 101-103.

This account of Arius' more detailed teaching on the relationship of the Son to the Father certainly sheds light on the use of Phil 2:6 in the fourth and fifth centuries. If indeed Arius was teaching that the Father

ἴσον οὐδὲ ὅμοιον, οὐχ ὁμόδοξον ἔχει μόνος οὗτος.
alone has **no equal**, none like him, none of equal glory

and that

οὐδὲ γάρ ἐστιν ἴσος, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὁμοούσιος αὐτῷ.
he is **not equal**—far less is he consubstantial to him (God).

and that

ἴσον μὲν τοῦ υἱοῦ γεννᾶν δυνατός ἐστιν ὁ κρείττων,
The greater one is able to beget someone equal to the Son,

διαφορώτερον δὲ ἢ κρείττονα ἢ μείζονα οὐχί.
but not someone more important or more powerful or greater.

then it becomes easier to understand why the Fathers would utilize Phil 2:6 so extensively to counter this particular point made by Arius. In other words, the Fathers would have cited Phil 2:6 not only because they saw it as a solid proof that the Son and the Father have the same substance (if indeed the Son is “equal” to the Father as they perceived the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in Phil 2:6 to be saying), but also because Arius himself had specifically brought up the question of equality and had used the word ἴσος in the *Thalia*.

Besides the multiple uses of ἴσος in this passage, also of note are Arius' direct attacks on consubstantiality:

οὐδὲ γάρ ἐστιν ἴσος, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὁμοούσιος αὐτῷ.
and he is not equal—far less is he consubstantial to him (God).

and

ξένος τοῦ υἱοῦ κατ' οὐσίαν ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι ἀναρχος ὑπάρχει.

The Father is in his substance alien from the Son because he remains without beginning.

Lastly, of considerable interest is Arius' conclusion that not only does the Son not have the same substance, but because the Son was created, he cannot know the substance of the Father:

συνελόντι εἰπεῖν τῷ υἱῷ ὁ θεὸς ἄρρητος ὑπάρχει.

To summarize, God is inexpressible to the Son.

These specifics give us a fairly good portrait of Arius' view about Christ's relationship to the Father and what particular language he used to defend his point of view that the Son was the first creature and of a different essence than the Father.³⁴⁶

The Events Surrounding the Doctrinal Clash

The two views about the essence of the Son held by two different leaders in Alexandria led to a great controversy in the city around 318 or 320.³⁴⁷ According to Sozomen, the bishop Alexander at first took a conciliatory approach to Arius' teaching. He invited Arius to an open debate in which the two positions were presented. Upon hearing in person Arius' ideas of the Son being created and of a different essence than the Father, however, the bishop urged Arius to embrace the consubstantiality and eternity of the Son.

Arius, however, was not to be discouraged easily, and set out anew to spread his perspective about the Son. Noticing the support that Arius had garnered in the East, and especially with Eusebius of Nicodemia, Alexander found it essential to act immediately when Arius continued promoting his ideas. The bishop of Alexandria summoned some one hundred bishops from Egypt and Lybia in 321, and Arius was excommunicated for his views by the council. Even after this

³⁴⁶ For further analysis of the Thalia, see Williams, 103 ff.

³⁴⁷ Boularand, 26 cites Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, I, 15.

condemnation, however, Arius was still not ready to bend. He continued to teach his followers in Alexandria until driven out of that city, and afterwards continued spreading his Christology actively in Palestine and Nicomedia, the major city of Bithynia in northern Asia Minor.

What began as a local theological cause in Alexandria with limited support would soon garner much wider support thanks to Arius' determination. Though in Alexandria he may have won over only a third of the priests and a quarter of the deacons, he gained ground outside of the city by persistence.³⁴⁸ His well-positioned defenders in the East would broaden significantly the scope of his reach between 321 and 324, particularly Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea, thus exacerbating the conflict there.

In Palestine, Arius did not rest from his banishment from Alexandria, but undertook a campaign to win over its clerics to his cause. To garner clerical support in major cities in Palestine, Arius asked those bishops who found his Christology acceptable to write to Alexander himself expressing their accord.³⁴⁹

Also ingenious was the genre he chose for his popular work the *Thalia* (*The Banquet*) we have cited earlier, apparently composed while Arius was being hosted by Eusebius of Nicomedia around 319. While the *Thalia* exists only in fragmentary form and as recounted by Athanasius,³⁵⁰ it appears that it was written in a popular poetic form, perhaps even to the tune of popular songs of the time³⁵¹ to spread his understanding of the Son's relationship to the Father. Arius' popularizing approach to his doctrinal expression is not insignificant for our study of the Greek Father's citation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from Phil 2:6. It shows that the society at large, not only the clergy, were meant to be drawn into these intense Christological controversies. It is in that context that the Fathers of the fourth century in particular cited Phil 2 and other biblical passages to prove their doctrinal positions.

It was also during his stay at Nicomedia that Arius would write his aforementioned letter to Alexander explaining his doctrinal position in an effort to be reinstated. Thus the capital of

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 29.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 32 cites Epiphanius, *Panarion*, *Haer.* LXIX, 4 (GCS 37:155).

³⁵⁰ Schaff, 621.

³⁵¹ Boularand, 35.

Bithynia (and later, in 286 AD, the capital of the eastern Roman Empire) in northwestern Asia Minor afforded a safe haven to Arius, and more particularly the welcome of its bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia, who would champion the Arian cause until his death in 341.

But these efforts of Arius and others like those Asterius of Cappadocia did not sway Alexander:

La tactique des Eusébiens, si habile qu'elle fût, n'obtint pas le résultat escompté. Aucune supplication ne put ébranler Alexandre. Ils en furent irrités, comme d'une injure qu'il leur aurait faite en refusant de se laisser convaincre. Aussi mirent-ils plus de cœur que jamais à faire prévaloir la thèse d'Arius. Et cela par des synodes particuliers.³⁵²

Arian conferences held at Nicomedia and Caesarea declared Arius innocent of heresy and placed him back in his role of presbyter of Baucalis in Alexandria. And so on their authority Arius left Nicomedia and returned to his city.

The emperor Constantine took notice and tried to resolve the issue with recourse to writing letters to the disagreeing parties, which by this time involved numerous bishops. In the Christian faith the emperor saw a means of unifying the empire, but the Arian crisis was doing just the opposite. He hoped that an appeal to Arius and Alexander would settle the issue.

Constantine's advisor, Bishop Hosius of Spain, brought letters to Arius and Alexander near the end of 324 (extant in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* 2.64-72), but to no avail. Hosius then directed a council at Antioch in early 325 which decided strongly against the Arian position. Eusebius of Caesarea was there condemned for his following of Arius' teaching.³⁵³ It is interesting to note that this council was unknown to historians until the discovery of a document containing its proceedings in Syriac (a translation of a Greek original) published in 1905.³⁵⁴ It is worthwhile

³⁵² Ibid, 36.

³⁵³ Rusch, 18.

³⁵⁴ The modern critical edition is F. Schulthess, "Die syrischen Kanones der Synoden von Nicaea bis Chalcedon." *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse* N.F. 10, no. 2 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1908): 160-62. The original Greek for the letter is no longer extant, but three manuscripts survive in Syriac: Cod. Par. Syr. 62; Vatican Cod. Syr. 148; Mingana Syr. 8. For a reconstruction of the Greek text through the Syriac, see E. Schwartz, "Zur Geschichte des Athanasius,"

to consider the details of this Synodal Letter of the Council of Antioch, given that the event took place only months before Nicaea:

A rescript of those items written by the Synod, which gather at Antioch, to Alexander the bishop of Thessalonica:

(1) To Alexander, holy and united in soul with us, a beloved brother and fellow minister; Hosius, Eustathius, Amphion, Bassianus, Zenobius, Piperius, Salamanes, Gregory, Magnus, Peter, Longinus, Manicius, Mocimus, Apapius, Macedonius, Paul, Bassianus, Seleucus, Sopatros, Antiochus, Macarius, Jacob, Hellanicus, Nicetas, Archelaus, Macrinus, Germanus, Anatolius, Zoilus, Cyril, Paulinus, Aetius, Moses, Eustathius, Alexander, Eirenaius, Rabbulas, Paul, Lupus, Nicomachus, Philoxenus, Maximus, Marinus, Euphantion, Tarcondimantus, Eirenicus, Peter, Pegasus, Eupsychius, Asclepius, Alpheius, Bassus, Gerontius, Hesychius, Avidius, and Teretnius send greetings in the Lord.

(2) Since the catholic church in every place is one body, even if in different places there might be dwellings of congregations, just as members of the whole body, it is suitable to your love to know the things moved and done by me and our holy brothers, fellow ministers united in soul with us. Thus you also, just as if present in the common spirit with us, could speak and act in common about those things determined and done by us soundly and according to the law of the church. (3) For after I came into the church of the Antiochenes and saw the church in much disorder with weeds because of the teaching of some and in discord, it seemed to me to be good that such conditions be thrown off and repelled not by me alone; rather it seemed necessary to urge the involvement of those united in soul with us and fellow ministers, those especially near the matter, which is pressing and urgent to our brothers—those from Palestine and Arabia, and from Phoenicia and Coelesyria, from Cilicia and some from Cappadocia—so that after we examined and reviewed matters with common reasoning we could finally determine the matters of the

Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse (Göttingen: Luder Horstmann, 1905): 271-79.

church, for the city is peopled by many and just individuals. (4) Therefore, when God's grace brought us together in the diocese in Antioch, we examined and took trouble over matters common, helpful, and useful to the church of God. We discovered much disorder, because in many cases the law of the church had been little esteemed and scorned, and in the interval the canons were entirely put to an end by individuals of the world. (5) Since a synod of bishops was hindered from being assembled in places of these regions, it seemed good and just that that which is of the highest priority of all, exceeding all others, be examined, rather than the entire mystery of faith in us. I mean the thing which concerns the Savior of us all, the "Son of the living God" [Matt. 16:16]. (6) Since our brother and fellow minister, the honoured and beloved Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, had excommunicated from the church some of his presbyters, those around Arius, because of the blasphemy they incited against our Savior, although the presbyters were able to lead into error some individuals by their impious teaching—because of this it seemed good to the holy synod that this matter be examined just so when the major item of the mysteries was resolved, as far as it was in our power, and then all the remaining matters could be examined individually in turn. (7) And then, assembled in one place, with some erudite brothers present, we spoke at length about the faith of the church, which we had been taught by the Scriptures and apostles and which had been received from the fathers. We brought into the discussion the actions of Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, against those with Arius, so that if some individuals appeared ruined by the teaching opposite to these actions they might become estranged from the church. Thus they would not be able, by remaining within the church, to seduce some of the simpler persons.

(8) Therefore the faith put forth by spiritual men, who do not think it is just to live or reflect according to the flesh but who were trained in the Spirit by the holy writings of divinely inspired books, is as follows: to believe in one God, Father all-sovereign, incomprehensible, immutable, and unchangeable, provider and guide of all, just, good, maker of heaven and earth and all that is in them, Lord of the Law and prophets and of the New Covenant; and (9) in one Lord Jesus, only-begotten Son, not begotten from nothing but from the Father, not as made but as properly an

offspring, begotten ineffably and indescribably wherefore only the Father who begot and the Son who was begotten know; for no one knows the Father except the Son, or the Son except the Father [cf. Matt. 11:27], who always is and not at a prior time was not. (10) We learned from the holy Scriptures that he alone is the image, not clearly as if he was unbegotten from the Father, nor by adoption, for it is impious and blasphemous to say this. The Scriptures say that he was begotten properly and truly as Son, so that we believe that he is immutable and unchangeable; he was begotten, or came into existence, neither by wish nor by adoption so that he appears to be from nothing. As far as it is probable, he was begotten not—which very thing it is not right to think—according to likeness or nature or mixture of none of the things that came into existence through him. (11) For this reason it surpasses every thought or intention or reason that we confess him begotten from the unbegotten Father, God the Word, truth, light, righteousness, Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior of all. He is the image not of the will or of any other thing but of the *hypostasis* of the Father himself. This Son, God the Word, both brought forth in flesh from Mary the God-bearing and made flesh, suffered, died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Majesty of the highest, coming to judge living and dead. (12) And still the Holy Scriptures teach us to believe as our Savior one Spirit, one catholic church, the resurrection of the dead, and a judgment of repayment as an individual did good or bad in the flesh, anathematizing those who say or think or proclaim that the Son of God is a creature or originated or made and not truly an offspring, or that there was once when he was not. For we believe that he was and is, and that he is light. (13) And besides we anathematize those who suppose that he is immutable by the self-act of his will, just as those who derive his generation from nothing and state that he is not immutable by nature as the Father. In all respects he is the image of the Father; thus, and especially in this regard, our Savior has been proclaimed the Father's image.

(14) Therefore this faith was set forth, and all the holy synod agreed and confessed that this is apostolic and saving teaching. All our fellow ministers thought the same thing concerning these matters. Only Theodotus of the church of the Laodiceans, and Narcissus from Neronias and Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine, as individuals

forgetting the Holy Scriptures and apostolic teachings, by various turns attempted to escape notice and conceal their errors by untrue, probable arguments, so that they appeared as persons introducing teaching opposite to these. From the works they were asked about, and that they asked about in turn, they were proved to be of the same opinion as those with Arius and to think opposite to the things mentioned previously. Thus, since they were hardened on such a matter, did not respect the holy synod which rejected their views, and acted shamefully, we all, the fellow ministers in the synod, judge not to commune with them and that they are not worthy of communion because of their faith, which is alien to the catholic church. And so that you should know, we write to you that you also guard from communion with them, from writing to them, or from receiving from them letters of communion. (15) Also know that because of the considerable brotherly love of the synod, we have given them a place for repentance and knowledge of the truth, the great and holy synod in Ancyra. Therefore, be eager to send these items around to all the brothers united in soul, so that they would be able to know the situation about these individuals and that there are certain individuals who have revolted from the church and are not in agreement with it. Greet all the brothers with you also from us. These brothers who are with us greet you in the Lord.³⁵⁵

It is noteworthy that the council at Antioch directly attacked the Arian position concerning the created status of Son, whom the Letter describes as “begotten ineffably and indescribably wherefore only the Father who begot and the Son who was begotten know; for no one knows the Father except the Son, or the Son except the Father [cf. Matt. 11:27], who always is and not at a prior time was not.” Thus the council was “anathematizing those who say or think or proclaim that the Son of God is a creature or originated or made and not truly an offspring, or that there was once when he was not.”

Also of note in the Letter are the descriptions pertaining to the divine nature of the Son: “He is the image not of the will or of any other thing but of the *hypostasis* of the Father himself . . . In all respects he is the image of the Father; thus, and especially in this regard, our Savior has been proclaimed the Father’s image.” Thus we note that in the process of articulating

³⁵⁵ Text of the synodal letter of the council of Antioch as it appears in English in Rusch, 45-48.

the eternity of the Son, the fourth-century theologians opposing Arius did so with reference to the Son's relationship to the Father. Here we do not witness the language of consubstantiality as in the *homoousios* of the Nicene Creed, but rather references to *hypostasis* (substance) and image. Yet even with this *hypostasis* one may confidently say based on the Nicene creed, which would be published in June of that same year, that the bishops had consubstantiality in mind: At Nicaea they would write that "those who . . . affirm that the Son of God is of another *hypostasis* or substance . . . such ones the catholic and apostolic church pronounces accursed and separated from the church."³⁵⁶ We will observe that it was to bolster such arguments that the fourth-century theologians would make extensive use of Phil 2:6 and the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ.

After Antioch, the emperor Constantine soon realized, however, that an even wider gathering of bishops than that at Antioch would be essential if the question of the relationship of the Son to the Father were to be finally resolved and unity among bishops of the East and West achieved. Thus the bishops of the Empire were convened to Nicaea,³⁵⁷ only 20 miles from Constantine's residence in Nicomedia. The expenses of each bishop were to be defrayed, as well as those of the two presbyters and three servants each one brought. In the end some 318 are reported by Athanasius to have come, out of about 1800 bishops in the Greek and Roman provinces combined (the number of bishops may have been closer to 220 or 250).³⁵⁸ Arriving by carriage, horse, donkey, and on foot, the church leaders began formal discussions when the emperor took his throne to preside the council on June 14. Eusebius' account of Constantine's words convey the emperor's goal:

It was the object of my prayers, my friends, to share in your company, and now that I have received this, I know I must express my gratitude to the King of all, because in addition to everything else he has allowed me to see this, which is better than any other good thing; I mean, to receive you all gathered together and to observe one unanimous opinion shared by all. Let no jealous enemy ruin our prosperity; now that the war of the tyrants against God has been swept away by the power of God

³⁵⁶ For text of the Creed of the Synod of Nicaea, see Rusch, 49.

³⁵⁷ Rusch, 19 specifies that the synodal letter from the Antioch council names Ancyra as the location, but that this site was changed to Nicaea.

³⁵⁸ "Nicaea, First of Council of." *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd revised edition, eds. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 1151 suggests that 318 was a symbolic figure based on the number of Abraham's servants in Gn 14:14.

the Saviour, let not the malignant demon encompass the divine law with blasphemies by other means. For to me internal division in the Church of God is graver than any war or fierce battle, and these things appear to cause more pain than secular affairs. When therefore I won victories over enemies through the favour and support of the Supreme, I considered that nothing remained but to give thanks to God, and to rejoice also with those who had been liberated by him through our agency. When contrary to all expectation I learnt of your division, I did not defer attention to the report, but, praying that this too might be healed through my ministration, I immediately sent for you all. I rejoice to see your gathering, and I consider that I shall be acting most in accordance with my prayers, when I see you all with your souls in communion, and one common, peaceful harmony prevailing among you all, which you, as persons consecrated to God, ought yourselves to be announcing to others. So do not delay, my friends, ministers of God, and good servants of the common Lord and Saviour of us all, to begin now to bring the causes of the division between you into the open, and to loosen all shackles of dispute by the laws of peace. Thus you will both achieve what is pleasing to the God of all, and you will give extreme gratification to me, your fellow servant.³⁵⁹

Thus in Latin Constantine gave his impassioned plea for unity in the face of a doctrinal schism he judged to be more grave than political ones he encountered. While the emperor handed over deliberations to the council presidents, he continued to take an active part in the discussions; he was likely ceremoniously flanked by Bishop Hosius from the West and Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea from the East.³⁶⁰ Other famous church leaders of the time were present, including Athanasius, who accompanied Bishop Alexander.

There were three theological parties from the start. The first affirmed that the Son was not created. Among this party's adherents were the aforementioned Alexander, Athanasius, and Hosius, as well as Marcellus of Ancyra, Eustathius of Antioch, and Macarius of Jerusalem. The second party, sometimes called the Arians or Eusebians, included Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia as well as Maris of Chalcedon, Menophantus of Ephesus, and Theognis of Nicaea, with a total of around 20 bishops in all. A third mediating party was led by Eusebius of Caesarea, whose adherents

³⁵⁹ Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* 3.12 [Cameron and Hall].

³⁶⁰ Schaff, 627.

were at first for various reasons uncomfortable with the theological expressions of the first and second parties at the time of the conference; these were predominantly bishops from the East who favored Logos theology but did not want to oppose Arius.³⁶¹

Various confessional statements were proposed in turn until at last a majority was established. The Arian party proposed a doctrinal confession that was vehemently rejected and destroyed, causing most of the party to secede. The mediating party, led by Eusebius, proposed a Palestinian Confession that recognized Christ's divine nature but avoided altogether the question of whether the Son was of the same essence (ὁμοούσιος) as the Father. This formulation had pleased the emperor and was even amenable to the Arians. But the party of Alexander and Athanasius perceived this creed as an unacceptable compromise. They wanted creedal phrasing that would definitively repudiate the idea that the Son and the Father were of two different substances. Some in the party even insisted that the word ὁμοούσιος be included in the confession.³⁶²

Hosius of Cordova produced a confession that was read by Hermogenes of Caesarea, who acted as secretary of the convention. Here is the Σύμβολον τῆς Νίκαιας, the Nicene Creed of 325 in Greek as we now have it:³⁶³

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἓνα θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα πάντων ὀρατῶν τε καὶ ἀοράτων ποιητὴν. καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τούτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο, τὰ τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῆ · τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα καὶ σαρκωθέντα, ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, παθόντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς. καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα. τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας · ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν καὶ πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν καὶ ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι ἢ τρεπτὸν ἢ ἀλλοιωτὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τούτους ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

³⁶¹ Rusch, 19.

³⁶² Schaff, 628.

³⁶³ Σύμβολον τῆς Νίκαιας [Dossetti].

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, that is, of the essence of the Father; God of God; Light of Light; very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. But those who say: “There was a time when he was not;” and “He was not before he was made;” and “He was made out of nothing,” or “He is of another substance” or “essence,” or “The Son of God is created,” or “changeable,” or “alterable”—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.³⁶⁴

Noteworthy first of all in the creed is the extensive effort to clarify the relationship of the Son to the Father, especially the words that clarify γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς “begotten of the Father” and μονογενῆ “only-begotten”:

ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς “of the essence of the Father”
θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ “God of God”
φῶς ἐκ φωτός “Light of Light”
θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ “very God of very God”
γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα “begotten not made”
ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί “being of one substance with the Father”

The party of Alexander and Athanasius had insisted upon a doctrinal formulation that clearly denounced the Arian belief that the Son was created by the Father and of a separate essence. In the wording produced by Hosius, the Alexandrian party had its solution, particularly by the use of ὁμοούσιον “of one substance,” avoiding any semblance to the semi-Arian term ὁμοιούσιος “of similar substance.” Clarification of the meaning of γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα “begotten not made”

³⁶⁴ Translation Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom, vol. I, The History of the Creeeds*, 6th edition (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 28-29.

would come later, particularly in the writings of Athanasius towards the end of his life.

Also of significance was the explicit denunciation of Arian sayings (i.e., ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν “there was a time when he was not” and following) coming at the end of the confession. Notable in this condemnation are once again references to the being of the Son: ὑποστάσεως and οὐσίας are mentioned explicitly to rule out definitively any question about the Son’s ontology: the Son was not to be thought of as having a different substance than the Father. That he was *homoousios* with the Father was probably meant to convey that the Son was fully God and not created. This precision will become important when, after this historical excursus, we review and summarize how the Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries used Phil 2:6 to defend this position from Scripture.

In very little time, almost all the bishops present at the council agreed to the content of the document, including Eusebius of Caesarea and eventually Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea.³⁶⁵ The sole bishops to refuse were the Egyptians Theonas and Secundus, who along with Arius were exiled to Illyria in keeping with the condemnation expressed at the end of the creed.³⁶⁶ Another tradition holds that Eusebius of Nicomedia was also banished, only to return in 328.³⁶⁷

In addition to the Christological questions addressed by the Nicene Creed, the council also made a decision about the observance date of Easter for the sake of unity of East and West, as well as the Meletian schism and other less critical matters. But the Nicene Creed and its Christological decisions have proved to be the more enduring legacy of the council by far. The Creed in its later form was destined to be the only confession essentially accepted by Greek, Latin, and Protestant churches and still used by them to this day.

The Nicene Council ended with a grand banquet in Constantine’s palace, from which the bishops were dismissed carrying official letters to present the council’s decisions to their respective provinces. From Eusebius of Caesarea’s hand we even have a more personal letter of a bishop to his diocese giving his perspective on the decisions made. The careful reader notes Eusebius’

³⁶⁵ Simonetti, 76, sees the pressure of Constantine’s authority as figuring largely into this formalized agreement.

³⁶⁶ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 629.

³⁶⁷ See “Arianism” in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 100.

hesitations about certain words that were adopted. While we give only representative excerpts here of the Greek text³⁶⁸ and English translation,³⁶⁹ the full letter is found later in the index.

Ταύτης ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐκτεθείσης τῆς πίστεως, οὐδενὶ παρῆν ἀντιλογίας τόπος. Ἄλλ' αὐτός τε πρῶτος ὁ θεοφιλέστατος ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς, ὀρθότατα περιέχειν αὐτὴν ἐμαρτύρησεν· οὕτω τε καὶ ἑαυτὸν φρονεῖν ἐμαρτύρατο, καὶ ταύτη τοὺς πάντας συγκαταθέσθαι, καὶ ὑπογράφειν τοῖς δόγμασι, καὶ συμφωνεῖν τούτοις αὐτοῖς παρεκελεύετο, ἐνὸς μόνου προσεγγραφέντος ῥήματος τοῦ ὁμοουσίου. Ὁ καὶ αὐτὸς ἠρμήνευσε λέγων, ὅτι μὴ κατὰ τὰ τῶν σωμάτων πάθη λέγοι τὸ ὁμοούσιον, οὔτε οὖν κατὰ διαίρεσιν, οὔτε κατὰ τινα ἀποτομὴν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑποστῆναι· μήτε γὰρ δύνασθαι τὴν ἄυλον καὶ νοερὰν καὶ ἀσώματον φύσιν σωματικόν τι πάθος ὑφίστασθαι· θείοις δὲ καὶ ἀπορρήτοις ῥήμασι προσήκει τὰ τοιαῦτα νοεῖν. Καὶ ὁ μὲν σοφώτατος καὶ εὐσεβῆς ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς τοιάδε ἐφιλοσόφει·

(7) When we presented this faith, there was no opportunity for resistance by anyone. But our emperor, most beloved of God, himself first of all witnessed that this was most orthodox. He agreed that even he himself thought thus, and he ordered all to assent to subscribe to the teachings and to be in harmony with them, although only one word, *homoousios*, was added, which he himself interpreted, saying that the Son might not be said to be *homoousios* according to the affections of bodies, and is from the Father neither according to division nor according to a cutting off, for the immaterial, intellectual, and incorporeal nature is unable to subsist in some corporeal affection, but it is befitting to think of such things in a divine and ineffable manner. And our emperor, most wise and pious, thought philosophically in this manner.

Οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ὁμοούσιον εἶναι τοῦ Πατρὸς τὸν Υἱὸν ἐξεταζόμενος ὁ λόγος συνίστησιν, οὐ κατὰ τὸν τῶν σωμάτων τρόπον, οὐδὲ τοῖς θνητοῖς ζώοις παραπλησίως· οὔτε γὰρ κατὰ διαίρεσιν τῆς οὐσίας, οὔτε κατὰ ἀποτομὴν, ἢ ἀλλοίωσιν τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐσίας τε καὶ δυνάμεως· τούτων γὰρ πάντων ἀλλοτρίαν

³⁶⁸ Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.8 [Opitz].

³⁶⁹ Eusebius, *Letter on the Council of Nicaea* [Rusch].

εἶναι τὴν ἀγέννητον φύσιν τοῦ Πατρὸς· παραστατικὸν δὲ εἶναι τῷ Πατρὶ τὸ ὁμοούσιον, τὸ μηδεμίαν ἐμφέρειαν πρὸς τὰ γενητὰ κτίσματα τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐμφαίνειν· μόνῳ δὲ τῷ Πατρὶ τῷ γεγεννηκότι κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ἀφωμοιωθῆναι, καὶ μὴ εἶναι ἐξ ἐτέρας τῆς ὑποστάσεως καὶ οὐσίας, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς. Ὅτι καὶ αὐτῷ τοῦτον ἐρμηνευθέντι τὸν τρόπον, καλῶς ἔχειν ἐφάνη συγκαταθέσθαι· ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν τινὰς λογίους καὶ ἐπιφανεῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ συγγραφέας ἔγνωμεν, ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ θεολογίας τῷ τοῦ ὁμοουσίου συγχρησαμένους ὀνόματι.

(12) Likewise, the argument “the Son is *homoousios* with the Father,” when examined, is sound; not in the manner of bodies or as mortal beings—for the Son is so not according division of substance or by a cutting or according to any affection, mutation, or change of the Father’s substance and power. The unbegotten nature of the Father is foreign to all these. (13) “*Homoousios* with the Father” indicates that the Son of God bears no resemblance to originated creatures but that he is alike in every way only to the Father who has begotten and that he is not from any other hypostasis and substance but from the Father. To this term, thus interpreted, it seemed well to assent, since we knew that there were certain learned ones of the ancients, famous bishops and writers, who employed the term *homoousios* in reference to their teaching about the Father and Son.

καὶ τὸν ἀναθεματισμὸν δὲ τὸν μετὰ τὴν πίστιν πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐκτεθέντα, ἄλυπον εἶναι ἠγησάμεθα, διὰ τὸ ἀπείργειν ἀγράφοις χρήσασθαι φωναῖς· διὸ σχεδὸν ἢ πᾶσα γέγονε σύγχυσις τε καὶ ἀκαταστασία τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. Μηδεμιᾶς γοῦν θεοπνεύστου γραφῆς τῷ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, καὶ τῷ ἦν ποτὲ ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, καὶ τοῖς ἐξῆς ἐπιλεγομένοις κεχρημένης, οὐκ εὐλογον ἐφάνη ταῦτα λέγειν καὶ διδάσκειν· ὅτι καὶ αὐτῷ καλῶς δόξαντι συνεθέμεθα, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ ἐν τῷ πρὸ τούτου χρόνῳ, τούτοις εἰώθαμεν χρῆσθαι τοῖς ῥήμασι.

(15) We considered the anathema, published by them after the faith, to be harmless because of its prohibition against using words not in Scripture, from which nearly every confusion and anarchy of the church occurred. Since at any rate no divinely inspired Scripture has employed “from nothing” and “once he was not” and those things added afterward, it did not appear reasonable to say and teach these things.

We agreed to this as something apparently good, because prior to this we were not accustomed to employing these words.

One notes in these three excerpts from Eusebius' letter his reticence to give full agreement to the document composed at Nicaea. He tells the churches that key terms of the creed can be interpreted in a way that he can agree with, but not without qualification.

The events of that spring in Nicaea set a precedent for the convening of church leaders to decide on key issues, the first of the so-called seven ecumenical councils (including, through the centuries, the three of Constantinople as well as those of Ephesus, Chalcedon, and the second of Nicaea in 787). One might imagine that in leaving the banquet for their homelands, the unified host of bishops and their associates considered the Arian controversy essentially resolved by the decision of the council and its codification in the Nicene Creed. However, the controversy was actually only beginning, for the circle of Arius was to continue the fight, joined by those who, like Eusebius of Caesarea, had hesitations about consubstantiality as expressed in Nicaea's *homoousios*.

AD 326-361 The Arian and Semi-Arian Reaction

Indeed, what appeared to be a victory for the Homoousians quickly changed direction after the first Council of Nicaea. Some of the bishops who agreed to the Nicene Creed had apparently done so with some reservation. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea had subscribed to the Creed but were quickly ready to fight the doctrine of the Homoousians. Whereas before and just after the Council of Nicaea it was Arian leaders who were deposed by the Homoousians, the tide began to turn at the end of the 320s. Eustathius of Antioch of the Nicene party was himself deposed in 330.³⁷⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea (though he claimed to continue to agree with the Nicene Creed and the Homoousians), along with Eusebius of Nicomedia, convinced Constantine to bring Arius out of his exile in Illyria around 334 and have him brought back into communion in Alexandria.³⁷¹

Another surprising event occurred in the decade following the council. Athanasius, who

³⁷⁰ "Arianism," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

³⁷¹ "Arius," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 105.

had already shown exceptional ability as a thinker and communicator at the council, became the leader of the Homoousians and, upon Alexander's death in 328, the Bishop of Alexandria. But when Athanasius countered the reinstatement of Arius as priest in Alexandria, Arian opposition was of such a strength that the Bishop was himself exiled to Treves in Gaul in 336 through the proceedings of Arian-led councils at Tyre and then at Constantinople. The charge against Athanasius: disrupting the peace of the church. Thus a decade after the Nicene council, the Arian resurgence was such that one of the key leaders of Homoousianism, Athanasius, was deposed.

Arius succeeded in being reinstated and absolved of heresy at a Jerusalem council in 335 and was about to undergo the same process at Constantinople when he died suddenly in 336 at more than eighty years old. Constantine himself then died in 337, and Athanasius was allowed to return to Alexandria the following year. But Arianism had taken firm root, and Athanasius' exiles were just beginning. Constantine's three sons (Constantine II, Constantius, and Constans) became co-emperors and divided the empire between themselves after ridding themselves of family rivals. Constantius (reigned 337-361) became ruler of the eastern provinces: Asia Minor, Thrace, Egypt, Syria, and Cyrenaica (the eastern part of modern Libya).

This Constantius allied himself with the Arian cause and made Eusebius of Nicomedia the bishop of Constantinople in 338. Eusebius had become leader of both the Arian cause and that of the semi-Arians, who were less categorical than the Arians; the partisans of both Heteroousion and Homoiousion were united in their opposition to Athanasius and the Homoousian West. The leadership of Constantius and Eusebius led to Athanasius being banished for a second time in 339/340. Athanasius then found in the Bishop Julius of Rome an ally.³⁷²

This Julius convened a council in Rome in the fall of 341 with some 50 bishops in attendance in the interest of absolving Athanasius of any wrongdoing. The results of this particular conference were positive on the side of Athanasius. However, a parallel convention of Eusebian parties, also in 341 at Antioch, upheld Athanasius' exile even as it issued four creeds rejecting Arianism as such (though avoiding the word homoousion).³⁷³

³⁷² Simonetti, 76.

³⁷³ Schaff, 634.

The brothers Constans of the West and Constantius of the East saw that their respective regions of the empire were in grave disaccord. They agreed to convene, at the request of Pope Julius, another council at Sardica in 343 with the goal of healing the schism and bringing the factions together. Bishop Hosius of Cordova presided over about 170 bishops attending from East and West. The Western bishops desired to restore Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Asclepas of Gaza. However, the Eastern bishops refused even to continue proceedings at the council because of these three deposed leaders. Hosius attempted to find points of compromise in order to proceed, but many of the Eastern bishops decided to leave the conference altogether and convene their own at Philippopolis. There they declared Athanasius anathema. Meanwhile, at Sardica the three deposed bishops were declared acquitted. The council at Sardica did not prove to achieve the desired uniting effect that Pope Julius, Constans, and Constantius had envisioned.³⁷⁴

To further complicate the situation, after the death of Constans in 350, Constantius, who had restored Athanasius to office in 346, held three different church synods in 351, 353, and 355 in order to force a moderate Arianism upon the whole church. This effort included removing and banishing key Nicene party leaders, including Hilary of Poitiers, Lucifer of Cagliari, and Hosius of Cordova. Constantius ordered 5,000 soldiers to overtake Athanasius while he officiated services in the Alexandria cathedral and replaced him with the Arian George of Cappadocia in 356. And so thirty years later, the doctrinal dispute raged on.

The Nicenes suffered at the hands of Constantius not only in being removed from office but also through persecution during exile. The Nicenes shot back verbal attacks upon the emperor and called him the Antichrist. But their refutations were to no avail, as Constantius' actions helped a moderate Arianism to win the day in the mid-350s. This moderate stance held that Christ was of a similar essence to the Father (Homoiousianism) in distinction to the consubstantiality of the Nicene party (Homousianism) or the different essence of the strict Arians (Heteroousianism).

Constantius forced Hosius of Cordova, who had been one of the clearest voices against Arianism at the Nicene Council 30 years prior, to give verbal assent to Arianism as expressed at the second council of Sirmium in 357 AD. And though Hosius shortly thereafter retracted this Arian assent before his death at over 100 years old, Constantius' actions against the Nicenes had

³⁷⁴ "Athanasius, St" in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 119.

taken their toll in the goal of stamping out Homoousianism completely.³⁷⁵ Again we note for the purposes of our study on the use of Phil 2:6 in the Greek Fathers that the question of the essence of Christ in relation to the Father was *the* theological issue of the time. Not only that, but it was debated with violence and sustained animosity. It is of little wonder that the Nicene-Arian conflict of the time is reflected to such a great extent in the patristic writings of the fourth and fifth centuries which we will examine.

But this moderate Arianism would not have the final say. There were still two schools of thought within Arianism. Despite compromises that had been made over the decades since the 320s to unify the Arian movement, some were still in reality what could be called Semi-Arians or Eusebians. These held that the Son was of like essence to the Father, but not of the same substance. Among them were Gregory of Laodicea and Basil of Ancyra. Some of these Semi-Arians probably wanted to uphold the distinction of personhood between the Son and the Father in order to avoid Sabellianism, which held that the Son and Father were distinct modes of the same monad rather than distinct persons.³⁷⁶

The other, stricter school within Arianism, however, went further in distinguishing between Son and Father. For Arians like Cyzicus of Mysia and Eudoxius and Aëtius of Antioch, the essences of the Son and Father were completely distinct. These essences were actually unlike each other, as for them the Son had been created out of nothing. For this reason, this party was labeled variously the Anomoeans (meaning “unlike” in essence), the Heterousiasts (meaning “different” in essence), and Exukontians (meaning created “not from being”).³⁷⁷

A series of Arian councils were held at the end of the 350s in order bring unity to this school of thought and finally win the day over the Nicene party. But the councils at Sirmium, Antioch, Ancyra, Seleucia, Rimini, and Constantinople did not achieve the desired affect. The number of councils and the efforts behind them once again points up the intensity with which this theological battle raged for the better part of the fourth century. Constantius would have liked to bring unity to the Arian cause as well, but died in 361 without having succeeded.

³⁷⁵ Schaff, 636.

³⁷⁶ Simonetti, 74.

³⁷⁷ Schaff, 637.

Besides the failed effort to unify Arians and semi-Arians, another major contribution to the decline of Arian Christology and the resurgence of the Nicene position is Athanasius' *Against the Arians*, most likely penned at the end of the 350s. Despite repeated exiles because of his outspoken leadership against Arianism, Athanasius did not let up in his advocacy of the Nicene Creed towards the end of his life. *Against the Arians* helps us better understand the heart of the Nicene argument for homoousion or consubstantiality, the identity of essence of the Father and Son. In stating that the Father and Son were of the same essence, the Nicenes were defending the inherent divinity of Christ against the idea of the created, derived divinity of the Arians.

But just how could one defend the identity of divine essence between two beings and yet declare that God is one? For Athanasius it was just as crucial to uphold monotheism as it was for Arius. This we shall see shortly through a number of Athanasius' quotations that use ἴσα θεῶ. His explanation came chiefly through the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. Generation was described as an ongoing process of communication of essence between Father and Son. Creation, by distinction, is God's single act of producing something of a different nature. Thus the Son is generated but was not created.

"Begotten," in other words, was for the Nicenes as represented by Athanasius not a question of priority or of divine essence, but rather of eternal filial relationship. The Son has eternally been in filial status in relationship to the Father, and the Father has always been in eternal paternal status in relationship to the Son. Eternal generation was a way of explaining the mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son.³⁷⁸

AD 362-381 Events Leading to the Council of Constantinople

In addition to Athanasius' *Against the Arians*, the death of Constantius was also to lead to a resurgence of the Nicene cause. The emperor Julian, who reigned as sole Augustus from 361-363, hoped that Christianity would destroy itself in this internal theological battle, and so Athanasius was brought out of exile for a time. And besides the absence of a specifically Arian emperor, there emerged at this time the three Cappadocian bishops: the brothers Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzen. These writers exercised a strong influence to turn the tide of the

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 660.

Arian controversies.

Besides the Cappadocians, other writers contributed to the resurgence of the Homoousian cause. Marcellus of Ancyra was bishop of Ancyra from 314 to 338 (not counting his removal between 336-337).³⁷⁹ He is one of the more difficult figures to categorize in the Arian controversy. On the one hand he emerged after 325 as a key figure in the Nicene party, especially because of his *Against Asterius* (of which we have only fragments), in which he sought to explain how the Father and Son were of the same essence. Some theological aspects of this work, such as the denial of the distinct personality of the Son, however, also created tension within the party and led to disagreements with Athanasius. Nonetheless, Marcellus' writing is still considered to have propelled the Nicene cause.

The Arian Valens was Eastern Roman Emperor from 364-378, but his death at the Battle of Adrianople would signal the end of the Arian cause officially endorsed. Gratian, Western Roman Emperor from 379-383, brought back banished bishops favorable to the Nicene cause. He also officially suppressed pagan religion until his assassination in 383 at the age of 24. And then Theodosius I from Spain ruled from 379-395, first as emperor in the East, and then finally of the whole Roman Empire. He took several major steps to see that Arianism would not continue. In early 380 Theodosius issued the Edict of Thessalonica which made Nicene Christianity the official religion of the Empire. In late 380 he positioned two key bishops as patriarchs: Meletius in Antioch and Gregory Nazianzen in Constantinople, and banished Arian leaders from the city.³⁸⁰

Finally, in 381, a lasting victory for the Nicene school was won when Theodosius convened the second council of Constantinople in May 381. The council upheld the Nicene Creed of 325 in its essential form without major changes. The divinity of the Holy Spirit was further affirmed. From July 381, Theodosius required that all churches of the empire had to have bishops who clearly affirmed the Nicene Creed. Though Arian theology continued for some centuries among the various peoples who overtook the Roman empire as well as in isolated cases since, Arianism never regained the prominence it had won for the fifty tumultuous years between 330 and 380.

³⁷⁹ S. Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325-345* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

³⁸⁰ Schaff, 638.

Theological Differences in the Arian Controversies

In the preceding section we have highlighted some of the major events, figures, and primary sources of the Arian controversy, particularly between 318 and 381 AD. One may wonder how it is that Arius could have arrived at the conclusion that Christ was created and of a different substance than God the Father while other church leaders vehemently defended Christ's eternity and consubstantiality. Certainly, there were political factors that contributed to the controversy. We have documented Constantine's personal involvement in the publication of the Nicene Creed, as well as Constantius' actions against the Nicenes. And then as the Nicene cause experienced a resurgence, it was certainly helped along by imperial officials favorable to it.

However, while the nontheological factors of politics and philosophy are important for an accurate picture of the fourth century discussions about the person of Christ and his relationship to the Father, we believe that the ultimate motivations behind these controversies were indeed doctrinal. They were born ultimately of a desire to articulate how Jesus Christ should be included in discussions of the Christian God.

And in these fourth-century discussions, differences in biblical interpretation can be detected. Arian interpreters read and emphasized particular biblical passages differently and integrated them theologically in a different way than did the Nicenes. Arian interpreters focused on passages that they believed called Christ a creature, made reference to his human limitations and growth, and compared him to the Father. Athanasius, however, held that when Christ professed lack of knowledge, he was speaking in terms of his human knowledge only.³⁸¹ The bishop tends to reprove Arianism with texts speaking of Christ with divine names, qualities, and actions. Theologically, Arianism reasoned that an eternal Christ is incompatible with monotheism. Athanasius, however, reasoned that a creature cannot be creator of all; that positing two essentially different divine figures amounts to polytheism; that Christ existing before time but not being eternal is a non-sense; and that God becoming Father to the Son at a certain time means that God is changeable.³⁸²

³⁸¹ For more on Athanasius' understanding of the human nature of Christ, see Grillmeier, 308-328.

³⁸² Schaff, 649.

The Theological Stakes in the Arian Controversies

Surveying the Arian controversies from the outside, a modern reader might justifiably wonder why these theological differences caused such a great uproar in the fourth-century church. Can the difference of a single Greek iota between ὁμοούσιος and ὁμοιούσιος really be cause for that great a conflict? The modern reader may have to read both words twice to even see a difference. But the difference does turn out to be very significant for Christian theology, for it addresses the question of the uniqueness of the one who is proclaimed by Christians as Son of God and Savior. Is that one of the same substance as God the Father, or is he of like substance as semi-Arians said, or is he rather a third option: of a different substance altogether?

Two important theological elements can be discerned for Christian theology. The similarity between the Greek words ὁμοούσιος and ὁμοιούσιος actually conceals a major difference in interpretation concerning Christ and his redemptive work described in the New Testament. If Christ is ὁμοούσιος, of the same essence as God the Father, then he is the eternal God-Man. If he is ὁμοιούσιος, of a similar essence, or ἕτεροούσιος, of a different essence from God the Father, then he is, in the intention of those who used these words in the fourth century, not eternally existing and not God in the same sense as God the Father. God the Father is the standard by which the Son is measured.

In addition to the identity of Christ, the second major implication of the difference between Arian and Nicene interpretations concerns the redemptive work of Christ. If Christ is not truly the God-Man, the thought goes, the salvific character of the cross is slighted: “the all-sufficiency of the redeeming act can no longer be given its proper emphasis . . .”³⁸³ Similarly, Baur argued that the heart of the issue in the Arian controversies is that Christianity

would be utterly null and meaningless, if he who is supposed to unite man with God in real unity of being, were not himself absolute God, or of one substance with the absolute God, but only a creature among creatures . . . Just as the distinctive character of the Athanasian doctrine lies in its effort to conceive the relation of the Father and Son, and in it the relation of God and man, as unity and community of

³⁸³ Grillmeier, 342.

essence, the Arian doctrine on the contrary has the opposite aim of a separation by which, first Father and Son, and then God and man, are placed in the abstract opposition of infinite and finite.³⁸⁴

To a great many Christian theologians both ancient and modern, Christ being fully God is not an accessory to his work of salvation, but an essential part. And since the theological center point for many forms of Christianity ancient and modern is the meaning of the death of Christ, wherever Christ's deity is attacked from within, the reaction is strong in order to preserve the uniqueness of its redemptive center among other faith confessions.

Theological Trajectories of the Arian Controversies

The events and writings of 318-381, framed by the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, led naturally to subsequent refinement of related Christian doctrines. While these two councils served to articulate that the Christ was indeed uncreated deity, there remained then to articulate how this divinity coexisted with Christ's humanity. The Council of Ephesus (431) explored the relationship between Jesus Christ's human nature and divine nature in the face of the teaching of Nestorius, as well as the relationship between Jesus' divine-human status and his own mother Mary (including the title Θεοτόκος "Mother of God"). The Council of Chalcedon (451) and the Second Council of Constantinople (553) further explored the interaction of Christ's human and divine natures, while the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681) investigated particularly the subject of Christ's volition. Did Jesus Christ, as the God-man, have both a human and a divine will, or only one will, as the movement of Monothelism taught from the seventh century AD? These church conferences served to discuss and articulate the Christological implications of the Nicene Creed established at Nicaea and then Constantinople.

Though after Constantinople the doctrine holding that Christ's divine essence was the same as that of God the Father was never officially reconsidered in the context of the Roman church, certain Germanic tribes who had been won to Christianity by Arian influence continued to hold an Arian Christology for two centuries.³⁸⁵ In modern times the Christology of the Jehovah's Witnesses

³⁸⁴ F. C. Baur, *Die christliche Kirche vom 4-6ten (Jahrhundert, 1859)*, 97; translation Schaff, 642.

³⁸⁵ On which see G. M. Berndt and R. Steinacher, eds., *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed* (Farnham, Surrey-Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

bears some similarity to the Arian movement, including the idea that Christ is a created being.

This survey of the geographical, political, and cultural extent of the disagreements related to Arianism provides a background from which to understand how all-encompassing was the doctrinal issue of these centuries and demonstrates the relevance of the crises to the study of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ citations in the fourth century. There is little wonder that the church writings of the time would be taken up with using scriptural passages such as Phil 2:6 to defend various doctrinal positions. With this historical background in mind, we will now leave our consideration of the Arian controversies in order to consider specific works of fourth and fifth century Greek authors who cite ἴσα θεῶ from Phil 2:6. Among the undisputed works of **Athanasius** we found 13 different passages in which ἴσα θεῶ is cited. All of them serve to argue for various issues surrounding Christ's divinity. We identified six quotation contexts treating the nature of his divinity, especially in relation to the Father; four treating the question of the two natures of Christ; and three discussing his immutability.

In one divinity text, Athanasius explains what it means for the Son to be in the Father and the Father in the Son (John 14:10).³⁸⁶ The Son has the fullness of the deity of the Father (τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς θεότητος) and is wholly God (καὶ ὅλος θεός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός). That is why, explains Athanasius, though the Son was ἴσα θεῶ, he did not consider τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as a prize. Thus Athanasius takes ἴσα θεῶ as communicating fullness of deity.

In a second divinity text, Athanasius gives the meaning of John 17:11, where Jesus prays to the Father, “May they be one as we are one.” Athanasius specifies that we do not have the same unity with the Father as the Son has with the Father. Rather, our unity with the Father comes through the Holy Spirit given by the Son. This means that we are not equal with the Father as the Son is equal with the Father. At the end of this commentary Athanasius writes that the enemies of God should no longer imagine themselves to be ἴσα θεῶ, with his meaning here being “equal with God,” for that is the unique possession of the Son.³⁸⁷

In a third divinity text from Athanasius, ἴσα θεῶ serves as an honorific title of divinity for Christ. Athanasius writes against Jews and Greeks who say that the Christ is a mere man like all

³⁸⁶ Athanasius, *C. Ar.* III 6.1 [Metzler and Savvidis].

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, *C. Ar.* III 25.7 [Metzler and Savvidis].

the other descendants of David. He cites a series of NT passages to show Christ's divinity, including Phil 2:6. He then repeats key titles for Christ from these quoted passages, and the one he chooses from Phil 2:6 is ἴσα θεῷ. Though he does not comment on Phil 2:6 directly, it is clear that for Athanasius, ἴσα θεῷ is in itself a phrase indicating Christ's divinity, by the way that he includes it with other titles that he considers divine, such as Son of God (υἰὸν τοῦ θεοῦ), author of life (ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς), reflection and exact representation (ἀπαύγασμα καὶ χαρακτηῖρα) and overseer of souls (ἐπίσκοπον ψυχῶν).³⁸⁸

A fourth divinity text is similar to the preceding one in its use of ἴσα θεῷ as a discrete title. Athanasius wants to show by his citation of many scriptures that the qualities that are predicated of the Father are also predicated of the Son. These include being God, the Omnipotent, the light, the designer of cause, eternal, honored as the Father is honored, ἴσα θεῷ. Though the author does not comment on our phrase directly, we observe that (1) he cites it as something belonging to Christ, not something that he didn't have and for which he tried to reach ; and (2) it is used as an honorific title understood to communicate Christ's divinity, given its placement in the series of titles mentioned above.³⁸⁹

Athanasius also uses Phil 2:6 in discussions of the two natures of Christ. Athanasius asserts that the Scriptures in their entirety present the Son as being both God for all time and as taking on flesh. Phil 2:6-8 is cited without comment, along with John 1:1-3, 14, to support this claim.³⁹⁰

A second text also illustrates Athanasius' use of Phil 2:6 regarding the two natures of Christ.³⁹¹ In a discussion of Christ's words, "I am the vine, and you are the branches" from John 15, Athanasius notes that just as Christ changed circumstances from wealth to poverty (for which he cites Phil 2:6-7 and 2 Cor 8:9), so also lofty and rich language is used when speaking of Christ's divinity, and lowly language is chosen for Christ's incarnated condition. The type of language used in scripture is changed to reflect the change of circumstances:

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὢν οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, ἀλλ' ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν καὶ πλούσιος ὢν ἐπτώχευσε δι' ἡμᾶς, οὕτως ὄντων ὑψηλῶν

³⁸⁸ Ibid, *Dion.* 8.4.4 [Metzler and Savvidis].

³⁸⁹ Ibid, *Syn.* 49.4.6 [Metzler and Savvidis].

³⁹⁰ Ibid, *C. Ar.* III 29.3 [Metzler and Savvidis].

³⁹¹ Ibid, *Dion.* 10.2.3 [Metzler and Savvidis]. Translation ours.

καὶ πλουσίων τῶν περὶ τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ λόγων εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ περὶ τῆς ἐνσάρκου παρουσίας αὐτοῦ ταπειναὶ καὶ πτωχαὶ λέξεις.

For just as he, existing in the form of God, did not consider being on an equality with God something to be retained, but made himself nothing by taking the form of a servant, and though he was rich he became poor for us, so also the words concerning his divinity being lofty and rich, the discourses concerning his appearance in the flesh are humble and beggarly.

We can understand from Athanasius' use of Phil 2:6-7 that he understood it as describing a change in circumstances from wealth to poverty. We also note once again the connection the Fathers made between Phil 2 and 2 Cor 8:9. Further, we surmise that the words concerning his divinity include ἴσα θεῷ.

A third type of use of Phil 2:6 in Athanasius regards Christ's immutability. Athanasius cites Phil 2:5-11 as he refutes the idea that Jesus Christ became better in his exaltation.³⁹² When Paul says that God highly exalted him, it is not speaking of the substance of the Word, because the Word was always ἴσα θεῷ, i.e., always the Most High. The exaltation of Phil 2:9 is rather speaking of the change in status of Christ's humanity: from a slave to the exalted one. In this passage it is clear that Athanasius understands ἴσα θεῷ as speaking of Christ's nature and not simply treatment or circumstances.

In another immutability text, Athanasius asks how the Word could have progressed in wisdom, age, and grace before God and men (Luke 2:52).³⁹³ What kind of progress could someone who is ἴσα θεῷ experience (ποῖαν ἔχει προκοπὴν ὁ ἴσα θεῷ ὑπάρχων;)? Athanasius responds that Luke is speaking in terms of physical bodily growth. As Christ's body grew, the grace and wisdom that were his were more and more clearly manifested. So here again ἴσα θεῷ is used to speak of Christ's nature, particularly its unchangeable divinity.

In these and other similar passages, it is clear that Athanasius understands τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ as referring to the different aspects of the divinity of the Son (although we note that Athanasius

³⁹² Ibid, *C. Ar.* I 41.2 [Metzler and Savvidis].

³⁹³ Ibid, *C. Ar.* III 51.2 [Metzler and Savvidis].

does not use ἴσος to replace ἴσα in quotations of Phil 2:6 as later Fathers would). Furthermore, while the dominant extant interpretations of ἴσα θεῶ in the second and third-century Fathers emphasized humility, in none of Athanasius’ thirteen different citation contexts of ἴσα θεῶ is Christ’s humility ever the subject of the discussion.

While **Basil** could use our phrase to describe the redemptive and loving intent of the incarnation, it is clear from three of his six quotation contexts that he understood our phrase to be speaking of Christ’s ontological nature. On two occasions he replaced ἴσα with the adjective ἴσος to argue for the equality of the Son with the Father. For example, Basil writes that existing ἴσα θεῶ is none other than existing equal to God (Τὸ ἴσα Θεῶ εἶναι, οὐκ ἄλλο ἐστὶ τῷ εἶναι ἴσον Θεῶ). For how could the Son, he reasons, who was not considering as something to be retained τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ, be unlike and unequal with God (Ὁ οὖν Υἱὸς, οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγησάμενος τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ, πῶς ἀνόμοιος καὶ ἄνισος Θεῶ)?³⁹⁴

In a different writing, Basil references John 5:18 and Phil 2:6 and asks how his opponents could say that the Son is not equal (ἴσος) to the Father: “How could he not consider being ἴσα Θεῶ something to be retained if, as you blaspheme, he was never equal? And how could he exist in the form of God if, according to your discourse, he was never the same?” (Πῶς δὲ οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ, εἰ, ὡς σὺ βλασφημεῖς, οὐδέποτε ἴσος; Πῶς δὲ καὶ ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπῆρχεν ὁ, κατὰ τὸν σὸν λόγον, μηδέποτε ὅμοιος;).³⁹⁵ So Basil understands our phrase in terms of equality of nature.

And a third ontological citation occurs in a discussion of John 14:28, where Jesus says that “the Father is greater than I” (ὁ Πατὴρ μείζων μου ἐστίν).³⁹⁶ Basil explains the saying with reference to ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6, explaining that if Jesus had intended to speak particularly of the nature of his being, he would have said, “The one who engendered me is greater than I” (Ὁ ἀγέννητος μείζων μου ἐστίν). For Basil, ἴσα θεῶ proves Jesus’ ontological equality of nature with the Father, and thus μείζων does not refer to a comparison of substance.

Marcellus of Ancyra argues against what he has heard that Eusebius of Caesarea implicitly

³⁹⁴ Basil, *Adversus Eunomium (libri 5)* 29.708 [PG 29:708].

³⁹⁵ Ibid, *Contra Sabellianos et Arium et Anomoeos* 31.604 [PG 31:604], translation ours.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, *Adversus Eunomium (libri 5)* 29.565 [PG 29:565].

teaches, namely that Christ is only a man.³⁹⁷ Marcellus claims that in citing 1 Tim 2:5 where Christ is called a man, Eusebius is forgetting what the same author said in Phil 2:6-7, which is cited without comment. It is clear that Marcellus views Phil 2:6-7 as affirming the divinity of Christ, but which part of the quotation does so is not specified. **Pseudo-Ephrem the Syrian** is credited with using our passage once in a similar context, to prove that Christ is not only a man born of a virgin, but the word of God incarnate, citing Phil 2:5-8 without comment.³⁹⁸

Eusebius uses our phrase particularly to argue the preexistence of Christ as well as to show how Christ is the fuller meaning of certain Hebrew Scriptures. And in his citations, like many other Greek Fathers, Eusebius more than once associates Phil 2:5-11 with 2 Cor 8:9. For example, Eusebius quotes Eccl 4:13-16 and applies the figure of the wise child born in poverty into his kingdom to Jesus Christ, noting that “Christ, being the wisdom of God, became poor as a beggar for our sakes, though he was rich (2 Cor 8:9)” (Ἐπεὶ Χριστὸς σοφία Θεοῦ ὢν δι’ ἡμᾶς ἐπτώχευσε πλούσιος ὢν).³⁹⁹ He later continues, “And in that kingdom of his he was born poor” (καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ ἐγενήθη πένης), “not considering τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ as something to be retained” (οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγούμενος τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ), “but humbling himself even from the uttermost glory” (ἀλλ’ ἐαυτὸν ταπεινῶν καὶ τῆς ἀνωτάτω δοξῆς), “he came down for the sake of the ones who had not room for his wealth of wisdom” (ὑποκαταβαίνων διὰ τοὺς μὴ χωροῦντας αὐτοῦ τὸν τῆς σοφίας πλοῦτον). What is interesting for our purposes is that Eusebius appears to have believed that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ speaks of the glorious and wealthy conditions of the preexistent Christ. In another text he describes τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ as a state that Christ already had, in which “he had been honored with the divinity of the glory of the Father” (θεότητι πατρικῆς δόξης τετιμημένος).⁴⁰⁰

Out of his fourteen different quotations of Phil 2:6b⁴⁰¹ (six of which are in the same passage), we never observe Eusebius specifically using ἴσα ontologically to argue about Christ’s deity or equality with the Father, as other Fathers do. Eusebius mainly cites our passage to describe how Christ is announced in the Hebrew Scriptures or is preexistent. This is exceptional among the

³⁹⁷ Marcellus, *Fragmenta* 101.7 [GCS 14:207].

³⁹⁸ Ephrem, *Ad Ioannem monachum, ut abstineat a Nestorii insania et blasphemia* 180.13 [Phrantzoles].

³⁹⁹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Proph.* 103.24 [Gaisford], translation ours.

⁴⁰⁰ Eusebius, *Eccl. Theol.* 1.13.6 [GCS 14:74], translation ours. J. Labourt confirms this interpretation of Eusebius in “Notes d’exégèse sur Philipp. II, 5-11,” *Revue Biblique* 7 (1898): 556.

⁴⁰¹ In this number fourteen we are excluding the aforementioned citations of *Epistula ecclesiarum apud Lugdunum et Viennam* and *Epistula ad Thmuitanos*.

Fathers of the fourth century, but perhaps not surprising considering that Eusebius has been considered by writers both ancient and modern to have been sympathetic to Arius' teaching at some level and at some point in time, though later officially repudiating Arianism.

Apollinarius of Laodicea records a dialogue between a non-Arian and an Arian.⁴⁰² The non-Arian takes ἴσα to mean ἴσος in Phil 2:6b, and wants to use this passage to prove the equality of Father and Son. The Arian asks, "If he did not take it, why do you give it to him?" The non-Arian responds, "I give him this equality because he didn't take it, but he has it by nature." This non-Arian goes on to say that if abstaining from taking "equality" was in itself worthy of praise, then it would be necessary to worship all the angels, since they did not take hold of equality with God. Thus both sides of this argument presented in Apollinarius read ontological equality in ἴσα θεῶ, with the question being whether it was possessed or not.

Out of his ten quotations of Phil 2:6b, **Gregory of Nyssa** twice used our text to teach the humility of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰³ The first of these texts quotes Phil 2:5-7 in an eloquent presentation of Christ's humility in which our particular phrase does not receive specific comment. In a second, Gregory's first sermon on the beatitudes, Christ's humiliation in Phil 2:6 is given as an example in the context of the beatitude "Blessed are the poor in heart, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." So the humility reading of ἴσα θεῶ does not disappear altogether in the fourth century.

Nonetheless, on even more occasions Gregory quotes to Phil 2:6 to argue different points of Christological controversy (seven times). On one occasion, ἴσα θεῶ is understood as communicating fullness of deity, with ἰσότης and ἴσος used as its synonyms; ἐκένωσε is understood as giving up the divine glory.⁴⁰⁴

In another context where Phil 2:6b is quoted, Gregory argues against the Apollinarian idea that in his incarnation, Jesus Christ did not have a human mind, but a divine mind in a human body and as such, he did not need to make a mental effort to do anything noteworthy.⁴⁰⁵ Gregory retorts that human beings like Beseleel, Solomon, and Amos clearly had divine enablement working

⁴⁰² Apollinarius, *Dial. De Trin.* 280.1-10 [Dräseke]. Translation ours.

⁴⁰³ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum* 4 [Langerbeck]; *De beatitudinibus* 1 [Callahan].

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium* [Mueller].

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, [PG 45:1209], 193. Translation ours.

through human intelligence: “By what kind of skill training was Beseleel led? Where did Solomon’s knowledge of such things come from? How does Amos pruner of mulberry trees get such a powerful prophetic gift from herding?” (ποία τοῦ Βεσελεήλ ἄσκησις τῶν τεχνῶν καθηγήσατο; πόθεν δὲ τῷ Σολομῶντι τῶν τοσοῦτων ἢ γνῶσις; ὁ δὲ τὰ συκάμινα κνίζων Ἀμὼς πῶς ἐξ αἰπόλων τοσαύτην ἔσχεν ἐν προφητεία τὴν δύναμιν;). Why then would this also not be possible, reasons Gregory, with someone who was with God in the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν) and was ἴσα θεῶ?

In a third text, Gregory explains, in a way not unlike Basil, how the inseparability of the Father and the Son nuances the assertion that the Father is greater than the Son.⁴⁰⁶ If the Son is equal to the Father in Phil 2:6b, in what sense is the Father greater than the Son (Πῶς καὶ μείζων ὁ Πατήρ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, καὶ ἴσος ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρός)? In citing the ἴσα θεῶ of Phil 2:6 and then immediately replacing it in his argument with ἴσος, it is clear that Gregory understands ἴσα as synonymous with ἴσος and, considering the context, as having an ontological meaning.

All five of **Epiphanius’** citations of our phrase are Christological with apologetic aims. In one of these passages, Phil 2:6-7 appears without comment in a series of quotations by which Epiphanius wants to demonstrate the true humanity of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰⁷ The other four are used to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father. In one of these four, correcting the ignorant who misinterpret Phil 2:6, Epiphanius writes that the passage does not say that Jesus Christ wanted to be equal with God *because* of a prize (οὐ γὰρ εἶπεν· οὐκ ἠθέλησε γενέσθαι ἴσος θεῶ δι’ ἀρπαγμοῦ), but rather he did not *consider* as a prize τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ, to be God by nature, for he was τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ.⁴⁰⁸ If he were not, reasons Epiphanius, how did he take on the form of a servant (πῶς μορφήν δούλου ἔλαβε)? It is clear from this passage that Epiphanius interpreted 1) τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as something already possessed by Christ and 2) that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ speaks of his equality of nature with God. This latter point is clear by his comment that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ means τὸ θεὸς εἶναι φύσει. It is also clear from his replacement of ἴσα with ἴσος, not only in explaining what the text does not say, but later in a more positive context, saying that “although he was equal with God, he made himself nothing” (καίπερ ὦν ἴσος θεῶ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε). The notion of equality with God as

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, *Deit.* (PG 46:561) [Rhein, et al].

⁴⁰⁷ Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 44.5 [GCS 25:55].

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 45.1 [GCS 25:55].

understood from Phil 2:6 then leads Epiphanius to quote John 5:18, in which Jesus, calling God his own father, was making himself equal to God (ἴσον θεῷ).

In another of Epiphanius' texts on the Father and Son, the author argues that the one who says "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 5:17) claims to be himself equal to God the Father (τὸν πατέρα θεὸν ἴσον ἑαυτοῦ φάσκει). For, he continues, "a man is not equal to God, nor like God, except the unique Son truly born of God the Father" (οὐκ ἄνθρωπος δέ ἐστιν ἴσος θεῷ, οὐδὲ ὡς θεός, ἀλλὰ ὁ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ γεγεννημένος ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς θεὸς υἱὸς μονογενῆς). Epiphanius then cites Phil 2:6-7 without comment on our phrase. One suspects based on the progression of thought, however, that Epiphanius uses ἴσος and ἴσα as synonyms as he did in the preceding text above.⁴⁰⁹

On a few occasions, **Didymus the Blind** cites our phrase in commentaries on the Psalms or Job. For example, the word translated beggar (ὁ πτωχός) in Ps 34:6a ("The beggar called, and the Lord heard him") leads Didymus to cite 2 Cor 8:9, where Jesus Christ, though he was rich, made himself poor for our sakes. To explain how Christ made himself poor, Didymus cites Phil 2:6-7. He made himself poor by taking on the form of a servant, even though he was ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ. Though there is no direct comment on our phrase, this usage shows a typical parallel in the Greek Fathers between 2 Cor 8:9 and Phil 2.⁴¹⁰

In a second Psalms context, a commentary on Ps 56:4a ("He will send his salvation from heaven"), Didymus explains by citing Phil 2:6-7 that the one sent from heaven is Jesus Christ, without comment on our phrase.⁴¹¹ And then in a third context, a commentary on Job, Phil 2:5-7 is cited to highlight Jesus as someone who did not act for his own gain, but that of others.⁴¹² There is no comment here on our phrase. These three quotations of Phil 2 in undisputed works of Didymus fall within the typical non-apologetic use of the passage in contexts of simple description of the incarnation/humiliation/exaltation of Jesus Christ.

However, if one takes *De trinitate* as coming from Didymus' hand, there are ten more quotations to consider. The author of this work cites Phil 2:6-7 and understands ἴσα in terms of

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, *Panarion* 65.7 [GCS 37:10]. Translation ours.

⁴¹⁰ Didymus, *Comm. Ps.* 29–34 [Gronewald].

⁴¹¹ Ibid, *Fragmenta in Psalmos* 595a.9 [PTS 16:21].

⁴¹² Ibid, *Commentarii in Job* fr. 328.24 [Hagedorn, Hagedorn, and Koenen].

equality of nature, replacing it with *ισότης* as well as *ἴσος* (τὸ ἴσον εἶναι τῇ φύσει τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ).⁴¹³ Later on, wanting to show that the Scriptures present Christ as equal (*ἴσος*) with the Father, Didymus cites Phil 2:6, Col 2:17, and John 5:18, as well as Jeremiah and Isaiah. The adjective *ἴσος* is taken as synonymous with the *ἴσα* of Phil 2:6: “Since the Scriptures know that he is equal with the Father . . . ” (Εἰ τῷ Πατρὶ ἴσον αὐτὸν ἴσασιν αἱ Γραφαί . . .).⁴¹⁴ Also of note is that the author uses the participle *ὑπάρχων* not only with *ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ* as it appears in Phil 2:6, but also with *ἴσα* (*ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ, καὶ ἴσα τῷ Θεῷ ὑπάρχων*).⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, in this context the word *ισότης* (equality) is twice used as a synonym for *ἴσα* and understood as a quality of the preexistent Christ. A little further on, the author interprets Phil 2:6b by replacing τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ with τὸ εἶναι ἴσος τῷ Θεῷ: “In other words: he did not seize, did not receive, being equal with God the Father” (ἀντὶ τοῦ. Οὐχ ἤρπασεν, οὐκ ἔλαβε τὸ εἶναι ἴσος τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ).⁴¹⁶

John Chrysostom quotes our phrase in twenty-five passages and with various objectives. On several occasions the focus is on Christ’s incarnation humility or selfless servanthood. For example, Chrysostom comments on 1 Cor 9:19 (“For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all”) and compares Paul’s attitude to that of Jesus Christ in Phil 2:6-7. Jesus Christ, like Paul, “being free with respect to all, became himself a servant of all, in order to win all” (οὗτος ἐλεύθερος ὢν ἐκ πάντων πᾶσιν ἑαυτὸν ἐδούλωσεν, ὥστε πάντας κερδᾶναι).⁴¹⁷

Or, touching on the related theme of selflessness, the author cites Phil 2:3, 5-7, saying that just as Tit 2:11 says that the grace of God that has appeared to all men and “teaches us to renounce ungodliness,” so for Paul the gracious appearance of Christ through the incarnation is also a teacher (τοῦτο αὐτὸ χάρις ἐστὶν καὶ διδασκαλία) instructing us to place the interests of others before our own.⁴¹⁸ And then in a third text, Phil 2:6-8 is cited with other passages as an example of selfless love.⁴¹⁹

The majority of times Chrysostom quotes our phrase, however, he aims to make a point about Christ’s ontological being (16 out of 25 times). These citations often aim to demonstrate the

⁴¹³ [Didymus], *Trin. lib. 1* 26.44 [Honscheid].

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, *Trin. lib. 3* [PG 39.792]. Translation ours.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*, *Trin. lib. 3* [PG 39.856].

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*, *Trin. lib. 3* [PG 39.877]. Translation ours.

⁴¹⁷ John Chrysostom, *In Principium Actorum*, homily 1-4 [PG 51.103.4].

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*, *Hom. Tit. 2:11* 23.9 [Wenger].

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, *Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt* 17.6.4 [SC 79:226].

equality of the Son and the Father, particularly in his commentary on Philippians. The number of times he quotes τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ compared to other Fathers should be considered in light of the immensity of his extant corpus, and that he wrote a commentary on Philippians itself. That being said, the proportion of types of usages of Phil 2:6 is similar to other Fathers of the fourth century, a time period when our phrase was most commonly cited with ontological objectives in apologetic contexts rather than simple descriptions of the incarnation or ethical injunctions to humility.

Some of these texts interpret the word ἴσα directly. On one occasion, he replaces ἴσα with ἴσος three times, saying that to use a term of equality presumes that there are two different entities. “For that which is equal is equal to something” (τὸ γὰρ ἴσον, τινί ἐστιν ἴσον).⁴²⁰ In a different text, Chrysostom notes that when Paul wants to exhort his Philippian readers to humility, he takes Christ as an example. In his comment on Phil 2:6, Chrysostom notes that “humility is when an equal person submits to an equal” (ταπεινοφροσύνη γὰρ ἐστιν ὅταν ἴσος ὑπακούῃ τῷ ἴσῳ). Chrysostom understands ἴσα Θεῶ here as speaking of equality of nature.⁴²¹

Other Christological texts comment upon the expression τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ as a whole. For example, Chrysostom argues that, given that Paul has just established that Christ is God by nature (φύσει Θεός) by the phrase ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ in Phil 2:6a, the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ cannot mean that Christ was seizing something that was not his. Chrysostom believes rather that the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ refers to the equality (τὸ ἴσον) already existing between the Father and Son by virtue of the phrase ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ. So the author understands our phrase in terms of ontological equality of two entities.⁴²² And again a little later in the same commentary τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ is something Christ had not by seizure, but by nature (Τοῦτο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ οὐχ ὡς ἀρπαγμὸν εἶχεν, ἀλλὰ φυσικόν).⁴²³ Again, the author seeks to affirm that the τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ was not seized, as his opponents said, but that Christ already possessed it and did not consider it something to seize. Chrysostom argues from Isa 9:6 that Christ, being prophesied as the “Messenger of great counsel,” is by no means a lesser god, as Arius is understood to teach.⁴²⁴ If Christ were a lesser god, he could not possibly have been able to seize τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῶ. And if this were simply an impossible fantasy that Christ had, the commentator argues, why would Paul have highlighted that kind of impossible

⁴²⁰ Ibid, *Hom. Phil.* [PG 62.219]. Translation ours.

⁴²¹ Ibid, *Anom.* [PG 48.792]. Translation ours.

⁴²² Ibid, *Hom. Phil.* [PG 62.220].

⁴²³ Ibid, *Hom. Phil.* [PG 62.229].

⁴²⁴ Ibid, *Hom. Phil.* [PG 62.220].

aspiration in the context of an exhortation to humility? When the reader is meant to follow Christ's example in choosing humility for the sake of others, it would indeed be highly unusual for Paul to say that the lesser God did not seize what he could not have. For, the author argues, the person who is lowly-minded can only be so by choice, when he could have been high-minded; if he is lowly-minded because he has to be, that is not the humility that Paul envisions.

A final possible allusion to Phil 2:6b in John Chrysostom shows us a different type of use.⁴²⁵ In his commentary on Ps 115:8, "Those who make (idols) will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" ("Ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς γένοιτο οἱ ποιοῦντες αὐτά, καὶ πάντες οἱ πεποιθότες ἐπ' αὐτοῖς), Chrysostom then comments, "And yet, it is certainly a virtue to be like God," (Καίτοι γε τοῦτο ἀρετή, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ). Although in the context of his citation Chrysostom does not identify the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ as coming from Paul, it appears to be a clear allusion to Phil 2:6b. What is interesting is that the ἴσα in the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ is used as a replacing synonym for "like" (ὅμοιοι) in Chrysostom's interpretive comments. Chrysostom's further comments do not shed more light on the meaning of his comment, other than to highlight the psalmist's understanding of the ironic consequence of idolatry. Among hundreds of patristic texts studied, this is the only one found that contains all four words of the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ and yet is not quoting Philippians overtly. Yet the allusion seems fairly clear to us. Thus Chrysostom could interpret ἴσα in Christological contexts as being synonymous with ἴσος "equal," while in a non-Christological context such as this Psalms commentary, ἴσα could replace ὅμοιος "like."

4.2.4 Fifth Century (Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Isidorus)

If Chrysostom has the most detailed commentary on Philippians among the Greek Fathers, **Cyril of Alexandria** has the most overall comments on Phil 2:5-11 throughout his works, and on our phrase in 2:6b in particular (over fifty times). On many occasions he cites Phil 2:6b to describe the redemptive purpose, humility, or motivation accompanying the incarnation. But the majority of citations that include 2:6b are used to defend the equality of the Son with the Father, who are argued to be of the same nature.

In our survey of these quotations touching the nature/equality of Christ, we noted three

⁴²⁵ Ibid, *Exp. Ps.* [PG 55.310]. Translation ours.

major patterns for Cyril. First of all, he communicates ontological equality by frequently replacing ἴσα with the words ἴσος (equal) and ἰσότης (equality). Second, in a similar vein, ἐν ἰσότητι ὑπάρχων or ἐν ἰσότητι ὑπάρχων μορφῆ is a frequent explanatory rephrasing of 2:6b, giving us further insight into Cyril's understanding of the phrase as a possession of Christ. Third, the change of the incarnation is understood as a temporary diminishing of the glory or dignity of the divine nature while in the flesh.

Consider first of all Cyril's frequent replacement of ἴσα with the words ἴσος (equal) and ἰσότης (equality). In one citation of Phil 2:5-8, Cyril explains ἐν μορφῆ Θεοῦ and τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ with the interpretation that Paul "marvels exceedingly at the Son as being equal and con-formal with God the Father" (λίαν ἀποθαυμάζει τὸν Υἱόν, ὡς ἴσον μὲν ὄντα καὶ σύμμορφον τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ).⁴²⁶ In another argument concerning the divine nature of the Son, Phil 2:6 is explained with the phrase, "He was equal with God, being wholly God" (Ἴσος γὰρ ἦν τῷ Θεῷ ὅλος ὢν Θεός).⁴²⁷

In the context of another citation of Phil 2:6, Cyril dwells upon the Son's preincarnate situation and status with citations of 2 Cor 8:9 and Heb 1:3, which he describes with words like ἰσότης ("equality"), ἰσοσθενής ("equal in power"), and ἰσοκλεής ("of equal reputation").⁴²⁸ And again in another text Cyril argues that the equality (ἰσότης) of the Son with the Father taught in Phil 2:6 does not contradict Jesus' saying that the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28), for the inferiority in question speaks of the suffering of his death (τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου).⁴²⁹ As he cites Phil 2:6 in these different arguments, the words ἴσος and ἰσότης replace ἴσα, suggesting an understanding of ἴσα as ontological equality of nature.⁴³⁰

Secondly, ἐν ἰσότητι ὑπάρχων or ἐν ἰσότητι ὑπάρχων μορφῆ is a frequent rephrasing of Phil 2:6b. In other words, the participle ὑπάρχων is paired not only with μορφῆ, but also with ἰσότητι. For example, the author comments that "the Son became for us a pattern of lowliness, existing in equality and in the form of the Father" (ταπεινοφροσύνης ὑπόδειγμα γέγονεν ἡμῖν ὁ Υἱὸς ἐν ἰσότητι

⁴²⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarii in Joannem* [Pusey]. Translation ours.

⁴²⁷ Ibid, *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali trinitate* [PG 75:185]. See also *Commentarii in Joannem* (Pusey, *Sancti patris nostri*, vol. 1, 179), where both ἴσος and ἰσότης are used in the same passage. Translation ours.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, *Epistulae paschales sive Homiliae paschales (epist. 1-30)* [PG 77:773].

⁴²⁹ Ibid, *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali trinitate* [PG 75:156].

⁴³⁰ For another example, see *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali trinitate* [PG 75:140]: in a defense of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, Cyril cites Phil 2:6 and John 5:18, and then explains that if the Son is ἐν ἰσότητι τοῦ Πατρὸς (in equality with the Father), he cannot be of a different nature.

μὲν ὑπάρχων τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ ἐν μορφῇ).⁴³¹ A different word order is given in another description of the incarnation, where the phrase “existing in the form and equality of God the Father” (Ἐν μορφῇ γὰρ καὶ ἰσότητι Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς ὑπάρχων) is used to paraphrase the quotation of Phil 2:6.⁴³²

A third pattern we notice in Cyril’s use of our phrase is that the change of the incarnation is understood as a diminishing of the honor and glory in the flesh, for a time, before the exaltation. In other words, though Cyril understands ἴσα as equality of nature, he makes it a point to argue on several occasions that Christ did not set aside that nature, but that it was the honor (ἀξίωμα) and glory (δόξη) of that nature that was diminished. The giving of the name in Phil 2:9 is then a restoration of a glory not lost, but set aside.

For example, in one passage Cyril cites Phil 2:5-11 to highlight how there are two conditions about which the Scriptures speak of the Word.⁴³³ On the one hand there is the divine condition and equality with God the Father (ἦν ὁ Λόγος ἐν μορφῇ καὶ ἰσότητι τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς) which the author sees highlighted in v. 6, and on the other hand the humbling of v. 7. Cyril explains that the Word “made himself nothing, as if having let go of being in the condition and equality with the Father” (οἶονεὶ πως μεθεῖς τὸ εἶναι ἐν μορφῇ καὶ ἰσότητι τοῦ Πατρὸς, κεκένωκεν ἑαυτόν). He later gives some indication of what this means by saying that as long as the Son held himself from the humiliation of the incarnation, he “appropriately exulted in the honors of deity as his own and by nature” (τοῖς τῆς θεότητος ἀξιώμασιν ἐπανχεῖν ἐκπρεπῶς ὡς ἰδικοῖς τε καὶ φυσικοῖς). So Cyril hesitates to say that Christ truly let go of the condition and equality that was his (using οἶονεὶ, “as if”), and goes on to clarify that what was relinquished was exulting in the honors of deity.

Not only did Christ not lose equality in the incarnation, argues Cyril in his works, he also did not fully lose the honor and glory. While Cyril knows that the Son did ask for the restoration of the honor of his nature in John 17 (which Cyril calls τὸ τῆς ἰδίας φύσεως ἀξίωμα), he had humbled himself, says Cyril from Phil 2:6-7, in equality with God (τῇ ἰσότητι τοῦ Θεοῦ);⁴³⁴ even

⁴³¹ Ibid, *Commentarii in Joannem* [Pusey]. Translation ours.

⁴³² Ibid, *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam* [PG 70:129]. Translation ours.

⁴³³ Ibid, *De sancta trinitate dialogi i-vii* 546.41 [SC 237:266]. Translation ours.

⁴³⁴ Ibid, *Commentarii in Joannem* [Pusey].

in his humanity, says Cyril in another text, Christ had conserved the honor of his own nature (τὸ τῆς ἰδίας φύσεως ἀξίωμα).⁴³⁵

What Cyril says of the conservation of Christ's honor (ἀξίωμα) he also asserts for his glory (δόξη). Again in his commentary on John, the author cites Phil 2:5-11 to explain in what sense Christ could ask the Father for the restoration of his glory.⁴³⁶ He writes that in the incarnation, the Son did not truly lose his glory, but that it was diminished: "He was not bereft of the divine glory, since in the moment of his incarnation he in a sense diminished it" (δόξης τῆς θεοπροποῦς οὐκ ἔρημος ἦν, ἀλλ' ἐπέπερ ἐν καιρῷ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς οἰκονομίας συνέστειλέ πως αὐτήν). When he asks for the return of his own glory, then, it is the return of glory in his flesh (δόξης οὖν ἄρα τῆς ἰδίας τὴν ἐπανάληψιν καὶ μετὰ σαρκὸς ἀπαιτεῖ). The exaltation of the Son in Phil 2:9 is understood to be an exaltation of the Son particularly in his flesh, necessarily following the humiliation of the incarnation, for the Son was already lofty (ὑψηλός). Thus the giving of the name above all names in Phil 2:9 is a restoration and not a new condition.⁴³⁷

So while Cyril paraphrases Phil 2:6b in terms of equality, his expositions upon the phrase frequently involve the notion of honor. Against the notion that the Son, as God, could not have suffered for man's redemption in a physical body, Cyril explains τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ as "remaining in equality with the Father" (μένειν . . . ἐν ἰσότητι πρὸς αὐτόν) and "not considering as a prize such a transcendent and divine honor" (οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσάμενον τὸ ὑπερφερές οὕτω καὶ θεοπροπές ἀξίωμα).⁴³⁸

Theodoret often cites Phil 2 in his commentaries on the Hebrew scriptures, interpreting them in light of the incarnation and Christ's humility and love. For example, the author cites Phil 2:6-7 and 2 Cor 8:9 to show how the poor person in Ps 41:1 applies to Christ.⁴³⁹ Theodoret also cites our text many times to highlight the eternity and true humanity of the Son, as well as the equality of the Son with the Father. He emphasizes equality with the Father by saying that Phil 2:6b does not read ἴσα ἀγγέλοις (to the angels) or ἴσα τῇ κτίσει (to a creature), but ἴσα Θεῷ.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ Ibid, *De sancta trinitate dialogi i-vii* 404.41 [SC 231:184].

⁴³⁶ Ibid, *Commentarii in Joannem* [Pusey].

⁴³⁷ Ibid, *De sancta trinitate dialogi i-vii* 485.8 [SC 237:80].

⁴³⁸ Ibid, *Quod unus sit Christus* 769.22 [SC 97:484]. Translation ours.

⁴³⁹ Theodoret, *Interpretatio in Psalmos* [PG 80.1161].

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, *De incarnatione domini* [PG 75.1429].

Theodoret also has the habit, like Cyril, of replacing ἴσα with the word ἰσότης (equality). On Phil 2:6-7, the author writes that “being God and God by nature, and having equality with the Father, he did not think this a great thing” (Θεὸς γὰρ ὢν, καὶ φύσει Θεὸς, καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα ἰσότητα ἔχων, οὐ μέγα τοῦτο ὑπέλαβε).⁴⁴¹ Against what one would expect, he “rather hid his worthiness, grasped utter humility, and put on the human condition” (Ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κατακρύψας, τὴν ἄκραν ταπεινοφροσύνην εἴλετο, καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν ὑπέδυ μορφήν). And a little later in the same commentary, Cyril uses not only ἰσότης, but ἴσος as well, to explain Christ’s ontological nature.⁴⁴²

Isidore of Pelusium, explaining Phil 2:5-7 in a private letter, argues that if Christ were not equal (ἴσος) to the Father, the force of the illustration of humility would be removed, for Christ would simply be obeying a superior.⁴⁴³ Isidore clearly understands Phil 2:6b as ontological equality: “He was by nature equal” (ἐκ φύσεως ἴσος ἦν). The context is simply an explanation of how the exhortation to humility functions in the context of Phil 2. In another context, the author asks a series of questions about Christ’s taking on flesh, including the question, “How could he humble himself, existing ἴσα θεῷ?”⁴⁴⁴ He concludes that for deity, there is a place for humble things, but when one is only human, there is no place for the lofty things.

Concerning the foregoing Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, we observe an increase in the uses of Phil 2:6b in apologetic contexts. Exhortations to humility and descriptions of Christ from the Hebrew Scriptures continue to be present, but the question of the ontological nature of Christ dominates. It appears that the authors of these two centuries found in τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ a useful tool for arguing about the nature of Christ. These uses include defending the deity of Christ and his equality with the Father by replacing ἴσα with ἴσος and ἰσότης. While Cyril is careful to mention that this equality of nature was not truly given up, but rather the dignity or glory attached to Christ’s nature, the overwhelming number of citations of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in these Fathers is oriented towards ontology and not preincarnate circumstances.

4.3 General Observations on the Greek Fathers

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, *Interpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli* [PG 82.569]. Translation ours.

⁴⁴² Ibid, *Interpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli* [PG 82.572.35, 39, 43].

⁴⁴³ Isidore, *Epistulae (1214–1413)* 1265.8 [SC 422:266].

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, *Epistulae (1214–1413)* 1227.54 [SC 422:202]. Translation ours.

Phil 2:6b is quoted for three primary reasons in the second through the fifth centuries. The first is to highlight Jesus Christ as an example of humility, often in the context of an exhortation (e.g., *Epistula ecclesiarum apud Lugdunum et Viennam*). The second is to describe Jesus Christ in his incarnation, humiliation, or exaltation, often in the context of a systematic commentary or a sermon on another biblical passage (e.g., Eusebius' citation of Phil 2 in his comments on Eccl 4:13-16 in *Eccl. Proph.* 103.24). A third reason Phil 2:6b is cited is to argue a point about the nature of Christ in apologetic contexts. See the numerous foregoing examples from the fourth and fifth centuries.

In the second and third centuries, the first and second reasons for citing predominate. In the fourth and fifth centuries, while the first and second reasons continue to be present, the third (apologetic) reason is noticeably more present. In these apologetic contexts, ἴσα is often replaced by ἴσος and ἰσότης to argue a point concerning the nature of Christ.

The question arises as to whether the Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries made any conscious semantic distinction between ἴσα and ἴσος or even between ἴσα and ἰσότης in light of how freely they replace one with another as apparent synonyms. One might mention Chrysostom's replacement of ὅμοιος with ἴσα, suggesting that at least that author also ascribed a different kind of comparative meaning to ἴσα in some contexts. But beyond that it is difficult to say. This leads us to the question of the place of the patristic citation of Phil 2:6b today.

4.4 Interpretation of Patristic Data

What are the benefits of considering the Latin and Greek Fathers' understanding and use of our phrase for the present study? Our goal in reviewing their citations of Phil 2:6b has not been to take their interpretations as normative, but rather to appreciate how the phrase was understood in its context with the passing of time. Grelot posited a shift in interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ from non-ontological to ontological in the Latins due to Christological concerns. Based on the preceding data we have noticed a similar pattern in the Greeks (and in an even clearer fashion, since they wrote in Greek as they commented on Phil 2:6 in Greek). This observation of a shift in Greek interpretation lends further weight to the plausibility of Grelot's argument of a historical shift in

Latin interpretation. N. T. Wright, following Lightfoot, agrees that “the Latin Fathers, as we saw, and among the Greeks Chrysostom in particular, were so concerned to combat Arianism that they read the clause not as a statement of condescension but as an affirmation of rightful divinity . . . Lightfoot’s analysis is correct: the earlier, and linguistically closer, Patristic evidence is in favour of reading the clause as (part of) a statement of Christ’s humility.”⁴⁴⁵ Thus a first benefit of the preceding survey is our conclusion that the ontological interpretation of our phrase is ancient, but not necessarily the most ancient, as the later Latin and Greek interpretations of the fourth and fifth centuries were decidedly more ontological due to the Christological controversies.

A second benefit of the preceding survey relates to the influence of the patristic ontological reading upon subsequent interpretation. While we cannot make the same claim for the later historical influence of the ontological interpretation through the Greeks as Grelot made concerning that effected through the highly influential Latin Vulgate, we observe the two streams nonetheless as a single historical exegetical current whose flow has never been completely diverted, judging from the dominance of the ontological interpretation today. Based on the commentators reviewed in Chapter 3, there appears to have been an effort in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century to revive the non-ontological reading, but its effects have not proved permanent. In other words, it is most likely that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ as ontology dominates translations today because of the fourth- and fifth-century Fathers. At least there has never been another exegetical watershed like it in the centuries since.

Having reviewed the modern secondary literature on Phil 2:6b and observed the way that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ was quoted in the Fathers, the next two chapters will consider ἴσα from a grammatical angle (Chapter 5) and then survey ἴσα θεῷ as a common collocation (Chapter 6).

⁴⁴⁵ Wright, 84.

Chapter 5: ἴσα: Morphology, Syntax, Semantics

This chapter considers the word ἴσα from the standpoint of morphology (word form), syntax (roles of words in sentences), and semantics (meaning). To do this, we will first consider briefly the form of ἴσα. Second, we will discuss its potential lexical classes and meanings in ancient Greek with the help of examples, including evaluations of the relevance of these classes to Phil 2:6. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate in a preliminary way the relative plausibility of the differing grammatical analyses of ἴσα in Phil 2:6 found in the secondary literature.

5.1 Morphology

The lexeme⁴⁴⁶ ἴσος is an adjective that can mean “like,” “same,” “equal,” “impartial,” “adequate,” “even,” “level,” or “flat.” S. Reece declares that this adjective “has a long history in the Greek language and is well attested even in the earliest historical periods, though in various linguistic forms”:⁴⁴⁷

Mycenaean: *ewisu*-⁴⁴⁸ and *wisowo*⁴⁴⁹

Pre-Homer: ἐπίσφος and πίσφος (pronounced *ewiswos* and *wiswos*); the latter attested in inscriptions from the Arcadian, Cretan, and Boeotian⁴⁵⁰ dialects

⁴⁴⁶ In linguistics a lexeme is a unit of meaning that can have multiple inflections, depending on whether it is variable or invariable.

⁴⁴⁷ S. Reece, *Homer’s Winged Words: The Evolution of Early Greek Epic Diction in the Light of Oral Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 176.

⁴⁴⁸ See Document 249 (=Va 482) of J. Chadwick’s *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 348. The form *ewisu* (which Chadwick understands as = ἴσο- from ἴσος) is compounded with another word of uncertain meaning to form an adjective (*e-wi-so-zu?-ko*); the context appears to be a description of evenly matched objects made of ivory. For more on *ewisu* see D. Kölligen, “A New Look at the Greek Desiderative,” *Indo-European Linguistics* 6 (2018): 105-106.

⁴⁴⁹ In Document 292 (=Sh 740) we find the adjective *wi-so-wo-pa-na* in which *wiswo* (again understood as = ἴσο- from ἴσος) is compounded with a word of unknown meaning to form an adjective describing plates of armor (Chadwick, *Documents*, 378-379).

⁴⁵⁰ West comments on *Works and Days* 752 that the Boeotians still said πίσφος with the digamma in the sixth century B.C. In *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1966. For more on the digamma in general, see C. D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), nos. 50, 52, 54.

Homer: ἔϊσος and ἴσος⁴⁵¹ (with the long iota compensating for the lost pronunciation of ϕ);⁴⁵²

Post-Homer: ἴσος and ἴσος (both long and short quantities of iota)

Attic and Koine: ἴσος (longer quantity no longer present)

The word ἴσα, a form of ἴσος, can be analyzed morphologically in the following terms:⁴⁵³

The vocative, nominative, or accusative dual feminine of the adjective ἴσος

The vocative, nominative, or accusative neuter plural of the adjective ἴσος

The dual feminine being impossible in the context of Phil 2:6 (indeed the dual not occurring in New Testament writers), we will focus on the different cases of the neuter plural as we discuss potential lexical classes.

5.2 Different Lexical Classes and Meanings of ἴσα in Ancient Greek

In this section we will explore the different possible lexical classes for the neuter plural ἴσα in ancient Greek literature. This endeavor will help us determine which class is most likely for ἴσα in Phil 2:6. With Tallerman we include among the major lexical classes verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.⁴⁵⁴ Verbs are used to present actions and states; nouns to represent objects; adjectives to qualify nouns and pronouns; and adverbs to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. It is common that a given word form can belong to one lexical class in one context, and a different lexical class in another context, as we will observe with ἴσα. We will now proceed to give examples

⁴⁵¹ Of which we will see several examples shortly; also early is Hesiod's use in *Works and Days* 327 and 752.

⁴⁵² "Dans le vers homérique, ἴσος présente de nombreux indices du digamma initial," comments P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique*, vol. 1: Phonétique et morphologie, ed. M. Casevitz (Paris: Klincksieck, 2013), 142. See, for example, *Il.* 5.161: ὡς δὲ λέων ἐν βουσι θορῶν ἐξ ἀγένας ἄξει 'even as a lion leaps among the cattle and breaks the neck', where the hiatus (the two alphas coming together between ἀγένας ἄξει) give evidence of the digamma sound at the beginning of ἄξει at some point in the history of the verse; for an example with ἴσος, see *Il.* 1.163: οὐ μὲν σοὶ ποτε ἴσον ἔχω γέρας ὀππότε Ἀχαιοὶ.

⁴⁵³ Other doric/aeolic possibilities include the vocative/nominative feminine singular, as well as the first singular future active indicative verb form of ἰσάζω.

⁴⁵⁴ M. Tallerman, *Understanding Syntax*, 4th ed. (London/New York: Routledge, 2015), 33. The term *lexical class* sometimes appears in the literature as word class, part of speech, or syntactic category.

from Greek literature of each of the three lexical classes we noticed for ἴσα: adjective, noun, and adverb.

5.2.1 ἴσα as a Plural (Predicate) Adjective

1. Philo, *Who is the Heir of Divine Things* 151 [Wendland]

τὸ παραπλήσιον μέντοι καὶ ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι τῶν ζώων καὶ μάλιστα ἀνθρώπων θεωρεῖται. ποὺς γὰρ ποδὶ καὶ χεὶρ χειρὶ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα σχεδὸν ἅπαντα ἴσα μεγέθει, τὰ ἐπὶ δεξιὰ τοῖς κατ' εὐώνυμα.

An equality of the same kind is seen in the members of living beings, and especially in humankind. Foot with foot and hand with hand and almost all the other members are **equal** in size, those of the right with those of the left.⁴⁵⁵

In a discussion of the equality of members in the universe, Philo uses ἴσα as a nominative plural adjective in agreement with τὰ ἄλλα, with a linking verb⁴⁵⁶ implied in a predicate construction.

2. Rev 21:16

τὸ μῆκος καὶ τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτῆς ἴσα ἐστίν.

Its length and width and height are **equal**.

The author of Revelation describes his vision of the new Jerusalem, a city laid out like a square. In this example we know that ἴσα is a nominative plural adjective because it agrees with the three neuter nouns in a predicate adjective construction.

⁴⁵⁵ The translation is ours in order to render clearly the plural adjective ἴσα. By comparison, the freer translation of Colson and Whitaker, LCL, has “Much the same may be observed in the parts of living animals, particularly of men. For one foot or one hand is equal in magnitude to the other and in almost all cases the same holds that the right side is equal to the left.”

⁴⁵⁶ Throughout this study the term *linking verb* will be used to denote a verb that connects a subject to information about the subject, i.e., its complement, without expressing an action. In English the words *be* and *seem* and in Greek *εἶναι* and *γίνεσθαι* can be linking verbs. *Linking verb* is interchangeable with *copula*.

3. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 4.98.3 [text and translation Thackeray]

Ὀγῆς δὲ μέγεθος τε καὶ κάλλος ἦν οἷος ὀλίγοι σφόδρα, ἦν δὲ καὶ κατὰ χεῖρα γενναῖος ἀνὴρ, ὡς ἴσα τὰ τῶν ἔργων εἶναι τοῖς τοῦ μεγέθους καὶ τῆς εὐπρεπείας πλεονεκτήμασι.

Og himself had a stature and beauty such as few could boast; he was withal a man of a doughty arm, so that his exploits were **on a par** with his superior gifts of height and a handsome presence.

In Josephus' description of the ancient king Og, ἴσα is a nominative plural adjective agreeing with the subject τὰ of τὰ τῶν ἔργων, and linked together by εἶναι to form a comparison.

4. Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 6.5.15.4 [de Lacy]

εἰ δὲ εὐρύτερόν ποτε θάτερον ἐπί τινος ζώου φαίνοιτο θατέρου τμήματος, ἀλλὰ συναμφοτέρα γε τῇ κοίλῃ φλεβὶ προφανῶς ἐστὶν ἴσα . . .

And if sometimes one of the divisions in this or that animal should be observed to be wider than the other, nevertheless the two together are visibly **equal to** the vena cava . . .

In the context of his description of how the vena cava splits into two large vessels before it reaches the heart, Galen uses ἴσα in a predicate adjective construction with ἐστὶν. The nominative plural adjective ἴσα agrees with the subject συναμφοτέρα.

5.2.1.1 Relevance to Phil 2:6

What is the relevance of these examples of ἴσα as a plural neuter adjective agreeing grammatically with a plural neuter noun subject, where ἴσα functions as the predicate adjective via the linking verb εἶναι? While Phil 2:6 *does* contain the verb εἶναι, its syntactic structure does not appear to match with the above adjectival examples. That is to say, Phil 2:6 has no plural neuter noun in the context with which ἴσα might agree.

As we observed in our survey of the secondary literature, while some authors have suggested that ἴσα in Phil 2:6 functions as predicate adjective, they do not do so on the basis of grammatical agreement between ἴσα and a plural noun as we see in these examples, but rather based on the verb εἶναι in that verse. They argue that, if εἶναι is present, then ἴσα must necessarily be functioning as a predicate adjective with the meaning of “equal,” even though morphologically an adverb. We will evaluate this predicate adjective argument later in this chapter (see 5.2.3.3.1)

5.2.2 ἴσα as a Plural Noun

Besides occurring as a plural agreeing adjective as in the above examples, ἴσα can, in other contexts, be a plural noun.

1. Plato, *Phaedo* 74c [Duke et al; translation Hackforth]

Τί δέ; αὐτὰ **τὰ ἴσα** ἔστιν ὅτε ἄνισά σοι ἐφάνη, ἢ ἡ ἰσότης ἀνισότης;

Οὐδέποτε γε, ὦ Σώκρατες.

But now, what about **equals** themselves? Have they ever appeared to you to be unequal, or equality to be inequality?

Never, Socrates.

Socrates teaches Simmias that our sense-perceptions of objects can only approximate true Forms, and that this imperfection suggests a once accurate perception by our souls that existed before birth. Here τὰ ἴσα is a noun in the nominative case—the subject of a predicate adjective construction with the copula ἔστιν and the nominative neuter plural adjective ἄνισα.

2. Strabo, *Geography* 6.2.1 [Radt; translation ours]

ἐν δὲ τῇ χωρογραφίᾳ μείζω λέγεται τὰ διαστήματα κατὰ μέρος διηρημένα μιλιασμῶ· ἐκ μὲν Πελωριάδος εἰς Μύλας εἴκοσι πέντε· τοσαῦτα δὲ καὶ ἐκ Μυλῶν εἰς Τυνδαρίδα· εἶτα εἰς Ἀγάθυρνον τριάκοντα καὶ **τὰ ἴσα** εἰς Ἄλαισαν καὶ πάλιν ἴσα εἰς Κεφαλοίδιον· ταῦτα μὲν πολίχνια·

But in the Chorography the distances given are longer, marked off in sections and given in miles: from Pelorias to Mylae, twenty-five miles; the same from Mylae to Tyndaris; then to Agathyrnum thirty, and **the same** to Alaesa, and again the same to Cephaloedium, these being small towns;

Here τὰ ἴσα is a plural noun in the nominative that agrees with τὰ διαστήματα, with the meaning that the distances are the same.

3. Luke 6:34

καὶ ἐὰν δανίσητε παρ' ὧν ἐλπίζετε λαβεῖν, ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστίν; καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἁμαρτωλοῖς δανίζουσιν ἵνα ἀπολάβωσιν **τὰ ἴσα**.

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to get back **the same amounts**.

In this case τὰ ἴσα is a neuter noun in the accusative, the direct object of the verb ἀπολάβωσιν, with the meaning “the equal things.” In the context of love of enemies, Jesus challenges his listeners to “lend” with no hope of getting anything back.

4. Lucian, *Tyrannicide* 12.7 [Macleod; translation Harmon]

Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ τοῦτο μέμνημαι διηγορευμένον ἐν τοῖς νόμοις (ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν πολλὴν δουλείαν ἐπιλέλησμαι τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς εἰρημένων) αἰτίας θανάτου εἶναι διττάς, καὶ εἴ τις μὴ αὐτὸς μὲν ἀπέκτεινε μηδὲ τῇ χειρὶ ἔδρασεν τὸ ἔργον, ἠνάγκασεν δὲ καὶ παρέσχεν ἀφορμὴν τοῦ φόνου, **τὰ ἴσα** καὶ τοῦτον ἀξιοῖ ὁ νόμος αὐτὸν ἀντικολλάζεσθαι—μάλα δικαίως·

I remember, moreover, this statement in the laws (unless, by reason of our protracted slavery, I have forgotten what is said in them), that there are two sorts of responsibility for manslaughter, and if without taking life himself or doing the deed with his own hand, a man has necessitated and given rise to the killing, the law requires that in this case too he himself receive **the same punishment**—quite justly.

In Lucian's fictitious rhetorical case, a man killed the tyrant's son, and the tyrant then killed himself upon seeing his dead son. The killer of the son pleads that the tyrant's death should also count as murder in order to be fully rewarded for an act beneficial to society. The killer argues that the law requires that he himself should receive τὰ ἴσα, meaning the same consequences as one who murdered with his own hand. Here again τὰ ἴσα is a plural noun in the accusative case, the direct object of the verb ἀντικολλάζεσθαι.

5.2.2.1 Relevance to Phil 2:6

A few have suggested that ἴσα in Phil 2:6 is a plural noun. As mentioned in Chapter 3, J. B. Lightfoot believed that no semantic distinction can be drawn between plural ἴσα εἶναι in Phil 2:6 and singular ἴσος εἶναι in John 5:18, and Vaughan joins him in positing that, if Paul had used the singular, he would have been dividing the substance of the triune Godhead.⁴⁵⁷ Thus these authors interpret ἴσα as “equalities.” But this definition ends up being inherently unclear in the context of Phil 2:6. It is difficult to translate ἴσα in relation to εἶναι if ἴσα is nominal. If we follow Vaughan's thought process we end up with the translation “he did not consider as something to retain being equalities with God.” The suggestion is awkward semantically. One would have to allow that Paul used the plural form even though it didn't make immediate sense, in order to avoid a theological error, that of dividing the Godhead. And while our examples in this section show that as a noun ἴσα can mean “equal things” (of numbers, distances, amounts, consequences), none of our examples introduces the semantic precedent of “equalities” as these authors suggest for Phil 2:6.

5.2.3 ἴσα as an Adverb

Besides being a plural adjective or a plural noun, the neuter plural ἴσα, when used in the accusative case, can belong to the lexical class of adverb (as can the accusative neuter singular ἴσον).⁴⁵⁸ This section will first explain in more detail the nature of adverbs and how they are formed and then give examples from Greek texts.

⁴⁵⁷ Lightfoot, 111-112; Vaughan, 47.

⁴⁵⁸ E.g., LSJ, 839; Blass and Debrunner, sect. 434, no. 1.

5.2.3.1 Nature and Function of Adverbs

Stanley Porter calls adverbs “a class of particles or indeclinable forms often used to modify verbs and other modifying words . . . and to establish such factors as time, frequency, place or location, and manner.”⁴⁵⁹ More concisely, Shuan-Fan Huang defines an adverb on a semantic level as “a sentence constituent which expresses a function of a function.” From this functional point of view, “adverbs may be described as the principal ways in which the language user characterizes the conditions and circumstances; the hows and wherefores of actions and events.”⁴⁶⁰ Depending on the context, adverbs 1) can give circumstantial information about time, place, or manner; 2) allow a speaker to give an evaluative comment about his or her statement (“obviously,” “maybe”); and 3) modify in terms of intensity (“very”), restriction (“only”), gradations (“more,” “less”), etc.⁴⁶¹

5.2.3.2 Morphology

Greek adverbs were originally derived from case forms of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives.⁴⁶² Here are some examples of adverbs in different cases:

Nominative	ἅπαξ	once
Accusative	πρῶτον	at first
Genitive	ποῦ	where
Dative	λάθρα	secretly
Locative	ἐκεῖ	there
Instrumental	ἄνω	above
Ablative	ἀκαίρως	unseasonably

For our purposes, we are particularly interested in how adverbs were derived from adjectives. Creating indeclinable adverbs from adjectives as a historical process (e.g., the adverb

⁴⁵⁹ S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 125-126.

⁴⁶⁰ S.-F. Huang, *A Study of Adverbs* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 9, 30.

⁴⁶¹ J. Feuillet, “Adjectifs et adverbes: essai de classifications,” in C. Guimier, ed., *Les états de l’adverbe* (Rennes: CERLICO, 1991), 48-49.

⁴⁶² H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920), 99. See also A. Meillet and J. Vendryes, *Traité de grammaire comparée des langues classiques* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927), no. 776ff.

ἴσα formed from the adjective ἴσος, or as above, πρῶτον from πρῶτος) is common in languages in general and in Greek in particular.⁴⁶³ Jennifer Austin says that “many languages have morphological means at their disposal to derive adverbs from adjectives (cf. English *quick-ly*, Spanish *elegante-mente* “elegantly,” German *interessant-erweise* “interestingly”) . . .”⁴⁶⁴

A. Mathys has detailed the many ways in which ancient Greek formed adverbs from adjectives, with a focus on Homer.⁴⁶⁵ While creating adverbs from adjectives with the ending -ως became more widespread in the prose of classical Greek, Mathys believes that this type of derivation was more recent in Homer. The reason Mathys believes that neuter adverbials are older in the language than -ως adverbials is because in Homer the -ως adverbs are only adverbs of manner, whereas neuter adverbials are used in every type of adverbial function, which suggests a longer history in the language. Eventually, Mathys notes, the neuter adverbials made a comeback in Hellenistic Greek and are still used in Modern Greek.⁴⁶⁶

The accusative case was quite possibly used in the formation of these neuter adverbs from adjectives due to the fact that the accusative is used to express certain relationships to the verb. Dana and Mantey comment that the accusative case “certainly belongs in a particular way to the verb, even as the genitive is especially allied with the substantive.” The common element semantically of the accusative is limitation of an action. Adverbs in general “qualify the action, motion, or state of verbs as to manner, place, time, and extent.” Adverbial accusatives, they argue, qualify a verb in terms of measure (of time, place), manner, or reference.⁴⁶⁷ Mathys adds that creating adverbs out of the neuter plural form of adjectives was common in the archaic period because the neuter plural form was the least marked morphologically.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶³ Dana and Mantey note that adverbs can actually be derived from several parts of speech, but agree with Smith that the most common derivations are from nouns, pronouns, and adjectives (235).

⁴⁶⁴ J. R. Austin, S. Engleberg, and G. Rauh, “Current issues in the syntax and semantics of adverbials” in *Adverbials* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 34.

⁴⁶⁵ A. Mathys, “Le neutre adverbial en grec ancien: morphologie, syntaxe et sémantique” (PhD diss. Paris-Sorbonne, 2013). On p. 79, Mathys gives a list of ten different adjective-to-adverb procedures.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 628.

⁴⁶⁷ Dana and Mantey, 91-97.

⁴⁶⁸ Mathys, 88.

The foregoing comments about adverbs serve to 1) establish their common role of giving information about the action/event of a verb and 2) clarify how ἴσα came to be used not just as a plural adjective and plural noun, but also as an adverb.

5.2.3.3 Examples of ἴσα as an Adverb

1. Homer, *The Odyssey* 1.430-433 [von der Mühl; translation Murray, revision Dimock]

τήν ποτε Λαέρτης πρίατο κτεάτεσσιν ἐοῖσι,
πρωθήβην ἔτ' ἐοῦσαν, ἔεικοσάβοια δ' ἔδωκεν,
ἴσα δέ μιν κεδνῇ ἀλόχῳ τίεν ἐν μεγάροισιν,
εὐνῇ δ' οὐ ποτ' ἔμικτο, χόλον δ' ἀλέεινε γυναικός·

Her long ago Laertes had bought with his wealth, when she was in her first youth, and gave for her the price of twenty oxen; and he honored her **even as** he honored his faithful wife in his halls, but he never lay with her in love, for he avoided the wrath of his wife.

The context is a digression describing the favorite handmaid of Telemachus, Eurycleia, whom Laertes honored (τίεν) in an equal way (ἴσα) to his faithful wife (κεδνῇ ἀλόχῳ), Anticleia. Note the comparison of treatment of two individuals, Eurycleia and Anticleia, with the narrator's digression focused on the honor afforded the former.⁴⁶⁹ Laertes' respect for Eurycleia's value is highlighted first of all by the fact that she was purchased young, which led to long service to the family as nurse of both Odysseus and Telemachus. Another point of honor was her purchase price of 20 oxen, whereas normally a skilled female slave would sell for four oxen.⁴⁷⁰ In this context, ἴσα is clearly used as an adverb to give more information about the verb τίεν, and lacks any neuter plural form with which to agree in the immediate clause as an adjective.

2. Sappho, Fr. 58.5-6 [text and translation West]

βάρυς δέ μ' ὀ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γόνα δ' [ο]ὐ φέροισι
τὰ δὴ ποτα λαίψηρ' ἔον ὄρχησθ' **ἴσα** νεβρίοισι.

⁴⁶⁹ I. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42.

⁴⁷⁰ A. Heubeck, et al, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 126.

My heart has been weighed down, my knees give no support
Which once were nimble in the dance **like** little fawns.

Though many of the surrounding lines are only partially legible, these two lines are some of the best preserved from the “Tithonus poem” on the theme of aging by Sappho. Previously known from the second-century AD Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1787 published in 1922, the third-century BC Cologne papyrus published in 2004 (*P.Köln* 21351) significantly improved its reconstruction.⁴⁷¹ In his short article on these two lines, J. Méndez Dosuna reasons that while ἴσα could be an adjective agreeing with τὰ (which refers to γόνα, thus “knees similar to fawns”), a type of use we documented above in 5.2.1, it appears rather to be an invariable adverb with the sense of “like.” He knows that the adverbialization of the accusative neuter plural ἴσα is common from Homer on.⁴⁷² He concludes that ἴσα νεβρίοισι “like fawns” modifies the verb ὀρχησθαι in the adjective + infinitive construction λαίμηρα ὀρχησθαι “nimble to dance.” His nuance concerning ἴσα will be important for our understanding of Phil 2:6 later on:

For convenience, I cling to the traditional labels ‘adverb’ and ‘adverbial’, although I am fully conscious that they are a misnomer. Actually, ‘adverbial’ ἴσα behaves more like a preposition in that it is constructed only with a dative and cannot introduce subordinate clauses with an explicit verb. The syntax of near-synonymous, more conjunction-like ὡς is more flexible: e.g. θεὸς ὡς / ἔστηκ(ε) (Il. 3.230-1), οἷ σε θεὸν ὡς / τίσουσ(ι) (Il. 9.301-2), τοῦ νῶϊ θεοῦ ὡς τερπόμεθ’ αὐδῆ (Od. 4.160), ᾗ Τρῶες . . . θεῶ ὡς εὐχετόωντο (Il. 22.394), and ὡς δὲ λέβης ζεῖ ἔνδον (Il. 21.362); cf. also the combinations ὡς ὅτε, ὡς εἰ.⁴⁷³

Méndez Dosuna’s grammatical aside helps us understand first of all that ἴσα, though formed as an adverb from an adjective, has a more restrictive syntactical placement than an adverb like ὡς. Secondly, Méndez Dosuna calls ὡς nearly synonymous with ἴσα, though the former has greater syntactic flexibility. In the next chapter we will present data suggesting that the expression ἴσα θεῶ

⁴⁷¹ D. Obbink, “Sappho Fragments 58-59: Text, Apparatus Criticus, and Translation,” in *The New Sappho on Old Age*, E. Green and M. Skinner, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 7-16.

⁴⁷² J. Méndez Dosuna, “Knees and Fawns in the New Sappho,” *Mnemosyne* 61 (2008): 108.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 109.

can be semantically interchangeable with the expression ὡς θεός. This interchangeability will help us define ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6 in our final chapter. For the moment, we will simply point out that ἴσα νεβρίοισι is not a matter of comparing equality of dancing of the poem's persona with that of fawns, as if to say that the persona dances *as well as* fawns do, but rather a simple comparison of manner of carrying out the action. The younger persona in the poem was able to dance about as nimbly as fawns are able to dance.

3. Sophocles, *Fragments*, 346, line 1 [Radt; translation Lloyd-Jones]

καλὸν φρονεῖν τὸν θνητὸν ἀνθρώποις ἴσα.

It is fitting for a mortal to think **like** human beings.

In Sophocles' fragment we observe a comparison between the reasoning of two groups (or two semantic categories for a single collective entity), with mortals urged to think in the manner of men. Again, there is no nominal form with which ἴσα might agree as an adjective. And if ἴσα were the direct object of φρονεῖν, we would expect an article before it. We rather read ἴσα as an adverb. A. C. Pearson confirms that ἴσα is paired with ἀνθρώποις, and is not here the simple collocation ἴσα φρονεῖν "to agree with his fellows";⁴⁷⁴ we posit that together this combination ἴσα ἀνθρώποις modifies the verb φρονεῖν, with the sense "think like human beings."

4. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.1.6 [Marchant, translation Brownson]

σωμασκοῦσί γε μὴν μάλα ὀλίγοι τινὲς ἐν ἐκάστη πόλει· παρ' ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐδεὶς μισθοφορεῖ, ὅστις μὴ ἰκανὸς ἐστὶν ἐμοὶ ἴσα πονεῖν.

Furthermore, in every city very few men train their bodies, but among my mercenaries no one serves unless he is able to endure **as** severe toils **as** I myself.

Here we note a comparison of the ability to endure hardships between the speaker and the mercenaries. That we can eliminate the lexical class of adjective for ἴσα is evident from the fact that there is no noun stated or implied with which ἴσα might agree. And while one might suggest

⁴⁷⁴ A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles*, vol 2 (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1963), 22.

that ἴσα is the direct object of πονεῖν, thus belonging to the lexical class of noun, again we are inclined to believe that an article would be present with ἴσα. We believe that Brownson has chosen the most natural reading, where ἴσα is an adverb giving more information about πονεῖν.

5. Basil of Caesaria, *Letters* 302.1.39 [text and translation Deferrari]

Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἴσα τοῖς ἔξωθεν ἐπετρέπημεν λυπεῖσθαι ἐπὶ τοῖς κεκοιμημένοις παρὰ τῆς νομοθεσίας τοῦ Ἀποστόλου.

For we are not permitted by the legislation of the Apostle to grieve **equally** with those outside the faith over those who have gone to rest.

Basil uses ἴσα to mean “in the same manner.” In his letter of consolation to the widow of Briso, he reminds his reader that Christians are not permitted by the Apostle Paul (1 Thess 4:13) to grieve in the same manner as those outside (ἴσα τοῖς ἔξωθεν) the faith. In this passage ἴσα is thus being used as an adverb modifying λυπεῖσθαι, comparing two manners of grieving. There is no neuter noun present with which ἴσα might agree, if it were an adjective, and there is little likelihood that ἴσα is the direct object of λυπεῖσθαι without an article. We believe that Deferrari has selected the most logical reading for ἴσα, that of adverb.

In the last five examples we observe that adverbial ἴσα is used in the comparison of the manner of treatment of two parties (Homer) or in the comparison of actions carried out in the same manner as another entity (Sappho, Sophocles, Xenophon, and Basil), always occurring with a dative of comparison.⁴⁷⁵ One might suggest that syntactically the adverb ἴσα in these examples expresses the manner in which an action is carried out (“like” or “in the same way”) and that the meaning of ἴσα itself adds the additional semantic dimension of comparison of two entities, the second of which appears in the dative.

We also observe that ἴσα in these five contexts occurs with action verbs: honor, dance, think, labor and grieve. So in the larger syntax of the clause, we have a group of words (verb + ἴσα

⁴⁷⁵ There is another expression, ἴσα καὶ, which can occur with other cases, such as the nominative in Δία τὸν Ὀλύμπιον, ἐν οὗ τῷ ἱερῷ ἴσα καὶ ἰκέται ἐσμέν (“Olympian Zeus, in whose temple we are as suppliants”), where ἰκέται is nominative masculine plural (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 3.14); or with the accusative in χαῖρε, σεβίζω σ’ ἴσα καὶ μάκαρας (“Hail, I render you homage as to the blessed ones”) where μάκαρας is accusative masculine plural (Euripides, *Electra*, 994).

+ entity compared in the dative) in which ἴσα + entity compared in the dative together modifies the action of the verb. Linguists call this kind of construction an *adverbial phrase*, meaning that a group of words functions collectively as an adverb to modify a verb.

5.2.3.3.1 Relevance to Phil 2:6

This notion of a group of words having a collective function in relation to a verb (i.e., the adverbial phrase mentioned in the previous paragraph) becomes helpful in evaluating the principal grammatical argument offered for ἴσα as a predicate adjective with an ontological meaning in Phil 2:6. For example, Blass and Debrunner, followed by Fee, interpret ἴσα in that verse as an adverb acting as an adjective in a predicate adjective construction signalled by the presence of εἶναι.⁴⁷⁶ And Clarke, following Reinecker, similarly posits that the “neuter plural can be used as an adverb which in turn is used here as an adjective” with the verb “to be.”⁴⁷⁷ What these commentators are really trying to account for is the role of ἴσα + the dative in relation to the verb, i.e., the syntactic function of the phrase. They sense correctly that morphologically ἴσα is an adverb, but believe that it must be functioning as a predicate adjective because they interpret εἶναι as a linking verb. Linking verbs have as their syntactical task to connect structurally a subject to its complement. Linguists would call what these commentators are proposing for ἴσα θεῶ an *adjectival phrase* functioning predicatively. An *adjectival phrase* is different from an *adjective phrase* in that the *adjectival phrase* does not have to contain an adjective in order to function as one. This phrasal syntactic category seems to fit what Clark and others are proposing—an adverb used in an expression that has an adjectival meaning because it is predicating something of a subject, not modifying a verb as to manner, degree, or some other aspect.

Those who argue for an adjectival phrase in Phil 2:6b thus believe that a subject, presumably the ὅς given at the beginning of Phil 2:5, is being complemented. Their translational thought process would appear to be:

ὅς . . . οὐχ . . . ἠγήσατο

He who . . . did not consider

⁴⁷⁶ Blass and Debrunner, sect. 434, no. 1; Fee, 207.

⁴⁷⁷ Clark, 57; Reinecker, 550.

(ὅς) τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ
(He) being equal to God

ἀρπαγμόν
something to be retained

Since the subject ὅς and adjectival phrase ἴσα θεῶ are connected by the linking verb εἶναι in what amounts to a predicate adjective construction, goes the thought, then ἴσα should be translated as an adjective, “equal.”

How should one respond to this apparent argument for ἴσα θεῶ as adjectival phrase in a predicate adjective construction? Fortunately, there is a way to decide whether a group of words containing an adverb should be categorized as a predicate adjective or simply an adverbial phrase.⁴⁷⁸ What determines the difference is whether the subject is being complemented or the verb’s action/state is being modified. If the verb can be shown to be a copulative, or linking verb, then the phrase in question is a complement of the subject, and thus a predicate adjective. If, on the other hand, the verb is not a copula in that context, then the phrase in question is adverbial.

As we review the semantic range of εἶναι as presented in the lexicons, we note that Liddell and Scott, Bailly, and Bauer all suggest that in addition to acting as a linking verb, εἶναι also can have the meaning “to exist,” and Bauer also notes the meaning “to live.” We will look to determine more precisely the nature of εἶναι when we come to the larger context of Phil 2:6 in Chapter 7. In addition, in the intervening Chapter 6 concerning the collocation ἴσα θεῶ / θεοῖς, we will have ample occasion to evaluate whether the majority of occurrences of the phrase are adjectival phrases complementing a subject or adverbial phrases modifying a verb. We will also pay attention to the

⁴⁷⁸ Besides a predicate adjective (She **is beautiful**) and predicate noun (She **is a professor**), some linguists allow for a third type of subject complement, a *predicate adverb* (She **is home**). As far as ancient Greek is concerned, Liddell and Scott, Bailly, and Bauer all recognize the use of εἶναι (stated or presumed) with certain kinds of adverbs or adverbial phrases, such as Phil 4:5, ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς (“the Lord is near”). See the entries for “εἶμι” in LSJ; in A. Bailly *Dictionnaire Grec-Français* (Paris, Hachette, 2000); and in W. Bauer, K. Aland and B. Aland, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Third Edition (BDAG), Revised and Edited by Frederick William Danker* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000). But this category appears to be limited to adverbs of time or location, which would not apply for ἴσα in Phil 2:6.

meaning of these phrases. If there are indeed instances of ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς being used as an adjectival phrase complementing a subject, what meanings can be discerned for the collocation in those contexts? If ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς is used as an adverbial phrase as in the four examples above, what are its nuances in those contexts? These background texts of our next chapter will provide a semantic field from which to evaluate the potential meanings of ἴσα θεῶν as it appears in the context of Phil 2, whether towards ontology, preincarnate circumstances, or otherwise.

Besides the argument for ἴσα θεῶν as predicative adjectival phrase, for the sake of completeness let us consider one other type of interpretation in the secondary literature that analyzes ἴσα as an adverb but translates it ontologically. Silva suggests that though ἴσα is an adverb in terms of its form, it is a “weakened” one semantically.⁴⁷⁹ His comment here is brief, but he apparently means that it is an adverb that is close to the adjective ἴσος in meaning, for Silva argues for ontological equality in the context, translating “the being equal to God.” Furthermore, he does not appear to be evoking the argument for a predicative adjectival phrase (see preceding paragraphs); a semantically “weakened” adverb makes one think of a semantic slide in a direction away from an adverb of manner, perhaps toward the adjective ἴσος. While more data would be necessary to understand his argument, we seriously doubt, considering Silva’s familiarity with linguistics, that he is confusing diachrony (language phenomena throughout a time period) and synchrony (language phenomena at a given moment in time). Nonetheless, we would like to take the notion of a “weakened” meaning for ἴσα as a point of departure for a brief comment about language change.

A possible reason that some interpreters are ultimately drawn to an ontological meaning for ἴσα is the notion that, because the accusative neuter plural ἴσα as an adverb was historically derived from the adjective ἴσος, it must somehow continue to be a quasi-adjective in any given text since that historical morpho-syntactic change took place, and as a result might have the same meaning as ἴσος in any given text. That this does not follow can be easily demonstrated from another adverb derived from ἴσος, namely, ἴσως, with the meaning of “equally” or “maybe.” The fact that ἴσως was historically derived from ἴσος does not mean that in any given context ἴσως might be an adjective or might mean “equal” or some related sense. What J. Barr pointed out concerning the “root fallacy” in biblical interpretation is relevant to our discussion here:

⁴⁷⁹ Silva, 124.

One of the types of argument which I shall criticize in this study is that which places excessive emphasis on the meaning of the ‘root’ of Hebrew words. It seems to be commonly believed that in Hebrew there is a ‘root meaning’ which is effective throughout all the variations given to the root by affixes and formative elements, and that therefore the ‘root meaning’ can confidently be taken to be assigned to an identifiable root; and likewise that any word may be taken to give some kind of suggestion of other words formed from the same root. This belief I shall for the sake of brevity call ‘the root fallacy’.⁴⁸⁰

In our case, the accusative neuter plural form ἴσα appears to be understood frequently as having at least some element of meaning related to “equal” since its lexical form is ἴσος, and ἴσος sometimes means “equal.” But Barr’s work points us first of all to the capacity of a word to have multiple meanings within a given semantic field depending on the context, rather than a single core meaning; and second to the fact that a derived form cannot be assumed to have the same meaning as a root or lexical form.

The possibility that accusative neuter plural form ἴσα can have a meaning distinct from ἴσος may be further obscured by a lack of understanding about the broader system of adverbs in ancient Greek. Typically, when introductory New Testament Greek grammars present adverbs, they teach that one takes the genitive masculine plural form, removes the -ν, and adds -ς, which gives an almost unmistakable -ως ending (to be confused only with certain singular genitive third declension noun forms). And that practice is legitimate as far as it goes. But it is rare, understandably, for beginners to be introduced to other adjective-to-adverb derivations; they may in fact be unaware that the -ως ending is itself the result of a historical process, mistaking it rather for a simple didactic method of recognizing adverbs. And even if, later on in their learning, students of the Greek New Testament are exposed to the fairly common neuter adverbs in a passage like Phil 2:6, we suspect that the fact that they are not as unmistakable morphologically as the -ως adverbs may lead to a perception that there never was a complete historical derivation.⁴⁸¹ In other words, if one judges primarily by form, one might more easily mistake ἴσα for an adjective than

⁴⁸⁰ J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: SCM Press, 1983, original edition 1961), 100.

⁴⁸¹ We have in mind, of course, modern seminary or divinity students who have not been trained in classical Greek at an earlier point in their education, as was once the norm.

suggest that, for example, ἴσως is an adjective. There may be a perception that ἴσως is a “true” adverb because it is almost unmistakable morphologically, and that ἴσα might potentially be a “weakened” adverb in any given context, since it can also be a noun or an adjective depending on its lexical class in a given context. Again, this confusion of diachrony and synchrony would be difficult to prove for any given interpreter of Phil 2:6, and it is doubtful that it lies behind Silva’s brief exegetical comment; but it is a pedagogical aside worth pondering as to the common propensity towards an ontological reading.

5.3 Chapter Summary

To summarize, we note three lexical classes for ἴσα in our examples up to this point: (plural) adjective, (plural) noun, and adverb. As a plural noun, ἴσα can be used to speak of equal measures or amounts. As an adjective, ἴσα can be used to say that an entity is equal to another. When an adverb, all the examples we have noted to date occur with a dative to compare the actions of, or the manner of treating, two different entities.

We judged the plural noun and plural agreeing adjective lexical classes highly unlikely for Phil 2:6, favoring instead an interpretation that sees ἴσα as an adverb that is the result of a process of morphological change already effected in our earliest Greek texts. We also noted in the examples given that ἴσα occurs with a dative of comparison to modify an action verb. The interpretation holding that ἴσα θεῶν in Phil 2:6 is best described syntactically as a predicative adjectival complement of a subject via the linking verb εἶναι will be further evaluated with reference to its context in Chapter 7 and semantic precedents in Chapter 6.

Besides Chapter 4’s conclusion that the ontological interpretation took hold historically during the Arian controversy of the fourth and fifth centuries as a way to prove the equality of the Son and the Father, and the present chapter’s conclusion that ἴσα is better described at the word level as a neuter plural adverb than a noun or agreeing adjective, there remains another angle from which we must examine ἴσα in Phil 2:6: ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς as a commonly known expression in Christian and broader Greek literature from Homer on down.

Chapter 6: ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς as Collocation in Christian and Broader Literature

This chapter will provide numerous examples showing that ἴσα occurred regularly through the archaic, classical, and hellenistic periods with either the singular θεῶ or the plural θεοῖς. While other modern writers have recognized this collocation,⁴⁸² we believe that a more detailed analysis is possible and will shed light on its use in Phil 2:6. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, we aim to determine the syntactic functions possible for the collocation (complement of a subject and thus a predicate, or adverbial phrase modifying a verb, or other). Second, we will observe pragmatic categories of its use and determine potential semantic values. The results of this chapter's enquiry will serve as the syntactic and semantic background data to analyze Phil 2:6 in Chapter 7.

6.1 The Collocation ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς Recognized by Others

While the lexicons and a few scholars have recognized the prevalence of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς as a common collocation outside of Christian literature from Homer on down, none has given an exhaustive account of its uses. Erik Heen has described ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς outside of Philippians the most extensively, believing that its use in Phil 2:6 was a subversive statement against the emperor cult⁴⁸³ and that the *Carmen Christi* in general is an example of the subtle modes of popular resistance to foreign domination common in that era.⁴⁸⁴ While reference to imperial rule in the hymn is possible, as others have suggested,⁴⁸⁵ we believe that Heen attempts to blend too many terms (ἰσόθεος, ἴσος θεῶ/θεοῖς, ἴσον θεῶ/θεοῖς, and ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς) in his argument, saying that

⁴⁸² A collocation is two or more words occurring together at a frequency greater than would be expected by chance.

⁴⁸³ On the emperor cult in the first century and beyond, see I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). “When alive, all Roman emperors, without exception, carefully avoided divine status in the Roman constitution; after their death, several of them received the title of *Divus* and with it this very status, full-blown and apparently without any limitations whatsoever: state priests and state temples were decreed by the Roman senate for their worship” (261). As Gradel points out, however, the fact that this official senatorial declaration of divine status was posthumous (such as in the case of Augustus in 14 A.D.) did not prevent the reigning emperor and other rulers from being the object of cultic activities at the popular level during their lifetimes. Practically speaking, when some form of divine status was ascribed to a ruler, the interest was not in understanding the essence of the divinity as in Christianity, but rather wholly related to ritual action (267).

⁴⁸⁴ E. Heen, “Phil 2:6-11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule: *Isa theo* and the Cult of the Emperor in the East” in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004), 125-153.

⁴⁸⁵ Hellerman, 133.

they “blurred in actual usage” and all expressed the meaning “godlike” or “godequal.”⁴⁸⁶ Most of the dozen or so examples with which he interacts in support of his imperial argument do not contain ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς at all, but rather one of these related terms. He too readily, in our opinion, subsumes these different terms under the title ἰσόθεοι τιμαί (divine honors bestowed upon local Roman imperial authorities) in an effort to regroup them semantically, arguing that the terms were all assigned to local Roman authorities. In grouping these terms together semantically, Heen fails to take into account the diversity of non-imperial contexts in which one finds ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς, as we will soon demonstrate. His conclusion that our phrase may well mean that Christ did not think that the divine honors were something to be seized as some local authorities and some emperors seized divine honors, but rather honors to be awarded through humble obedience, attempts to take into account the background of the phrase, but in our opinion may put too much weight on one phrase to accomplish a historically precise subversion in a fairly subtle way.

A second author, Camille Focant, suggests that rather than the traditional ontological reading of Phil 2:6, where ἴσα is taken to mean ontological equality, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶν should rather be considered in light of the common expression ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς, used “pour des héros épiques dignes par leur vaillance d’être traités à l’égal des dieux, comme des dieux.”⁴⁸⁷ Focant cites two examples where verbs of honor/reverence are used with ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς (Homer, *Odyssey* 11.484 and Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.2.7.8) in contexts where the aim is clearly not ontological, but honorific. Thus Paul would be saying that Christ did not want to take advantage of divine honors, but was willing to forego them in his incarnation.

A third author, M. Tellbe, like Heen, has a tendency to jump from ἴσα θεῶν to consideration of other terms associated with the imperial cult, including ἰσόθεος⁴⁸⁸ and ἰσόθεοι τιμαί.⁴⁸⁹ But he lands on safer ground in his conclusion by insisting that rather than seeking specific parallels between Christ and the Roman imperial cult (Heen) or Christ and the Hellenistic hero cult (Focant), interpreters should simply see a parallel between Christ and earthly rulers in general. While earthly rulers were self-aggrandizing in their quest for divine honors, Jesus Christ is presented as bypassing the expected trajectory.

⁴⁸⁶ Heen, 147.

⁴⁸⁷ C. Focant, “Philippiens 2,5-11 face à la pluralité des lectures,” in de Boissieu, 12.

⁴⁸⁸ On which see our comments and examples later in this chapter.

⁴⁸⁹ M. Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue and State* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001), 256.

Thus while Focant reads τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ against the background of Greek heroic literature, and Heen has in view particularly the Roman imperial practice, Tellbe cautiously suggests a parallel between Christ and earthly rulers in general. The common semantic element observed in various texts for ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς that these three authors apply to the ἴσα θεῶ of Phil 2:6 is that of honorific treatment. The data of this chapter will allow us to evaluate the accuracy of these authors' characterizations of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in general and, in Chapter 7, their relevance to Phil 2:6 specifically.

Why, if the lexicons and other authors have recognized the potential relevance of this collocation for understanding Phil 2:6, is a new examination needed? We believe it is possible to classify textual examples of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς more extensively in order to establish their connection with Phil 2:6 more precisely.

6.2 Two Pragmatic Categories

We placed examples of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in two broad categories based on two major pragmatic situations we observed while analyzing the data. While the data surely could have been presented otherwise, we chose categories we believed most logical. We placed in a first category pragmatic contexts of *divine treatment received* (three pragmatic entities), most often in which an agent worships/reverences/honors a non-divine entity as it would a divine entity or entities. In a second category we placed examples of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in pragmatic contexts of *divine action/state* (two pragmatic entities), most often with various verbs of thinking or acting. In most of these cases, an agent thinks or performs an action as would the divine. Some examples will contain several lines of text where they are helpful for understanding the context, whereas other examples will simply summarize and give only a phrase of the Greek. Where relevant we also include insights from the major commentaries. From the two types of pragmatic categories we will then develop a semantic field (set of related meanings) for the collocation.

6.2.1 Category One: Three Entities

The context in these examples is one of treating someone or something as one would treat the divine. There are always three entities in this particular pragmatic context: the one who gives special treatment, the human/animal so treated, and a god/the gods which act as the standard of treatment. The most common Greek verbs in this type are τιμάω, σέβομαι, and θαυμάζω, i.e., verbs of honor or worship, but others also appear with the collocation in this type of pragmatic context. In the majority of cases these verbs are modified by the adverb ἴσα to compare the manner in which the action is carried out. This is by far the most common type of construction with ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς that we have observed.

1. Homer, *Odyssey* 11.298-304 [von der Mühl; translation adapted from Murray]
καὶ Λήδην εἶδον, τὴν Τυνδαρέου παράκοιτιν,
ἢ ῥ' ὑπὸ Τυνδαρέῳ κρατερόφρονε γείνατο παῖδε,
Κάστορά θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα,
τοὺς ἄμφω ζωοὺς κατέχει φυσίζοος αἴα·
οἱ καὶ νέρθεν γῆς τιμὴν πρὸς Ζηνὸς ἔχοντες
ἄλλοτε μὲν ζώουσ' ἑτερήμεροι, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
τεθνῶσιν· **τιμὴν δὲ λελόγγασιν ἴσα θεοῖσι.**

And I saw Lede, the wife of Tyndareus, who bore to Tyndareus two sons, stout of heart, Castor the tamer of horses, and the boxer Polydeuces. These two the earth, the giver of life, covers, alive though they be, and even in the world below they have honor from Zeus. One day they live in turn, and one day they are dead; and **they have obtained by lot honor like that of the gods.**

Castor and Polydeuces have, by lot, received (λελόγγασιν) honor equal to the gods. Note the comparison of treatment between the two brothers Dioscuroi and the gods. Hoekstra comments, “Here ἴσα has come to function as an adverb because of the fact that the archaic expression λελόγγασιν ἴσα θεοῖσι was adapted to τιμὴν δέ.”⁴⁹⁰ Although Hoekstra does not document other

⁴⁹⁰ A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes: Studies in the development of Greek epic diction* (Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1965), 105. The ancient Homeric scholia

instances of λελόγγασι ἴσα θεοῖσι as an expression, he apparently understands τιμὴν δέ to be the added direct object complement of λελόγγασιν, with ἴσα θεοῖσι then modifying the verb and its complement.

2. Homer, *Odyssey* 11.483-485 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

οὐ τις ἀνὴρ προπάροιθε μακάρτερος οὔτ' ἄρ' ὀπίσσω·
πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν
Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν

Whereas no man before this was more blessed than you, Achilles, nor shall ever be hereafter. For before, when you were alive, we Argives **honored you equally with the gods**, and now that you are here, you rule mightily among the dead.

Heubeck comments on Odysseus' reasoning: Achilles' "uniquely good fortune continues even in death: the honour paid to Achilles in his lifetime (ἴσα θεοῖσιν . . .) is paralleled by his position among the dead (Achilles' ghost is envisaged as surrounded by a crowd of companions)."⁴⁹¹ The ghost of Achilles deflects the honor offered by Odysseus, saying that he would much rather live on earth poor and landless than occupy a place of esteem in Hades.⁴⁹² Here again we note three entities in an honorific situation: the Argives, Achilles, and the gods.

3. Homer, *Odyssey* 15.518-520 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

ἀλλὰ τοι ἄλλον φῶτα πιφάυσκομαι, ὅν κεν ἴκοιο,
Εὐρύμαχον, Πολύβοιο δαΐφρονος ἀγλαὸν υἱόν,
τὸν νῦν ἴσα θεῶ Ἰθακῆσιοι εἰσορόωσι·

But I will tell you of another man to whom you may go, Eurymachus, glorious son of wise Polybus, **whom now the men of Ithaca look upon as on a god**.

(commentaries originally found in margins of Homeric manuscripts) are silent on this verse; in the following examples, we will note any pertinent scholia we have found.

⁴⁹¹ A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 106.

⁴⁹² For further evidence of the negative picture of the destiny of souls in Homer, see 11.541-542 later in this same passage.

The verb εἰσοράω used here can also be translated *revere* or *admire*. Again, we have comparison of treatment between a person and a god by a third entity, in this case the men of Ithaca. Heubeck speculates as to the origin of the combination of ἴσα θεῶ with εἰσορόωσι: “The form of the expression (note the neut. pl.) probably results from a combination of the formulae *τίε Ϝἴσα θεοῖσι (cf. *Il.* xiii 176 etc. and *Od.* xi 304 etc.) and *θεὸν (θεοῦς) ὡς εἰσοράουσι (-άοντες etc., cf. vii 71 etc.), the latter being the pres. tense counterpart of θεὸς ὡς τίετο δῆμῳ, see xiv 205 n.”⁴⁹³ Note that Heubeck identifies ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς as a recognized expression.

Excursus on ὡς with words for divinity

It will be further instructive for our understanding to examine ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς from the perspective of the two expression types Heubeck mentions above as appearing in Homer. The first type uses ἴσα with nouns/verbs starting with τι- plus dative of comparison referring to the divinity or some other entity; the other uses ὡς with words for divinity and often some form of the verb εἰσοράω. Here are the two examples he gives of each:

A. Nouns/verbs starting with τι- plus ἴσα plus dative of comparison:

Homer, *Iliad* 13.175-176 [West; translation Murray]

ἄψ ἐς Ἴλιον ἦλθε, μετέπρεπε δὲ Τρώεσσι,
ναῖε δὲ παρ Πριάμῳ· ὃ δὲ μιν τίεν ἴσα τέκεσσι.

In the context, Homer describes the victim of Teucer’s deadly spear, Imbrius. This Imbrius had married a daughter of Priam. Before his death Imbrius had “returned to Ilios and was preeminent among the Trojans, and he dwelt in the house of Priam, **who held him in like honor with his own children.**” Here Heubeck is drawing our attention to the common use of the verb τίω with ἴσα plus the dative case. The context is again one of honor where a first entity, Priam, honors a second entity, Imbrius, in the same way as a third entity, Priam’s children.

Homer, *Odyssey* 11.304 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

⁴⁹³ A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, 263. The asterisk is here used for a non-attested form that is nonetheless believed to be an accurate reconstruction of actual language use.

τιμὴν δὲ λελόγασιν ἴσα θεοῖσι.

They have won honor like that of the gods.

See example 1 above for translation and discussion. We note that ἴσα θεοῖσι is used with a noun referring to honor (τιμὴν).

B. Verbs of honor (such as εἰσοράω⁴⁹⁴) plus ὡς plus θεός

Odyssey 7.66-72 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

Ἀρήτην· τὴν δ' Ἀλκίνοος ποιήσατ' ἄκοιτιν
καί μιν ἔτισ' ὡς οὐ τις ἐπὶ χθονὶ τίεται ἄλλη,
ὄσσοι νῦν γε γυναῖκες ὑπ' ἀνδράσιν οἶκον ἔχουσι.
ὥς κείνη περὶ κῆρι τετίμηται τε καὶ ἔστιν
ἔκ τε φίλων παίδων ἔκ τ' αὐτοῦ Ἀλκινόοιο
καὶ λαῶν, **οἳ μὴν ῥα θεὸν ὡς εἰσορόωντες**
δειδέχεται μύθοισιν, ὅτε στείχησ' ἀνὰ ἄστν.

Alcinous made Arete his wife, and honored her as no other woman on earth is honored, of all those who in these days direct their households in subjection to their husbands; so heartily is she honored, and has ever been, by her children and by Alcinous himself and by the people, **who look upon her as upon a goddess, and greet** her as she goes through the city.”

Here again the context is one of honor, including the verbs τίεται and τετίμηται. Heubeck's comment given above focuses particularly on οἳ μὴν ῥα θεὸν ὡς εἰσορόωντες, i.e., that Arete's children and husband and the people “look upon her as a goddess.” Heubeck apparently sees ὡς as an adverb commonly used with εἰσοράω, calling it a formula, whereas ἴσα he pairs with τίω. We found a very similar example in *Iliad* 12.312: πάντες δὲ θεοῦς ὡς εἰσορόωσι. One might perceive a sound pattern at work in these two collocations: the repetition of the iota sound in ἴσα and τίω on

⁴⁹⁴ We note with LSJ that this verb can mean simply ‘look upon’ but also (as in this context) ‘look upon with honor’, i.e., see with admiration.

the one hand, and on the other hand, in the case of the example above, the omega-sigma sound in ὦς and εἰσορώσι.

Homer, *Odyssey* 14.202-206 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

ἐμὲ δ' ὠνητὴ τέκε μήτηρ
παλλακίς, ἀλλὰ με ἴσον ἰθαιγενέεσσιν ἐτίμα
Κάστωρ Ὑλακίδης, τοῦ ἐγὼ γένος εὔχομαι εἶναι·
ὄς τότ' ἐνὶ Κρήτεσσι θεὸς ὦς τίετο δῆμῳ
ὄλβῳ τε πλούτῳ τε καὶ υἰάσι κυδαλίμοισιν.

Odysseus describes his heritage thus: “but the mother that bore me was bought, a concubine. Yet Castor, son of Hylax, of whom I declare that I am sprung, honored me even as his true-born sons. **He was at that time honored as a god among the Cretans** in the land for his good estate, and his wealth, and his glorious sons.”

Here, within the same passage, it is interesting to note that we have an example of τίω with ὦς plus θεός as well as τιμάω with ἴσον plus dative. On θεός ὦς τίετο δῆμῳ Heubeck and Hoekstra comment that “such a position of a ruler is out of the question in the eighth century and highly doubtful in the Dark Ages: it is most probably a reminiscence of Mycenaean times . . . its significance is no longer understood, for the poet thinks it necessary to add ὄλβῳ τε κτλ. (206) by way of explanation.”⁴⁹⁵ Though we are not sure why Heubeck and Hoekstra believe that the expression would no longer be understood given the frequency of other similar uses, they are also partly basing their conclusion on phonological grounds: “the lengthening of the syllable preceding ‘postpositive’ ὦς is mostly regarded as a survival from the time when the latter still had the form *ῥῶς . . .”⁴⁹⁶ In any case Heubeck and Hoekstra are pointing out that the expression is archaic.

It becomes obvious by comparing these four passages in Heubeck’s comment that τίω can appear either with ἴσα or with ὦς plus the noun compared, as can the verb εἰσοράω. This strongly suggests, considering that the contexts are very similar in these examples, that ἴσα and ὦς are semantically interchangeable, at least when used with verbs of honor such as τίω or εἰσοράω. If

⁴⁹⁵ A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, 207.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

these two constructions are indeed synonymous, this would suggest that the meaning of the formula verb of honor + object + ἴσα + dative of comparison is not necessarily “honor A in a equal way to B” in the sense of a measured precision of equal treatment of A and B, but rather simply “honor A with a treatment appropriate to B,” i.e., with a high level of honor appropriate to divinity. Thus with these honorific formula an author compares degrees of honor. Reverence given to one entity is compared generally to the level of reverence given to another.

And we can multiply examples of ὡς. The ὡς examples we give below share characteristics with the expression ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in that they contain an entity that reverences, the entity revered, and comparison with the god/gods. While ὡς with words for divinity is not as common as ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς, there are many clear attestations:

Homer, *Iliad* 3.230-231 [West; translation Murray]

Ἴδομενεὺς δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐνὶ Κρήτεσσι θεὸς ὡς
ἔστηκ', ἀμφὶ δέ μιν Κρητῶν ἀγοὶ ἠγερέθονται.

And Idomeneus **stands** to one side of him **among the Cretans like a god**, and about him are gathered the leaders of the Cretans.

Homer, *Iliad* 11.58 [West; translation Murray adapted]

Αἰνεΐαν θ', ὃς Τρωσὶ θεὸς ὡς τίετο δῆμῳ

Aeneas, **who was honored by the Trojan people like a god**.

Homer, *Iliad* 9.154-155 [West; translation Murray]

ἐν δ' ἄνδρες ναίουσι πολύρρηνες πολυβοῦται,
οἳ κέ ἐ δωτίνησι θεὸν ὡς τιμήσουσι

And in them dwell men rich in flocks and rich in cattle, **men who will honor him with gifts as though he were a god**.

Here Agamemnon is listing the compensations he will give to Achilles, among them seven cities whose wealthy men will honor Achilles like a god. *Iliad* 9.297 has a reading very similar to

this text which gives the same list of compensations when it is presented to Achilles by Odysseus on behalf of Agamemnon.

Homer, *Iliad* 9.302 [West; translation Murray]

οἶ σε θεὸν ὧς τίσουσ'· ἧ γάρ κέ σφι μάλα μέγα κῦδος ἄροιο·

These will honor you as though you were a god, for surely you will win great glory in their eyes.

This is again the context of Odysseus presenting to Achilles the compensations of Agamemnon. Odysseus appeals to Achilles that even if he hates Agamemnon too much, he can at least have pity on the rest of the Achaeans, and the latter will honor Achilles as though he is a god. Hainsworth comments that Odysseus is appealing to Achilles' sense of social obligation as a Homeric kingly figure to protect the Achaeans and thus receive honor from them.⁴⁹⁷

Homer, *Iliad* 22.393-394 [West; translation Murray]

ἡράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν Ἴκτορα δῖον,

ᾧ Τρῶες κατὰ ἄστῳ θεῷ ὧς εὐχετόωντο.

We have us great glory; we have slain noble Hector, **to whom the Trojans made prayer throughout their city as to a god.**

Homer, *Iliad* 22.432-436 [West; translation Murray]

ὄ μοι νύκτας τε καὶ ἦμαρ

εὐχολῆ κατὰ ἄστῳ πελέσκεο, πᾶσί τ' ὄνειρα

Τρῳαί τε καὶ Τρῳῆσι κατὰ πόλιν, **οἶ σε θεὸν ὧς**

δειδέχατ'· ἧ γὰρ καὶ σφι μάλα μέγα κῦδος ἔησθα

ζῶος ἐών· νῦν αὖ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κυχάνει.

⁴⁹⁷ B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 99, commenting on *Iliad* 9.302.

Hecabe laments her son Hector's death: "You were my boast night and day in the city, and a help to all, both to the men and women of Troy throughout the town, **who always greeted you as a god**; for surely you were to them a very great glory, while yet you lived; but now death and fate have caught up with you."

These last six texts were taken from the *Iliad*. We also observe ὡς with divinity in honorific situation in the *Odyssey*:

Homer, *Odyssey* 5.36-40 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

οἳ κέν μιν περὶ κῆρι θεὸν ὧς τιμήσουσι,
πέμψουσιν δ' ἐν νηὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
χαλκόν τε χρυσόν τε ἄλλας ἐσθῆτά τε δόντες,
πόλλ', ὅσ' ἂν οὐδέ ποτε Τροίης ἐξήρατ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
εἶ περ ἀπήμων ἦλθε, λαχὼν ἀπὸ ληΐδος αἴσαν.

These shall heartily show him all honor, as if he were a god, and shall send him in a ship to his own native land, after giving him stores of bronze and gold and clothing, more than Odysseus would ever have won for himself from Troy, if he had returned unscathed with his due share of the spoil.

Zeus ordains that Odysseus be brought back to his native land on a ship of the Phaeacians, who will honor him like a god. *Odyssey* 19.280 recounts the fulfillment of this announcement using the same language, as does *Odyssey* 23.339.

Homer, *Odyssey* 8.167-175 [von der Mühl; translation Murray]

οὕτως οὐ πάντεσσι θεοὶ χαρίεντα διδοῦσιν
ἀνδράσιν, οὔτε φυὴν οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτ' ἀγορητόν.
ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος πέλει ἀνήρ,
ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφήν ἔπεσι στέφει· οἳ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν
τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν, ὁ δ' ἀσφαλῶς ἀγορεύει,
αἰδοῖ μιλίχῃ, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνὰ ἄστῃ θεὸν ὧς εἰσορώσιν.

ἄλλος δ' αὖ εἶδος μὲν ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν,
ἀλλ' οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστέφεται ἐπέεσσιν,
ὥς καὶ σοὶ εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπές, οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως
οὐδὲ θεὸς τεύξειε, νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐσσι.

So true is it that the gods do not give gracious gifts to all alike, not form, nor mind, nor eloquence. For one man is inferior in looks, but the god sets a crown of beauty upon his words, and men look upon him with delight, and he speaks on unfalteringly with sweet modesty, and is conspicuous among the gathered people, and as he goes through the city **men gaze upon him as upon a god**. Another again is in looks like the immortals, but no crown of grace is set about his words. So also in your case your looks are preeminent, nor could a god himself improve them, but in mind you are stunted.

Odysseus here explains that all people are not endowed with gifts in the same way. Heubeck comments that the idea of gazing upon (εἰσορόωσιν) this man as upon a god is ironic here, since the case in point given by Odysseus is not exceptional for his looks, but rather for his speech.⁴⁹⁸ However, we would argue that the idea is not necessarily ironic, for the sense of ‘gaze upon as a god’ need not be limited in cause to exceptional appearance, but may also be prompted by other impressive gifts, such as that of eloquence.

To summarize our excursus on ὥς with divinity, we observe that ὥς always comes after the word for divinity in these examples (i.e., is postpositive, making the preceding closed syllable long, and accented ὦς). We note also the interchangeability of the verbs used with both ὥς and ἴσα: τιμάω, τίω, and εἰσοράω are all three used with either ὥς or ἴσα. We further observe the pragmatic similarities of three entities in contexts of honor. In all of the examples of ὥς with divinity given above, the entity that honors is always plural—often the people of a specified locale, and sometimes in the context of the city or town, i.e., someone is honored as they proceed κατὰ ἄστυ, ἀνὰ ἄστυ, κατὰ πτόλιν. As we conclude this excursus and resume our examples below, we will note that this is often, though not always, true in the case of ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς: the entity that reverences is a group

⁴⁹⁸ A. Heubeck, et al, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. 1, 357.

of admirers of a given locale. And thus we leave our excursus on ὡς plus divinity terms and continue observing examples of ἴσα plus divinity terms:

4. Hecataeus of Abdera, fragment 25.89.1 [Jacoby; translation Oldfather]⁴⁹⁹

Λείπεται δ' ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν περὶ τῆς τῶν κροκοδείλων ἀποθεώσεως, ὑπὲρ ἧς οἱ πλεῖστοι διαποροῦσι πῶς τῶν θηρίων τούτων σαρκοφαγούντων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐνομοθετήθη **τιμᾶν ἴσα θεοῖς** τοὺς τὰ δεινότατα διατιθέντας.

It remains for us to speak of the deification of crocodiles, a subject regarding which most men are entirely at a loss to explain how, when these beasts eat the flesh of men, it ever became the law **to honour like the gods** creatures of the most revolting habits.

Passing now from Homer to Hecataeus of Abdera, we again have the divine treatment being given to an entity (in this case crocodiles) in the manner it is granted to the gods. We thus observe that not only can men, women, and children be honored like the gods, but also animals. Granted, crocodiles were already treated as divine in the Egyptian context, so the appearance of our phrase here is not as surprising as its use in the case of men, women, and children. Nonetheless, the passage remains instructive as a comparison between honorific treatment of the immortal gods and crocodiles. In the excursus above we discussed how ὡς can be used with verbs of honor to compare reverence given to a divinity in the same way that ἴσα can. We discovered in studying this fragment of Hecataeus the same pattern, with ὡς and ἴσα both used in the same passage. The context of the following is still the Egyptian worship of crocodiles and appears just after the quote given above:

Hecataeus of Abdera, fragment 25.89.3 [Jacoby; translation Oldfather]

φασὶ γὰρ τινες τῶν ἀρχαίων τινὰ βασιλέων, τὸν προσαγορευόμενον Μηνᾶν (?), διωκόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων κυνῶν καταφυγεῖν εἰς τὴν Μοίριδος καλουμένην λίμνην, ἔπειθ' ὑπὸ κροκοδείλου παραδόξως ἀναληφθέντα εἰς τὸ πέραν ἀπενεχθῆναι. τῆς δὲ σωτηρίας χάριν ἀποδιδόναι βουλόμενον τῷ ζώῳ πόλιν κτίσαι πλησίον, ὀνομάσαντα Κροκοδείλων· **καταδειξαι δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις ὡς θεοὺς τιμᾶν**

⁴⁹⁹ This fragment of Hecataeus of Abdera appears in *The Library of History* volume I, Book 1.89.1.4, by Diodorus Siculus.

ταῦτα ζῶια, καὶ τὴν λίμνην αὐτοῖς εἰς τροφήν ἀναθεῖναι. ἐνταῦθα δὲ καὶ τὸν τάφον ἑαυτῷ κατασκευάσαι πυραμίδα τετράπλευρον ἐπιστήσαντα, καὶ τὸν θαυμαζόμενον παρὰ πολλοῖς λαβύρινθον οἰκοδομήσαι.

For some say that once one of the earthly kings whose name was Menas, being pursued by his own dogs, came in his flight to the Lake of Moeris, as it is called, where, strange as it may seem, a crocodile took him on his back and carried him to the other side. Wishing to show his gratitude to the beast for saving him, he founded a city near the place and named it City of the Crocodiles; **and he commanded the natives of the region to worship these animals as gods** and dedicated the lake to them for their sustenance; and in that place he also constructed his own tomb, erecting a pyramid with four sides, and built the Labyrinth which is admired by many.

Thus we observe in the same passage of Hecataeus the verb τιμάω used with both ὡς and ἴσα plus divinity. This time ὡς comes before the word it modifies (θεοῦς), unlike the postpositive examples we saw in the Homer texts. For our purposes it is instructive to note that the interchangeability of ὡς and ἴσα in these honorific contexts suggest that both are adverbs used to compare treatment of an entity with that given to the divine, with the meaning “as” or “like.” But we also discovered a third possible variation which further reinforces the adverbial analysis. The context is again the Egyptian practice of deifying animals, but this time the sacred bulls are in focus:

Hecataeus of Abdera, Fragment 25.88.4 [Jacoby; translation Oldfather]
τοὺς δὲ ταύρους τοὺς ἱεροὺς, λέγω δὲ τὸν τε Ἄπιν καὶ τὸν Μνεῦιν, **τιμᾶσθαι**
παραπλησίως τοῖς θεοῖς, Ὀσίριδος καταδείξαντος, ἅμα μὲν διὰ τὴν τῆς γεωργίας
χρείαν, ἅμα δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ τῶν εὐρόντων τοὺς καρποὺς τὴν δόξαν ταῖς τούτων
ἐργασίαις παραδόσιμον γεγονέναι τοῖς μεταγενεστέροις εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν αἰῶνα.

The sacred bulls—I refer to the Apis and the Mnevis—are **honoured like the gods**, as Osiris commanded, both because of their use in farming and also because the fame of those who discovered the fruits of the earth is handed down by the labours

of these animals to succeeding generations for all time.

Here we note that instead of *ώς* and *ἴσα*, we have the adverb *παραπλησίως* with *τιμάω* and divinity. It occurs in the same context of animal deification with three entities: entity who reverences, entity revered, and the divine entity. In the context, *παραπλησίως* has the meaning “in like manner.” This third adverb, appearing as it does in the same formula as do *ώς* and *ἴσα*, reinforces the adverbial analysis of *ἴσα* in the description of these pragmatic settings. Moving on from Hecataeus of Abdera, with Dioscorides we now continue our examples of *ἴσα* plus divinity terms:

5. Dioscorides, Epigram 18 [Gow and Page; translation Paton]

πάντη, πότνια, **χαῖρε θεοῖς ἴσα**·

σὰς γὰρ αἰοιδὰς ἀθανάτας ἔχομεν νῦν ἔτι θυγατέρας.

Wherever thou be, **I salute thee**, my queen, **as divine**;

For we still deem thy songs to be daughters of the gods.

In his third-century BC epigram to Sappho, Dioscorides hails the poetess as he would the gods. In their commentary, Gow and Page suggest for *χαῖρε θεοῖς ἴσα* the meaning “this form of address is as suitable to you as to the gods addressed in hymns.”⁵⁰⁰

6. Philodemus, *Περὶ εὐσεβείας*, Fragment 51.1468-1476 [text, translation Obbink]

τοσοῦ[το] τοίνυ[ν ἄ]πέσχε [τοῦ] βλαπ[τικ]ὸς ἀνθ[ρώ]πων γ[εγον]ένα[ι τι]νὸς ὧ[στε
ο]ὐ μόν[ον] **τοὺς γενέ[τα]ς ἴσα [θε]οῖς ἐτίμησεν** [οὐ]δὲ μόν[ον] πρὸς [τοὺς]
ἀδελ[φο]ὺς ἐρω[τικῶς,]

So far in fact was [Epicurus] from being harmful to anyone of mankind that not only did **he honour his parents as much as the gods**, nor was he fondly disposed only towards his brothers . . .

⁵⁰⁰ A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 250.

Here in the Philodemus fragment we observe that τιμᾶν ἴσα θεοῖς, above applied to animals considered as divine in the Hecataeus text, can also be used of parents, and is seen as a virtuous quality of Epicurus.

7. Diodorus of Sicily, Book 10, Fragment 23 [Cohen-Skalli; translation Oldfather]
Ἵτι ὁ αὐτὸς πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα διαλεγόμενος πρὸς βίου σώφρονος ζῆλον καὶ πρὸς ἀνδρείαν τε καὶ καρτερίαν, ἔτι δὲ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετάς, **ἴσα θεοῖς παρὰ τοῖς Κροτωνιάταις ἐτιμᾶτο.**

During the time that Pythagoras was delivering many other discourses designed to inculcate the emulation of a sober life and manliness and perseverance and the other virtues, **he received at the hands of the inhabitants of Croton honours the equal of those accorded to the gods.**⁵⁰¹

Cohen-Skalli translates, “honoré à l’égal des dieux chez les Crotoniates.”⁵⁰² Both of these translations are viable and communicate that Pythagoras was honored in a way equal to the gods. Again we note three pragmatic entities. We also begin to note that while the entity that honors can be an individual, a collectivity is often in view: here the inhabitants of Croton, and in earlier examples the Argives and the men of Ithaca.

8. Pausanias (geographer) *Description of Greece*, Book 2, Ch. 2, Section 7 [Rocha-Pereira; translation Jones, adapted]

Πενθέα ὑβρίζοντα ἐς Διόνυσον καὶ ἄλλα τολμᾶν λέγουσι καὶ τέλος ἐς τὸν Κιθαιρῶνα ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ κατασκοπῇ τῶν γυναικῶν, ἀναβάντα δὲ ἐς δένδρον θεάσασθαι τὰ ποιούμενα· τὰς δὲ, ὡς ἐφώρασαν, καθελκύσαι τε αὐτίκα Πενθέα καὶ ζῶντος ἀποσπᾶν ἄλλο ἄλλην τοῦ σώματος· ὕστερον δὲ, ὡς Κορίνθιοι λέγουσιν, ἡ Πυθία χρᾶ σφισιν ἀνευρόντας **τὸ δένδρον ἐκεῖνο ἴσα τῷ θεῷ σέβειν**· καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ διὰ τόδε τὰς εἰκόνας πεποιήνται ταύτας.

They say that Pentheus treated Dionysus outrageously, his crowning outrage being

⁵⁰¹ The subject, Pythagoras, is not named in the Greek of the passage we quote but is understood from the context.

⁵⁰² Cohen-Skalli, 196.

that he went to Cithaeron, to spy upon the women, and climbing up a tree beheld what was done. When the women detected Pentheus, they immediately dragged him down, and joined in tearing him, living as he was, limb from limb. Afterwards, as the Corinthians say, the Pythian priestess commanded them by an oracle to discover **that tree and to worship it equally with the god**. For this reason they have made these images from the tree.

In his description of Corinth, Pausanias describes how, in addition to a statue of Artemis in the marketplace, there are also wooden images of Dionysus, and pauses his description to give the above anecdote about the story behind those images: Dionysus' revenge upon Pentheus. In the anecdote, the oracle commanded the Corinthians to worship the tree as they would Dionysus.⁵⁰³ So we have in this text the comparison of the treatment of a tree with that of a god (i.e., treating the tree as a sacred object). We thus observe another example of a collectivity that worships/honors (the Corinthians), as well as another non-human entity being worshipped/honored as divine (a tree; cf. crocodiles above).

9. Pausanias (lexicographer), *Collection of Attic Words*, epsilon 18.5 [Erbse; translation ours]

εἰς Κυνόσαργες . . . ἔστι δὲ τόπος ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ, ἐν ᾧ τοὺς νόθους τῶν παίδων ἔταπτον. ὠνόμασται δὲ οὕτως ἀπὸ κυνὸς ἀργοῦ, τουτέστι λευκοῦ ἢ ταχέος. καὶ γὰρ Ἡρακλεῖ θύοντος κύνα λευκὸν ἢ ταχὺν ἀρπάσαντα τοῦ θυομένου τὰ μηρία αὐτοῦ καταθεῖναι. καὶ ἐπερωτήσαντας τοὺς θεοὺς λαβεῖν χρησμόν, ἱερὸν Ἡρακλέους ἰδρῦσαι ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ τόπῳ. ἐξ οὗ καὶ τοὺς νόθους ἐκεῖ συντελεῖν, ὅτι καὶ Ἡρακλῆς νόθος ὢν ἴσα θεοῖς ἐτιμᾶτο.

Cynosarges . . . a place in Attica, prescribed for the half-breeds. It was called thus because of a bright dog, that is to say, white or swift. For when sacrificing to Heracles, a white or swift dog, after snatching the offering, dropped the thigh bones. And having inquired of the gods, he received an oracle: "Establish a temple of Heracles in this place." For this reason the half-breeds gather there, because even

⁵⁰³ Aelian gives an anecdote of Xerxes falling in love with a tree and honoring it, but our phrase is not used (*Varia Historia* 2.14, cf. 9.39).

Heracles, being a half-breed, **was honored in a way equal to the gods.**

Pausanias explains the origin of the name Κυνόσαργες for the Cynosarges gymnasium outside Athens, sacred to Heracles, for those not of pure Athenian blood. The thought is that if Heracles, who is sometimes described as a νόθος, could be honored like the gods, then there could also be a place designated for half-breeds to gather. Again the issue is treatment of an entity as one would treat the gods.

10. Dionysius of Byzantium, *Voyage through the Bosphorus* 41.2 [Güngerich; translation ours]

Μικρὸν δ' ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ νεῶς Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Φιλαδέλφου **τοῦτον ἐτίμησαν ἴσα θεῶ** Βυζάντιοι, μεγαλοφροσύνης τ' αὐτοῦ καὶ τιμῆς τῆς περὶ τὴν πόλιν ἀπολαύσαντες·

A little beyond this is a temple of Ptolemy Philadelphus. The Byzantines **revered him as a god**, having experienced the benefit of his generosity and honor upon the city.

We have once again the very common τιμάω + ἴσα θεῶ. And again a collectivity is in view (the Byzantines) as those who revere another entity (Ptolemy Philadelphus). We note also the context of the city.

11. Philostratus of Athens, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5.24.1-13 [text, translation Jones]

τὰ δὲ ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, ἐπειδὴ ἐσέπλευσεν· ἡ Ἀλεξάνδρεια καὶ ἀπόντος μὲν αὐτοῦ ἦρα καὶ ἐπόθουν τὸν Ἀπολλώνιον, ὡς εἶς ἓνα, καὶ ἡ Αἴγυπτος δὲ ἡ ἄνω μεστοὶ θεολογίας ὄντες καὶ φοιτῆσαι αὐτὸν ἐς τὰ ἦθη τὰ αὐτῶν ἠύχοντο, ἅτε γὰρ πολλῶν ἀφικνουμένων μὲν ἐνθένδε ἐς Αἴγυπτον, πολλῶν δὲ ἐπιμιγνόντων δεῦρο ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἦδετό τε παρ' αὐτοῖς Ἀπολλώνιος καὶ τὰ ὄτα ἐς αὐτὸν Αἰγυπτίοις ὀρθὰ ἦν· προϊόντα γέ τοι ἀπὸ τῆς νεῶς ἐς τὸ ἄστυ **θεῶ ἴσα ἀπέβλεπον** καὶ διεχώρουν τῶν στενωπῶν, ὥσπερ τοῖς φέρουσι τὰ ἱερά. παραπεμπομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἡγεμόνες,

This is what he did in Alexandria. The Alexandrians doted on him even before he arrived, and longed for Apollonius as one human being does another, and the people of Upper Egypt, who are full of sacred lore, prayed from him to visit their region too. The reason was that many people travel from here to Egypt, and many come here as visitors from Egypt, so that Apollonius was a celebrity there, and the Egyptians were all ears for him. As he proceeded from the ship to the city, **they looked on him as a god**, and parted before him in the streets as for those carrying the sacred objects, and he received a greater escort than the governors of the provinces.

When Apollonius arrives in Alexandria, Philostratus says that he is greeted as would be a god by the Alexandrians. Once again, we note a comparison of treatment between a person and a god by a group of people in the context of the city.

12. Clement of Alexandria, *The Rich Man's Salvation* 29.5-6 [GCS 17:179; translation Butterworth].

τοῦτον οὖν ἀγαπᾶν ἴσα χρῆ τῷ θεῷ. ἀγαπᾶ δὲ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ὁ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῶν καὶ φυλάσσων αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐντολάς.

Him therefore we must love equally with God. And he loves Christ Jesus who does His will and keeps His commandments.

In Clement's discussion of the two great commandments to love God and love one's neighbor, he specifies that the closest neighbor of the Christian is Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ who has done the most to benefit the Christian. Therefore, Clement reasons, a Christian must love Jesus Christ as one loves God, particularly by keeping Christ's commandments. Here we note again comparison of treatment of two entities; Jesus Christ and God are to be treated in the same way, i.e. loved to the same degree. After that, Clement continues, as a logical consequence one must love Christ's disciples as well. This use of the expression is interesting because of its similarity to Phil 2:6, i.e., the treatment of Jesus Christ and God the Father are likely in view in both passages, though Clement does not make it clear that he is citing that text.

13. Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Codex 243, Bekker page 357b lines 19-23 [text, translation Henry]

Μὴ τοίνυν κακοδαίμονας κάλει
τοὺς τὴν μεγίστην εὐδαιμονίαν εὐδαιμονήσαντας,
μηδὲ δυστυχεῖς τοὺς ὁμοιουμένους τοῖς κρείττοσι,
μηδὲ πένητας ὧν θησαυρὸς ἀθάνατος,
μηδὲ ἀτίμους οὗς ἴσα θεοῖς θαυμάζομεν.

N'appelle donc pas malheureux
les hommes qui jouissent du plus grand des bonheurs,
ni malchanceux ceux qui sont les égaux des puissants,
ni pauvres ceux dont le trésor est impérissable,
ni indignes d'honneurs **ceux que nous admirons à l'égal des dieux.**

Photius⁵⁰⁴ cites an otherwise unknown passage from the third oration of Himerius, where Epicurus is accused of impiety. Himerius defends men who favor wisdom above wealth. The climax of his praise of their virtue is found in our phrase ἴσα θεοῖς, this time used with θαυμάζω. The entity that admires is once again here a collectivity as signalled by the first person plural.

14. Eusthatus of Antioch, *De engastrimytho contra Origenem* 490 [Declerck; translation ours]

εἰ τοίνυν αὐτῷ τῷ κυρίῳ τοιαῦτα προσοῖσαι ῥήματα παρ' οὐδὲν ἡγήσατο,
πῶς οὐκ ἔστι σαφὲς ὅτι **προσκυνεῖσθαι βουλόμενος ἴσα θεῷ** ταῦτα διεπράττετο;

If thus to the Lord himself he considered it nothing to say such words, how is it not clear that he was doing these things **because he wanted to be worshipped like God?**

⁵⁰⁴ Photius has been called the inventor of the book review because of this ninth-century work. The *Bibliotheca* is a compendium of comments on literature he had read from the classical to Byzantine periods. For more on Photius' reading of the fourth-century rhetorician Himerius, see N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1996), 108.

In his critique of Origen's account of the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel, Eusthatius considers the temptation of Christ, where Satan asks to be worshipped. Eusthatius then comments on Satan's motivation of being worshipped as God is worshipped. We note that ἴσα θεῶ with a verb of worship was still known in the fourth century AD.

15. Socrates, *Church History*, Book 4.24.42 [SC 505:100-105]

Persecuted Egyptian monks were sent into exile on an island where the inhabitants venerated the local priest as God (ὄν πάντες οἱ ἐκεῖ ἴσα θεῶ ἔσεβον). The monks exorcised the demon of the priest's daughter, and the islanders converted to Christianity, transforming their temple into a church. Again the venerating entity is a group, this time of local island inhabitants.

16. Basil of Caesarea, *Homily During the Time of Famine and Drought* 31.317.49 [PG 31.317.49; translation ours]

Basil encourages his audience to put their hope in God during times of want, for God uses those times to test one's constancy. For there are some, he continues, whose devotion is found wanting in times of trouble:

Καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι, μέχρι μὲν ἐν τῷ στόματι τὰ σιτία τυγχάνει, εὐφημοῦσι, κολακεύουσιν, ὑπερθαυμάζουσιν· ὀλίγον δὲ τῆς τραπέζης ὑπερτεθείσης, ὥσπερ τισὶ λίθοις ταῖς βλασφημίαις βάλλουσιν οὓς πρὸ βραχέως **ἴσα θεῶ διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν προσεκύνουν.**

For those ones, as long as there is food in the mouth, bless, flatter, admire exceedingly, but when the table is delayed for a time, promptly they heap blasphemies against some stones which little before **they were worshipping as God for pleasure.**

The text goes on to say that the Old and New Testaments are full of examples of God taking care of those who hungered, like Elisha and Daniel. For our study, it is important to note that Basil was familiar with the adverbial formula *verb of worship* + ἴσα θεῶ, even during the fourth-century Christological controversies, when the ἴσα of ἴσα θεῶ was argued to be ontological. We also note yet another non-human entity as object of worship (cf. above crocodiles, a tree).

16. *Alexandre Romance*, recension gamma 2.12.2 (also recension epsilon 17.5.3)

[Engelmann; translation ours]

δεξάμενος δὲ Πῶρος τὴν ἐπιστολὴν Δαρείου καὶ ἀναγνούς, τὴν κεφαλὴν
κατασεΐσας ἔφη·

καὶ ὁ τύχη ποτὲ μὲν ἴσα θεοῖς Δαρεῖος
νῦν ὑπὸ Μακεδόνων ἐλαύνεται.

Having read the letter he had received from Darius, Poros, shaking his head, said,

The Darius who was once by good fortune **like the gods**

Is now by the Macedonians led.⁵⁰⁵

The context is a change of circumstances. Though at one time Darius had the good fortune of being ἴσα θεοῖς (which occurs between the article and its noun Δαρεῖος), Poros highlights that Darius' lot has changed at the hands of Macedonians. Though there is no verb of honor here, the context warrants the conclusion that the thought is one of honorific treatment once received now in stark contrast with Darius' shame in finding himself at the mercy of the Macedonians. The collocation ἴσα θεοῖς in this context appears to act as an adjectival phrase: Darius was at one time ἴσα θεοῖς, like the gods, but by contrast is now led as captive. Thus ἴσα θεοῖς here serves to highlight the contrast between the previous honor and the present shame.

17. Macarius Macres, *Oration* 3.41.6 [Argyriou; translation ours]

Ὅτι δὲ καὶ νοσημάτων κρατοῦσι παντοῶν καὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξάντεις ποιοῦσι καὶ
τοὺς ἴσα θεοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν θεραπευομένους δαίμονας ῥαδίως ἐξελαύνουσι·

For they rule over the afflicted of all sorts and do harm to the recovering and
recklessly drive out **the souls who by many are served like the gods**.

In this polemic against the advances of Islam, addressed to Christians at the beginning of

⁵⁰⁵ The French translation by C. Jouanno, *Histoire merveilleuse du roi Alexandre maître du monde* (Toulouse: Anacharsis, 2009), 118, has: “Ayant lu la lettre qu’il avait reçue de Darius, Poros dit en secouant la tête: ‘Voici que Darius, que la fortune avait autrefois égalé aux dieux, se trouve aujourd’hui malmené par les Macédoniens.’”

the fifteenth century, the author appears to describe the persecution of Christians who are already in a physically weakened state. In this late occurrence of our expression, ἴσα θεοῖς appears to be used to highlight the virtuous nature of those persecuted.

To summarize: we have discerned that a first pragmatic context in which ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς occurs is the comparison of the treatment of an entity (whether human or non-human) with a divinity/divinities, i.e., venerating or honoring a non-divine entity (in some cases thought to be divine) to the same degree or in the same manner as the divine. The entity that honors can be an individual but is sometimes a group, such as the inhabitants of a given locale. We also note the recurrence of the verbs τιμάω, σέβομαι, and θαυμάζω in the data examined to date. In 16 of the 17 foregoing examples ἴσα is clearly an adverb modifying a verb of honor, worship, or appreciation with the meaning “in a manner like” or “to the same degree as.” The other example, number 16 from the *Alexander Romance*, has ἴσα θεοῖς occurring between an article and its noun with no verb stated in what appears to be an adjectival phrase in the context of honorific treatment.

6.2.2 Category Two: Two Entities

Unlike the previous three-entity pragmatic context, in the following type of use of ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς there are only two entities: the one who acts and the god/gods. The collocation is used to compare human actions or manner of existence with the divine. Verbs of thinking and ability are prevalent.

1. Homer, *Iliad* 5.435-441 [West; translation Murray]

τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων,
τρὶς δέ οἱ ἐστυφέλιξε φαινήν ἀσπίδ' Ἀπόλλων·
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος,
δεινὰ δ' ὁμοκλήσας προσέφη ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων·
φράζεο Τυδεΐδη καὶ χάζεο, **μηδὲ θεοῖσιν**
ἴσ' ἔθελε φρονέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτε φῦλον ὁμοῖον
ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων.

Thrice then he leapt at him, eager to slay him, and thrice did Apollo beat back his shining shield. But when for the fourth time he rushed on him like a god, then with a terrible cry spoke to him Apollo who works from afar: “Consider, son of Tydeus, and withdraw, **do not be minded to think on a par with the gods**; since in no way of like sort is the race of immortal gods and that of men who walk up on the earth.”

When Diomedes rushed upon Apollo δαίμονι ἴσος (“like a god”), he is discouraged from wanting to think θεοῖσιν ἴσ’ (which we here interpret as a shortened adverb ἴσα), i.e., in the manner of the gods, because gods and men are not of the same class (φῦλον ὁμοῖον). On these lines Kirk comments: “Apollo’s warning comes in a compact and closely enjambed 3-v. sentence, proceeding from sharp deterrence . . . to broader prohibition (‘don’t think on a par with gods’) justified by an epigrammatic general rule (‘there is no similarity between the races of gods and men’).”⁵⁰⁶ Indeed, observing the bucolic caesura⁵⁰⁷ in φράζω Τυδεΐδη καὶ χάζω, μηδὲ θεοῖσιν (5.440) and the continuation of the phrase into the next verse, one might justifiably express the emphasis of the enjambment as “not on a par with the gods should you be minded to think.”

2. Homer, *Iliad* 21.311-315 [West; translation Murray]

ἀλλ’ ἐπάμυνε τάχιστα, καὶ ἐμπίπληθι ῥέεθρα
ὔδατος ἐκ πηγέων, πάντας δ’ ὀρόθουνον ἐνάυλους,
ἴστη δὲ μέγα κῦμα, πολὺν δ’ ὀρυμαγδὸν ὄρινε
φιτρῶν καὶ λάων, ἵνα παύσομεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα
ὃς δὴ νῦν κρατέει, **μέμονεν δ’ ὅ γε ἴσα θεοῖσι.**

Nay, bear thou aid with speed, and fill they streams with water from thy springs, and arouse all thy torrents ; raise thou a great wave, and stir thou a mighty din of treetrunks and stones, that we may check this fierce man that now prevaieth, **and is minded to vie even with the gods.**

⁵⁰⁶ G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 107, commenting on 5.440-5.441.

⁵⁰⁷ That is, the pause between φράζω Τυδεΐδη καὶ χάζω and μηδὲ θεοῖσιν after what is called the fourth foot of the hexameter.

The river Scamander calls upon his brother river, Simoïs, to aid him in the fight against Achilles. The idea of μέμονεν δ' ὅ γε ἴσα θεοῖσι is that Achilles strives to win in a way that conforms to the superiority of the gods.

3. *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 214 [Faulkner; translation Evelyn-White]

In musing over the fate of Anchises after seducing him, Aphrodite recalls how in another context, Zeus had taken Ganymede to serve the immortals. In that story, when Ganymede's father Tros mourns the loss of his son, Hermes reassured the bereaved that Ganymede would be “immortal and unaging in the manner of the gods” (ὡς ἔοι ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἴσα θεοῖσιν).

We have once again a simple comparison, this time of a divine state rather than divine treatment received or divine ability. The expression ἴσα θεοῖσιν is an adverbial phrase modifying the adjectives ἀθάνατος and ἀγήρωσ. Ganymedes will come to experience immortality and agelessness after the manner of the gods. One may additionally wonder whether this instance of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς also involves a notion of divine honor received, i.e., Ganymede has received the divine honor of being taken by Zeus to live with the immortals. But even if so, this thought is probably secondary to the notion of coming to resemble the gods in immortality and agelessness. As an aside, M. L. West calls this the oldest of the long Homeric hymns and dates it to the last third of the seventh century B.C.⁵⁰⁸ And so we note the long history of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς, as already seen by its presence in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

4. Sometimes attributed to Hesiod, *Fragmenta*, 43a, lines 71-72 [West]

[ῆ]ν ἔργα διδάξατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
[]εουσα, νόεσκε γὰρ ἴσα θεῆσι

In this fragment it is said concerning Eurynome, daughter of Pandion's son Nisus, that she was taught skills by Pallas Athena, and that **she was thinking in the manner of the goddesses** (νόεσκε γὰρ ἴσα θεῆσι).

5. *Alexander Romance*, recension epsilon 17.4.16 [Trumpf; translation ours]

⁵⁰⁸ M. L. West, *Homeric Hymns. Homeric Apocrypha. Lives of Homer* (LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 14, 16.

ἄπαξ ὑπεξελθεῖν με τοῖς Μακεδόσιν εἰς πόλεμον,
ἵνα γνῶσι κατὰ θεῶν μὴ ὀπλίζεσθαι.
ἐπίσταμαι γὰρ ἀκαταμάχητον εἶναι τὸ τῶν Ἰνδῶν στίφος
ὥς καὶ σε ἴσα θεοῖς ὄντα πάντα τὰ δοκούμενα δυνατά.

I could once for all engage combat with the Macedonians,
So that they know not to take arms against the gods.
For I know to be unconquerable the batallions of the Indians
Just as you also, in the same way as the gods, are able to do whatever is imagined.

Darius writes to king Porus of India for help against Alexander and ascribes to Porus a god-like manner in his military ability. Syntactically ἴσα θεοῖς appears to be an adverbial phrase modifying the adjective δυνατά.

6. Libanius, *Declamations* 35.14-17 [Foerster; translation ours]

ἄγει τοίνυν καὶ ἐμὲ πρὸς τὸν θάνατον ἢ τοῦ σίτου σπάνις. εἰ γὰρ καὶ κοινὸν τοῦτο πόλεων καὶ ἄλλοτε ἄλλως ἐπιδὼν καὶ οὐ τοῦτό γε μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λοιμοὶ καὶ σεισμοὶ καὶ θαλάττης ἐπικλύσεις καὶ τούτων ἔτι πλείω προσβάλλειν ἀνθρώποις εἶωθεν, ἀλλ' ὑμᾶς γοῦν ἐβουλόμην **ἴσα θεοῖς εὐτυχεῖν**.

The lack of food brings me to death. For if this is also common of the cities and otherwise at another time they also drank not only this, but also plagues and earthquakes and sea floods and those things, still I sail to attack, for they had customs like men, but I wanted you **to prosper in the manner of the gods**.

This is the only example we found of the verb εὐτυχεῖν used with ἴσα.

7. Didymus Caecus, *Fragmenta in epistulam Romanos* [Staab; translation ours]

τὸν γὰρ ἄνθρωπον ἐξοιστήσας **ἴσα θεῷ ἐθέλειν γενέσθαι**,
τῆς κατ' ἀπάτην ὁμιλίας τὴν ἀφορμὴν ἐπορίζετο ἐκ τῆς παρασχεθείσης ἐντολῆς.

For driving the man wild **to want to become like God**, by deceptive discourse he

devised an occasion out of the commandment given.

In commenting on Paul's words in Rom 7:11 (For sin deceived me by seizing an occasion through the commandment), Didymus cites the story of the Fall in Gen 3. He highlights the serpent's words to the woman as they appear in the Septuagint, to the effect that if the woman were to eat of the tree, "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like the gods (ἔσεσθε ὡς θεοί) by knowing good and evil." Didymus then comments that by his trickery, the devil drove the man to want to become like God (ἴσα θεῶ ἐθέλειν γενέσθαι). Though apparently not a quotation of Phil 2:6, it is instructive to note that Didymus replaces ὡς θεοὶ with ἴσα θεῶ, thereby appearing to use ἴσα to mean "similar to" in the sense of resembling God in their ability to distinguish good and evil. So the context leads us to class this use of ἴσα θεῶ as an issue of comparison of human and divine ability. Syntactically, one could class this occurrence of ἴσα θεῶ as a predicative adjectival phrase, where ἴσα θεῶ is linked to the subject with the verb γενέσθαι. We know from Chapter 2 that Didymus cites ἴσα θεῶ from Phil 2:6 many times in his writings. While it does not appear to be a citation of Phil 2:6 in this context, an allusion is not impossible.

8. Macarius Magnes, *Apocriticus* 3.87.29 [Goulet; translation ours]

As Jesus walked on the water, he corrected Peter's faith, for the latter had dared to step out onto the water ἴσα θεῶ, "in the manner of God" (ἴσα θεῶ ἐπάνω τῶν ὑδάτων βαίνειν θρασυόμενον). A few lines later the author adds that "the sea briefly drowned the servant who, in an undisciplined way, behaved impetuously in a manner like unto (ἴσα) his master" (ἀτάκτως ἴσα τῷ δεσπότῃ τὸν δοῦλον νεανιευόμενον ἢ θάλασσα μικροῦ κατεπόντισεν). These two examples are instructive in that this early fifth century AD author applies our phrase to Peter rather than Jesus. It is impossible to say whether our author is thinking of Phil 2 and thus uses our phrase in an ironic way as he thinks of that text (i.e., what was ostensibly predicated of Jesus is taken on by Peter). But regardless, we note that the use of both of these instances is adverbial, with ἴσα giving more information about how an action was carried out.

To summarize, the foregoing eight examples differ from the previous set of 17 in that there are only two pragmatic entities: the agent and the deity. Furthermore, one cannot necessarily conclude that the common semantic element is honorific treatment. Thinking, prospering, or walking on water does not in these contexts explicitly involve honor, but a comparison between

the actions or states of the human agent and the deity. The meaning of ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς was mainly, as in the previous set of examples, “in the same manner as the god/gods”; in one case, example 7 of the Didymus text, the meaning was “like God” with reference to the divine ability to distinguish good and evil in Gen 3. Syntactically, we classified five of these eight instances of ἴσα θεῶν as an adverbial phrase of comparison of manner modifying the action of a verb (examples 1, 2, 4, 6, 8); two others we analyzed as adverbial phrases modifying an adjective (examples 3 and 5); and in one instance we considered ἴσα θεῶν a predicative adjectival phrase functioning as the complement of a subject (example 7). Before summarizing the chapter’s findings and relating this data to Phil 2:6, we turn briefly to expressions related in form to ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς.

6.3 Related collocations

ἴσα καὶ θεῶν/θεοῖς

Galen of Pergamon describes the type of men who are guided by Hermes, men of virtue who excel in various arts. Among them are Socrates, Homer, Hippocrates, and Plato, men “who we revere even as we would the gods” (οὗς ἴσα καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς σέβομεν).⁵⁰⁹ The expression ἴσα καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς here resembles very closely those of our first set of examples of having three pragmatic entities and a verb of worship. Another author, Nicolas of Damascus, also uses ἴσα καὶ with τιμάω, but instead of θεῶν in the dative, we have the accusative, which was noted as possible for ἴσα καὶ in Chapter 5.⁵¹⁰

ἴσον θεῶν/θεοῖς

The form ἴσον could be an accusative masculine singular adjective or an accusative neuter singular adverb. A search for this construction revealed only a handful of examples where ἴσον occurs with θεῶν/θεοῖς; this collocation is much less common than the plural ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς. Among the non-patristic uses (where we saw that ἴσον sometimes freely replaced ἴσα in Christological interpretations of the fourth and fifth centuries), we will highlight two where ἴσον is an adverb, and two where it is an adjective. We have Menander with the sayings Ἴσον θεῶν σου τοὺς φίλους τιμᾶν

⁵⁰⁹ Galen of Pergamon, *Exhortation to the Arts* 5.18 [Boudon]. Translation ours.

⁵¹⁰ Nicholas of Damascus, *Life of Augustus* 26 [Hall]. Cf. *Life of Augustus*, 29.

θέλε⁵¹¹ (“Be willing to honor your friends like you would a god”) and ἴσον θεοῖς χρῆ πάντα τ]{}ε}μᾶν τοὺς γονεῖς⁵¹² (“One must honor the fathers like the gods in all things”). In both of these ἴσον is clearly an adverb, with no other accusative singular with which to agree.

The adjective ἴσον appears in *Protrepticus* 4.55.1 of Clement of Alexandria. In his critique of idols and Greek gods, Clement of Alexandria mocks the self-written epitaph of Hippo of Melos:

Ἴππωνος τόδε σῆμα,
τὸν ἀθάνατοισι **θεοῖσιν ἴσον** ἐποίησεν Μοῖρα καταφθίμενον.⁵¹³

Here lies Hippo, whom Fate rendered **equal to the immortal gods** in his death.

Another adjectival use appears in Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Origenem oratio panegyrica* 9.52:

οἴους ἐγὼ πολλάκις ἐθαύμασα, ὅταν τὴν αὐτὴν ἀρετὴν θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, καὶ **ἐπὶ γῆς τῷ πρώτῳ θεῷ ἴσον εἶναι τὸν σοφὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀποδειξῶσιν**.⁵¹⁴

I have often admired [the philosophers] when they declare that the same virtue belongs to God and men, and **that on earth the wise man is equal to the first God**.

ἴσος θεῶ/θεοῖς

It is interesting to note that ἴσος with the singular θεῶ is not found outside the fourth and fifth-century Fathers, where it often replaced ἴσα in Christological interpretations. We do find ἴσος with the plural θεοῖς in Sappho’s φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν⁵¹⁵ (“That one appears to me to be equal to the gods”). Or consider the lines from Libanius’ *Oration* 20.13.2:

οὕτως οὖν ἠγεῖτο **θεοῖς ἴσος** ὄντως ὁ βασιλεὺς φανεῖσθαι καὶ διοτροφῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς,

⁵¹¹ Menander, *Sententiae* 269 [Meineke]. These one-line sayings are also found in *Sententiae e codicibus Byzantinis* 357, ed. S. Jäkel, *Menandri sententiae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1964), 33-83.

⁵¹² Menander, *Sententiae e papyris* 13.18 [Jäkel].

⁵¹³ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.55.1 [SC 2:118]. Translation ours.

⁵¹⁴ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *In Origenem oratio panegyrica* 9.52 [SC 148:147]. Translation ours.

⁵¹⁵ Sappho, *Fragment* 31.1 [Lobel and Page].

εἰ μὴ τιμωρίας ἦδοιτο ταῖς κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν.⁵¹⁶

In this way then the emperor believed that he would reveal himself **as a peer of the gods**, truly nurtured of the divine, if he did not delight in merited punishments.⁵¹⁷

Another interesting example of ἴσος θεοῖς occurs in Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 13.38.24-26 [Dilts; translation Wilson]:

Εἰώθει δέ φασιν ἐπιλέγειν ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ πράξεσιν ὅτι τὸν τῶν Διοσκόρων ζῆ βίον παρ' ἡμέραν τεθνηκῶς τε καὶ ἀναβιούς· εὐημερήσας γὰρ ἐν τῷ δήμῳ **ἴσος θεοῖς νομίζεσθαι**, κακῶς δὲ ἀπαλλάξας τῶν νεκρῶν μηδὲ ὀλίγον διαφέρειν.

They say (Alcibiades) used to describe his career as the life of the Dioscuri, alive and dead on alternate days. If he was successful the public **treated him as a god**; if he failed he was no better than a dead man.

In the preceding three examples of ἴσος θεοῖς, we note that even when using the adjective ἴσος in this collocation (and not just with ἴσα), the meaning appears to be similarity to the gods rather than equality with them.

We also note in passing that the ancient discussions of the Homeric phrase θεόφιν μῆστωρ ἀτάλαντος (“equal of the gods in counsel”) sometimes produced the gloss ἴσος θεοῖς.⁵¹⁸

δαίμονι ἴσος

Further collocations related to ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς that have received some attention in the literature are δαίμονι ἴσος (see Example 1 in 6.2.2 above) and ἴσος Ἄρει, used to communicate the antagonism of god-hero epic battle confrontation.⁵¹⁹ The Homeric scholia glossed δαίμονι ἴσος as

⁵¹⁶ Libanius' *Oration* 20.13.2 [Foerster].

⁵¹⁷ Translation Norman.

⁵¹⁸ Apollonius, *Lexicon Homericum* 87.9 [Bekker].

⁵¹⁹ L. Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 12; G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 143-144, 293-294; *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 109.

θεῶ ὅμοιος.⁵²⁰ This again makes us think of similarity to the divine rather than equality.

It is important to note then for our purposes that even when the adjective ἴσος is used in ἴσος θεῶ/θεοῖς or with another word for the realm of the divine, the meaning is not necessarily equality as in ontological essence, but can rather portray a circumstantial resemblance. When Diomedes rushes upon Apollo δαίμονι ἴσος, his audacious thinking is discouraged precisely *because* the immortal gods and men are not of the same class (φῦλον ὁμοῖον).⁵²¹ Interpreters who liken ἴσα to ἴσος semantically in Phil 2:6 in order to argue for ontological equality thus would want to consider that even the non-adverbialized form ἴσος can have a non-ontological meaning in at least some contexts of ἴσος + divinity. While the theological viewpoints of pagan and Christian authors are certainly a factor in how the word is used in a given context, it remains that even the word ἴσος, to which modern and ancient commentators have sought to connect ἴσα semantically, can mean “resembles.”

ισόθεος⁵²²

1. Homer, *Iliad* 2.565-569 [West; translation Murray]

τοῖσι δ' ἄμ' Εὐρύαλος τρίτατος κίεν, **ισόθεος φῶς**,
Μηκιστέος υἱὸς Ταλαϊονίδαο ἄνακτος·
σμπάντων δ' ἠγεῖτο βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης·
τοῖσι δ' ἄμ' ὀγδώκοντα μέλαινα νῆες ἔποντο.

And with them came a third, Euryalus, **a godlike warrior**, son of king Mecisteus, son of Talaus; but leader over them all was Diomedes, good at the war cry. And with them there followed eighty lack ships.

We counted 12 occurrences of the collocation ἰσόθεος φῶς ‘god-like mortal’ in the *Iliad* itself and two in the *Odyssey*. Here again, a mortal resembles the divine, in this case in the realm of war.

⁵²⁰ Homeric Scholia D, *Iliad* 5.438 line of scholion 2 defines Δαίμονι ἴσος as θεῶ ὅμοιος, καὶ παραπλήσιος, and *Iliad* 21.18 line of scholion 4 defines Δαίμονι ἴσος as simply θεῶ ὅμοιος. C. G. Heyne, *Homeri Ilias*, 2 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1834).

⁵²¹ Muellner, 23.

⁵²² For ἰσόθεος, LSJ has ‘equal to the gods’ or ‘godlike’ of heroes or of things.

2. Lucian, *The Downward Journey* 16.5-6 [Macleod; translation Harmon]
παροικῶν ἄνω τῷ τυράννῳ πάνυ ἀκριβῶς ἐώρων τὰ γιγνόμενα παρ' αὐτῷ
καί μοι ἐδόκει τότε **ισόθεός** τις εἶναι·

As I lived next store to Sir Tyrant on earth, I used to see quite distinctly what went on at his house, and then I thought him **a very god**.

The character Micyllus goes on to contrast the Tyrant's life of utter luxury with how he now appeared in the underworld. In the past the Tyrant seemed to Micyllus to be like a god.

3. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts of the Apostles* 17 [PG 60.140.59; translation ours]

Οὕτω καὶ **ισόθεοι ἐσόμεθα**, τὸ ἀόργητον πανταχοῦ διατηροῦντες, καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἐπιτευξόμεθα ἀγαθῶν

And so **we will be like God**,
Always remaining free from that anger
And will obtain the good things to come.

John Chrysostom uses *ισόθεοι* here at the end of his homily to describe Christians who will resemble God in the proper use of anger.

A brief survey of the related collocations ἴσα καὶ θεῶ/θεοῖς, ἴσον θεῶ/θεοῖς, ἴσος θεῶ/θεοῖς, δαίμονι ἴσος, and ἴσoθεος suggests that they are predominantly used to describe circumstantially a measure of resemblance between the human and the divine. We have not noticed a notion of equality of essence as is posited for Phil 2:6.

6.4 Summary of Findings on ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς

We have posited two broad semantic categories for ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς for which there are multiple examples. The great majority of pragmatic contexts contain a verb of honor/worship with three entities: a human worshipper or group of worshippers, the human/animal entity worshipped,

and the deity or deities. What is compared by the adverb ἵσα is the honor given to the divine with that given to the non-divine. In a second set of texts, there are two entities in the pragmatic context: the non-divine agent and the divine being(s). The non-divine agent thinks, acts, succeeds, or experiences a state in the manner of the divine. What is compared between the two entities is divine action or state.

The two broad semantic categories we suggest for the collocation ἵσα θεῶν/θεοῖς are thus 1) comparison of honorific divine treatment, and 2) comparison of divine ability/state. Of the 25 examples of ἵσα θεῶν/θεοῖς reviewed in this chapter, 23 had the meaning of “in the same manner as the god/the gods” while two remaining examples (*Alexandre Romance*, recension gamma 2.12.2 and Didymus Caecus, *Fragmenta in epistulam Romanos*) could be translated “like the god(s)” with respect to honor (*Alexander Romance*) or moral knowledge (Didymus). We would translate with an adjective in these two cases rather than an adverb as we did for the others because the collocation ἵσα θεῶν/θεοῖς appears to be the complement of the subject, with a verb of being stated (Didymus) or implied (*Alexander Romance*). In addition, we noted contexts in which ἵσα θεῶν/θεοῖς was used interchangeably with ὡς θεός, suggesting that at least in some cases ἵσα is being used as an adverb of comparison meaning “like.”

6.4 Relevance to Phil 2:6

What is the potential relevance of these findings on ἵσα θεῶν/θεοῖς as we proceed to a final chapter on the context of Phil 2:6? The foregoing examples of ἵσα θεῶν/θεοῖς span more than 20 centuries and are used by many different authors, Christian and non-Christian alike. It is thus highly plausible to say that Paul would have been familiar with the expression and did not use it accidentally. The Apostle appears to have chosen a collocation that is overwhelmingly used to compare manner of acting or being treated in particular circumstances where the human and the divine are both mentioned. If Paul followed an expected use, these examples bolster the case for the plausibility of ἵσα θεῶν in Phil 2:6 as either a comparative adverbial phrase modifying a verb or adjective (“in the same manner as God,” “to the same degree as God”) or as a comparative adjectival phrase complementing a subject via a linking verb stated or implied (“like God” in the sense of “resembling God”).

When we compare this data with the ontological definition “equal to God” or “equality with God” suggested for Phil 2:6 as detailed in Chapter 1, we notice that the meaning in the above examples is never “equal to” or “equality” in the ontological sense of the essence of A being equal to B or A having equality with B. Rather, a person or animal is compared with a god or gods in a specific state of affairs. That entity is either the object of the action, in which case it is acted upon just as a god/gods would be acted upon, or it is the agent/subject of the action/state, in which case it acts or exists just as a god or the gods would. But there is no clear example among these uses of ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς of a straightforward equality as in the equation A=B in an abstract sense. One can imagine having found the opposite, i.e., a set of 25 examples which all point to ἴσα θεῶν/θεοῖς as metaphysical equality, in which case the ontological argument would have a strong case. But the opposite is true. We instead have a body of texts which almost all unambiguously make a comparison of the human with the divine in a particular circumstance. While these comparisons are at first glance elusive as to precise meaning, stretching us as they do to consider divine realms for which we are given little detail, they are nonetheless bound to tangible events or situations.

If Paul used our phrase to mean A=B (Jesus being equal to God in essence) as something that Jesus did not consider valuable, as is evoked by the translation “being equal to God” or “equality with God,” such a use would constitute more of an innovation on Paul’s part than an expected use. Had he wanted to signal ontology, he would have been selecting an unconventional use of an expression overwhelmingly used in contexts of situational divine honor or ability. That the author of the *Carmen Christi* would do this is of course not impossible (i.e., stretch a related, established collocation at his disposal to describe the absolute equality of the preincarnate Christ with God the Father). However, given the semantic precedents we have established in this chapter, such would be an unexpected use ἴσα θεῶν. Depending on how we interpret other key terms in Phil 2 in the next chapter, ontology may present an obstacle to understanding the text as coherently as possible.

For the sake of clarity we will now recapitulate from the beginning of our argument regarding ἴσα θεῶν. Chapter 3 documented the significant number of commentators who argue that ἴσα θεῶν should be translated in terms of preincarnate circumstances and not ontology. In Chapter 4, we showed that the dominant translation of ἴσα as “equal” or “equality” may be the historical product of an ancient doctrinal emphasis, and that the modern reading of the text has been colored

by those fourth- and fifth-century Christological concerns. In Chapter 5 we argued that though ἴσα can be a plural noun or plural adjective, the most logical lexical class for ἴσα in Phil 2:6 is that of adverb; the question of whether εἶναι is better understood as denoting existence or a linking verb in that passage was left in suspense. In the present Chapter 6 we have suggested that ἴσα θεῶ was a common collocation comparing circumstantial manner or state between non-divine and divine entities. We now proceed to Chapter 7 to discover how Phil 2:6b relates to the semantic field established by the above examples. Specifically, do we notice a two-entity pragmatic situation or a three-entity one? Is ἴσα θεῶ used with a linking verb or not, helping us determine whether our collocation is phrasally adverbial or adjectival? Does the context point clearly to the comparison of either 1) divine treatment received or 2) divine action/state, or both, or neither one? Can ἴσα θεῶ be defined as “in the manner of God” or “like God,” as it was in this chapter’s examples, or otherwise?

Chapter 7: τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in the Context of the Hymn and the Letter

7.1 Greek text of Phil 2.1-11

¹ Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί, ² πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες, σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες, ³ μηδὲν κατ' ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ἠγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν, ⁴ μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστοι σκοποῦντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι. ⁵ τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ, ⁷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ⁸ ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ· ⁹ διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἔχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ¹⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, ¹¹ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς. (NA²⁸)

The previous chapter established two broad semantic categories for ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in the literature: the comparison of non-divine with reverential divine treatment (three-entity pragmatic context) and the comparison of non-divine with divine action/state (two-entity pragmatic context). In the majority of cases, ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς was an adverbial phrase modifying a verb with the meaning “in the manner of the god(s).” In two cases ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς could be analysed as an adjectival phrase complementing a subject via a linking verb stated or implied, with the meaning “like the god(s).” We classed one of these adjectival phrases in the semantic category of comparison with divine honorific treatment, and the other in the semantic category of comparison with divine action/state.

In this chapter we would like to know whether the greater context of the *Carmen Christi*, including its key disputed terms, allows us to situate ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6 within any of these syntactical, pragmatic, and semantic boundaries. Is ἴσα θεῶ used with a linking verb or not, helping us determine whether our collocation is adverbial or adjectival? Can we notice a two-entity pragmatic situation or a three-entity one? Does the context point clearly to the comparison of either 1) divine treatment received or 2) divine action/state, or both, or neither one? Should ἴσα θεῶ be defined as “in the manner of God,” “like God,” or otherwise?

Once our interpretation of the collocation in Phil 2:6 is established, we may then proceed to the details of a translation and its implications for the entire passage. To set the stage for that discussion, however, we will first consider important preliminaries about the hymn’s interpretation, including other key words and phrases.

7.2 The Role of the Hymn in the Context of the Letter

The fundamental way in which Phil 2:6-11 fits into the overall letter is in Paul’s use of a series of examples who practice the kind of humble, others-oriented, gospel-advancing thinking that he advocates throughout. Notice how the prologue to the *Carmen Christi*, Phil 2.1-5, introduces the kind of outlook Paul envisions for his readers by repetition of one of the epistle’s key words:

τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε: think the same thing (Phil 2:2)

τὸ ἓν φρονοῦντες: thinking the one thing (Phil 2:2)

τοῦτο φρονεῖτε: think this (Phil 2:5)

This stylistic repetition and its increasing semantic specificity serve to point forward toward the model whose thinking is about to be illustrated in the hymn. As the passage progresses, the “same thing” (τὸ αὐτό) becomes “the one thing” (τὸ ἓν), which becomes a demonstrative “this” (τοῦτο): the very same thought pattern that was in Jesus Christ.

That Jesus Christ’s way of thinking is unconstrained, occurring as it does as a voluntary act, is at the heart of the hymn’s illustrative power and will later prove important for our interpretation of Phil 2:6. This same emphasis upon unobligated choice in the context of other more advantageous options finds its way into the mention of other examples of which Paul makes use in the letter: the author himself, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and the Philippian audience itself.

For example, in 1:24 Paul gives a personal illustration of his own uncoerced, others-oriented thinking. He knows that departing to be with Christ will be much better (1:23) but instead favors remaining, because “it is more necessary on your account” (1:24), in order to advance their joy and faith (1:25). Timothy is also oriented towards others (2:20) for the cause of the gospel (2:22), again in the context of choice, i.e., when no one else is. Epaphroditus, though ill, was

unexpectedly concerned about others' worries (2:26), risking his life for his people (2:30) for the sake of Christ. And at the end of the letter, the Philippians themselves become examples of that same others-oriented thinking by again sending a gift to Paul (4:15). The first gift they sent was voluntary (Paul was content in his state, 4:11) as was the second (no other churches gave, 4:15), but both gifts served to advance the gospel through Paul.

The latent power of Paul's presentation of these examples is that each one proactively chooses to think not according to natural self-interest, but within another framework of reasoning, that of the advance of the gospel. The fact that this thinking is not automatic for all Christians everywhere is reinforced by the negative example in 4:1, where Euodia and Syntyche are found in conflict. To them Paul must reiterate the importance of unified thinking (the same τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν of 2:2) that will advance the gospel (4:3), as it had advanced through their agency in the past. Apparently they had already at one time adopted the thinking that the others illustrate but needed to choose that thinking once again in a new context.

All of these examples combine to build a framework in which the *Carmen Christi* is at home and is the crowning element. For of all the uncoerced decisions to consider others' interests rather than one's own, that of Jesus Christ is the most radical and most unexpected. Furthermore, the exaltation of Jesus Christ at the end of the hymn can justifiably be interpreted not as a digression included simply because it was part of the original hymn, but as a purposeful teaching about what occurs when one has the others-oriented mindset Paul is commending to his readers. If Christ's way of thinking leads to exaltation, so will the readers'. Paul affirms this in 3:15-4:1, where two different ways of thinking (the false teachers vs. the apostolic model) lead to two different outcomes (destruction vs. the future glorious state).

We would add that if the *Carmen Christi* is a familiar pre-Pauline ode (on which see the discussion in Chapter 2), the Apostle would have been aiming to add a particular rhetorical punch to the mention of this standout example. Much in the same way that the citation of a familiar song or saying placed in the flow of a discourse today evokes the authority of an outside source and other associations, Paul may have intended to tap into the emotional overtones of a traditional composition used in actual worship by early Christians to express the wonder of their new

understanding of Jesus Christ in relation to Judaism's God and his plan.⁵²³ But we affirm that the rhetoric of the verses themselves, coupled with the series of models in the letter, is sufficiently powerful to accomplish the imitation of Christ's thought and action that Paul intended, and thus it is not necessary to know whether they are pre-Pauline, for their place and effectiveness are discerned easily enough.

7.3 τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in the Context of the Hymn

7.3.1 οὐχ . . . ἀλλά

The voluntary and unexpectedly radical nature of Jesus Christ's others-oriented thinking is particularly highlighted in 2:6-7.⁵²⁴ In fact, his thinking is presented in terms of two apparently legitimate possibilities, just as Paul's was in 1:22-23, when the Apostle was torn between being with Christ through death and staying on with the Philippians. The first way of thinking is the one that Christ did not choose, highlighted in 2:6. It is presented as a contrast with the course of action that he did choose in 2:7, coordinated by the adversative conjunction ἀλλά:

οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ,

ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκέκωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν . . .

Grelot reinforces the fact that syntactically the two propositions are correlative and have the same subject whose two acts are antithetic: ἠγήσατο and ἐκέκωσεν. Further, Grelot suggests that the placement of the negative particle οὐχ at the head of the first proposition serves to reinforce emphatically its negation of the entire thought, thus preparing the reader for the full weight of the contrast: "It is not true that Christ considered . . . but, on the contrary, he . . ." ⁵²⁵

Why would Paul not simply say what Jesus *did* choose? Why does he present the other

⁵²³ L. W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 87.

⁵²⁴ Throughout this chapter, following Paul in Phil 2.5, we will use the names Jesus and/or Christ to speak of the preincarnate divine person whose attitude Paul highlights, even though this is anachronistic from a theological standpoint.

⁵²⁵ P. Grelot, "La valeur de οὐχ . . . ἀλλά . . . dans Philippiens 2,6-7," *Biblica* 54 (1973): 25-42. Grelot rejects as misguided the distinction that J. Carmignac made between the negation of ἀρπαγμὸν versus the negation of ἠγήσατο.

option and connect the two options with an adversative conjunction? While some interpreters (ancient Arians and some moderns) have concluded that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ was off-limits to Jesus Christ, others have noted that there is nothing admirable in not desiring something that one cannot have.⁵²⁶ What is more, the larger context of models we have established in the previous section allows us to go a step further with the question of these two options before Christ. We have seen that all the models in the letter act in a way that is uncoerced and sometimes contrary to expectation. Paul appears to say that he himself had a legitimate choice before him; choosing to stay and help the Philippians was not a given. Epaphroditus' concern seems almost unnecessary, for, being ill, he was the one who was more in need of the concern of others. Timothy and the Philippians' others-oriented thinking was unexpected simply because it was not the norm among their peers. Paul appears intent on highlighting the voluntary nature of others-oriented thinking—an outlook that only makes sense once one has been gripped by a gospel-centered worldview.

If indeed Paul presents two potential outlooks that Jesus Christ could have had (he did not think this way but rather acted in another way that was indicative of the outlook that was, according to 2:5, in him), the context suggests that Paul is, as with the other models, highlighting the unexpectedness of Jesus Christ's unconstrained choice. Of all the models in the letter, Jesus Christ is the least coerced and most self-effacing, for he exists (ὑπάρχων) ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ (on which see below). This theme of unexpectedness leads us to believe that the most contextual way to understand the participle ὑπάρχων in relation to οὐχ ἠγήσατο is that of a concession: he did not think a certain way *even though* he was existing (ὑπάρχων) in the state ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ. The establishment of this remarkable ongoing state⁵²⁷ called ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ as being in place prior to the moment of his decision serves to highlight the fact that Christ's refusal of a certain way of thinking was contrary to expectation. After the ἀλλά Paul then highlights the unexpected stance that Jesus Christ did end up taking.

7.3.2 ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ

The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ is one of the most disputed of all the passage's terms, if not the

⁵²⁶ “There is nothing praiseworthy in not usurping a status to which one has no title.” G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 121.

⁵²⁷ Understood here as an ongoing state in light of the present (i.e., unfinished) aspect of the participle ὑπάρχων.

most disputed. While our focus upon τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ precludes a lengthy discussion of all the suggested interpretations, a few comments are in order. Part of the challenge of the expression is the rarity of the word μορφή in biblical usage: besides here in 2:6 and 2:7, the only other NT occurrence is Mk 16:12, plus six occurrences in the LXX. While one meaning of μορφή in broader Greek literature is “outward form perceived by the senses,” immediate and broader contextual clues have led many interpreters of its occurrence in 2:6 to reject, or at least nuance, this signification as such. O’Brien⁵²⁸ notes five different major interpretations of μορφή in Phil 2:6, which will serve as representative for our purposes:

- 1) Lightfoot’s Aristotelian meaning of *essential nature*;
- 2) the Hebrew Scriptures’ *glory radiated from the divine being*;
- 3) Dunn’s *image of God* from Gen 1:26-27 and 3:1-5;
- 4) Käsemann’s *mode of being* of the Gnostic “heavenly man”; and
- 5) Schweizer’s *condition* or *status* of unity with God.

It is crucial in choosing among these or other options that ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ be considered 1) as an expression, as opposed to a singular focus upon the word μορφή itself; and 2) as linguistically paralleled with the μορφήν δούλου of 2:7.⁵²⁹ While we are not obligated to understand the two occurrences of μορφή in the passage in the same way, the context lacks clear indicators that we should understand them in a significantly different way. While both expressions have the word μορφή, the juxtaposition of θεοῦ and δούλου suggests a strong contrast in which the one influences the meaning of the other. We suggest that, when one does consider the semantic parallels between ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφήν δούλου in the context of the surrounding verses, the following interrelated elements of interpretation of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ emerge:

- 1) Essential class of deity
- 2) Recognition of deity by others
- 3) Practical autonomy of deity

⁵²⁸ O’Brien, 207-208.

⁵²⁹ A. Grillmeier agrees that “the content of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ is still primarily to be defined from its opposition to ἐν μορφήν δούλου” in *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, trans. J. Bowden (Mowbrays: London, 1975), 21.

Essential class of deity

A first contrast that suggests itself when comparing these two expressions is that the two instances of μορφή belong to different classes of beings: the divine on one hand, and a subclass of humanity on the other. It is this contrast of classes of being, along with examples of μορφή in metaphysical discussions in Greek literature, that have led some interpreters to see in ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ generally and in the word μορφή particularly an allusion to the notion of *essential nature*, or what makes divinity divine as opposed to what makes humanity human.

Now some interpreters are uncomfortable drawing this kind of absolute line between the divine and human for the first century, citing textual evidence that some currents of Second Temple Judaism allowed for venerated intermediary divine beings, such as Philo's "second god."⁵³⁰ But we would counter that whether the hymn is a Pauline or an early church composition, the meaning of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ would have to have been acceptable theologically to what Hurtado calls the "exclusivist monotheistic stance"⁵³¹ of the earliest *Jewish Christians, including Paul*, not to the standards of Second Temple Judaism, Greek religion, or the Roman imperial cult.⁵³² Those who, like Yarbrow Collins, understand that θεοῦ here might have evoked, or been intended to evoke in reader's minds, an angelic figure⁵³³ or any other divine intermediary in isolation from unity with the one God of Israel must consider that ὑπάρχων ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, as a participial modifier of ἡγήσατο, appears to be used to set up a remarkably unexpected choice. The further that θεοῦ is pulled from its monotheistic context, the less powerful the illustration of one who chose to think

⁵³⁰ Such as A. Yarbrow Collins, who comments concerning ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ: "Being 'in the form of God' implies existence as a heavenly being who shares in the divine glory. The precise mode of existence or activity is left unspecified. In the cultural context of the first century C.E., this gap could be filled by imagining a principal angel; a hypostasis of God, such as the Logos or Wisdom; or, less likely, the noetic Adam, still possessing the glory of God as the image of God." See "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 243.

⁵³¹ L. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 49.

⁵³² While the idea that the preincarnate Christ existed as one of many venerated divine intermediaries who was then promoted to higher status recognition may have been acceptable in the broader Jewish, Greek, or Roman contexts, we doubt that Paul's "one Lord" out of many "lords" in 1 Cor 8:6, or any of his other writings on the subject, can be made to accommodate that idea. N.T. Wright adds, "It should be clear that Paul remained a monotheist, and never sold out this position to any sort of Hellenistic ditheism or polytheism" (94).

⁵³³ M. Hengel, 376, argues that based on the Letter to the Hebrews, the Apocalypse of John, and the Shepherd of Hermas, "'Angel Christology' was apparently not a live option for earliest Christianity. The Son, lifted up and seated at the right hand of God, was from the beginning set *above* all angels." So the speculations of Early Judaism about angelic hierarchy did not lead to Christians seeing an exceptional figure like Jesus as naturally fitting into that hierarchy.

of humans despite his divine essence. Thus we propose that the juxtaposition of θεοῦ and δούλου suggests a contrast between the class of that which is thoroughly divine and that which is thoroughly human. The flow of the hymnic narrative will present the incarnation as a striking meeting of these two essential classes.

Recognition of deity by others

A second contrast that suggests itself with μορφή is that of recognition by others. Paul does not contrast θεοῦ and ἀνθρώπου, but rather θεοῦ and δούλου, for there was something remarkably extreme that he wanted to note first in 2:7 about the choice that Christ made in taking on what was human (communicated in the rest of 2:7 as ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, “being born in human likeness”). It was a choice not just to become a human being, but to belong figuratively to a subset of human beings with the lowest social status of the time.

Hellerman comments here that in v. 7 “being born in human likeness” is paralleled with taking the μορφήν δούλου because “Christ was essentially taking on the form of a slave vis-à-vis his former exalted status as expressed in ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων. For one who “existed in the form of God,” becoming a man was tantamount to assuming servile status, humanly speaking.”⁵³⁴ So the word δούλου is used because it not only describes the goal of Christ’s life in relationship to others, but also, as Hellerman is arguing, communicates the conceptual distance in status between one who is ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος. The descending movement is so radical that Paul believed the resulting change in recognition by others was best described in terms of a slave, even though Jesus Christ was not literally someone’s slave.

Thus some interpreters like Calvin have seen in ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, by means of its opposition to the ignominy of μορφήν δούλου, an allusion to God’s majesty, that is, the recognition by human beings of his possession of ultimate status in the realm of the divine. Indeed, the preposition ἐν in ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ may suggest a sphere of living in which a certain honorable recognition is maintained.

⁵³⁴ Hellerman, 136.

Practical autonomy as deity

Given that in the context of the hymn (especially v. 8) the word δούλου evokes the image of a bondservant who is completely subject to others (a person not only humbling *himself*, but also becoming obedient unto death), one would suggest that a third observable element in the juxtaposition of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου is *autonomy* versus *subjection*. This concept of autonomy is related to the social recognition by others that we have just detailed but is different insofar as divine or human agency is in focus. The notion of divine freedom communicated by ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ would properly set up the context for the unexpected choice to forsake the τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ. Though living in unconstrained liberty of choice in which all were subjected to him, Christ did not choose the expected course of action that would appear to be in his better interest. He instead chose an environment in which he was subjected to all, including, if we may be permitted to consider the broader apostolic teaching, God the Father.

If indeed all three of these closely related semantic elements are intimated by ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ in its juxtaposition with μορφὴν δούλου (essential class of deity, recognition of deity by others, and practical autonomy of deity), how can ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ be expressed concisely in translation? The popular English translation “in the form of God” may orient the reader uniquely to external form. This meaning is notably suspect 1) in the context of the invisible God of Judaism, 2) in the contrast with μορφὴν δούλου, which appears to communicate more than servile appearance, but rather a broader societal perception, and 3) in the further clarification by Paul at the end of v. 7 that Christ was found in outward appearance as a man (σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος), making μορφὴν δούλου as “outward form of a slave” less likely. On the other hand, the NIV’s translation “in very nature God” limits the reader to divine essence or class, neglecting the additional elements of recognition and autonomy. Paul did not write at the beginning of 2:6 simply that Jesus Christ ὑπάρχων ὡς θεός “was existing as God” but rather ὑπάρχων ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ; he chose an expression that could convey these multiple concepts we have suggested while also functioning well when used later with μορφὴν δούλου.

This density of meaning may thus lead one to translate that Christ was “existing in divine glorious autonomy,” in a direction not unlike, but more developed than, what some more recent French translations have taken (“en condition divine”). This translation has the advantage of

communicating at once 1) divinity in opposition to a human subclass, 2) glorious recognized status in opposition to shameful reputation, and 3) total volitional independence as opposed to the complete subjection of the will that are all implied by ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ in its juxtaposition with μορφὴν δούλου. The fact that ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ has these multiple layers of meaning may explain the number of different interpretations offered in the literature; a focus on one or another of these elements may cause an interpreter to miss the totality. To follow the same train of thought and keep the contrast intended with ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, Christ's taking the μορφὴν δούλου would then mean adding a "servile shameful subjection."

7.3.3 ἀρπαγμόν

Thus far we have observed that there is a basic contrast between 2:6 and 2:7, highlighting that Jesus Christ adopted the less expected of two possible ways of thinking (οὐχ ἠγήσατο, ἀλλὰ . . .), given his divine glorious autonomy (expressed by ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ). We may now begin to ask what he did not think (οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ), beginning with ἀρπαγμόν.⁵³⁵ This word is embroiled in a long history of discussion that cannot be described fully here.⁵³⁶ To simplify the literature considerably, interpreters wonder whether ἀρπαγμόν means in Phil 2:6 a prize or privilege that is unpossessed (and therefore can be grasped at) or a prize or privilege already possessed (and therefore to be retained) by Jesus Christ.⁵³⁷ Wright⁵³⁸ claims that no scholars have been able to refute Hoover's philological argument⁵³⁹ for something possessed to be retained. And beyond this conclusion we would add once again that Paul's introducing the idea of grasping after an unpossessed object complicates his illustration of humility and is less clearly exemplary than the kind of free and unexpected choice between two options. In other words, Jesus Christ's thinking

⁵³⁵ We believe along with Feuillet that the argument claiming that οὐχ does not modify the verb ἠγήσατο but rather qualifies ἀρπαγμόν (he "thought not *harpagmon*" vs. "he did not think *harpagmon*") is inconclusive and dilutes the contrast between the two outlooks that Paul presents.

⁵³⁶ It is not necessary to label the different meanings given to ἀρπαγμόν with Latin terms. These terms have been used with such a range of meanings in the literature as to become less than useful.

⁵³⁷ These are the two broad categories given by Lampe for ἀρπαγμός in Phil 2:6 (*PGL* 228); similarly, 'prize to be grasped' (LSJ 245). The word can also mean 'robbery' or 'rape' (LSJ, *PGL*). As an example of this latter semantic grouping, Pseudo-Plutarch (*The Education of Children*, 12, first or second century A.D.) has the meaning of 'kidnapping' in a discussion of what kind of admirers fathers should allow to associate with their sons:

καὶ τοὺς μὲν Θήβησι καὶ τοὺς ἐν Ἡλίδι φευκτέον ἔρωτας καὶ τὸν ἐν Κρήτῃ καλούμενον ἀρπαγμόν, τοὺς δ' Ἀθήνησι καὶ τοὺς ἐν Λακεδαιμόνι ζηλωτέον.

And while the sort of love prevailing at Thebes and in Elis is to be avoided, as well as the so-called **kidnapping** in Crete, that which is found at Athens and in Lacedaemon is to be emulated [Babbitt].

⁵³⁸ Wright, 78.

⁵³⁹ R.W. Hoover, "The HARPAGMOS Enigma: A Philological Solution," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971): 95-119.

has more illustrative power if the two choices are readily accessible to him. It is not impossible that ἀρπαγμόν speaks of something unpossessed, but it appears to be less likely on philological and contextual grounds.

If we conclude that ἀρπαγμόν refers to something Jesus Christ already possessed, but did not think in terms of retaining, we now have a major piece of information to help us access the meaning of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ. Before deciding what it was that he possessed, let us also consider a final key term, ἐκένωσεν.

7.3.4 ἐκένωσεν . . . λαβών . . . γενόμενος

It is at this point that we need to pull in the meaning of the main verb in 2:7's ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν . . . λαβών . . . γενόμενος. Some have suggested that ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν is literal: Jesus Christ “emptied himself,” i.e., forfeited some part of his essential being, so that he was less divine than before. Others believe that ἐκένωσεν is better described as metaphorical, i.e., Jesus Christ “made himself nothing.” Wright, for example, believes that nothing in the context speaks of forfeited attributes, and that the overall context of self-negation over self-aggrandizement suggests an emptying of “apparent significance.”⁵⁴⁰ This is reflected in the King James Version’s “He made himself of no reputation.”

Besides the existence of other metaphorical instances of the word⁵⁴¹ and a lack of contextual indications as to the forfeiting of attributes, some interpreters also draw attention to the fact that the verb ἐκένωσεν is modified by an adverbial (apparently instrumental) participle: He accomplished the action ἐκένωσεν by taking on, i.e., adding (λαβών) a “servile shameful subjection” (μορφήν δούλου). The act described by ἐκένωσεν would thus be accomplished first of all by adding rather than taking some element away. Grillmeier comments: “Because this kenosis is a ‘taking’, or better an ‘adding’, the first kind of being is not done away with. He who is on an equality with God adds something to his divinity, the form of a servant. The being which he assumes serves more to conceal than to reveal him.”⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ Wright, 83.

⁵⁴¹ R. D. Culver, *Systematic Theology* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2005), 511, following Leitch, points to four other metaphorical uses out of a total of six in the NT.

⁵⁴² Grillmeier, 21.

Camille Focant further argues that the μορφήν δούλου does not simply replace ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, as ὑπάρχων is incomplete in its verbal aspect; the μορφήν δούλου is rather added to the ongoing existence ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, as communicated by the instrumental participle λαβών.⁵⁴³ This classic interpretation assumes an overall narrative flow to the passage in which the divine preexistent Christ took on human nature.⁵⁴⁴

The resulting question of the ensuing relationship between the added μορφήν δούλου and the existence ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ approaches the heart of the Christian understanding of the incarnation. What elements of the existence ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ were given up or modified when the “servile shameful subjection” was added? How does a reader uphold the tension between the two expressions? We believe that the best way to clarify this relationship is with recourse to the other remaining debated expression, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, which acts as an interpretive key for the passage. Only then will a clearer meaning for ἐκένωσεν emerge.

7.3.5 τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ

To recapitulate this chapter’s argument so far: two accessible courses of action, resulting from two potential ways of thinking, were before Jesus Christ, but he unexpectedly passed over the first in favor of the second. Paul highlights that this choice is surprising given Christ’s existence in divine glorious autonomy, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ. When the Apostle describes the first potential outlook that Jesus Christ did not adopt, he speaks of an acquired possession that Christ did not insist holding onto. We will now turn to the nature of that possession as described in the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, and at the same time gain further understanding into the metaphorical ἐκένωσεν that was accomplished by means of taking the “servile shameful subjection.”

But first, it will be important to recall the essence of the previous chapters’ findings:

- 1) Despite the predominance of the ontological rendering “being equal with God”

⁵⁴³ Focant, 11; Grillmeier, 21: “Christ is already in the form of God when he enters his earthly existence.”

⁵⁴⁴ As Hansen 134 suggests: the aorist ἐκένωσεν is modified by two aorist participles: *taking* and *becoming*. The contrast between verses 6 and 7 emphasized by ἀλλά, and the fact that ἐκένωσεν is in the aorist while the ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ appears to be continuous state (ὑπάρχων) suggests that verse 6 describes a preincarnate situation. Hansen further argues that there is no point in saying that one who is already a human being became in the likeness of human beings and was found in appearance as a human being (141); the narrative strongly suggests a movement from preincarnate to incarnate. On which see also Grillmeier, 20-23.

in modern English translations, many interpreters have argued that ἴσα rather signifies preincarnate circumstances;

2) The interpretation of Phil 2:6 by the ancient Greek Fathers showed that the ontological interpretation enjoyed an increase in frequency in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, in which there was a particular interest in showing that Jesus Christ was of the same nature as God the Father. This translation tradition has held sway in English translations to this day;

3) Though the form ἴσα can be a plural noun or plural adjective, the most logical word class for ἴσα in Phil 2:6 is that of adverb; ἴσα θεῶ as a collocation could potentially function as an adverbial phrase modifying a verb or as a predicative adjectival phrase complementing a subject; and

4) We discovered, finally, that ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς was a common collocation spanning more than 20 centuries. We broadly classed the collocation into either comparison of treatment of the non-divine and the divine (majority use), or comparison of actions/states of the non-divine and the divine. The meanings we established were “in the manner of the god(s)” or “like the god(s).” The various contexts studied dealt not with equality of essential nature but rather human-divine similarity of honor received, action, or state in a particular circumstance.

This brings us to the main issue of the present chapter and our entire study. Can it be established from the context whether τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in Phil 2:6 is referring to equality of essence or some other meaning? We believe this question can be settled with confidence. To do so, our initial inquiry concerning τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ will be whether the context of the *Carmen Christi* itself addresses issues of the essence of Christ’s nature or of a change in circumstances. We phrase the inquiry in this binary way because these are the two main interpretations that have been offered: ontological and particular circumstances. We believe that, as detailed above, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ in its juxtaposition with μορφὴν δούλου does indeed give us a commentary on Christ’s person. But this commentary is given to set the stage for the remarkable choice made behind the incarnation. Christ’s essence is not the primary focus of the hymn; ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ serves to point up how much

more Christ's followers should think humbly if he himself was able to do so. While some interpreters have assumed that the author then continues his commentary on Christ's essential being with the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, we believe that the narrative moves in a different direction at this point.

There are three main reasons why we believe τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ refers to preincarnate circumstances:

- 1) It contributes less to the context than the complex alternative reading (and thus according to an axiom of information theory is more likely to be correct).⁵⁴⁵
- 2) It has significant semantic precedent in the textual examples we reviewed in Chapter 6, while the ontological reading does not.
- 3) The narrative contours of the hymn focus strongly on the issue of circumstantially shifting honor and shame.

First of all, reading τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ as circumstantial honor, action, or state contributes less to the context than the proposed alternative interpretation of “equality with God.” The ontological interpretation is inherently confusing, introducing the apparent element “he didn’t consider being equal with God something to hold onto,” thus he must have abandoned something of his essence in his incarnation. If equality of essence is what is being compared between Jesus Christ and God the Father, one cannot be blamed for asking whether that essence was diminished. We believe this

⁵⁴⁵ C. E. Shannon, twentieth-century mathematician and the father of information theory, discovered in his telecommunications work that information is conveyed as a system of interrelated parts distributed through the entirety of a communication. He showed that a certain amount of telephone interference did not automatically lead to a communication breakdown, because a hearer can guess the value of missing segments of a conversation based on the surrounding information. When faced with a choice of what those missing segments may be, the human brain instantaneously reviews and eliminates the more improbable options for each segment based on the distribution of information throughout the communication. Thus the hearer decodes the information sent and, relying on the inherent redundancy of language to achieve coherent understanding, eliminates the options that are judged to communicate too much information to the whole. Linguists have legitimately applied Shannon’s information theory to understanding written texts as pieces of communication. When we interpret ancient texts, we do so as decoders of a sent message. When a segment of a given communication is unclear as to its meaning, and more than one semantic value is being considered for that segment, we rely on Shannon’s work on contextual probability to choose the meaning most at home in relation to the other segments rather than one that introduces an element relatively foreign to the context. See C. E. Shannon, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

introduces an extraneous element into the text.

Second, the circumstantial reading has semantic precedent in the textual examples we reviewed in Chapter 6, while the ontological reading does not. It is of course not impossible that the author stretched the collocation in order to use it in a metaphysical way, but if the semantic field we have established served as any kind of clue, it is more likely that an ancient audience would understand a comparison of non-divine and divine circumstantial honor or action or state of affairs than that their minds would jump to equality of essence. The collocation simply wasn't used in the latter way.

Third, the narrative contours of the hymn focus strongly on the issue of circumstantially shifting honor and shame, suggesting that Paul did indeed use ἴσα θεῶν to compare contrasting situations of honor. Indeed, the issue of divine honor is the backbone of the hymn's narrative flow. It is here that the widely recognized multi-stage narrative movement of the hymn becomes relevant, in which 2:6 describes a preincarnate state, 2:7 the taking on of humanity, and 2:8 the humiliation of the crucifixion. Hellerman even suggests that this three-stage trajectory is purposefully presented as a *cursus pudorum*—"a succession (or race) of ignominies" that subverts the Roman *cursus honorum*, or succession of honors.⁵⁴⁶ According to this interpretation, Paul wanted to communicate an ironic contrast to a series of honors well known in the Roman East.⁵⁴⁷ Rather than increasing in status, the strophic structure of the poem vividly portrays Christ's progressive descent in societal recognition to that of a slave and then to the most dishonorable experience imaginable at that time—death on a cross.

Regardless of whether one adopts Hellerman's attractive reading which would appear to have obvious relevance to the Philippian context, the three-stage trajectory in itself is quite evident in the text—a trajectory then reversed by the addition of a fourth element: the exaltation of verses 9-11. These narrative contours of the hymn strongly suggest a focus upon varying levels of recognition. Going from divine glorious autonomy to shameful servile subjection would have been particularly repulsive in the larger eastern Roman society. Paul's paraenetic objective would lie in encouraging in his readers the counter-cultural type of humility for the sake of unity in their

⁵⁴⁶ Hellerman, 129.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 142.

assembly that Christ had exhibited in his own mindset and choices.

Reading τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as describing preincarnate circumstances fits naturally into the flow of such a trajectory. Though the preincarnate Christ belonged to the divine class and not the human class, received divine recognition by others, and exercised divine autonomy (on which see above on ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ), he surprisingly did not consider holding on to living in the remarkable circumstances in which God lives. That Christ did not retain the circumstances he lived in fits more naturally and directly in a narrative about social downgrading than the idea that he did not retain being equal in nature with God. Here we thus take ἴσα θεῶ not as an adjectival phrase complementing the subject ὅς with εἶναι as linking verb (“being like God”), but rather as an adverbial phrase modifying εἶναι as a verb of existence (“existing in the way that God exists”). This latter meaning for εἶναι is well-attested in the lexicons and was a common interpretation of εἶναι in Phil 2:6 among nineteenth century commentators (see Meyer, Müller, and Vincent in Chapter 3). We believe that the adjectival translation “being like God,” which we saw was possible in two later Greek texts in Chapter 6, while not inaccurate for Phil 2:6, does not sufficiently communicate issues of honor highlighted in the context and for which ἴσα θεῶ was likely chosen as a collocation.

And while it is true that Paul did not use the typical structure of verb of worship + ἴσα θεῶ, and that we have in the context of Phil 2:6 only two pragmatic entities (Jesus Christ and God the Father, i.e., no stated worshipper as in many contexts), we suggest that perhaps εἶναι as existence was chosen (or “living,” as we will suggest for a translation) because it allowed ἴσα θεῶ to evoke a broader meaning than would have a verb of veneration (on which see below). However, our interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as a circumstantial honorific condition and not ontology does not stand or fall on εἶναι being interpreted as a verb of existence instead of a linking verb; we suggested in Chapter 6 that one of the two uses of ἴσα θεῶ as a predicative adjectival phrase also occurred in the context of honor and shame. In this sense the argument about whether ἴσα θεῶ is an adverbial or a predicative adjectival phrase does not ultimately decide between the circumstantial and ontological meanings.

But we can go further in describing what these circumstantial honorific conditions involved. It is here that we remind the reader of the significant number of commentators who, with us, have

also interpreted τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as a question of circumstantial recognition (on which see Chapter 3). Proponents of this reading have described their understanding of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ in these terms:

- 1) Preincarnate circumstances or conditions that accompany sharing the divine nature (Gifford);⁵⁴⁸
- 2) “le *traitement* qui eût manifesté son appartenance à la sphère divine” (Grelot);⁵⁴⁹
- 3) Not a “metaphysical but a social statement” about Christ’s status or importance (Osiek);⁵⁵⁰ and
- 4) Not “His essential equality with God or His identity of being with God, but describes His manner of existence as God,” his glory, majesty, and splendour (Müller).⁵⁵¹

Bringing together these explanations, in τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ we have a preincarnate situation in which Christ was recognized for his majesty. We propose that he did not consider retaining his *living amidst the honors that God enjoys*, that is to say, holding onto, as he became a man, the advantages of a setting in which he had been treated in accordance with his divine dignity. Amiot calls these the “honneurs divins auxquels il aurait dû participer dans sa nature humaine,”⁵⁵² and that is the heart of the comparison brought by the dative: Christ’s eventual earthly (lack of honorific) conditions compared to God the Father’s honorific conditions which Christ had shared but decided not to retain.

One might say *living amidst the honors that God enjoys* is overly explanatory for τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ, but we would counter that the widespread, predominant use of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς to speak of divine honors argues that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ would have easily evoked the image of divine treatment to a first-century audience in a way that is lost on us. Today it is common in the secondary literature

⁵⁴⁸ Gifford, 49.

⁵⁴⁹ Grelot, “Deux expressions,” 505.

⁵⁵⁰ Osiek, 61.

⁵⁵¹ Müller, 79. The wider apostolic teaching would suggest that the glory of Christ was limited but not completely forfeited during his earthly ministry.

⁵⁵² Amiot, 96.

to try to figure out what ἴσα means and then add θεῶ to it. But it is much more likely that an audience would have understood the words belonging together as a common expression. And though some of our examples of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς were used with verbs of thinking or ability to say that an entity thought or acted like the god(s), the fact that the verb εἶναι is used here rather than a verb of thinking or ability suggests that the notion of existence in honorific conditions is more likely. Also, concepts of thinking like God or having a divine ability to accomplish something in the manner of God are not directly discussed in the context of Phil 2 in relation to Jesus Christ. The translation we are suggesting implies that in order to “in humility consider others more significant” (2:3) and “look not only to his own interests but also the interests of others” (2:4), Jesus Christ chose to forego the divine honors that accompany living the way God (his Father) lives. Thus we would interpret the immediately surrounding verses:

5 Have this attitude in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Though he was existing in divine glorious autonomy, he did not consider living⁵⁵³ amidst the honors that God enjoys something to be retained,

7a But made himself nothing by taking on a servile shameful subjection and entering into conformity with mankind . . .

How does the interpretation of ἴσα θεῶ as an adverbial phrase and the foregoing English rendering elucidate the passage in general, including the key terms discussed above? First, as mentioned above, the translations “equal” and “equality” with God, orienting the reader as they do toward a comparison of the nature of Jesus Christ with God the Father, have created unnecessary confusion. If ontological equality is in question, and ἀρπαγμὸν is taken to be something possessed but not retained, then the interpreter, arriving at ἐκένωσεν, cannot be blamed for wondering in what sense that equality was forsaken. The adverbial interpretation, however, asserts that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ is a simple matter of circumstances—of divine honor in one context that was not retained in another.

Second, the metaphorical action described by ἐκένωσεν serves as a trigger to describe

⁵⁵³ We chose the word “living” instead of repeating the word “existing,” which was already used in v. 6.

Christ's radical change of conditions from enjoying the recognition and autonomy that God does to experiencing not only the human condition, but the most shameful experience that one can imagine. Not only did Jesus Christ come to know fully what it meant to be human—he knew the absolute worst of earthly disrespect. That the writer has this in mind is supported by the two supporting participles of ἐκένωσεν: he accomplished the act by proactively taking (λαβών) and becoming (γενόμενος). These verbal forms both describe the forsaking of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in time and space.

Third, besides ἐκένωσεν, our suggested translation of Phil 2:5-7 also elucidates the relationship of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ to the ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ - μορφὴν δούλου parallel. If forsaking τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ means forsaking “living amidst the honors that God enjoys,” then we are obligated to say that two of the three aspects of the ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ were directly affected when the μορφὴν δούλου was added.⁵⁵⁴ The second semantic element of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ that we mentioned, that of recognition of deity by others, is largely suspended until the exaltation detailed in 2:9. The third semantic element of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, that of practical autonomy of deity, was traded for subjection to humans during the time of his earthly existence (though in relation to God the Father Paul taught an ongoing and permanent subjection of the Son to the Father which some theologians say was not in effect before the incarnation). As to the first semantic element of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, that of the true essence of deity strongly implied by the θεοῦ - δούλου class contrast, it is interesting to note that the author of the hymn never says that this element was affected as the others were with the forsaking of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ. While forsaking “living amidst the honors that God enjoys” would necessarily mean a change in the recognition of deity implied in the ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ - μορφὴν δούλου contrast during his earthly ministry, our reading of ἴσα θεῷ as an adverbial phrase does not require us to wonder about whether ontology was affected to the extent that the ontological reading does, in which ἴσα θεῷ appears to say that Christ forsook his equality. A change in honorific circumstances does not represent the exchange of essential class of being in regard to the divine-human realms. In fact, the author seems intent upon holding the ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ - μορφὴν δούλου tension as existing together in time and space in this particular regard. As we mentioned earlier,

⁵⁵⁴ This would explain why some interpreters believe that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ is synonymous with ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, while others insist it is not. In our interpretation, the two are not synonymous, but “existing amidst the honors that God enjoys” does indeed relate back to some elements of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, namely to recognition of deity by others, and in a secondary way, to divine autonomy. While Wright and others suggest a “close connection” (83) between τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ and ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ because of what he calls the articular infinitive referring in our phrase “to something previously mentioned or otherwise well known,” we believe the article τὸ is a simple matter of substantivization of the idea of existing.

the fact that the author uses λαβών as an adverbial modifier of the metaphorical ἐκένωσεν suggests that Christ's making himself nothing did not consist of a replacement of an essential class, but the addition of another—he took the μορφήν δούλου. That the author has in mind in this verse divinity adding humanity becomes clear by the other adverbial modifier of ἐκένωσεν: ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος.

To continue this train of thought to the end of the passage, the giving of the name that is above all names (τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα) in v. 9 is a restoration of the divine honors that Christ willingly left, but with a new element of note. The tension in the narrative between, on the one hand, ultimate dignity and autonomy in the celestial realm, and on the other hand, utter shame and subjection in the human realm, is resolved in all spheres: in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων). God's grand exaltation (ὑπερύψωσεν) of Jesus Christ as the Septuagint's κύριος is by no means an exaggerated promotion to a new class of being but a question of broader recognition of Christ's preincarnate ontology at the opportune moment of the redemptive plan. But this broader recognition is only possible because of Christ's unexpected choice to forsake living amidst the honors that God enjoys.

The circumstantial interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ also fits better than the ontological in the broader apostolic teaching of the incarnation. This is why so many Church Fathers and modern commentators, regardless of how they read τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, so naturally connect the *Carmen Christi* to the circumstantial change described in 2 Cor 8:9:

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that you might be enriched by means of his poverty.⁵⁵⁵

Heb 12:2 also speaks of a radical change in circumstantial honor:

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

As does John 17:5:

⁵⁵⁵ We give our translation of this and the next two passages.

Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

While these passages speak clearly of the radical circumstantial contrast that Christ experienced, by contrast none of the apostolic circle suggest that Christ was once equal with God but in some sense relinquished that equality in the context of the incarnation, as ontological interpreters of ἴσα θεῶ are forced to contemplate.

7.4 Final Thoughts on the Point of Paul's Exhortation

It is interesting to note that although Phil 2 begins with an exhortation to adopt the same mindset as that of Jesus Christ, the hymn itself does not tell us *why* Christ had this kind of mindset that could choose such a radical and unexpected course of action, given his divine glorious autonomy. We know that the whole narrative ends with glory given to God the Father, and one may suspect that this enters into the equation. But the larger context of the letter also helps us here.

Paul's emphasis in the letter upon an others-oriented way of thinking is more than humanistic altruism, for it occurs in the context of voluntary humbling that Paul calls εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (1:12), "for the progress of the gospel." The ancient apostolic understanding of humble service is not altruism for its own sake, but is firmly placed in the context of the divine plan of human redemption. Only the inherent worthiness of such a God-honoring redemptive movement could warrant the radical outlook that Jesus Christ displayed in experiencing the fatal humility that the hymn's centerpoint calls μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, "unto death, even a cross-death." Indeed, it is upon that very act that the plan was contingent. What allows Paul not to shrink back from holding before his readers such a daunting example is the additional conviction that God by his Spirit was at work in his readers to complete what he had started (1:6), giving them both the desire and ability to accomplish what he wants (2:13), namely, the progress of the good news about Jesus Christ through voluntary, humble, others-oriented self-sacrifice.

7.5 Hermeneutical Implications

If τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ is understood as part of a comparison of divine and earthly circumstances rather than a commentary on the essential nature of Jesus Christ in relation to God the Father, does such a nuance constitute a blow to orthodox Catholic and Protestant views concerning the equality of the Son with the Father? Has a key text been taken away, weakening the argument of those who argue for such a doctrine? And furthermore, is that the intention of this dissertation?

Our response to these questions is no. The doctrine of Trinitarian equality does not rest uniquely on this passage. And the objective behind this study is not to weaken the equality argument any more than it was the intention of many revered commentators of the past highlighted in Chapter 3 who concluded that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ was not primarily ontological. The aim is rather accurate exegesis with the conviction that an ancient author's general objective can be discovered with confidence given adequate context.⁵⁵⁶ If the author of the *Carmen Christi* never intended for the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ to communicate the way Jesus Christ thought about his essential equality with the Father nor the ensuing traditional ideas about his foregoing essential attributes in a *kenosis*, then one must take the passage on its own terms and hear what is being said in a fresh way.

We have argued in this study about what τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ does *not* say about Christ's being. But this is not to say that the hymn as a whole is not concerned with Christology. Grillmeier called the *Carmen Christi*, alongside Rom 1:3-4 and Col 1:15ff, "the most powerful and most concentrated expression of the Christology of Paul's letters."⁵⁵⁷ Indeed, we concluded that the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, when understood in its parallel with μορφὴν δούλου, does include ontology. Besides the elements of recognition and autonomy of deity, the phrase strongly suggests that the author believed the preincarnate Christ belonged to the class of that which is deity versus that which is human, and that in the mystery of the incarnation he took on that latter class as well.

Further, even though we have interpreted τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as a particular situation in which Christ lived amidst the honors that God enjoys, in the monotheistic apostolic context this key phrase itself implies not mere honorary treatment as in so many of our examples in Chapter 6, but an underlying essence that merited it. "Recent scholarship rightly emphasizes that this hymn is not in

⁵⁵⁶ By context we mean the verbal environment surrounding a unit of meaning which conditions the meaning of the larger discourse.

⁵⁵⁷ Grillmeier, 20.

the first place concerned with Christ's *being* . . ." but "it would be false to refuse the later theology of the church the right to reflect upon the being of Christ with the help of this hymn."⁵⁵⁸

Lastly, besides being a positive contribution to the Church's understanding of the *person* of Christ, it goes without saying that the *Carmen Christi* remains an essential text on the *event* of the incarnation itself. The interpretation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as part of a comparison of heavenly and earthly circumstances serves to elucidate, not complicate, the apostolic preaching of the inner workings of that event.

7.6 Final Statement of Argument

The foregoing study has advanced the scholarly discussion concerning τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ by examining the expression from the following five new research angles:

- 1) A considerable number of modern interpreters believe that ἴσα θεῶ denotes a particular circumstance and should be translated as such; a handful of English and French translations have even opted for a circumstantial rendering (Ch. 3);
- 2) The Arian crisis appears to have led certain Fathers to interpret ἴσα as synonymous with ἴσος, and this reading has influenced later interpretation (Ch. 4);
- 3) On morphological grounds the most logical word class for ἴσα itself in Phil 2:6 is adverb, not (plural) noun or (agreeing plural) adjective; whether ἴσα θεῶ as a phrase is adverbial or adjectival depends on the type of verb with which it occurs (Ch. 5);
- 4) Ancient authors both Christian and secular from over 20 centuries used ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς as a commonly known collocation with the meaning "in the manner of the god(s)" or "like the god(s)"; the collocation was used to compare circumstantial honor, action, or state, not metaphysical questions of equality of essence (Ch. 6); and

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 22.

5) In the context of Phil 2:6 divine honor forfeited and regained is clearly highlighted through the narrative contours of the hymn, placing τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ squarely in the semantic range of our textual examples of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in the literature; lastly, the circumstantial reading gives greater semantic coherence to the hymn as a whole (Ch. 7).

Individually and collectively these angles offer robust evidence for τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ as preincarnate situation in Phil 2:6.

CONCLUSION

The Research Process

It became clear early in the research process that a multidisciplinary approach to the question of the meaning of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ would be necessary, and we believe this approach has borne fruit in arriving at a more accurate interpretation of Phil 2:6 in its context. A secondary benefit was the occasion to add to my research experience further study in the history of interpretation, patristics, morphology, semantics, archaic Greek literature, exegesis, and theology. The area of Greek patristics was largely new territory into which I appreciated being initiated.

In the research process, a necessary emphasis we placed on the adjective-adverb distinction for ἴσα at the morphological level gave way in time to a closer study of how ἴσα and θεῶ/θεοῖς worked together semantically as a collocation as we began to appreciate its frequency in the literature. Also surprising was finding ὡς θεός in the same contexts as ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς late in the research process.

The most surprising element in the research process of this dissertation has been formulating a new presentation of data for one of the most commented upon passages in the New Testament. As for all who undertake a research process in this discipline, it is fascinating to think that all of the pieces of information needed to further a scholarly conversation are only inches away from us as we walk the library stacks over the course of many years. Yet it is ultimately perseverance that is needed to bring them together into a coherent whole to be useful for others. In our case this service has particularly been offered for those who strive to understand as closely as possible the Christian Scriptures. But we believe this study also benefits those who read Greek literature in general, particularly as regards the understanding of ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς.

Directions for New Study

While we spent a fair amount of time considering ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς in Homer, a researcher better versed in the Homeric literature could probably take this area even further to understand how the collocation relates to the larger question of human-divine, as well as honor-shame, rapport in the archaic period. Authors like L. Muellner and G. Nagy have done some work in this area, but without a particular concentration on ἴσα θεῶ/θεοῖς, so we believe there is some room for development.

A second area of interest is the phenomenon of Paul using or at least appropriating an expression largely used in polytheistic contexts. We know that he did not shrink from citing Greek poets on certain occasions, and his employment of ἴσα θεῶ might add an interesting element to the overall picture of his use of wider Greek literature.

A third element of direction for further study concerns the secondary literature relating to Phil 2:6. An article could be written on the apparent shift away from a more comprehensive non-ontological reading of ἴσα θεῶ in the last 50 years.

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Eusebius, *Letter on the Council of Nicaea* [Rusch]. For the Greek of the critical edition, see H.-G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, 2.1 (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1940).

(1) From another source, beloved, you have probably learned what was worked out about the faith of the church at the great synod brought together in Nicaea. And this occurred because rumor is accustomed to outrun the accurate report of what things were done. But we have sent to you of necessity first the document dealing with the faith we presented, and then the second document, which they issued after they added our words, so that the truth might not be otherwise related to you by heresy.

(2) Therefore our treatise, read in the presence of our emperor, the most beloved of God and declared to be good and worthy, is as follows:

(3) “As we have received from the bishops before us and in the first catechization, and when we receive baptism, as we have learned from the divine Scripture, and as we believed and taught in the office of presbyter and bishop itself, and thus now believing, we report to you our faith. It is this:

(4) We believe in one God, Father, all-sovereign, the maker of all seen and unseen, and in one Lord Jesus Christ the Word of God, God from God, Light from Light, Life from Life, only-begotten Son, firstborn of all creation, before all ages begotten from the Father through whom all things came into existence; who was made flesh on account of our salvation, and lived among mankind, and suffered and rose on the third day and went up to the Father and will come again in glory to judge living and dead. And also we believe in one Holy Spirit.

(5) Believing each of these to be and to exist, the Father truly Father, and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit, as also our Lord sending his disciples for proclamation said, ‘Go and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ [Matt. 28:19]. Concerning this, we affirm that this we maintain, and thus we think and so we have maintained previously, and we stand until death on this faith, anathematizing every godless heresy.

(6) We have thought this from the heart and soul always, from which time we knew ourselves, and now we think it and say it from truth; this we bear witness to in the presence of God all-sovereign, being able to show through proofs and to persuade you that during preceding times we believed and proclaimed thus.”

(7) When we presented this faith, there was no opportunity for resistance by anyone. But our emperor, most beloved of God, himself first of all witnessed that this was most orthodox. He agreed that even he himself thought thus, and he ordered all to assent to subscribe to the teachings and to be in harmony with them, although only one word, *homoousios*, was added, which he himself interpreted, saying that the Son might not be said to be *homoousios* according to the affections of bodies, and is from the Father neither according to division nor according to a cutting off, for the immaterial, intellectual, and incorporeal nature is unable to subsist in some corporeal affection, but it is befitting to think of such things in a divine and ineffable manner. And our emperor, most wise and pious, thought philosophically in this manner. But they, with the pretense of the addition of *homoousios*, produced this document:

(8) The faith composed in the synod:

“We believe in one God, Father, all-sovereign, maker of all things seen and unseen, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, that is only-begotten from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, *homoousios* with the Father, through whom all things, those in heaven and those on earth, came into existence, who on account of us men and on account of our salvation came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered, arose on the third day, went up into heaven, is coming to judge living and dead. And in the Holy Spirit. And those who say, “There was once when he was not” and “Before he was begotten, he was not” and that “he came into existence from nothing,” or those who allege that the Son of God is “from another *hypostasis* or substance” or is created or mutable or different, the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes.”

(9) When this document was composed by them, so that the phrases “from the substance of the Father” and “*homoousios* with the Father” were stated by them, we did not grant this to them without examination. Therefore, interrogations and responses occurred, and the discourse tested

the sense of these phrases. Then, “from the substance” was confessed by them to be indicative of the Son’s being from the Father, not as if he is part of the Father.

(10) In this way it seemed good also to us to agree with the sense of the pious teaching suggesting that the Son is from the Father, not part of his substance. We also agreed with the sense, not even refraining from the expression *homoousios*, since the object of peace and the aim of not deviating from the true sense was before our eyes.

(11) In the same manner we accepted “having been begotten and not made,” because they declared that “made” was a common designation of the other creatures who came into existence through the Son and to whom the Son has no resemblance. Thus he is not something made similar to things which came into existence through him, but rather he happens to be of a better substance in comparison to anything made, which the divine oracles teach to have been begotten from the Father, because the method of begetting happens to be unutterable and beyond the understanding of every originated nature.

(12) Likewise, the argument “the Son is *homoousios* with the Father,” when examined, is sound; not in the manner of bodies or as mortal beings—for the Son is so not according division of substance or by a cutting or according to any affection, mutation, or change of the Father’s substance and power. The unbegotten nature of the Father is foreign to all these.

(13) “*Homoousios* with the Father” indicates that the Son of God bears no resemblance to originated creatures but that he is alike in every way only to the Father who has begotten and that he is not from any other hypostasis and substance but from the Father. To this term, thus interpreted, it seemed well to assent, since we knew that there were certain learned ones of the ancients, famous bishops and writers, who employed the term *homoousios* in reference to their teaching about the Father and Son.

(14) Therefore let these things be said about the published faith to which we all agreed, not without investigation but according to the attributed sense examined in the presence of the most beloved of God, the emperor himself, and in agreement with the above-mentioned reflections.

(15) We considered the anathema, published by them after the faith, to be harmless because of its prohibition against using words not in Scripture, from which nearly every confusion and anarchy of the church occurred. Since at any rate no divinely inspired Scripture has employed “from nothing” and “once he was not” and those things added afterward, it did not appear reasonable to say and teach these things. We agreed to this as something apparently good, because prior to this we were not accustomed to employing these words.

(16) Still it did not appear outrageous to anathematize “before he was begotten, he was not,” for the confession of all is that the Son of God was before the generation according to the flesh. Already our emperor, the most beloved of God, affirmed in a discourse that even according to his divine generation he was before all the ages, since even before he was begotten in actuality, he was in the Father ingenerately in potentiality, since the Father is always the Father, both as King always and as Savior always, in potentiality being all things and being always in the same respect and in like manner.

(17) Beloved, these things we have transmitted to you of necessity, making clear to you the decision of our investigation and approval, and how reasonably we resisted then, even until the final hour, when accounts written differently offended us. But we accepted without strife those things not harmful, when it appeared to us, frankly scrutinizing the intention of the words, that they agreed with the things confessed by us in the faith previously published.

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