SOCIAL VALUES OF HEAVENLY SOCIETY:  
THE CONCEPTS OF HONOR AND IDENTITY  
IN PAUL’S LETTER TO PHILIPPIANS

By  
Maria Karyakina

Submitted in fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)

In the Department of New Testament Studies  
Faculty of Theology  
University of Pretoria

Promoter: Prof. Dr. Gert J. Steyn

March 2013

© University of Pretoria
Summary

The aim of this study is the analysis of social concepts of honor and identity in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

In the first chapter, the research problem is formulated and the appropriate methodology, which could address the issue under investigation, is chosen. It was observed, that in the social studies of the New Testament texts, the key analytical categories – honor, identity and (social) values, – as well as the correlation between them, were not properly defined. At the same time, the text of the letter to the Philippians demonstrates that to aspire for honor is not totally rejected within Christian community (1:20; 2:29; 3:14). The discourse analysis (discovery of social patterns embedded in the text) was taken as main methodological approach; clarifying of social concepts and text analysis were main tools used to test the hypothesis: In his letter to the Philippians, Paul does not argue to reject honor as a social value, yet he promotes a new identity and new source of honor; aspiration to honor within one’s group remains the same for non-Christians and for “heavenly society.”

In the second chapter, the main terminology is defined. So, “value” is an often non-verbalized, invisible conception, which determines one’s understanding of the desirable or rationality. The same values can have different embodiments in different cultures; the same values can be shared by different groups. Identity is based on the visible manifestations of a culture; people of different identities can share the same values. Honor is a positive evaluation of one’s behavior; it is very significant for every collectivistic society. The source of honor is at the same time the source of identity: the one whose opinion matters, whose approval is valuable is the one with whom a person associates/identifies him/herself.

In the third chapter, the language of identity in the letter to the Philippians is analyzed. Paul pays a lot of attention to his readers’ new identity “in Christ.” He accentuates their distance
from the non-members of the group (negative identity); he insists on their unity, mutual support, and call to leave aside any inner quarrel or competitiveness in order to concentrate on the survival and development of the “in-Christ” group. His own example of changed identity demonstrates that Christ gives Paul both a sense of belonging and a sense of worth. Strong orientation of the members of the Christian commune to their group reflects the common dependence of an individual on his/hew group in collectivist societies.

In the fourth chapter, the issue of honor in the text of Philippians is investigated. The Christological hymn (Phil 2:6-11) and its context presents the only appropriate way of behavior and hence, gaining honor within the “in-Christ” community: God is the only honor-bestower; one must stay loyal to the community and obedient to its leaders despite suffering and death. Paul’s account of his own experience demonstrates that he is anxious about honor, yet he seeks it exclusively in terms of the “in-Christ” group: God is the only source of honor; hence honor must be achieved strictly via loyal service to God and his group. Any attempt to gain honor in competition with other members of the “in-Christ” group is interpreted as treason, as it denies the status of God as the only honor-bestower.

In the fifth chapter, the findings of the research are summarized. It is concluded that social values of “heavenly society” are very much the same as those of a non-Christian society. Belonging to a group and positive evaluation of such a group (honor) – relational values common for Mediterranean cultures – are still most significant for the “in-Christ” group members. The only thing which is changed is identity (and hence, the source of honor): for Christians, God and Christ are an exclusive source of identity and an exclusive source of honor. Hence, the “in-Christ” group and the outer world both share the value of honor; the only difference between them is the source of that honor (i.e. identity). Values remain the same, identity is different.
Key words

Social values
Philippians
Identity
Honor
Paul
Christological hymn
Opponents
Group
Unity
Abstract

This study investigates the social values concepts of honor and identity in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. The definitions of the main analytical concepts – social values, identity and honor – are given; the correlation between them is also explained. It is demonstrated that belonging to one’s group (identity) and seeking for approval within one’s group (positive evaluation or honor) are two closely connected, most important social values. The significance of these values and their interconnection are reflected in the text of the letter to the Philippians. Paul’s promoting of positive identity (explicit and implicit ones), negative identity (statements against opposition), and the example of his own identity being changed (Phil 3.4-11) is scrutinized. The concept of honor is analyzed mainly on the material of the Christological hymn (Phil 2.6-11) and its context, as well as against Paul’s utterances about his personal experience in Phil 1.15-21 and 3.4-21. The study proves that in the letter to the Philippians, Paul does not promote new values nor rejects honor; he canvasses his readers that their new identity in Christ implies the new source of honor – God himself. Gaining honor from God alone, within an “in-Christ” community, can result in dishonor from outsiders; readiness to be disgraced by those who do not belong to the “in-Christ” group is the sign that honor works only within a group, which is the source of it. Within an “in-Christ” community, honor is still valued, yet it is gained exclusively through loyal work for God and his community.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who made the completion of this study possible:

- prof. Jan van der Watt, who started the whole process and supported me to the very end of this project;
- prof. Gert Steyn, for encouragement and support to complete the research;
- rev. George Nel and NGK Community in Booysens, Pretoria, who provided accommodation and spiritual support for my family during my study in Pretoria;
- Heila and Dennis Meyer, who became part of my family in South Africa;
- Tertia and Stefan Schoeman and Suzanne Kirk, whose support and care made the four-years study possible;
- Mrs Rina Roos, who has been a guarding angel for the students at the Faculty of Theology.

To all of you I am indebted, as you have helped me to grow academically, and more important, to become a better person. You reflect the image of Christ, and your lives lighten this world, making it a better place. Each of you is always in my heart and in my prayers.
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.............................................................................................................................i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.......................................................................................................ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.........................................................................................................iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.................................................................................................vi

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .........................................................................................1

1.1 Hypothesis .....................................................................................................................1
1.2 Methodology ................................................................................................................2
1.3 The research history and research problem ...............................................................5
1.4 The outline of the research .........................................................................................20

CHAPTER 2. SOCIAL VALUES AND IDENTITY IN THE LETTER TO THE
PHILIPPIANS .....................................................................................................................22

2.1 Key terms: values and identity ..................................................................................22
   2.1.1 Values and culture ...............................................................................................22
   2.1.2 Identity ...............................................................................................................26
   2.1.3 An individual and a group: dynamic of relations ..............................................31
   2.1.4 Honor, shame and “significant other” ...............................................................32
2.2 Honor in the ancient Mediterranean World...............................................................36
   2.2.1 Specific features of Mediterranean honor and shame system .........................36
   2.2.2 Honor and power dynamics: patronage, friendship and benefactor-
       beneficiary relationship .........................................................................................39
2.3 Honor and identity in ancient Philippi .....................................................................45
2.4 Conclusions ...............................................................................................................49

CHAPTER 3. NEW IDENTITY OF HEAVENLY SOCIETY MEMBERS .........................52
3.1 Negative identity: “we” vs. “them” .........................................................52

3.1.1 Internal opponents: 1:15-17; 2:3-4; 2:21 .................................................55

3.1.1.1 Wrong-motivated brothers ..............................................................55

3.1.1.2 Inspired by Paul’s imprisonment .....................................................56

3.1.1.3 The cause of the conflict .................................................................60

3.1.2 External opponents: “dogs” and enemies of Christ (3:2; 3:18-19) ..........63

3.1.3 Mixed opponents: 1:28-30 .................................................................67

3.1.4 Opponents as one group .....................................................................76

3.1.5 Opponents in the letter to the Philippians: those, who are not “us” ....85

3.2 Positive identity: unity in Christ .............................................................90

3.2.1 The language of positive identity throughout the letter ......................91

3.1.2 Explicit admonitions for unity .............................................................95

3.3 Paul’s own example of the changed identity (3:4-11) ............................99

3.3.1 Paul’s old identity: περιτόμη & διατημέρος (3:5-6) ..............................100

3.3.2 Changing point: διὰ τῶν Χριστῶν (3:7-8) ..............................................106

3.3.3 Conclusion: Paul’s new identity in Christ .............................................114

3.4 Conclusion: accentuating the new identity as an exercise of the value of belonging ........................................................................................................116

CHAPTER 4. PAUL’S ARGUMENTATION OF HONOR-VALUE: DEALING WITH HONOR IN HEAVENLY SOCIETY .................................................................119

4.1 Christological hymn: Christ’s way of dealing with honor .......................122

4.1.1 Christ’s interaction with God in terms of honor ....................................123

4.1.2 The meaning of 2:6 ..............................................................................127

4.1.3 The essence of Christ’s kenosis: obedience to God..............................137

4.1.4 God as the ultimate significant other ..................................................148

4.1.5 The hymn’s context: application of the hymn ....................................154

4.1.5.1 Unity and rejection of the competition (2:1-5) ...............................154

iv
List of Abbreviations

**Books of the Bible**

1. New Testament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>2 Cor</td>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mk</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Gal</td>
<td>Galatians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt</td>
<td>Mathew</td>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>Philippians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lk</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Heb</td>
<td>Hebrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rom</td>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>1 Pet</td>
<td>1 Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cor</td>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>2 Tim</td>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Old Testament and Deutorocanonical books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>Is</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>Jer</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lev</td>
<td>Leviticus</td>
<td>Tob</td>
<td>Tobit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Hos</td>
<td>Hosea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam</td>
<td>1 Samuel</td>
<td>1 Macc</td>
<td>1 Maccabees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ch</td>
<td>2 Chronicles</td>
<td>2 Macc</td>
<td>2 Maccabees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ancient Sources

CB NTS   Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series


CSEL   Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna: Temsky, 1866.


Ancient Authors

Aelius Aristides, *Or.*  *Orationes*

Josephus, *Ant.*  *Jewish Antiquities*

Epictetus, *Dis.*  *Discourses*

Aristotle, *Rhet.*  *Rhetorica*

Eth.Nic.  *Ethica Nicomaecha*

Homer, *Od.*  *Odyssea*

Xenophon, *Mem.*  *Memorabilia*

Euripides, *Cyc.*  *Cyclops*
Church Fathers

Tertullian, *de Resurr. Carn.*  
*De Resurrectione Carnis*

*adv. Prax.*  
*Adversus Praxeam*

*adv. Marc.*  
*Adversus Marcionem*

St. Ambrose, *de Fid.*  
*De fide ad Gratianum Augustum*

Eusebius, *H.E.*  
*Historica ecclesiastica*

*Ecl.Proph.*  
*Eclogae propheticae*

*Eccles.Theol.*  
*De ecclesiastica theologia*

*Commentarii in evangelium Joannis*

*Comm. Rom.*  
*Commentarii in Romanos*

*Homilia de semente*

*Contra Julianum*

Journal Titles, Series Titles, Bible Translations and Dictionaries

AAA American Anthropological Association

BIS Biblical Interpretation Series

BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

CB NTS Connectanea Biblica New Testament Series

FRANT Forschungen zur Relition und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExpT</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNT SS</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of New Testament Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOT SS</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNTS</td>
<td>Library of New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL AB</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL ECL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and its Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL WGRWSS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNT</td>
<td>Supplements to Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNTG</td>
<td>Studies in New Testament Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNTS MS</td>
<td>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAAA</td>
<td>A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNTB</td>
<td>The Dictionary of New Testament Background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul persuades his readers to be humble, obedient, to reject honor-competition, and he cites Christ as an example of such behavior (2:5). At the same time we can see that Paul himself is not that uninterested in gaining honor: he knows that he will not be ashamed (1:20), he aspires to reward with glory from God (1:20-21; 2:16; 3:14). He wants to repeat Christ’s way not only in humbling himself, yet also in God’s appraisal of him (2:9-11; 3:21). If one humiliates oneself in order to get honor and praise, is this a genuine humiliation? If one rejects oneself in order to get much more from the other source, is that a true authentic self-denial or is it just a way to get what one wants to get? This study aims to clarify this contradiction and to find out what is “honor” and what is the difference between honor from people (which Christians are to reject) and honor from God (which they are to aspire to receive).

1.2 Hypothesis

Our hypothesis is that in his letter to Philippians, Paul speaks not about rejecting honor, yet about rejecting certain sources of honor: the apostle looks for
appreciation, for positive merit rating from God alone, and he wants his readers to do the same. One’s source of honor (i.e. “significant other”) is at the same time one’s source of identity: it is a person or a group with whom one associates oneself and who’s evaluation is significant to one. Because of their correlation and interdependence, identity and honor are two major analytical concepts of our study.

1.2 Methodology

As both honor and identity are sociological categories, social analysis of the text is the main methodology of this research. Yet a social-scientific approach to the New Testament texts contains some methodological issues, which have to be addressed prior to any application of it. Firstly, is the usage of contemporary social theories and terminology with regard to biblical texts justifiable? And secondly, may one expect to find in the biblical texts the social patterns, which existence was proposed by scientists only in the 20th century? The answer to these questions can be given in two ways.

Firstly, the ability and necessity to build, maintain and develop social relations, as well as to analyze these relations, are biological characteristics of *homo sapiens*. And as the ancient and contemporary people belong to one biological species, it is reasonable to suppose that “both our and their minds create culture with the same basic cognitive capacities.”\(^1\) Hence, one may make an assumption that

---

people of the past also verbalized their understanding of their social interactions, though they could use different vocabulary (both linguistically and conceptually).  

The cognitive discourse analysis might help to understand both ancients’ and contemporary researchers’ ways of conceptualizing and its articulation. After all, analogy is the way one cannot escape studying ancient times.

Secondly, the contemporary social and psychological theories can be applied to the Bible texts as an heuristic method, and then careful exegesis, as well as analysis of other sources, is needed to prove or disprove the adequacy of such application.

Another methodological (theoretical) aspect, closely connected to the aforesaid “careful exegesis,” is how one can expect a text to reflect social understandings of the author(s) and original readers of this text? To comprehend this essential epistemological and hermeneutic issue, one must start with the premise that

---


3 See Luomanen, Pyysiäinen and Uro, “Introduction,” 19-20; Riotto, Behaving as a Christ-believer, 11.


6 By “other sources” we mean extra-biblical texts and data, which can help in reconstructing the cultural context of the text under investigation.

“every text has an “ideational” function through its representation of experience and representation of the world.” Hence, every text has dialectical relations with the society and culture it has arisen in: it shapes and at the same time is constituted by society and culture. That is why it is possible to analyze a text in order to reconstruct the embodied social patterns. As the letter-genre, which the letter to Philippians belongs to, is a discourse rather than a narrative, “new rhetoric” will be applied in order to follow Paul’s argumentation and critical discourse-analysis will be used to reconstruct social structures reflected in the text. This reconstruction though, will be limited by the scope of our study: understanding of identity and honor in the letter to Philippians is the topic of our research.

In his “Social-scientific reading of the letter to Philippians,” Nebreda admits that there is a methodological shift in his interpretation of the Christological hymn in the letter (2:6-11), when he moves from sociological approach to an ideological one;

---


9 Though one must be aware of the fact that the text influences and (its interpretation) is influenced by the society and culture it is interpreted in (if these society and culture are different from those the text originated from). It is especially significant for Biblical texts, which by their sacral status have incomparable impact on society and culture all over Christian world.

10 Titscher at al., Methods of Text, 148-149. Cf. Tellbe speaking of the New testament texts: “The text should be regarded as a vehicle, which not only constructs the self-understanding of the reader(s) (individual and social identity), but which may also reflect the existing realities (both relating to the author and to the community of the addressees)... Text both potentially construct the “imaginative” or cognitive world of the reader and reflect in some way the social, political and religious world of the authors (and to some extent also of its readers)” (M. Tellbe, Christ Believers in Ephesus: Textual Analysis of Early Church (WUNT 242; Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) 51, italic original).


13 Critical discourse analysis focuses on social relationship, see Wodak, Disorders of Discourse, 17-20; Titscher at al. Methods of Text, 144-148.
he argues however that “any discussion on Christ’s identity needs to commence from God’s action towards humanity, from his radical identity with it in Christ.”¹⁴ In this study, we will try not to mix ideology and sociology; all the fragments of the text will be analyzed from the one (sociological) perspective. Relations within Christian commune, as well as relations between God and Christ and between God and humans will be analyzed from the same social perspective, including sense of identity and power game.

1.3 The research history and the research problem

The Christian movement originated from within the Jewish community and was thoroughly Jewish in the beginning. Yet quite soon it moved beyond its Jewish ethnic and religious borders and by the middle of the century the amount of Gentiles among the followers of Jesus was so big that the Jerusalem Council was held to formulate a set of certain boundaries which would separate Christian communities from a polytheist world without making the converted Gentiles to become Jewish (Acts 15:1-29). The difficulties of finding this new identity of a new religious community are reflected in the New Testament texts, especially in the letters of Paul, who believed his specific mission was to invite Gentiles into the Christian commune (Gal 1:16).

In recent years, the issue of Early Christian identity has been widely discussed. The question of the concept itself, referring to the early Christian groups, the differences between Christian communities’ self-identity and ethnic, national and religious identity of Greeks, Romans and Jews of the first and second centuries CE were addressed. The fact that in the first century of CE Christian communities were struggling to find their own identity, i.e. their place among social structures of the Roman Empire, became a common place.

While identity formation and terminology referring to it have been analyzed from different perspectives, the idea of interdependency between identity and practice of social values has been stated by some scholars. Yet the term “social value” itself remains rather unclear. Most of the time in historical-anthropological studies of the New Testament texts, the term “(social) values” is used referring to (articulated) ideology or certain types of practice, as models of behavior or moral/physical qualities, considered as “good” or “preferable” and encouraged by society. In this sense, the term “value” can describe categories of different levels:


like “honor”\textsuperscript{18} and “maleness,” “wealth” and “courage,” “beauty” and “power,” “chastity” and “piety,”\textsuperscript{19} “prohibition of murder” and distinctive Jewish value like “the Sabbath” and so on.\textsuperscript{20} Such an approach, though helpful for historical and anthropological studies, fails for sociological analysis. To understand the nature and dynamic of social processes, one must distinguish between value-orientation systems (or basic values), which lie underneath the culture, and secondary expressions/practices of these values, which actually represent the culture of a certain social group.

The absence of this distinction, so common for Biblical social studies, leads to misinterpretation of the conflict between cultural groups. The causes and the consequences of certain behavior and evaluation of it are also mixed up. In the result of this, the social/cultural phenomena of different levels are lumped together, general concepts are not been separated from particular cases, and finally, the nature of the conflict between ethnic and religious groups becomes even more mysterious than ever. Though all the qualities and states listed above can be valued by a certain social


\textsuperscript{20} Van der Watt, “Radical Social Redefinition,” 111-112. Van der Watt does not only distinguish “common Mediterranean values” shared by all Mediterranean societies (like certain family system, already mentioned prohibition of murder and false witness), and Jewish value system, which includes additional values of Sabbath, honoring the only one God, food laws etc. (idem.). Van der Watt argues that Jesus and his followers kept Jewish values, yet reinterpreted them “in the light of the presence of Jesus” (ibid. p.129). Although this view goes along with the hypothesis of this study, the terminology should be clarified: what Van der Watt calls “Jewish value system” should be rather called identity markers, while values themselves and value system are much more profound concept, the underlying structure of society (see chapter 2 of this study).
group, they cannot be seen (analyzed) as being homogeneous. They refer to different sides of the life of an individual and society; they also have a certain ranging: some of them are central, others are secondary and are esteemed only because of their connection to the central ones. The difference between basic and secondary values can also be seen as the difference between goals and means: for example, wealth and physical strength are valuable only because they serve to achieve power and honor.

There are many examples of misunderstanding and that are confusing in social studies of the New Testament. For example, David de Silva speaks of “the alternative system of values,” which Christians were committed to;²¹ beside the unclear use of the term “system of values,” Christians’ understanding of honor issues does not seem to be so alternative to that of their non-Christian neighbors. De Silva speaks about the contradiction between Christian ethics of forgiveness and Greco-Roman ethics of honor,²² while just some pages earlier he himself explains that Jesus’ parable (Matt 18:23-35) is not about one skipping one’s ambitions, but rather about the caution not to show disrespect “for God’s honor and patience.”²³ The contradiction between Christian and non Christian values is rather seeming than real, and can be confusing if only one does not make out the difference between general ideas of values and particular cases of their practicing.

De Silva is not alone in his opinion of Christianity offering “the alternative system of values.” So says Crossan, for instance: according to him, social program of Jesus “is pointed directly and deliberately at the intersection of patronage and

---

²² Ibid. 65.
²³ Ibid. 62.
clientage, honor and shame, the very heart of Mediterranean society.”

Crossan, furthermore, says that shared meals were “a strategy for rebuilding peasant community on radically different principles than those of honor and shame, patronage and clientage.”

In the recent studies of Paul’s letter to Philippians this understanding of Christian identity and values is a widespread view. Over and over again researchers repeat that the values of Jesus’ followers contradict the values of their non-Christian milieu, that Christians introduce new values such as love, compassion, humbleness, and suffering. Allegedly, two systems of values existed: a non-Christian one, where honor, pride, courage, strength, well-being, etc. took the central place; and a Christian system of values, where humbleness, suffering, and forgiving were at the core. Hellerman writes: “God’s value system is utterly unlike that reflected in the social world of Roman Philippi.”

Witherington argues that in Philippians, “some” of the Greco-Roman cultural values “could be affirmed when they comported with Christian values;” and the values characterized as “true,” “pure” and so on (Phil 4:8) could be accepted, others have to undergo a “critical shifting… with sieve of Christian values and believes.”

Yet such an approach generates some analytical ambiguity and methodological questions. David de Silva argues: “Christians lost their place and

---

25 Ibid. 332, italics added.
standing in the society, stripped their reputation for being reliable citizens because of their commitment to an alternate system of values, religious practices, and social relationships.”

The question is, which was the cause and which one was its consequence, i.e. Christians’ commitment to “the alternate system of values,” or their dissociation from society? Christians valued sufferings, which were the result of persecution from the dominant culture; yet the dominant culture persecuted Christians, because they had different values (such as suffering instead of well-being or humbleness instead of honor-pursuing). What arouse first then, disgrace or rejection of honor; persecution or high evaluation of suffering? The model does not explain clearly enough why Christians developed an alternative system of values; it also cannot explain the proximity between Christian and philosophical cultures.

James Smith, in his deconstructing reading of Philippians underlines that “Paul can only think and say what the language and structures of his culture allow. The implication is that Paul’s “theology” can only ever be based upon a logocentric pre-text: the immanent features of his social discourse.”

He writes that “Pauline theology is troubled when it fails to take into consideration the presence of underlying social and ideological structures, because Paul’s text is already

---


constrained by them.” This “troubled reading” happens when one supposes that Paul offers an alternative setting of social values, totally different from his cultural matrix. One has to assume an extra-cultural invention, and interpret the Christ-event in a theological, not sociological perspective (what Nebreda admits he does). Though we do not reject the possibility of super-natural (i.e. extra-cultural) invention, we strongly believe that every one of such inventions of God (i.e. super-natural one) can only be seen, understood and verbalized in terms of the existed human culture, common for the recipients of this invention.

Besides, if Christian values are so radically different from these of non-Christian society, then it is doubtful that the study of the Hellenistic culture can be helpful in understanding the processes which took place in the Early Christian Church. And if one admits the succession of the cultures, then one needs to define in which sense the culture and values of Christian communities remain the same as those of the social milieu from which it has originated, and what exactly the difference is. In other words, in what terms the continuity and discontinuity of Christian culture has been manifested. These terms can be identified only if one has a clear definition of values, i.e. a precise category for comparison. And first of all, the correlation between values and identity must be clarified.

There has been awareness among the scholars, the awareness of the fact that identity and honor are closely connected. The very notion of honor is a social matter,

---

32 Smith, *Marks of an Apostle*, 155. Cf. Moxnes: “honor-system was more than a “cultural” element… [but] expressed the very character of the political system, it was power made visible. This explains Paul’s acceptance of the honor system…[his] criticism of the honor culture therefore had certain given limits” (“The Quest for Honor and the Unity of the Community in Romans 12 and in the Orations of Dio Chrysostom,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004) 203-230, on p. 229).

33 Nebreda, *Christ Identity*, 64.
especially in a collectivistic society of the 1st century. Witherington writes: “‘honor’ and ‘shame’ in the culture Paul lived in… do not primarily refer to feelings of honor and shame, …but rather to being honored or disgraced in public.” Honor-shame system is a key mean for maintenance of group sustainability: the society encourages the behavior which serves the group’s stability and strength; the same way it suppresses the behavior which jeopardizes them. Stability and strength refer both to biological and social survival of the group: in the mixed society, a dominant culture tends to assimilate minor groups; so the honor-shame system serves the preservation of the group’s very existence. In other words, the aim of an honor-shame system is to keep the members of the group being loyal and conformed to it. And here again, one needs to carefully distinguish between goals and means: an honor and shame system is not just about certain behavioral patterns; these patterns are merely the signs of being conformed to the group. Hence, the key here is the group: certain behavior is considered “honorable” or “shameful” only because it is profitable or not for the group; and though the group’s morality is often presented as the ultimate one, the understanding of what is honorable and what is shameful depends on the group.


35 See sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of this study.

36 Moxnes agrees that Paul’s criticism of the honor culture is limited by “the area of self-determination for the group in question…[the goal is] the common good… of the group, unity and harmony instead of strife…” (“The Quest for Honor,” 229). David de Silva demonstrates how the author of the letter to the Hebrews uses honor and shame language to promote loyalty to and solidarity within the Christian group (D. de Silva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Revised edition; SBL: Studies in Biblical Literature 21; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008)).
Among the most recent social studies of the letter to the Philippians, the theme of honor and identity is rather popular. Special attention is given to the Christological hymn (2:6-11) as to a paradigm of honorable behavior for the in-Christ group. In most cases, however, scholars follow the common tendency to mix social values and their practice, to interpret Paul’s admonition of rejection honor-competition as rejection of honor itself, and to see the Christological hymn (2:5-11) as promoting a self-denial behavior, totally strange to the understanding of what is honorable for a Roman colony of the 1st century CE. J.P. Heil studied the letter to Philippians as a chiastically structured piece which “encourages its audience to rejoice… in *their being conformed to the selfless, humble mindset*, that enabled Jesus to obediently accept the suffering and death *which resulted* in exaltation as the universal Lord.”

Analyzing the letter to Philippians – having Roman culture as the point of reference – has become a tradition due to the number of archeological evidences and the primary sources, which speak for the Roman character of the town.

So Flemming writes that “self-emptying Lord” of the hymn “…subverts Caesar’s claims to universal dominion,… [and] also turns the whole Roman value system of what constitutes honor and power on its head.” This view is shared by other scholars such as Oakes, Witherington, who read the hymn 2:6-11 as “a

---


withering critique of the emperor cult;"\textsuperscript{41} and Brawley, who calls the story described in the hymn as “Jesus experience of imperial system.”\textsuperscript{42} Heen argues that the hymn is “a pointed critique” of those who “grasped after honor…in the first place…of the emperor.”\textsuperscript{43} Joseph Hellerman interprets the hymn as \textit{cursus pudorum}, i.e. as a challenge to \textit{cursus honorum}; he concludes that Paul did not reject “in principle the social realities of honor and shame,” but “sought to reconstruct” them, to promote “a radically alternative set of attitudes and… behavior to be honored in Christian commune.”\textsuperscript{44} Hellerman argues that “God’s value system is utterly unlike that reflected in the social world of Roman Philippi.”\textsuperscript{45}

Sergio Nebreda criticizes Hellerman for the lack of “a concrete social location” of his reconstructed Christian community in Philippi,\textsuperscript{46} and starts his analysis with a higher level of abstraction using Social Identity Theory.\textsuperscript{47} Yet he comes to the same conclusion: identity is built upon honor: a person identifies

\textsuperscript{41} Witherington, \textit{Paul’s Letter to Philippians}, 156.


\textsuperscript{44} Hellerman, \textit{Reconstructing Honor}, 165. Cf. G. Sergienko: “Paul undoubtedly capitalizes on the Philippians’ love of honor, introducing, however, a significantly revised version of the \textit{courses honorum}. For whereas in the conventions of Greco-Roman culture the way to honor through self-aggrandizement and self-assertion, in Christianity it lay through humility and self-denial” (G. Sergienko “’Our \textit{Politeuma} is in Heaven!’: Paul’s Polemical Engagement with the ‘Enemies of the Cross of Christ’ in Philippians 3:18-20” (PhD dissertation. School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2011) 144). Cf. D. Watson’s study on Messianic secret in Mark: “Mark’s Jesus does not dispense with honor; rather, he turns it on its head” (D.F. Watson, \textit{Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010) 140). Watson speaks of “modified honor-shame values;” he argues that “the distinctions of status and honor were inverted, so that serving, rather than ruling, was most honored” (ibid. 141).

\textsuperscript{45} Hellerman, \textit{Reconstructing Honor}, 149.

\textsuperscript{46} Nebreda, \textit{Christ Identity}, 64-65.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 36-45.
him/herself with something honorable; when it turns out that Christ goes through shameful events, when Christ behaves shamefully, the Christian group re-evaluates values and prescribes an honorable status to self-giving, humbleness and absence of ambitions, by this creating a new set of values.\textsuperscript{48} That is, the Christological hymn is read over against the Greco-Roman culture of competitiveness, the hymn is interpreted as promoting “counter-cultural”\textsuperscript{49} and “radically alternative”\textsuperscript{50} values of humbleness and self-giving. According to Nebreda, Paul “uses [the hymn] as the basis for an alternative life-style to the status-quo in the colony.”\textsuperscript{51}

Yet such interpretation of early Christian communities’ comprehension of the Christ event supposes two points. Firstly, that means that though the role of honor-shame system is to control an individual’s behavior, in this case the behavior of an individual (Christ) destroys the traditional system of values. At the same time we know that despite the Christ-event, the honor-shame system has survived over centuries till now.\textsuperscript{52} Besides, as it was pointed above, it is not clear where the new model of behavior comes from in the first place; and the scholars have to explain it theologically, by the super-natural intervention, which goes beyond scientific analysis.

Secondly, Nebreda’s and Hellerman’s interpretations suppose that the values themselves remain the same: it is still honor what is valuable. A Christian community controls the behavior of its members the same way a non-Christian community does it: by honoring certain conduct and shaming the deviants.

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid. 28-32.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid. 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Hellerman, \textit{Reconstructing Honor}, 165.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Nebreda, \textit{Christ Identity}, 64.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} See section 2.1.4 of this study.
\end{enumerate}
Witherington demonstrates how Paul uses honor-shame rhetoric, shaming the wrong behavior and promoting (honoring) the one he wants his readers to conduct. So, what has really changed is a means – self-denial vs. self-boasting, while the goal remains the same: it is glorification and receiving honor. Yet even the means seem to stay the same: denial of transient pleasure and comfort, readiness to suffer and even to die for the sake of future honor as a hero were part of Greco-Roman military’s and athletes’ ethics.

Paul hardly had a selfless and humble mindset; he rather aspired for exaltation with Christ and was rather sensitive to his leading position within Christian community. It is this aspiring for exaltation which resulted in suffering, and not vice versa. Joseph Marchal offers a feminist view of Paul’s letter to Philippians. His “hermeneutic of suspicion” allows him to see in the apostle’s argumentation a promotion of a hierarchical type of relations, typical for the Greco-Roman world. He argues that the rhetoric of Paul is “far from running counter to imperial ideology in the first century.” According to Marchal, power dynamics inside the Christian community is very much the same as outside of it. Marchal is not alone in this. Karl

53 Cf. Sergienko, “Our Politeuma is in Heaven,” 144.
Galinsky, along with other contributors of the book “Roman and Religion. A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult,” maintains that the post-colonial view on the relationship between Christian movement and Roman empire as being sharp opposition, should be changed now to viewing these relationships as rather juxtaposition or competition.

Witherington, Nebreda, Hellerman and others agree that the Christian groups value honor; the practice of this value, though, is different from the outer world. The key point here is the group, where the value is practiced. That is why identity, i.e. belonging to a certain group, becomes crucial for understanding both social value and its embodiment. In our view, the letter to Philippians speaks not about an alternative life-style, yet about alternative identity. We argue that in the Christian commune the values, as well as the honor-shame system, remain the same as what they are in a non-Christian society. What is changed is identity, i.e. the setting where these values are practiced.

In her article on “The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas,” Anna Solevåg demonstrates how a Christian community reinterprets and re-establishes the social status of two female martyrs. She notes that the text reproduces “society’s patriarchal norms within the Christian community” and what seems to be (from a Roman


58 See J.C. Hanges, “To Complicate Encounters: A Response to Karl Galinsky’s “The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Diveder?” in Roman and Religion, 27-34.


perspective) a disrespect to *paterfamilias* and disloyalty to the emperor, becomes “at the cosmic level” an honored submission to a true *paterfamilias* and an allegiance to a true emperor (God); and shamefully suffering women can still be seen as a respectable matron\(^61\) and even a heroic man.\(^62\) Solevåg says that the text of “The Martyrdom...” does not attempt “to subvert any categories, but to subvert the meaning of the still respected categories of emperor/empire, father/family and masculinity.”\(^63\) I would say that the text suggests setting a different perspective, or, in terms that Solevåg herself uses, re-casting the roles.\(^64\) So, it is not the values or society’s norms of behavior that are re-established; it is reality which the Christian community faces (persecution, suffering and shame), which is reinterpreted in a way it befits the conventional system of values.

Recasting of the roles, when God becomes the emperor and the ultimate *paterfamilias*, means nothing but changing one’s identity. Changing one’s identity supposes changing one’s honor-bestower. A honor-shame system regulates the relationship within a Christian community, among its members, and also between an individual and God. In our opinion, the conflict between Christians and non-Christians, as well as between Jews and non-Jews was not about predominant values, and even not about main cultural rituals, as they all belonged to a Mediterranean type of culture. Their conflict was about identities: what group does one belong to? Who

\(^{61}\) Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas – Reinterpreting Empire,” 277-78. Cf. G. Theissen: “It is obvious that the bond with the emperor and the bond with the *kyrios* Jesus Christ have some structural similarities”: same terminology, soteriology, and “even ecclesiology shows a structural kinship, with its ‘sense of empire’” (*The Social Reality and Early Christianity*, 273).


\(^{63}\) Ibid. 283.

\(^{64}\) Ibid. 283.

© University of Pretoria
is my court of reputation? Who is my ultimate honor-bestower? Whose opinion matters?

It is reasonable, then, to investigate how one’s understanding of what is honorable and what are the way’s of achieving honor, depend on one’s identity, i.e. on one’s associating with a certain group. And also how one group’s understanding of honorable behavior is seen from the perspective of another group.

*Hence, the aim of the present research is to analyze how such social categories as identity and honor are presented in Paul’s letter to Philippians.*

The confusion of “honored shame” is especially obvious in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. The so-called Christological hymn (2:6-11) has received special attention by scholars who study the honor value and identity in Early Christian communities.65

Unity and loyalty to the Christian community is one of the most important themes of the letter to the Philippians.66 Thus, it is important to start the analysis from the question of identity, i.e. from the fact that now the group, in which the honor-shame system works in, includes God as the ultimate patron and honor-bestower. The so-called hymn (2:6-11) should be read with the focus on the group which the game of honor delivery is played in. Taking into account the identity issue, one can see that the rules of the acquiring honor within the “in-Christ” group are not that different from these of Roman society. Perceiving what is good for the group-

---

members, working hard for the group interest, loyalty to the group, absolute obedience to its leader – these are honored in the Christian community. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, hence, is a perfect example of first, the interdependence and interrelations of honor and identity, and second, of the continuation between Greco-Roman social values and these of the “in-Christ” group.

### 1.4 The outline of the research

The aim of the present research is to fill in the existing gap in theoretical considerations of the social-scientific approach to the New Testament texts, namely to clarify the relation between identity and social values. It will be analyzed, how the two concepts correlate, where they overlap and how they differ. The understanding of identity and social values, driven from contemporary sociology, will be heuristically applied to the text of the letter to the Philippians and checked against it.

In the second chapter, the detailed definition of the main terms will be given: the meaning of the words like values, value-systems, culture, identity, and group will be discussed, as well as the relation between the concepts. The central social values of the Mediterranean culture type will be defined, and the variations of their practice in the Roman Empire, such as patronage and benefactor-beneficiary relationships, will also be described. At the end of the second chapter the possible models of acquiring honor in ancient Philippi will be discussed; the language of honor and identity in Paul’s letter to the Philippians will be analyzed.
The third chapter of the research will be devoted to the theme of identity in the letter to the Philippians. We will analyze how Paul forces the new identity of his readers – as the “in-Christ” group members – both positively (by encouraging their unity in Christ) and negatively (by dissociating from the non-members). Paul’s own example of changed identity (Phil 3:4-11) will also be studied.

The fourth chapter will deal with honor in the letter to the Philippians. We will see how the Christological hymn (2:6-11) and its context present honor and the way of acquiring it. We will also investigate how Paul describes his own strategy of achieving honor within the “in-Christ” community.

The results of the research will be summarized in the fifth chapter: Conclusion.
CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL VALUES AND IDENTITY IN THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

2.1 Key terms: values, identity and honor

To avoid the common confusion mentioned in the “Methodology,” we need to define “values” as a sociological term. Special attention will be paid to basic values (or value-orientation; system of values) of a culture. It will be demonstrated that one’s sense of identity is rather based on one’s culture than on one’s value-orientation (the latter mostly remains implicit).

2.1.1 Values and culture

The most well-known definition of the term “value” belongs to the pioneer of social values analysis, C. Kluckhohn, who first introduced the term “value-orientation” and “value-orientation system” in 1951. According to Kluckhohn, a value is “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means,

and ends of action.”\(^2\) In other words, values determine one’s “definition of rationality” and hence, also one’s behavior.\(^3\) Though values are not visible and not necessarily clearly verbalized, they are expressed in cultural phenomena, and hence, can be extracted or reconstructed from them (i.e. from cultural phenomena) by an observer or by an actor him/herself. This ability to be verbalized (“verbalizability”) is what distinguishes value from instincts.\(^4\) After all, “man is an evaluating animal.”\(^5\)

The reconstruction of values from practice is not an easy assignment. As every culture is heterogeneous, values and practice can contradict each other.\(^6\) So, speaking of a system of values which is a characteristic for a certain culture, one can speak rather about the dominant value-orientation, remembering that it can vary from individual to individual (especially in heterogeneous, individualistic societies, like modern Western ones).

A system of values\(^7\) forms a core element of culture.\(^8\) To visualize the relations between values and other elements of culture, Hofstede uses a diagram of

---


\(^3\) G. Hofstede, Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in work-related values (Cross-Cultural Research and Methodology Series; London: Sage, 1984) 18.

\(^4\) Kluckhohn, “Values and Value-orientations,” 397.


\(^6\) J.K. Chance, “The Anthropology of Honour and Shame: Culture, Values, and Practice,” in Simea 68 (1996) 139-51, on pp. 146-148; cf. D.D. Gilmore, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area,” in Annual reviews in Anthropology 11 (1982) 175-211, on p. 180; see Hofstede Culture’s Consequences: International, 19-20 on the difference between values as desired and values as desirable (i.e. what one ought to desire according to one’s society’s approval, probably ideology). Though Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck repeatedly maintain, different individuals belonged to one culture can have different value-orientations (F. Kluckhohn and F. Strodtbeck, Variations in Value-Orientations (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1961), it is true rather for XX\(^{th}\) century society; ancient cultures were more homogenous.

\(^7\) System of values, or “value-orientation.” “Value-orientations are complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically
concentric circles ("the Onion Diagram"), where the inner one is values, while the outer ones are rituals, heroes, and symbols:

The outer circles are practical expressions of the inner one. These expressions differ from culture to culture, as well as values themselves can be different in different cultures. And as values remain invisible, the rituals, heroes and symbols, i.e. practical embodiment or realization of the values, are what distinguish one culture from another one.

---


9 Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing*, 11, exhibit 1.4: “The ‘Onion Diagram.’ Manifestation of culture at different levels of depth.”
The most well known social-anthropological classification of values belongs to F. Kluckhohn and F. Strodtbeck. In 1961, they proposed to analyze systems of values using five dimensions (according to five “common human problems”): man-nature (-supernature) orientation; time orientation; activity orientation; relational orientation; nature of man orientation. This classification is usually used in social-scientific studies of the New Testament: the table of values of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck is used for explanation of the difference between the culture behind the New Testament and that of the contemporary, westernized (20th century United States) reader.

In this research, we do not attempt to study all the values of Paul’s contemporary society. Our interest is limited to social values, i.e. to those, which have been named by Kluckhohn as relational ones. In every culture, human relations can be analyzed in two basic categories: first, “communial sharing” (sense of

---

10 Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck, Variations, 10-20.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck also mentioned the sixth dimension, namely “man’s conception of space and his place in it” (Variations, 10, n.16). Nonetheless, the dimension had not been contemplated thoroughly. It can probably be related to the conception of “limited goods,” see G. Foster, “Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good,” in American Anthropologist 67 (1965) 239-315.


common identity as “us” and difference form “them”), i.e. determination of external borders of the group; and second, regarding to relations among the members of the group, (the ranking of authority, matching equality, etc.),\textsuperscript{13} i.e. power game(s) and distribution of goods inside the group.

In other words, relational values should be investigated in two main directions: belonging to a group (group-identity) and relations inside this group (personal identity).

### 2.1.2 Identity

The term “identity” derives from the Latin adjective \textit{idem} meaning “the same,” i.e. it has comparative nature and emphasizes sameness or oneness with others.\textsuperscript{14} One’s identity formation happens through one’s identification with others or through one’s dissociation from others.\textsuperscript{15} Hence, by definition, human identity has a social or collectivistic nature;\textsuperscript{16} identity can take place only in a group: one can identify oneself only in relation to (an)other one(s).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} See Berry at al., \textit{Cross-Cultural Psychology}, 56.
\end{itemize}
Sociologically speaking, identity is a result of “naming, of placing ourselves in socially constructed categories, and language becomes central in this process.”

That means that first, one’s identity is expressed in terms of one’s culture and consequently the second, one’s identity reflects core values of one’s culture.

One should keep in mind that identity and culture are not equal. Culture, as we have seen, consists of two “layers”: the inner (or invisible) one, and the outer (visible) one. One’s sense of identity is based on one’s attitude to the outer layer of culture, i.e. to the language, models of behavior, norms, symbols, images and so on. The inner layer of values, which the culture is actually built upon, remains in the shadow, as one is not necessarily aware of the very existence of these values (as values are not necessarily verbalized). Different cultures can share the same values and practice them differently; more than that, different cultures can share both some values and some of their practices. Hence, people can share values and even some practices, yet they can have different identities.

Though based on the value-practice, identity has strong connection with values themselves. As identity takes place on the visible or verbalized level of culture, it is possible to trace the values of the culture by analyzing the language,

---


18 See Hofstede, Culture’s Consequences: Comparing, 10.

19 For example, both the Muslim and Christian population of contemporary Turkey share such a social value as collectivism. They both express this value by having numerous families and by keeping the members of the extended family close. Yet they definitely keep different identities. See Hofstede, Culture’s Consequences: Comparing, 10 for more examples. See also F. Barth on ethnic character of Christian identity: Christians shared values with Greco-Romans and Jews, but distinguished themselves “ethnically,” where “ethnic” difference in fact is “religious” one (F. Barth, “Vvedenie” [“Introduction”] in Etnicheskiye Gruppi i socialnie granitsi: Socialnaja organizacija kulturnich raslichii (Russian translation of Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference (ed. F. Barth; Bergen-Oslo, London: Universitets Forlaget, George Allen and Unwin, 1969). Moscow: Novoe Izdatelstvo, 2006) 9-48).
which one uses to articulate one’s identity: a person would use the most significant
categories in the given circumstances for identifying him/herself. Accordingly,
depending on the most important values of the society one belongs to, one’s self-
identification would be expressed differently. Sociological questionnaires
demonstrate that people whose values are highly individualistic, would express their
identities in individualistic terms.\textsuperscript{20} In that context, Paul’s self-description in Phil 3:5
(“I am… of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to
the Law, a Pharisee…”) indicates strong collectivist orientation, which demands,
particularly, an association with an ethnic-religious group.

As identity is a result of one’s location in society, it implies bordering,
blundering: one puts a boundary between oneself (“me” or “us”) and “others”
(“you,” “him/her,” “them”). According to Frederik Barth, “society is an entity which
rejects or discriminates others.”\textsuperscript{21} Hofstede points out that “[a] shared identity needs
a shared Other.”\textsuperscript{22} In other words, self-identity has both positive and negative aspects
(though both are not always clearly articulated) and answers both questions: “Whom
I belong to?” and “Whom I do not belong to?” The statement “I am A” supposes
(and often is followed by) the statement “I am not B.”\textsuperscript{23} Returning to Paul’s self-
identification in Phil 3:5-6: by describing himself as “circumcised by the eighth day,”
the apostle separates himself from the nations who did not practice circumcision (like

\begin{footnotes}
\item See Hofstede, \textit{Culture’s Consequences: Comparing}, 227-234, referring to Bochner, “Perspectives
on Inquiry II: Theories and Stories,” in \textit{Handbook of Interpersonal Communications}. (2\textsuperscript{nd} edition;
\item Barth, “Vvedenie,” 11. Here and down, the quotations from F. Barth 2006 are translated from
Russian into English by me – M.K.
\item Hofstede, \textit{Culture’s Consequences: Comparing}, 10.
\item For example, if one says: “I am Caucasian” means one is not African or Asiatic; and if one says: “I
am German” supposes one separates oneself not so much from Africans of Asiatics, as form
British, Slavic or French people.
\end{footnotes}
Greeks and Romans); as an Israelite, he separates himself from Semites who did practice circumcision but did not originate from Israel; as Benjaminite, he is different from Samaritans and/or from other tribes of Israel which “broke from the house of David” (2 Ch 10:19); as a Pharisee, he does not share the interpretations of the law of Sadducees and Essenes.

The identity mark – a sign or language which indicates one’s belonging to a certain group – by definition belongs to the outer layer of culture. It can be a certain language, or hero, or ritual, or symbol, which serves as a group’s boundary and is to discern between the groups. Identity marks are revered by the members of the group: maintaining the boundaries strengthens the group’s identity (i.e. the group’s very existence); threatening or disrespect of the identity mark is a threat or disrespect to the group itself.\footnote{E.J. Christiansen, \textit{A Covenant in Judaism and Paul. A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers}. Leiden/New York/Koeln: Brill, 1995) 321-324. Christiansen studies the texts of Rom 9-11, Gal and 1 Cor. In the letter to Philippians baptism is not mentioned and it is not the identity mark of the Christian commune (see section 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.3.2 of this study).}

For Jewish people, the identity mark was circumcision; circumcision separated them, the people of covenant, from the outsiders (Gentiles). When the followers of Jesus changed the identity mark of people of covenant from circumcision to baptism,\footnote{“Survival of an ethnic group depends on stability of its borders” (Barth, “Vvedenie,” 16).} it entailed the consequences of changed identity and changed “others.”

One’s identity usually has different levels: one can identity oneself as a parent (regarding to one’s children), as a child (regarding to one’s parents), as a student, and as a tutor (if one works part-time helping some school kids with their homework). People can also share both values and culture, share same identities on some levels, while keeping different identities on other levels: the tribe of Judah is
different from that of Benjamin, but they have both kept loyalty to the Mosaic Law and in that sense they shared their identity against that of Gentiles.  

On the example of the section from the letter to the Philippians chapter 3, we have seen that an individual is always related to one or another group, and respectively, always considers him/herself as different from the group(s) of “others.” And here the term “group” should be clarified. If an individual can be defined physically (one human being), then a group is not simply a number of individuals. The key here is the sense of identity: “a social group” is a number of people “perceived as a ‘group’ by themselves or by others,” have a sense of identity and feeling of belonging.” In other words, members of the group share identity and perceive themselves as “us,” while out-groups remain “them.” The only difference between the two is perception: “we” belong to our group, “they” do not. That is why quite often, in-group’s characteristics are considered as good ones, while that of out-groups are bad. The existence and even demonization of out-groups also

---

26 In Social Identity Theory (SIT) this multiple and contextual character of one’s identity is called “identity salience” – depending on the context and social situation, one social role (identity) can be more important than others (see S. Stryker and R.T. Serpe, “Identity Salience and Psychological Centrality: Equivalent, Overlapping, or Complementary Concepts?” in Social Psychology Quaterly 57 (1994) 16-35, on p. 17). Brawley explains that in Phil 3:5-9, Paul did not reject his Jewish identity; he rather made his identity in Christ a priority here for rhetorical reasons (cf. Paul’s salience of his Jewish identity in Rom 11) (Brawley, “From Reflex to Reflection,” 131).


28 R.T. Schnaefar and R.P. Lamm, Sociology (New-York: McGraw-Hill, 1986) 446). In Schaefer and Lamm, it is a part of definition for “community” which is, in their interpretation, different from “group” (for their definition of “group,” see ibid. 131). In this study, we do not distinguish between “community” and “group.”

29 Schaefer and Lamm, Sociology, 132; see also Triandis, “Cross-Cultural Studies,” 52-53.

“promotes a sense of belonging,” and hence, it helps not only to build positive self-identity of the members of the group, but also to strengthen the relations inside the group. Dissociation from the opponents in the letter to Philippians also seems rather helping to promote Christians’ unity than disputing with real enemies.

2.1.3 Individual and group: dynamic of relations

There is a dynamic in relations between an individual and his/her own group: besides having the sense of identity in terms of “belonging” (group-identity), i.e. one’s self-location in the group, one also locates oneself inside the social structure of the very group (personal identity). In other words, beside horizontal self-location, or delimiting oneself from out-groups, one also finds one’s role inside the group, and by doing this, one delimits oneself from other individuals of one’s group. The extent of freedom one has in one’s group determines the collectivist or individualistic character of the group. In collectivist societies one’s role in the group is assigned to a greater extent by the group (i.e. according to the group’s traditions, opinion of other members, and also by one’s gender, belonging to a certain family, etc.), while in individualistic societies one can self-locate oneself more independently.

31 Schnaefer and Lamm, Sociology, 132.


33 See D. de Silva (D. de Silva, “No Confidence in the Flesh: The Meaning and Function of Philippians 3.2-21,” Trinity Journal 15 (1994) 27-54) and also the section 3.1.2 of this study.

34 Only to a certain degree, as one still remains inside the group.

35 Though originally collectivism and individualism were seen as polar opposites on a single dimension, nowadays sociologists try to approach them as “conceptually and empirically
As group-oriented (collectivist) societies one’s self-esteem is strongly correlated to what sense of worth one receives from one’s group, all these societies are characterized by having some sort of honor-shame system, i.e. a system of public evaluation of one’s socialization success, one’s integration into a group.

2.1.4 Honor, shame, and "a significant other"

The origin and existence of the honor and shame system can be attributed to the concentration of social power among aristocracy in stratified societies, but it rather should be explained by the collectivist character of the societies, i.e. by the fact that independent” (Berry et al., Cross-Cultural Psychology, 69. Scholars offer a three-dimensional division: collectivism (individual and collective), individualism (independent, autonomous, agentic, separate), and a relational dimension (individual to other individuals, to other selves) (Y. Kashima, S. Yamaguchi, U. Kim, S.-C. Choi, M. Gelfand, and M. Yuki, “Culture, Gender, and Self: A Perspective from individualism-collectivism research,” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69 (1995) 925-337, on pp. 925-926). Collectivism and individualism can co-exist in one culture (Triandis, “Cross-Cultural Studies,” 43; see Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Variations, 17-18, where they argue they collectivism and individualism “always” co-exist), besides, there are different kinds of both in the society and in one person. Firstly, both individualism and collectivism can vary being high or low in power distance (see Hofstede, Culture’s Consequences: Comparing, 209-2012; see also H.C. Triandis and M.J. Gelfand, “Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism,” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 74/1 (1998) 118-128). Secondly, a person can behave as an individualist in one relationship and as a collectivist in others: for example, familism is a way of behavior when one demonstrates collectivist tendencies being inside one’s own family, and behaves as an individualist being outside it. For the purpose of this study, we will concentrate primarily on collectivist societies, though keeping in mind that individualistic tendencies can also be present there (Triandis, “Cross-Cultural Studies,” 109).


one is extremely oriented toward one’s group and receives both sense of identity and evaluation (sense of worth) from the group.\textsuperscript{39} F. Barth notes that “because the very belonging to a group supposes possession of basic identity, it also supposes aspire to evaluate and to be evaluated according to standards, relevant to this identity.\textsuperscript{40} That means that identity (i.e. one’s correlation with other(s)) is tightly connected with evaluation, i.e. with a sense of honor or shame. It is nobody else but the group who defines what is honorable and what is shameful.

As Aristotle puts it: “Honor is a sort of measure of worth” (\textit{Rhet.} I.VII.30).\textsuperscript{41} Shame, in turn, is not just “dishonor,”\textsuperscript{42} but also very much “a kind of pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds… which seem to…bring dishonor” (\textit{Rhet.} II.6.2; \textit{Eth.Nic.} 3.8.1-3 sense of shame as a virtue). In other words, shame is the very “[sensitivity] to the judgment of others,” both positive and negative.\textsuperscript{43} It is necessary to clarify, nonetheless that “the judgment of others” matters only in the case if they are not just any others, but significant ones. One’s “significant others” are these who

\textsuperscript{39} See also Brandes referring to the studies of honor-shame system in non-Mediterranean societies (“Reflection on Honor,” 121).

\textsuperscript{40} Barth, “Vvedenie,” 16.


\textsuperscript{42} For honor and shame are not pure antonyms (opposites), see M. Herzfeld, “Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems,” \textit{Man} 15 (1980) 339-51. On the opposition of shame and guilt (respectively, public (social) status and personal emotions; or external one and internal one), see J. Stiebert, \textit{The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible. The Prophetic Contribution} (JSOTSup 346; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 6-12; on the critique (shame is sociological category, while guilt itself and well as the relations between shame and guilt are rather psychological ones) see Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers, “Introduction,” 8.

first, belong to one’s group, and second, have power to bestow honor or ostracize a person with dishonor (shame).

With his usual love for details, Aristotle explains that one feels shame for (i.e. is sensitive to the judgment of) “those whom [one] esteem,” who possess some desirable goods and have power to give them to one, who are one’s rival and finally, “those who are likely to be always with [one] or who keep watch upon [one].” Respectively, one has also less sense of shame for strangers, and feels no shame for those whose opinion one does not respect (Rhet. II.6.14-23).

To receive honor, to be acknowledged as an honorable one, one has to meet one’s significant others (i.e. one’s society) expectations.44 This “tyranny of public opinion”45 is the essence of a group-oriented (collectivistic) society and has its original purpose in the preservation of the group. Indeed, honor and shame play a great role in preservation of culture and maintenance of social stability.46 Shame-consciousness is conformity towards one’s group norms and moral code and an agreement to follow them. “Shameless” behavior means nothing else but “antisocial” behavior, and hence, shame is actually “a mechanism of social control.”47 A “shameless” person suffers both social isolation, which often, especially in pre-industrial societies, is also accompanied by the “economic handicap.”48

44 See Rhet. II.6.26 how the opinion of significant others determines one’s behavior.


46 See de Silva, The Hope of Glory, 2-3; idem, Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews (SBL DS 152; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 80-144.


The “social control” of honor and shame is not only about moral codes of the group, but also very much about the borders of the group. In other words, honor and shame not only indicate the success of socialization, but also are the means of socialization processes itself: first of all, they indicate the very fact of one’s belonging to a group. One can be evaluated only if one is included into the evaluation system.\textsuperscript{49} Because inclusiveness into a group is the base for one’s identity in collectivist societies, one’s identity is closely connected with the honor and shame system of the group that one belongs to. The borders of the group separate “significant others” from strangers, i.e. a “court of reputation” from those, who are not included into this court, and hence from those, who are not included into the group itself.\textsuperscript{50} The overlapping between identity and honor is most clearly seen in the ascribed honor, which is received passively, by simple connection (association) with honorable family, person or office.\textsuperscript{51}

The depending of social, and often economical, well-being on the opinion of the significant other(s) explains the correlation of honor and power: the one who bestows honor has control over the one who needs to be acknowledged. So, in collectivist societies the group controls an individual by an honor and shame system, while the individual seeks to meet his/her group’s expectations, conforms to it and stays loyal to the group.

\textsuperscript{49} If one wants to enjoy “the rewards of companionship,” one must “be expected to be included into the gossip. Being gossiped about is as much sigh of belonging to the neighborly network as being gossiped with…no gossip, no companionship” (E. Bott, \textit{Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms, and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed; New York: Free Press, 1971) 67).

\textsuperscript{50} See de Silva, \textit{Despising Shame}, 80-144.

2.2 Honor in the Ancient Mediterranean World

2.2.1 Specific features of Mediterranean honor and shame system

Though the honor and shame system can be found in every group-oriented (collectivist) society, the honor and shame of a “pan-Mediterranean culture type” has its own specific features, which distinguishes it from other collectivist societies all over the world. First, anthropologists point out strong “pervasive sexuality” of honor and shame in the ancient Mediterranean region. That means, men and women have different norms of behavior. Following these norms, they can achieve honor and avoid shame. The expectations from men and women are so different that even their socialization is measured differently: for men the goal is to achieve honor, while for women the main aim is to avoid being called “shameless.” Another very important trait of the Mediterranean honor and shame system is understanding honor as “a sort of limited good.” The ancient Mediterranean area is also characterized by specific family structures: due to ecological and historical factors, a nuclear family


53 And not just “definitions of honorable behavior may vary between genders,” as de Silva puts it (de Silva, *The Hope of Glory*, 13).


55 Brandes, “Reflection on Honor and Shame,” 121-122; see also Foster, “Peasant Society”
(small kinship) is predominant. Together, these factors resulted in male competitiveness. If for women shame-conscience is manifested in the keeping of sexual purity, men are to win their honor in constant competition with other males.

Males compete with each other in order to get higher social status, so the competition over honor includes competition in different aspects of life such as moral and spiritual qualifications, physical strength and wealth. “To be honorable a man must be able to meet the dangers... His ability to do this depends... also upon material circumstances.”57 The connection between honor and wealth on one side, and dishonor and poverty on the other, can be traced in Homer and Hesiod.58

Honor competition, expected from Mediterranean men, can take place only between peers.59 The established (legitimate) inequality in status/honor leaves no room for honor contest, as the honor of the senior has become “unchallengeable,” and/or has evolved into grace, a non-agonistic phenomenon and in this sense opposite to honor,60 so the junior side has nothing to compete over. For example, if


58 Od. 1. 329-3; 11.360-1; “poverty exposes a man to the risk of insult and humiliation” Work and Days 453-4.

59 See Aristotle, Rhet. II.X.5-6: “they envy those who are near them in time, place, age, and reputation... nor those who... are either far interior or superior to him; and the people and things which one envies are on the same footing. And since men strive for honor with those who are competitors, or rivals, who aim same things... whence the saying ‘Potter [being jealous] of potter.’” Cf. also Rhet. II.VI.12: “It is also shameful not to have a share in the honorable things which all men... who resemble us, or the majority of them, have a share with... they are rivals of those who are like them.” Cf. de Silva, The Hope of Glory, 10.

one slaps one’s peer, it is an insult, a challenge to be answered; if one slaps one’s slave (an inferior one), it brings no shame to the slave. Slapping of a king or god is not a challenge, it is a blasphemy; it brings shame on the slapping person and is punished by death. That is why one would never even think of slapping a king or god: they are also outside of the power game.

For a superior person it is normal to demonstrate his/her superiority; the junior one is vulnerable and cannot protect him/herself from being hurt. When a dominant person bestows honor upon these who recognize his honor, power, and superiority, he does not diminish his own honor (as it would happen in the peer competition, when honor is considered as limited good), but quite the contrary, he strengthen his domination. So, while the junior one cannot win honor in the challenge, he still can achieve some by associating with the powerful person. In an unequal relationship there is no contest, but patronage and protectorate in return for the recognition of legitimate honor superiority.

The agonistic character of Mediterranean cultures can be traced from Aristotle’s “men are always contending with [rivals]” (*Rhet.* II. V. 9), to the studies

---

61 “Slaves were outside of the honor-shame game, but not outside of the system... they were always in a state of dishonor” (Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 276).


64 See Pitt-Rivers, “Postscript.”

of contemporary Mediterranean societies in collective essays edited by Peristiany\textsuperscript{66} and Gilmore.\textsuperscript{67} The study of Walcot\textsuperscript{68} represents a special research in continuity of certain cultural features (namely, preoccupation with honor and competitiveness)\textsuperscript{69} between ancient Greece (as it is reflected in the writings of Hesiod and Homer) and modern Greek villages. Although the original function of the honor and shame system is to maintain the stability of society, in ancient Mediterranean societies “there has always existed a tension between co-operation and competition.”\textsuperscript{70}

2.2.2 Honor and power dynamics: patronage, friendship and benefactor-beneficiary relations

As we have seen in the previous section, the honor issue is tightly related to power, social and material resources. Honor distribution correlates with power/material goods distribution: the one who has power, also has honor; stripping of honor (shaming) means deprivation of power and often material goods. Competition exists between equals; the interaction between different strata of society does not involve

\begin{itemize}
\item Walcot, \textit{Greek Peasants}.
\item See especially Walcot, \textit{Greek Peasants}, 57-93.
\item Brandes, “Reflection on Honor and Shame,” 132; Cf. Fisher, \textit{Hybris}, 21-31, and p. 494 for \textit{hybris}, i.e. serious assault (honor challenge) as a main cause of political instability in Ancient Greece. Competitiveness is an individualistic feature (see Hofstede, \textit{Culture’s Consequences: Comparing}, 8-10), and honor and shame system is a characteristic of collectivist society. The very deep integration of honor contest in the ancient Mediterranean honor and shame system supports the relatively recent view of collectivistic and individualistic tendencies as co-existing and non-opposite ones.
\end{itemize}
competition. However, there are also reciprocity relations between unequal parties, yet it is obvious that the inferior side pays back in a different category of good.

Two major models of regulating relations between unequal parties in the Greco-Roman world are patronage/clientage and benefactor/beneficiary relations. These two forms of social exchange are rather similar and often overlap, so they often are treated as synonyms.\textsuperscript{71} Both patronage and benefaction are “asymmetrical relationship; disparity between parties in access to certain goods and services; non-legal/contractual relationship; reciprocity and relationship expected; increase in honor intended; potentially viewed with either favor or distance by the general population; relationship to gods can be expressed in these terms; and the language of grace predominates,”\textsuperscript{72} though some differences between them did exist.\textsuperscript{73}

In his work “Paul as Benefactor,” Joubert argues that benefaction is characterized as rather competitive relations between two equal parties: benefactor and beneficiary.\textsuperscript{74} Indeed, when a benefactor bestowed a luxury gift onto a community/a city, a gift such as athletic games, festivals, new building, and so on, the beneficiary (the community/city) answered him by giving him titles (\textsuperscript{σωτήρ,} ...
euvergetēs, prozēvōs, theōs, etc.), installing inscriptions, awarding him with golden crown and so on.\textsuperscript{75} “which inspires him to further generosity.”\textsuperscript{76} Though notionally benefits were not loans, the reciprocal character of social relations supposed that “the debtor should not only equal the gift bestowed upon him; but his ideal should be to surpass it in deed and spirit.”\textsuperscript{77} Such relations were definitely agonistic; the goal of a benefaction was to increase the benefactor’s honor.

Patron-client relationship, on the other hand, can be described as a more hierarchical type of gift-exchange. Contrary to benefaction, in patronage the power and status difference between the two parties are acknowledged.\textsuperscript{78} The patron provided his client(s) with protection, assistance, when needed – with lands, food and other material goods. The duty of client(s) was mainly to stay loyal and “to support their patron in any way he demanded.”\textsuperscript{79} Sometimes the term “friendship” was used, yet inequality in social statuses of patron and client remained the base of such relationship.\textsuperscript{80} The aim of the patronage relations (“friendship”) was not emotional

\textsuperscript{75} The most extraordinary example is the replacing the existing calendar by taking the birth of Augustus as the beginning of the new year (see Joubert, \textit{Paul as Benefactor}, 52-53, n.110).

\textsuperscript{76} Marshall, \textit{Jesus, Patrons}, 48.

\textsuperscript{77} Joubert, \textit{Paul as Benefactor}, 49. Contra: Z. Crook argues that honorary inscriptions and other expressions of the public’s gratitude “did not place the association or a city in a position of superiority to the benefactor; rather, they appeal to the philotemia of benefactors and patrons... as a form of enticement – if you give to us, you can be sure to receive plenty of honor and gratitude” (Crook, \textit{Reconceptualizing Conversion}, 63).

\textsuperscript{78} Joubert, \textit{Paul as Benefactor}, 24.


affection; each party has its own agenda: patron gained allies and hence, political influence and honor; a client gained security, protection and material goods, i.e. his association with his patron also gave him “honor” in the eyes of others.

Patron-client relations were the most important factor of social upward mobility in the Roman empire: A slave of a powerful master or a client of a powerful patron moved on the social scale together with his master(patron) or being promoted by him. Loyalty to the patron was the key here: “A rise in the world was the reward for personal loyalty to an individual, so we might talk about an ‘advancement loyalty.’”

It is important for our study to note that personal relationship in most cases implied social inequality or/and power game. With the shortage of material resources and viewing honor as a limited good, social relations were very much about strengthening one’s social position. And if in case with benefactor-beneficiary relations it was a continuing honor-competition between the two parties, in case of patronage, patron’s honor was not the subject of challenge. A patron remained in the superior position even if he failed to fulfill his duty toward his clients. One could gain honor either in victory over rival/friend or by associating oneself with powerful and reach patron.


83 Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 67-68.
Though the difference between benefaction and patronage is sometimes vogue, and Joubert’s view is criticized, the point here is the type of reciprocity. Crook attributes both to “slightly different forms of exchange... general reciprocity, which should not be confused with balanced reciprocity.” Yet if a benefactor expects to receive honor from his beneficiary, that puts him in a position of a needy – he needs the public to give him honor; in fact, he buys that honor for the benefactions he bestows onto the commune. If the public has something the benefactor lacks, that places the latter in the equal position with the recipients of his gifts.

And if only one side has something to share, and the other side has nothing to pay back with, this situation means “asymmetrical relations” and gifts become part of generalized reciprocity, when the senior side needs nothing specific from the junior one, but the long-term loyal relationship. And this is the case of patronage: “the duties of clients were stated in a diffuse manner; they were required to be ready to support their patron in any way he demanded... loyalty was considered essential to the link.” Patronage involved both parties into long-term relationship, into a commitment, which made them kind of a family (when a patron is a paterfamilias): disloyalty (accusing each other in law suits, acting against each other’s interests, abuse of the patron’s power or trust) was considered as treason. Patronage relations existed between lords and their freed slaves, between nobles and individuals (or

84 See Crook, Reconceptualizing Conversion, 60-66.
85 Ibid. 66.
86 Eisenstadt, Roniger, Patrons, Clients, 57-58.
87 Ibid. 58.
public) of lower social standing, between retired Roman soldiers and their former
general, between Rome and depending provinces.88

Hellerman gives facts proving that competition was a significant phenomenon
in the Roman army.89 However, he does not make a distinction between the possible
sources of honor. Equals fight over honor trying to overcome each other in any
aspect of life, and assaulting each other is an integral part of such competition, as
honor is “located” in a small group and the fewer honors the other has, the more has
the one. In case of relationship between unequals (patronage), the situation is
different. The entire honor is concentrated by the superior person; he is the one who
distributes honor in a given group. The inferior ones can compete with each other for
the patron’s favor, yet they cannot take honor away from each other; the only source
of honor is their patron.

One can say that generally benefactor-beneficiary relations had a kind of
agonistic character and because of that, they did not help strengthening community’s
ties and had rather axiological force. On the other hand, patronage was a hierarchical,
vertically structured system of social relations;90 honor was distributed solely by a
patron (and broker). It is no coincidence that benefaction was typical for democratic
Greece, while patronage became a model of the entire Roman empire: it strengthened

essential integrating factor, for it neutralized the power struggles in the Roman aristocracy which
had plunged the republic into a profound crisis” (*Social Reality and the Early Christianity*, 272).


the vertical line of power\(^\text{91}\) and allowed Romans to rule the empire with means of relatively small bureaucracy.\(^\text{92}\)

### 2.2.3 Honor and identity in ancient Philippi\(^\text{93}\)

A lot has been written on the reconstruction of Philippi of Paul’s time, including its demography and possible features of its Christian commune. This section is a summary of other scholars’ works with primarily sources.\(^\text{94}\)

In 356 BCE, a Thracian settlement was conquered by Philip II of Macedonia, who gave it his name. The region was rich in natural resources and because of that

---

\(^{91}\) See J.E. Lendon, “Roman Honor,” in *Oxford Book of Social Relations in the Roman World* (ed. M. Peachin; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 377-495, on p. 396 on how aspire for honor (for honor, which was granted by the emperor to the loyal cities and its governors) helped to keep the Roman Empire stable.


\(^{93}\) In this section the cultural features of Philippi – the city to which Christian commune the letter of Paul under consideration of our study – is addressed. The understanding of honor and identity of the apostle himself will be discussed in the next chapter, where the text written by Paul will be studied.

the city of Philippi had a strategic value. Yet not much references of the Greek period of the city’s history survived. In the Roman period, Philippi was established as a Roman colony first in 42 BCE. Up to three thousand Roman veterans settled in Philippi and near it,95 which “guaranteed that the colony of Philippi would have a distinctly Roman flavor.”96 Roman influence to the city was reinforced by the fact that the veterans became the city’s elite. Hellerman points out that “though a numerical minority, the Romans remained an ideological majority, particularly where issues of honor, status, and social values were concerned.”97

Social profile of Philippians Christian commune is difficult to reconstruct. However, several scholars have attempted to do so. Oaks tries to establish the exact percentage of the population belonging to different social strata, particularly his calculation is 40% of Roman citizens and 60% for Greek-speaking non-citizens.98 This calculation was criticized by others for the questionable methodology, namely by de Vos.99 Hellerman speaks about Roman veterans (i.e. Roman citizens) in Philippi being about 25% of the town’s population, though the ideological and cultural influence of them was disproportional to their numbers.100

There is an agreement that though the population of Philippi (and hence, the addressees of Paul’s letter to the Christian community in this city) was mostly


96 Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 65.

97 Ibid. 70-71.

98 Oakes, Philippians, 50, 70-77.

99 De Vos, Church and Community in Conflict, 242.

100 Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 70.
Greek, yet very much influenced by Roman culture. Pilhofer writes: “Gewiß waren die Römer zahlenmäßig nicht in der Mehrheit, … aber das Lebensgefühl war durch und durch Römisc.” The town of Philippi is characterized as a “pro-Roman one” and “strongly Romanized.” What exactly does that mean?

Sergio Nebreda described a “model of Romanization,” which includes seven major points. The two most relevant to our study are: “a strong pressure to conform to the “higher” model (ideologically, culturally and socially) which provided a new identity for local populations” as “petite Rome;” and “pacific”

---

101 Roman citizens were the elite of the town; the artisans, liberti and slaves were mostly Greek-speaking (see A.J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983) 60-91). The text of the letter does not give any clear evidence of the social status of Paul’s addressees. Though some of the Christian community members were relatively rich (Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2, see B. Witherington, Friendship and finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1994) 108; Peterlin, Paul’s Letter to Philippians,126; Sergienko, “Our Politeuma is in Heaven,” 126-127), Lydia from Acts 16). See Oakes, Philippians, 59-70, where he reconstructs the demographic features of Philippian Christian community. According to him, Greeks were in majority in the community (58-64%) (p.61). The evidences for the Roman citizens among the addressees of the letter are the references to τὸ πατριώτης (1:13), ἡ Κλεοπάτρα οἰκία (4:22), Latinized Φιλιππήσιοι (4:15), πολιτικός (1:27), and πολιτεύεσθαι (3:20) (p.65). The Latin name of Κλέμεντς (4:3) allows assumption that he was a Roman citizen (see Peterlin, loc.cit., 168). Hellerman builds upon Oakes, arguing that Christian commune in Philippi included some high-profile members, and that Paul appeals to them not to use their high social status for their own advantage, but to use it for the needs of their less fortune siblings in Christ (Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 154). Nebreda criticized this reconstruction (Christ Identity…, 64-65). Brawley just says that “it is not likely that many of the Greek-speaking recipients of Paul’s letter were Roman citizens, so they would be marginalized both in property and status” (Brawley, “From Reflex to Reflection,” 136). It is not clear though why he makes such assumption.

102 The overwhelming majority of the inscriptions discovered in Philippi are in Latin (about 80% of them, in comparison with only 40% of inscriptions in Latin in Pisidian Antioch) (Witherington, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 5).

103 Pilhofer, Philippi. Band 1, 92. “Certainly, Romans were not in the numerical majority … but the atmosphere was Roman through and through” (translation from German is ours – MK.). Cf. Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 70-71.

104 Sergienko, “Our Politeuma is in Heaven,” 81.

105 De Vos, Church and Community in Conflict, 242.

106 These points are “use of Latin language;” “efficient system of roads;” “conformism to the high model of Rome; redistribution of land; “pacific government;” “challenge to local and ethnic identity;” “concern with urbanitas” (see Nebreda, Christ Identity, 149-153).

107 Nebreda, Reconstructing Honor, 149-150, italic original.
government and administration of the conquered region (whether as client or subjugated nation/city)... based on a system of punishment and reward.”

In other words, “Romanization” meant the change of identity and the change of the source of honor – both now were to be found in the Rome state. Association with Roman Empire (citizenship) made a person included into the empire’s justice system; loyal service to the emperor (who was the head and the symbol of the state) as a soldier or a governor, or as a good citizen caring for the good of the state, was rewarded by different kinds of honors (including material rewards). The services of soldiers, who were risking their lives for the sake of the Empire, were especially appreciated.

Roman ideology is described by Oaks this way: it is “Roman discourse, which sustains certain power relations... Externally, they constitute Rome’s dominant position... Internally, they constitute a hierarchy that runs from the emperor down to the most marginal inhabitants of the Empire.”

We can conclude that the Roman way of social relations (including dealing with the honor issue) was grafted into an originally Greek-speaking community. One cannot say with certainty how smooth the process of integration of one culture into another was going;

---


110 Than is what made the cult of the emperor so important.

111 Philippi is the best example of this, as the town experienced two waves of Roman veterans settled, who used the lands and resources of the town and its suburban for their own good.


113 See Nebreda, *Christ Identity*, 147-161 for different aspects of Romanization of the conquered lands, including social-economical tension between conquerors and the natives. The well-known paradox of Romanization of the Eastern part of the empire is that Romans had respect to “civilized” Greeks is about the fact that Romans could never assimilate Greek culture (see R.
models of treating honor (achieving it in the fight with equals and getting it through association with an honorable patron) co-existed in the city.

2.4 Conclusions

In the present chapter we have made some theoretical considerations. We clarified the key sociological terms, which are to be used in the present study, namely values, value-orientation, culture and identity. We established that though these terms are closely connected and sometimes overlap, one should distinguish between basic values and their embodiment: the former lie behind (or underneath) the culture and give it directions, while the latter forms the observable part of culture; though value-practice is the most visible manifestation of culture – it (practice) is determined by an implicit and often unconscious basic value-system. To avoid a common confusion, we underlined the difference between the values and their realization in culture. We pointed out that different cultures can share the same values.

We defined identity as a sense of belonging, of locating oneself in a society. Though identity is based and articulated in terms of the outer layers of the culture, it has a direct connection to the social values (relational orientation). That means that first, people with different identities can share the same values; and second, one can reconstruct (trace) a person’s social values by analyzing the person’s language of identity. That means further that a certain kind of honor-shame system exists in every human society and especially in a group-oriented one. The very meaning of a society

being collectivistic is that it controls the behavior of an individual. The stronger the collectivist tendencies are, the more power has a group over an individual by honoring welcomed behavior and shaming the undesirable one.

A group has its own hero(s), either (and) symbols, or (and) rituals. Belonging to a group, i.e. one’s identity is expressed in association with its hero, honoring its symbols, and practicing its rituals, which in turn, gives to one a sense of worth, i.e. honor. Changing the group (i.e. changing of identity) supposes changing of heroes, or symbols and/or rituals, yet not the basic values.

Merging our theoretical expositions with our findings regarding the Mediterranean culture type, we can now distinguish between what are basic (and common) values for all Mediterranean societies and what are different manifestations of these values. The relational dimension of the ancient Mediterranean value-system is characterized by strong group-orientation and specifically by a Mediterranean type of honor-and-shame. Returning to Hofstede’s diagram, we can say that this group-orientation and male agonistic honor lie in the core of Mediterranean culture. The “rituals of honor,” i.e. practices of the value of honor for the ancient Mediterranean area, are first, differentiation of opposite sexes: while women are domesticated, male rituals are more public. As we have said, every collectivist culture values belonging to a group and honor; yet the constant competition between males is the main ritual, which distinguishes Mediterranean culture type from other collectivist cultures. In case of the ancient Mediterranean, the practice of competition contradicts to the value of “belonging.” These all are equally correct for many of the Mediterranean cultures, starting with Homeric Greece and Ancient Mesopotamia, continuing
through the Hellenistic period and Roman empires, and even up to the middle of 20th century Italy, Greece, Turkey and Spain.

We have also discussed different types of power/honor dynamics that existed in the Greco-Roman Empire. Two basic ones were those of gaining honor as reflected in two main features of the Mediterranean culture type: (a) benefaction can be understood as a form of honor-competition, and (b) patronage is an embodiment of value of belonging, when honor is gained via association with a powerful patron. We noted that honor-competition could jeopardize the interests of a group, while patronage served to the unification of a group.

At the end of the chapter, we described the cultural features of Philippi, where the addressees of the letter under consideration lived. By the first century A.D., the ancient Greek city was a Roman colony with authoritative elite of Roman veterans. One can expect that in Philippi the features of both cultures – a Greek one with its love to honor-competition, and a Roman one with its strong patronage tendencies, – coexisted.

The next chapter will be devoted to the analysis of how Paul understands honor and identity, and how the relation between them is presented in the text of the letter to Philippians.
CHAPTER 3

NEW IDENTITY OF HEAVENLY SOCIETY MEMBERS

As it was established in chapter 1 of this study, identity can be expressed both positively (“who I am”) and negatively (“who I am not”). As negative identity – dissociation from the opponents – is present in Paul’s letter to the Philippians much more vividly than the positive one. We will analyze it first. Thereafter we will see how the identity of Christian community members is expressed positively. In the third section of the chapter we will examine Phil 3:4-11, where Paul speaks about who he used to be (negative identity) and who he is now (positive identity). As the apostle is the model to be imitated (Phil 3:17), his self-identity is an exemplary one.

3.1 Negative identity: “we” versus “them”

Negative identity is an important way of self-identification: defining one’s opponent is also defining who one is not; the existence of “other” allows existence of “me” (see section 2.1.2 of this study). The attempts to describe the opponents (“the other”)

---

of the Christian community in the letter to Philippians have a long history, yet any proposition of connecting Paul’s negative references in the letter to the historical group of people has its objection (see below).

Two major questions are asked towards the opponents in the letter of Philippians: firstly, who were the historical prototypes of these opponents? And secondly, whether there were any real opponents and should we better concentrate on

---


There is an attempt to find a group which would satisfy all the allusions that Paul gives in Philp.3 (see J. Gnilka, “Die antipaulinische Mission in Philippi,” BZ 9 (1965) 212-14; Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, lv). And as Paul’s hints are quite assorted, the result looks rather like a hybrid of all false teaching once been identified in the text of New Testament: “Jewish Christians who used their identity badges to prove their essential Jewishness and promised an immediate salvation with its correlates of ethical indifference and a claim to ‘perfection’ now, based on realized eschatology” (Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, lv). Tellbe distinguishes four different fragments referring to three different groups of opponents in the letter to Philippians: 1:15-17 addresses Paul’s personal rivals in the place of the letter origin; 1:27-28 and 3:18-19 address Philippians’ conflict with civil society and Roman ideology; and in 3:2ff. the apostle refers to Judaizers (Tellbe, Paul between Synagogue and State, 259, 269-74); see also Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, lii (cf. R. Martin, Philippians (New Century Bible; London: Oliphants; Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1976) 22). The point is that it is really difficult to find any realistic opponents in the letter to Philippians.
the opponent’s *function* in Paul’s argument?⁴ Martin and Hawthorne start their observation of the studies on the opponents in the epistle without much confidence: “One cannot say with certainty who these opponents were,”⁵ which indicates that the first question failed to get a final answer.

The opponents in the letter to Philippians cannot be identified with perfect certainty: as indicated, any attempt to connect whom Paul refers to as negative example, has its objections. Nonetheless, the negative illustration in the letter has its aim to emphasize the positive admonitions of the apostle. Whether “enemies of the cross” were pure fiction, or they had real prototypes, Paul gave them certain features, which would help his readers to find their own identity.

There are three major sections⁶ which contain references to the opponents in the letter to Philippi. The opponents can be divided into internal ones, those who are still considered as “brothers” (1:15-17); and external ones, “enemies of the cross,” who Paul refuses to regard as part of God’s people (3:2-20). However, in the section 1:28-30, the two groups meet: the apostle seems to speak about both threats at the

---

⁴ Bloomquist writes that “the actual historical identity of Paul’s opponents does not affect our understanding of Paul’s rhetorical argumentation... what is at stake is not who those “opponents” really were, but how Paul saw them...” (L. G. Bloomquist, *The function of suffering in Philippians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 196). Thürén argues that most references to the opposition in the New Testament epistles are not referring to any real personalities or real conflict; they are rather rhetorical constructions, used by the authors to built their argument and to clarify their theology (L. Thürén, “The Antagonists – Rhetorically Marginalized Identities in the New Testament” in *Identity Formation in the New Testament* (ed. B. Holmberg and M. Winninge; WUNT 227; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 79-95). The letter to Philippians is not included in Thürén’s research (Thürén concentrates on Galatians, Romans and the letter of Judas); yet on our opinion, this letter is the very case where the opponents have rhetorical function.

⁵ Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, li.

⁶ There are also some “silent features” of the opponents (Mearns, “The Identity of Paul’s opponents,” 195): the fragments which can be interpreted as implicitly referring to the antagonists. Such fragments are: 2:3-4; 2:21; 2:14-15; 3:12-16; 4:2. Because of the space limits, and for the sake of the argument, we will concentrate on the major fragments and will turn to the minor ones only occasionally.
same time: one from within and one from without. The sections that are dealing with the internal opponents, are Phil 1:15-18; 2:3-4; 2:21. We will now have a closer look at each of these.

3.1.1 Internal opponents: Philippians 1:15-17; 2:3-4; 2:21

3.1.1.1 Wrong-motivated brothers

The section 1.15-17 is a part of the bigger passage 1:12-26(30), where Paul speaks about his present situation. He informs his readers about challenges he faces being under house arrest: some of the members of the Christian community envy him and try to make his situation worse.

There is a possibility that Paul’s presentation of the situation here is not objective, as it is obviously the case in 3:2-19 (see below). After all, Paul’s accusations that his rivals are being selfish, envious and driven by a hidden agenda are typical for rhetorical polemic. However, the mild tone of the apostle, the emphasized absence of the hostility from his side, and his ability to admit that the adversaries’ presentation of the gospel is correct, speak (at least relatively) for the objective depiction of the situation here. Hence, the material of 1:15-18 can provide some information for the reconstruction of the letter-writing situation.

The important issue here is that those adversaries of the apostle cannot be identified with Judaizers or other heretics against whom Paul argues in the letter to

---

7 Cf. 4:8, where Paul gives the last exhortation and mentions that Philippians should think only what is (among other epithets) ἀγνώ, which probably calls up to the negative motive in 1:17 οὐ ἀγνώς.

the Galatians and in the Corinthian correspondence. Without any reservation, he repeats it three times that they do preach the gospel and Christ (Phil 1:15, 16, 17; cf. 2 Cor 11:4 ἀλλον Ἰησοῦν... ἣ πνεύμα ἐτερον... ἣ εὐαγγέλιον ἐτερον) and he even enjoys the fact that Christ is preached (Phil 1:18). The apostle refers to them as τοι Ἀδελφοί (1:14), and not as ψευδαδέλφους (Gal 2:4).

That makes it clear that the trouble with “some brothers” is not about their interpretation of the gospel and Christ, but it is a personal conflict, based on their dislike for Paul. The apostle interprets their antipathy towards himself as being based on strife, jealousy and selfishness: διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, ἐξ ἐρεθίας (Phil 1:15, 17). In 2:3 Paul appeals to his readers to avoid selfishness and conceit (κατ’ ἐρεθίαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν); he also critically mentions selfishness in 2:21 (οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἐαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; cf. 3:4 μὴ τὰ ἐαυτῶν ἐκαστοῦς σκοποῦντες).

The resemblance of the motives and even word-choices (ἐρεθίας 1:15; 2.3) indicates that Paul most probably refers to the same problem in all three sections (1:15-17; 2:3-4; 2:21).

3.1.1.2 Inspired by Paul’s imprisonment

Morna Hooker has assumed that “some brothers” misunderstood the apostle’s imprisonment: they probably thought that Paul deserved to be punished by God; or

---

9 Cf. F. Craddock, Philippians (Atlantha: John Knox, 1985) 26; B. Witherington, Friendship and finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1994) 45; Klijn, An Introduction, 109. Contra: Martin and Hawthorne insist that in chapters 1 and 3 Paul refers to different groups of people, “because the danger in 1.28 is real while the false teachers are only on the horizon in chapter 3” (Philippians, lii; cf. Martin, Philippians, 22).

they expected a miracle rescue, God’s intervention (like the one which is described in Acts 16:26-34), and could not comprehend why it did not happen again. That means that “some brothers” could hardly be among those who were heartened by Paul’s imprisonment: τοῖς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου (1:14), and hence, should be considered as “a minority.”

Yet the text of the letter hardly gives the base for such an interpretation. Paul writes that his imprisonment served to the success of the gospel and “most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much bolder to speak the word without fear” (NKJ 1:13-14). However, “some” of those brothers (who have started preaching more bravely) are doing this out of envy. Graphically, we can depict the situation like this:

---

καὶ τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ

πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου περισσοτέρως τοιμαν ἀφόβως

tὸν λόγον λαλεῖν.

τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι’ εἰδοκίαν

tὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν:

οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὦτι εἰς ἀπολογίανοιδέμενοι ἐγείρειν
tοῦ εἰσαγγελίου κείμαι, τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου

tὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν,

Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται,
καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω.

Both groups, driven by different motives, are called by Paul τινές, and there is no grammatical reason to think that both τινές should not be traced back to τοὺς πλείονας τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐν κυρίῳ. The scheme shows that both groups (right-motivated ones and wrong-motivated ones) belong to the “majority of the brethren in Christ”: the majority are preaching the Word (τὸν λόγον λαλεῖν, 1:14); and it is repeated three times that both groups – those who sympathize with Paul and those who are rather out of sympathy with him – are preaching Christ (τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσουσιν 1:15; τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν 1:16; Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται 1:17).
Hence, there is no base to think that those who are jealous of Paul do not preach the gospel “boldly, without fear.” Those who have not become “more confident” by Paul’s chains (i.e. those, for whom the apostle’s imprisonment has not been a stimulation to continue and reinforce his life-work), have not begun to preach the gospel more boldly; the apostle does not discuss their motives of preaching, as there is nothing to discuss: they do not preach. That means that those, who preach the gospel out of envy and strife, belong to “the majority,” i.e. to those, who have been inspired by Paul’s imprisonment to proclaim the Word without fear. In this case, the wrong-motivated preachers cannot be from those (the minority) who have been discouraged by Paul’s situation. Besides, the apostle himself does not speak about some kind of misunderstanding of his situation by some people; on the contrary, he claims that they act from jealousy, and deliberately cause damage to him. Hence, the views that Paul’s rivals were not motivated by his imprisonment or that there was a mis-comprehension of Paul’s imprisonment hardly have any support from the text.

The question now is, what kind of inspiration did Paul mean in 1:14 (πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου), if it was relevant for both his personal challengers and for his supporters. It is possible that the Christians were inspired by the fact that Paul was not treated badly by Roman authorities. They could see that Romans rescued Paul from an enraged Jewish crowd, and even protected him from assassins (according to the version in Acts 21:31-34; 23:12-25). That is why they started to preach the gospel “even more boldly, without fear” (περισσοτέρως τολμᾶν ἀφόβως 1:14), meaning that they were not afraid of the persecution from the Roman government. They could see that the Roman authorities would not accuse them in not being supportive to the emperor, and that they would even provide protection if Jews
become to behave aggressively. This seems to be the only reason for active preaching in the view of Paul’s imprisonment (like solidarity with Paul or desire to suffer for Christ), which would match the fact that one of the goals of this preaching was to challenge Paul and to harm him.

3.1.1.3 The cause of the conflict

If the conflict between Paul and “some brothers” was not a theological, but a personal one, what was its nature? From the apostle’s point of view, his adversaries were led by selfishness and envy. The word ἑρεθία that Paul uses in 1:15 and 2:3 belongs to the honor-discourse (see section 4.2 of this study). It is possible that some preachers were envious of Paul’s leading position in the church. In the previous chapter we established that the honor issue was extremely important for Mediterranean communities; honor was treated as a limited good, and one’s personal increasing of honor meant lack of honor (i.e. disgrace) of another one. In the case of Paul, the honor he received from the members of the Christian communities as their leader meant that other church leaders felt dishonored. In order to gain more honor they needed to put Paul into disgrace.12

Another possible cause of the conflict, closely connected to the honor-competition among church leaders, is the financial issue. It is possible that “some brothers” envy Paul’s leading position and the material assistance he received from his adherents. Paul says that his rivals are “seeking to increase the trouble of [his] chains”: οἴομενοι θαλησίν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου (1:17). Paul hardly means here

12 In the next chapter of this study we will speak more about honor competition within Christian commune.
that the jealous preachers tried to spread the gospel in order to make the Roman government less tolerant towards the apostle, as they themselves would receive the same treatment from the Romans. Besides, the officials’ allegedly angry reaction would be the same to the activities of “right-motivated” Christian preachers, so in this case, any missionary work would deteriorate Paul’s situation. In 1.18 the apostle expresses his gladness about the spreading of the gospel irrespectively of the motive it is done from. However, the word θλίψεις that Paul uses in 1:17, might shed some light on this issue.

In 4:14 the apostle employs θλίψεις to refer to his financial difficulties: καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντες μου τῇ θλίψει ("you did a right thing participating in my trouble"). The Philippians’ material support of Paul is a very important aspect of their relationship with the apostle, which is reflected in the letter. 13 it is mentioned in the beginning (1:3-5, 7), again after a while (2:25, 30), and the whole passage at the end of the letter is devoted to the donations (4:10-19). The lack of material support could really worsen Paul’s situation in prison: he would have to live (again) in hunger and need, and hence experience misery/disgrace (4:12). As writing letters in antiquity required certain material resources, and preaching presupposed that a preacher had leisure time to do so, shortage of money would prevent Paul from remaining a leader and an apostle. Paul was able to receive money from the congregation(s) only because of his high status in the Christian church. As we noted in the previous chapter, honor has not only social value, but also gives access to certain material resources.

13 Witherington speaks about Paul’s “joy over [Philippians’] support” is one of the occasions of the letter (Friendship and Finances, 27).
So it is highly probable that in 1:15-17 Paul speaks about “some brothers” envying his leading position, and particularly the material support the apostle received in prison. Paul’s house arrest made it clear that the Roman authorities would not relentlessly persecute Christian missionaries; and while Paul’s ability to travel from church to church and hence to influence Christian communities was limited due to his arrest, they started to preach actively in order to gain leading positions and to receive financial benefits from such position. The strengthening of their status and pulling off the financial resources to themselves entailed weakening Paul’s status and shortage of these resources of him.

To sum up: wrong motivation such as jealousy and selfishness was causing problems in the community which surrounded the apostle at the moment of the writing of the letter. As Paul thought it was worth mentioning in the beginning of the letter, the problem was rather severe; honor-competition between members (“envy and selfishness”) were potentially dangerous for the Philippian congregation, as Paul warns his readers to avoid them (2:3-4; see section 4.2). At this point, the important fact is that the conflict between Paul and “some brothers” has had an internal character. The apostle’s rivals are named among “brothers in Christ” (1:14), and though Paul regards their motives as wrong ones, he does not cast any doubt on the content of their preaching. The clash has been rather “a domestic affair,” a sad disagreement between brothers, inside the “in-Christ” group. The wrong motives of τιμής do not jeopardize their belonging to one family of brothers in Christ (οἱ ἀδέλφοι ἐν κυρίῳ 1:14).
3.1.2 External opponents: “dogs” and enemies of Christ (3:2, 3:18-19)

In contrast with serene report about the rivals and emphasized indifference to their motives in 1:15-17, Philippians 3 gives sudden and highly emotional vilification of the opponents. The change of Paul’s attitude in 3:2 has given the base for the theories of the composite character of the letter.\(^\text{14}\) As the sections in Phil 3 have a vilification nature, the identification of the opponents in this chapter is another challenge, which resulted in different answers: in the epithets Paul had given to the “enemies” in 3:2 and 3:19, as well as in Paul’s argument in 3:3-18, scholars recognized Jews, Judaizers, and Epicureans; and in the apostle’s argument in 3:12-16 some saw references to Gnostics.

Because of the circumcision theme that Paul develops in 3:3-5, the περιτομή and ultimately, all three expressions in 3:2 seem to be as a reference to Jews or Judaizers. “Dogs,” “evildoers,” and “mutilation” (κύνας, κακούς ἐργάτας, and κατατομή) are used to be seen as “clear inversions of Jewish boasts.”\(^\text{15}\) In 3:19 Paul refers to the “enemies of Christ’s cross,” associating them with destruction (ἀπώλεια), bodily desires (κοιλία), and shame (αἰσχῦνη). The commentators have to

\(^\text{14}\) On the integrity of the letter, see Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, xxx-xxxiv; see also Pretorius, “New Trends.”

\(^\text{15}\) Tellbe, Paul between Synagogue and State, 259. Particularly, περιτομή refers to circumcision; κύνας to Jewish food law, and κακούς ἐργάτας – to other regulations of the law (cf. ἐργάται δόλοι in 2 Cor 11:13) (Garland, “The Composition and Unity,” 168; E.P. Sanders, “Paul on the Law, His Opponents, and the Jewish People in Philippians 3 and 2 Corinthians 11,” in Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity. V1 Paul and the Gospels. (ed. P. Richardson, D. Granskou; Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1986) 83; see also section 3.2.4 of this study).
build quite complicated allusions to explain these three as references to Judaizers. The main reason for it is the obvious structural similarity with 3:2 (see below); however, by itself, 3:19 can hardly point to Judaizers or Jews.

So, the connection of κοιλία and αἰσχύνη with Judaism is rather weak. Κοιλία (belly) is assumed to refer to the Jewish food law, or even the male organ, which in parallel with αἰσχύνη (shame) allegedly points to circumcision, as circumcision was considered by Gentiles as something shameful. It is not clear, however, why two of the similar-structured and consecutive phrases are parallel, and one (ὁν τὸ τέλος ἀπόλεια) is separated. Secondly, if “shame” refers to circumcision, then Paul’s accusation makes no sense: in that case, “enemies of the cross” have decided to be circumcised despite the fact that circumcision is something shameful for non-Jews, which means that they are exactly like Paul himself (3:7-11) and even like Christ (2:6-11): both Paul and Christ have rejected earthly honor to serve God (because, after all, circumcision is the first step of keeping the law that God has given Moses to obey). So, to follow his logic, Paul should praise “the enemies.”

To support the Jewish interpretation of 3:19, line b. (ὁν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία) is assumed to be paralleled with Rom 16:18 (οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι τῷ κυρίῳ ἠμῶν Χριστῷ οὐ δουλεύοντιν ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐαντῶν κοιλία). But it is not an established fact that in Rom 16:18 Paul speaks about Judaizers.

---

18 See Tellbe, Paul between Synagogue, 165-170.
There is an attempt to link Paul’s vilification in 3:19 with Gentiles. So, on the base of resemblance of the image “their belly is their god” with both Greek and Roman critics of intemperate life style, Cotter proposed that Paul’s language here can be interpreted as a reference to voluntary associations and symposiums. In 3:20 Paul proclaims: “our citizenship is that of heaven” (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει), which besides the antithesis τοῖς οὐρανοῖς – τὰ ἐπίγεια can also indicate πολίτευμα as "a catch word for the Philippians’ opponents." Πολίτευμα can designate both state and voluntary association. The fact, that many of the social clubs in Philippi were devoted to the imperial cult and that πολίτευμα can also mean a state, along with using the emperor’s titles σωτήρ and κύριος to Christ (3:20), allows the conclusion that Paul refers here to the imperial cult.

---

19 "In Greek and Roman literature κόλα (or γαστήρ and its Latin equivalent venter) is often used of the stomach as the seat of hunger and desire, e.g. Euripides speaks of Cyclops’ belly as the ‘greatest of all deities’ (Cyc. 335), Xenophon of “slavery to the belly” (Mem. 1.6.8)" (Tellbe, *Paul between Synagogue*, 270, n. 254); see ibid., n. 256 for critics of symposiums.


24 See Tellbe, *Paul between*, 271). The reasons for assuming Romans and Roman ideology in ἀντικειμένοι of 1:28 are the same. See below.
Sergienko argues that in 3:18-20 Paul opposes some Christians, who participated in a voluntary association (πολίτευμα) devoted to the imperial cult.\(^\text{25}\)

Though his argument is convincing (the emphatic ἐμῶν preceding πολίτευμα in 3:20 indicated Paul refers “their πολίτευμα”), it is not fully satisfactory: firstly, it deals exclusively with the section 3:18-20, though the structural sameness of the sections 3:2-3 and 3:19-20 (see below) suppose they must be analyzed together; secondly, the anti-imperial character of Paul’s discourse here\(^\text{26}\) and elsewhere is now doubted.\(^\text{27}\)

The short observation we have done above, demonstrates that none of the epithets referring to the opponents in the letter to Philippians, chapter 3, gives a recognizable picture of the opponents. As T. Geoffrion concludes, “the precise identity of the “enemy” does not appear to be recoverable.”\(^\text{28}\) The difficulties with the identification of Philippians’ opponents can be explained by the very nature of the sections in which they are mentioned, as the insulting character of 3.2 and 3.19 does not presuppose the objective reflection of historical reality; these sections rather resemble the author’s attitude to this reality.\(^\text{29}\) This supports the thesis that the use of vilification texts “on the informational level is to abuse them.”\(^\text{30}\) Hence, any attempt

\(^{25}\) Sergienko, “Our Politeuma is in Heaven.”

\(^{26}\) It is a significant part of Sergienko’s argument, see his “Our Politeuma is in Heaven,” 197-214.


\(^{28}\) Geoffrion, The Rhetorical Purpose, 43; cf. Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, li.

\(^{29}\) “…in passages where the attitudes, motivation and character of the adversaries dominated, their depiction was determined by the strongly subjective experiences and perceptions of the writer and by his personal interpretation of their actions within the framework of an existential ideological conflict. In these texts the element of historical reference would certainly diminish… To use these texts naively on the informational level is to abuse them.” (A. du Toit, “Vilification as a Pragmatic Device in Early Christian Epistolography,” Biblica 75/3 (1994) 403-312, on pp. 411-412).

to find the real-life original behind the vilification texts is certainly doomed to failure.  

At this point we can say that Paul’s attitude to the opposition in Philippians chapter 3 is totally different from that in 1:15-17: the apostle is furious; he is so overwhelmed with emotions that his speech does not reflect the reality any more. In contrast with 1:15-18, there is no tolerance to the existence of the opposition, no middle ground (in 1:15-18 the preaching of the gospel is this ground); the apostle dissociates them from the people of God in absolute terms and calls them “enemies of Christ’s cross” (3:18). Due to the genre of the sections, nothing more specific can be said about the opponents in Philippians 3.

### 3.1.3 Mixed opponents: 1.28-30

The third group of opponents, ἀντικειμένοι themselves, is actually the second section referring to the adversaries in the letter (1:28-30). Their identity is also a mystery: Paul gives no clue to who they were. As Paul calls his readers not to be afraid (1:28), it seems they (the readers) are challenged by these opponents. In 1:28-30 the apostle tries to explain what is going on with the Philippians: ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ ... τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγώνα ἔχοντες, οἶον εἰδεῖτε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἄκοιτε ἐν ἐμοί (1:29-30: “it is granted to you, for Christ…to suffer, having the same struggle you have seen in me and now hear about me” – M.K.). Here, Paul

---

links the Philippians' present experience with his own: they struggle for Christ's sake in the way he did and does now. However, it is not absolutely clear what he means.

The meaning of ἀγών as "struggle, contest, battle" involves several aspects: first, it presupposes devotion, endurance, exertion, overcoming the hardship for the sake of the ultimate goal; secondly, it also presupposes the antagonist: one who struggles against somebody or something. So, here in 1:28-30 Paul speaks about both suffering (πάθοςχίου) and those who cause this suffering of the Philippians (ἀντικειμένοι). Was Paul having the same antagonists as the Philippians had? And can we find out who these were?

The only known visit of Paul in Philippi is the one described in the book of Acts, when he and Silas were arrested and beaten (Acts 16:20-21). Hence, this visit seems to be the only opportunity for the Philippians to see Paul’s struggle (οἶνον εἴδετε ἐν ἐμοί). Tellbe equalizes Paul’s arrest described in Acts 16 and the one Paul is in at the time of the writing of the letter to the Philippians, as both were made by Roman authorities. But the roles played by Romans in both cases are totally different: in the case of Acts, Philippi’s military authorities break the Roman law, having Paul and Silas arrested and beaten because of their Jewishness (Acts 16:20-21), without any official legal charge. Hence, the sufferings of Paul in Philippi are

33 See Stauffer, “Ἀγών,” 137-139.
34 Cf. 1 Thess 2:2 Paul says that he and his co-workers experienced a spiteful treatment in Philippi and proclaimed the gospel with amid opposition (λαλήσας πρὸς ἰματὶ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγώνι).
35 Tellbe, Paul between Synagogue, 233, n. 99.
36 On the reliability of Acts and on the use of the book as a source for Pauline studies, see Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 110-113; Riotto, Behaving as a Christ-Believer, 171-173.
rather caused by anti-Semites than by the Roman authorities. Paul’s current long-lasting arrest by Roman officials has been, in fact, initiated to rescue him from the furious Jewish crowd, who wanted to lynch him;\textsuperscript{37} The Romans kept him, not in prison but under house arrest.\textsuperscript{38} Even when the attitude from the Roman officials changed (as Fest had sympathy towards Jews against Paul, see Acts 24:25; 25:9), Paul still was sure that the Roman government had nothing against him (Acts 25:8 \textit{…οὕτε ἐὰς Καίσαρά τι ἤμαρτον}), and Agrippa was ready to let him go, if only he had not had demanded the trial before Caesar (Acts 26.32). The book of Acts leaves us with the fact that Paul stayed in Rome waiting for his trial, being free to live not in prison and to preach the gospel freely (28:30-31).\textsuperscript{39} Paul’s arrest is presented as being initiated by hostile Jews (Acts 28:17-20). However, we realize that the author of the book of Acts has had his own agenda and hence has presented the facts to create a certain impression to the readers. Yet, in the letter to the Philippians Paul himself views his imprisonment as the opportunity to preach the gospel to the high representatives of Roman government (Phil 1:16 \textit{ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εἰαγγελίου κεῖμαι}, cf. 4:22). In the section 3.2.1 of this study, we underlined that both Paul’s allies and his personal rivals were encouraged by his imprisonment to preach the gospel more boldly (1:14). It could hardly be possible that “brethren” were heartened by the perspective to be arrested for anti-governmental activities. On the contrary, it is highly probable that they were inspired to preach even more intensively as they saw

\textsuperscript{37} Acts 21:31-34; 23:10; cf. 23:12-24.

\textsuperscript{38} Acts 24:23; cf.26:3; 28:14, 26, 30-21 – Paul is allowed to walk wherever he likes and to communicate to everybody and “to preach Christ unhindered.”

that the Romans are rather supportive (at least as regards to the conflicts between Christians and Jews). In the letter to the Romans, the apostle speaks of the (Roman) authorities as about being established by God, and underlines its positive role in maintaining the civil order, punishing the criminals and protecting those who do right things (Rom 13:1-6). So, if Paul means by οἱ οὖν εἴδετε ἐν ἐμοί his arrest and battery described in Acts 16 and 1 Thess 2:2, it is highly unlikely that his statement has an anti-Roman character, and that he sees the Roman government as his or/and the Christian community’s opponents here in Phil 1:28-30 or elsewhere in his letters.40

It is possible that by the struggle Paul’s readers “have seen” and “now hear” in him the apostle means two different situations. So, it is highly probable that νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί (1:30) referred to Paul’s difficulties that he has just described: as the letter was read aloud in the congregation, the Philippians were “now hearing” about the apostle being challenged by “some brothers” (1:15-18). The Philippians also knew about Paul’s financial hardship: after all, that was the reason why they supported him (cf. 2:25 χρείας; 4:10-18). We have already connected the apostle’s problems with “some brothers” with pecuniary issues (see section 3.2.1). Does that mean that the Philippians are also experiencing shortage of finances? Hardly so, as in that case they would not be able to support Paul (cf. 4:10).41 It is more probable that the apostle means here not any particular issue or particular disagreement, but the very fact of having challengers who wanted to harm him. As with the case of οἱ οὖν

---

40 CONTRA: Cassidy, Paul in Chains; Hellerman (Reconstructing Honor) sees the whole letter and especially the Christological hymn 2.6-11 as being anti-Roman. On this, see section 4.1.

41 Paul’s phrase ἐφ’ ὧν καὶ ἐφρονίτε, ἤκαψατέ οὖν (“you concerned [for me] before, but you lacked the opportunity” 4:10b) indicates that it was time when Philippians could not support Paul, though they wanted to. However, according to 4:10a ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεπάλευτε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν (“now you have revive to concern about me”), this period is over.
he rather speaks in general terms, meaning the large sense of the word \( \dot{\alpha}γ\omicron\nu \) as overcoming the hardship. Together, his past and present experiences point, firstly, to the consistency of the \( \dot{\alpha}γ\omicron\nu \), and secondly, that it could come from both in and out of the Christian community.

However, the apostle presents the Philippians’ conflict with the(ir) opponents in 1:28-30 as being more glaring than his personal conflict which he described in 1:15-18. Paul refuses to admit the opponents’ belonging to the family of Christ (cf.1:14), and contrasts not just motives, but the very being and the lot of two parties: “you” are set off with “the opponents” (\( \dot{\alpha}ντικε\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu\)); “you” are heading the salvation, while “the opponents” are heading towards destruction (\( \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha \)), which connects 1:28 with 3:19-20. As we have seen above, due to the vilification character of the fragment, 3:19 is not of much help in the identification of the opponents. Phil 1:28 seems to be the same.

In 1:28 Paul says that the Philippians should not be intimidated, as there is a sign of their salvation and their opponents’ demolition (κα\( \alpha \) μη πτυρόμενοι \( \varepsilon \nu \) μηδενι \( \upsilon \) των \( \dot{\alpha}ντικε\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu\), \( \dot{\eta}τ\iotaς \ \varepsilon\ost\iota\nu \ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma \ \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma\), \( \iota\mu\omicron\nu \ \dot{d}e \ \sigma\omega\tau\omicron\iota\ri\alpha\varsigma\), κα\( \alpha \) τ\( \o\omicron\tau\omicron\iota\) \( \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\ \theta\omicron\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\). This sign (\( \dot{\epsilon}nde\iota\iota\iota\varsigma\)) separates the two destinies, and hence it is the point of the contradiction. However, the waning syntax of 1:27-28 makes the interpretation

---

42 This parallel refutes the Martin and Hawthorne’s interpretation of \( \dot{\eta}τ\iotaς \ \varepsilon\ost\iota\nu \ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma \ \dot{\epsilon}nde\iota\iota\iota\varsigma \ \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma\), \( \iota\mu\omicron\nu \ \dot{d}e \ \sigma\omega\tau\omicron\iota\ri\alpha\varsigma\) as they argue for the connection of \( \iota\mu\omicron\nu \) to both \( \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma\) and \( \sigma\omega\tau\omicron\iota\ri\alpha\varsigma\); “your [present] suffering and persecution (\( \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma\)) is sign of your [eternal] salvation” (Philippians, 73). The reconstruction seems to be exaggerated and syntactically “barely defensible” (M. Silva, Philippians (Backer Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament; Michigan, Grand Rapids: Backer Book House, 1992) 95). The parallel with 2 Thess 1:4-9 argues for the understanding of both \( \dot{\alpha}π\omicron\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma\) and \( \sigma\omega\tau\omicron\iota\ri\alpha\varsigma\) in soteriological sense (F.F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Word Biblical Commentary 45; Waco, Texas: Word, 1982) 149; Silva, Philippians, 95; G. Fee, Paul’s Letter to Philippians (The New International Commentary of the New Testament; ed. N.B. Stenehouse, F.F. Bruce, and C.D. Fee; Michigan, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 156 n.74).
quite difficult: what the antecedent is of ἥτις, has been the object of many discussions. Nevertheless, a closer look might help. Morphologically, the relative pronoun ἥτις (1:28) correlates with τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (fem. sing.; 1:27).\(^{43}\)

Hence, the faith of the gospel denotes the opponents’ distortion. On the other hand, the Philippians themselves are called to close ranks around τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,\(^{44}\) as it brings them salvation. Martin and Hawthorne see the verb στήκετε as being explained in two participle phrases.\(^{45}\) If one divides the sentence according to the two participles (συναθλοῦντες and μὴ πυρόμενοι), the structure of the passage can be seen as the following:

---

\(^{43}\) Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 72-73; Martin, *Philippians*, 84 (refers to H. Binder, *Der Glaube bei Paulus*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968) 78; CONTRA: O’Brien, *The Epistle to Philippians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 154; Fee argues: sometimes in koine Greek the number and the gender of the relative pronoun depend on these of the predicate noun that follows, and not on the number and gender of its antecedent. In this case, ἥτις is attracted to ἐνδειξίς, which is also fem.Sg.. Hence, the antecedent of ἥτις can be any other noun and not necessarily τῇ πίστει. However, it does not give much help, as what exactly is the sign of the opponents’ defeat and Philippians’ salvation, remains unclear: as the cases of 1 Cor 3.17 (ἀ γάρ νας τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγίος ἐστιν, οίτων ἐστε ἴματε) and Eph 3.13 (διὸ αἰτούμε μὴ ἐγκαθεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεισι μοῦ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ἥτις ἐστίν ἄδεια ὑμῶν) the antecedents are respectively νας and θλίψεις, i.e. the closest nouns. But Phil 1:27 cannot be read in the similar way: the preceding clause has no noun but ἄντικειμένοι, and the opponents themselves cannot symbolize their own destruction. So, Fee suggests that “the indefinite [pronoun, ἥτις] is used because it refers not to any specific word or idea that precedes, but to the whole of the preceding clause” (Fee, *Paul’s Letter to Philippians*, 168, n. 53), and can be “either the steadfastness of the Philippians, their sufferings, or the opposition they are encountering” (O’Brien, loc.cit, 154; cf. J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervann, 1953) 106). However, according to Greek grammar, “If the main clause as a whole is regarded as the antecedent, the relative stands in the neuter singular with or without a demonstrative” (H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1956) 562.2501a), which is observed in 1:28b-29, where neutral demonstrative pronoun του/το refers to Philippians situation of faith/faithfulness and suffering: καὶ τοῦτο ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἑτοίμαζεν ὑμῖν ἐκαθισθή τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύειν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν (cf. also οἷος ἦν ὁ τοῦτο μοι ἄπορηκει τοῖς συμπεπληγμένοις (1:19) where του/το refers to the preaching of Christ (1:18)). In the case of ἥτις ἐστίν αὐτοῖς ἐνδειξίς, the application of the rule cited above, and hence the possibility of ἥτις being related to the whole situation, is questionable.

\(^{44}\) The verb συναθλᾶω can be understood as “to struggle along with someone” (Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 166) or “united for one goal” and “here the goal is to preserve τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου” (Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 71).

\(^{45}\) Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 71.
Verses 27-28 can be interpreted as: “I want to hear that you remain unanimous, with a single heart, with one mind, standing up together for the faith of the gospel, and not being intimidated by the opponents (of the faith), because this (faith) brings salvation for you and defeat for your enemies.” In both clauses the faith of the gospel ($\tau\iota\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varepsilon\tau\iota\upsilon\varepsilon\nu\delta\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\ell\iota\omicron\upsilon$) takes the central role: in the first case, the Philippian Christians are called to unite themselves around the faith; secondly, the faith is the reason of not being afraid of the opponents; in other words, they should unite around the faith against the opponents. What is this faith?

The word-combination $\tau\iota\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\upsilon\varepsilon\nu\delta\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\ell\iota\omicron\upsilon$ refers to “the faith brought about by the gospel” or “faith whose content is the gospel” and hence, represents the Christian creed. The very formation of Christian communities has been caused by

---

46 The dative in the word-combination συμαθλούντες $\tau\iota\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\upsilon\varepsilon\nu\delta\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\ell\iota\omicron\upsilon$ should hardly be understood as “with the faith” (as Hall argues, see D.R. Hall, “Fellow-Workers with the Gospel,” *Expository Times* 85 (1974) 119-20), but rather as “dative of interest or advantage” (“for the faith”) (Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 71; cf. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 152). Hence, faith is what unites them in staying and struggling together for one goal, because faith is this goal (see V.C. Pfützner, *Paul and the Agon Motif* (NTS 16; Leiden: E J Brill, 1967) 114-118).


the faith in the gospel (i.e. in the death and resurrection of Christ); so the gospel is the reason of the community’s existence. In other words, the faith of the gospel is what distinguishes Christians from non-Christians, it is the Christians’ boundary with the outer world. This faith is the identity mark of the Christians, it differentiates “them” from “you,” so ἀντικειμένον stands against, not only Philippians themselves, but also against the faith proper. Whether ἀντικειμένον attack Philippian Christian communities or Christian faith, such an attack threatens the very subsistence of the community: without its faith the community cannot exist; yet the faith (i.e. its content) proclaims the destruction of the ἀντικειμένον. The contrast between “them” and the faith of the gospel, as well as between salvation and distortion refer to the section 3:18-20: the enemies of Christ’s cross (i.e. the opponents of the essence of the gospel) will meet ἀπώλεια, while “you”/ “we” (united around the cross/the faith of the gospel) will see salvation and the savior. So faith of (in) the gospel becomes the watershed between Paul’s readers and their opponents.

Because the significance of the gospel as the identity mark of the Christian group is often missed, scholars struggle to follow Paul’s argument: the correlation between the threat to the Christian faith and Paul’s appeal to unity is being questioned. Yet the Christian creed can be preserved only by the group who would...

49 Though we agree with Martin and Hawthorne that Ἑρίζει points to τῇ πίστει, we cannot agree with them that ἐδείξει points to “adherence to the faith” (Philippians, 72-73; cf. S.E. Fowl, “Philippians 1.28b, One More Time,” in New Testament Greek and Exegesis: Esseys in Honor of G.F. Hawthorne (ed. A.M. Donaldson and T.B. Sallors; Michigan, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 167-179), as in this case it turns out that Ἑρίζει refers to the idea behind the whole phrase μὴ πεταλώνοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων. Arguing for the “adherence” as ἐδείξει, Martin and Hawthorne make the discussion of Ἑρίζει being connected to τῇ πίστει (which they support) pointless. So, the emergence of “adherence of the faith” instead of just “faith” in Martin and Hawthorne’s argument is very surprising.

50 “The issue here [1:27-28] is apostolic faith. The faith is being threatened… Thus the plea for unity is no small matter. Only be the total cooperation of Christians striving together… can the true
practice it. The annihilation of the creed results in the annihilation of the group and vice versa: the creed, i.e. the belief in certain tenets (in this case, the belief in Christ’s death and resurrection), is what separate Christians from non-Christians. Hence, the consolidation of the Christian community’s unity and defense of the Christian faith, are two sides of the same coin: it is the Christian creed what calls the community into being, yet the community keeps the creed from sinking into oblivion.

Though the identity of the ἀντίκειμαι in the section 1:27-30 remains a mystery, the opponents here obtain an important feature: Paul sets them off, sends them to destruction, and contrasts them to his faithful community in Philippians. In 1:15-18, speaking about his personal opposition, the apostle contrasts right and wrong motives, which move different groups to preach the gospel. Despite being wrongly motivated, “some brothers” (τινὲς [ἀδελθοί]) remain “brothers,” and they are not hostile to the gospel.

In the section 1:28-30 the identity of the opponents is dualistic: on the one hand, the opponents are set off and contrasted with the positive group of “you” (τίμεῖς), described as being hostile to the faith and because of that they are going to end up in destruction, which connects them with “the enemies” in Phil 3. On the other hand, ἀντικείμενοι are connected to Paul’s own experience (1:30 τῶν αὐτῶν ἁγίῳ ἔχοντες, οἱ δὲ εἶδον ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ οὐν ἀκούστε ἐν ἐμοί). The nature of the last association is also not clear, as the apostle seems to refer to different occasions of experiencing hostility from insiders and outsiders of the Christian community. This last remark of Paul has an important meaning: by causing the apostle’s sufferings, his...
Christian rivals described in 1:15-18 become closely associated with opponents of the Christian faith and enemies of Christ’s cross.

3.1.4 Opponents as one group

As we have mentioned above, scholars offered different views on how many groups of opponents Paul deals with in the letter to the Philippians. In our opinion, the rhetoric of Paul’s letter must be taking into account to clarify the meaning of his references to the opponents. Despite the difference in tone, all passages mentioning the opponents are tied together having the same function in Paul’s argument.

In the section 3.2.1.1 we demonstrated, that sections 1:15-17, 2:3-4, and 2:21 have the common feature of dealing with motives, which Paul does not see being appropriate for his readers. In 1:15-18 the apostle speaks about his personal adversaries being selfish and driven by rivalry (ἐριθέα 1:17; τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦν 2:21); in 2:3-4, he addresses his readers and plead them not to be driven by egoistic interests and jealousy (μηδὲν κατ’ ἐριθείαν; μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἐκαστος σκοποῦντες).

Beside the linguistic similarities, the structures of these sections also resemble each other: each time Paul mentions “wrong motive(s),” he alternates it with a positive one, making them even more distinct:\footnote{Martin and Hawthorne speak about “double chiasm (a crisscross structure here) (Philippians, 45).}
1:15-18

τινὲς μὲν καὶ διὰ φθόνου καὶ ἐριν,
τινὲς δὲ καὶ δι’ εὐδοκίαν τὸν Χριστὸν κηρύσσομεν·
οί μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίανοιόμενοι τοῦ εὐαγγελίου
κεῖμαι, οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνῶς,
θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου.

...εἴτε προφάσει
εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ...

2:3-4

μηδὲν κατ’ ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν
ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφοροῦσιν ἀλλήλους ἴγοροι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν,
μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἐκαστὸς σκοποῦντες
ἀλλὰ [καὶ] τὰ ἑτέρων ἐκαστοί.

2:21

οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν,
οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

These structural and semantic similarities allow the conclusion that in all three sections the apostle speaks about the same trouble and hence, the same group of opponents.

In our view, the two vilificatory passages in Phil 3 should be seen as parallel to each other and referred to the same problem. We have already established that both sections 3:2-3 and 3:19 have the same character, which makes the reconstruction of the addressees nearly impossible. However, a similar structure allows connecting them at least to each other. Both consist of trice-repeated labeling and the following generalization:
a) 3:2-3: imperative + noun\(^{52}\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας}, \\
\text{βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας}, \\
\text{βλέπετε τὴν κατατομὴν}.
\end{align*}\]

[οἱ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες ἡμεῖς]

b) 3:19: noun + noun\(^{53}\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{ὁ νῦν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια,} \\
\text{ὁ νῦν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία} \\
\text{καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν}, \\
\text{οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες}.
\end{align*}\]

In the first section, the generalization is not explicitly present. However, implicitly it is quite obvious: though Paul picks here the last word and uses paronomasia

---

\(^{52}\) The imperative is the same all three times, and the nouns are connected by alliteration: all the nouns begin with κ: κύνας; κακοὺς ἐργάτας; κατατομὴν.

\(^{53}\) Martin and Hawthorne put together “enemies of the cross” (3:18) and “their goal is destruction” (3:19) and see in them those, who could not accept suffer and death of the Son of God, i.e. those, whom Paul refers to in 1 Cor 1:23 and 2 Cor 10-13 (Philippians, 223). “They, therefore, could not accept the message of the cross, nor could they tolerate its dissemination. Nor could they tolerate the idea of a suffering apostle” (ibid.). This interpretation connects 3:18-19 with 1:15-18, and refers both fragments to those who expected Christ’s exaltation revealed in his followers now, and not one day (cf.3:20-21). In Christ’s case, the recovery from shame to glory (resurrection) was rather quick, what takes it so long to reveal this glory to the entire world?

The problem with Martin and Hawthorne interpretation is that they disconnect ὁ νῦν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια from the following ὁ νῦν θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, analyzing the latter separately (Philippians, 224-225). They explain it as: “The conjunction καὶ... links ἡ κοιλία and ἡ δόξα together as a single subject, with ὁ θεὸς as the predicate,” which should be translated as “whose god is the belly and the glory in their shame,” i.e. “they have made their stomach and their glory in their shame their god” (loc.cit. 225). Silva objects this interpretation as being “artificial and possibly even solecistic” (Silva, Philippians, 212). Indeed, it does not seem to be enough arguments to detach the three-fold accusation and to break it into two-fold one. Hawthorne does not hesitate to assume that Paul meant some words, which are actually missing to reconstruct a perfect parallel (see his reconstruction of 1:28)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{ἐστὶν [μὲν] αὐτοῖς ἐνδείξεις ἀπώλειας [ἡμῶν],} \\
\text{ὅτι \[καὶ ἡμῶν ἐνδείξεις σωτηρίας ἡμῶν}}
\end{align*}\]
he employs the summary “relying on flesh” very closely and repeats it three times (vv. 3-4...οἱ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, καὶ περ ἐγὼ ἐχων πεποίθησιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἰ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον’), which indicates its importance. As the theme of circumcision is extremely significant for Paul, he clearly gets sidetracked here by the consonant and could not resist mentioning it. However, he is back on track soon and clearly makes his point by repetition of the image of “relying.”

Garland views the fragment 3.2-3 as a chiasm: starting with the paronomasia κατατομή – περιτομή as a centre (“The Composition,” 169-170; see also Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 172):

a. Those dogs (τοίς κύνας)
   b. those evilworkers (οἵς κακοὶς ἐργάτας)
   c. the mutilators (τὴν κατατομὴν)
   c’. the (true) circumcision (περιτομή)
   b’. the ones who serve (οἱ πνευματικοὶ θεοῦ λατρεύοντες)
   a’. the ones who boast... not in the flesh (καὶ καυχόμενοι... οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες)

The b-b’ lines of Garland reconstruction is based on the Lightfoot’s suggestion that Paul uses the word λατρεύω deliberately, as in LXX it indicates Israel’s service to God (Lightfoot, Saint Paul’s Epistle, 145; H. Strathmann, “Λατρεύω, λατρεία,” TDNT, IV: 58-61). Nonetheless, Garland notes that “the key phrase of the section is ‘confidence in the flesh’” (“The Composition,” 170), though the chiastic structure supposes that the centre of the chiasm (in this case κατατομή – περιτομή) is the key phrase. So, Paul’s purpose of using the chiasm here is not clear.

Bateman proposes the parallel structure for the fragment (“Were the Opponents,” 54):

τοίς κύνας
οἵς κακοὶς ἐργάτας
τὴν κατατομὴν
καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ηρου καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ

Ημεῖς γὰρ ἐσμέν ἡ περιτομὴ
οἱ πνευματικοὶ θεοῦ λατρεύοντες
καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ηροῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ

The trouble with Bateman’s version is, however, that the obvious parallel κατατομὴ – περιτομὴ disappears, which is highly problematic. The parallel between καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ and τὴν κατατομὴν is not less unlikely than that with τοίς κύνας proposed by Garland: in both cases the second participle remains unsettled. Bateman himself does not explain why his interpretation of the fragment’s structure is more preferable than that of Garland: his comment is merely “The chiasm seems forced” (Bateman, “Were the Opponents,” 54 n. 50).

In both interpretations, the unit βλέπειεν blurs, as it is divided into three separate lines, and each of them has separate parallel. Besides, both chiastic and parallel structures come apart and get lost in the offshoots and clauses of 3:3-4. It is difficult to see parallel between short, as shouts, insults of 3:2 and long, intensified by participles, descriptive sentences of 3:3-4. 3:2 contains three verbs, while supposedly parallel 3:3-4 – of four verbs/participles. In addition, neither parallel structure, nor chiastic one seems to be found in 3:9-20, the fragment, which resemblance to 3s2 is glaring.
Naming three features of “bad guys” and summing their negative nature with resumptive images (“relying on flesh” and “earthly mindset” respectively) are not all the similarities of the sections. In both cases Paul gives an alternative: in 3:2-3 he contrasts relying on flesh and relying on no flesh; and in 3:19-20 he does the same with earth and heaven.\(^{55}\) Indeed, as we demonstrated above, Paul’s mentioning of circumcision slips away quickly, and he gives much time to the contraposition of flesh / no flesh (spirit, God, Christ). The antithesis of v. 20 (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει) creates a pair “earth – heaven,”\(^{56}\) which supports our reconstruction of the implicit antithesis in vv.2-3 “[flesh] – non-flesh (spirit).”

The brackets of contrasting “them” and “us” frame chapter 3:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{2 they… are…} \\
\text{but we are…} \\
\text{19 their… is…} \\
\text{20 but our… is…}
\end{array}
\]

This framing allows an assumption that the section 3:12-16 also has a polemical character and the situation that Paul refers to is the same which caused the emotional vilification in 3:2 and 3:19. The structural parallel of the brackets supports the view shared by the majority of scholars: the opponents mentioned in 3:2 and 3:19 should be treated as a single whole.\(^{57}\) However, the vilificatory nature of the sections does

---


56 In the phrase ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει the pronoun ἡμῶν is emphatically placed first, to contrast “our” πολίτευμα and “their” one (see O’Brien, *The Epistle*, 459; Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 348, n14; M. Silva, *Philippians: Commentary* (The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; ed. K. Barker; Chicago: Moody, 2005) 183; Sergienko, “Our Politeuma is in Heaven,” 152.

not allow reconstruction of the opponents’ identity.

In 1:28, the apostle explicitly speaks about the opponents (ἀντικειμένοι). Paul persuades his readers not to be afraid of them. Whom exactly does he mean: his personal rivals at the place of his imprisonment or a group opposing the Christian community in Philippi? The analysis of the text (see section 3.2.1 in this chapter of the study) demonstrates that Paul could actually mean both: as he contrasts “you” and “them” in 1:28 (αὐτοῖς/ὑμῶν), the opponents are obviously these of Philippi; however, in 1:30, explaining the significance of the events taking place in the life of his readers, he refers to his own experience: τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγωνὰ ἔχοντες, οἱ ἐξετάζει ἐν ἐμοί καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί. The former (ἐξετάζει) cannot be interpreted as denotation of Roman authorities, and the latter (νῦν ἀκούετε) seems to refer to just mention Paul’s adversaries. The assumption that in 1:30 the apostle speaks about himself being challenged by “some brothers” (1:15-18) is supported by the location of the section: in 2:3-4 and 2:21 he continues contrasting wrong motivation by strife and rivalry with correct motivation by love and selflessness.58

The sections 1:27-28 and 3:19-20 have striking linguistic parallels: Paul’s appeal to his readers in the nearest contexts of both fragments contain paronyms: πολιτεύεσθε (1:27) and πολιτεύμα (3:20); in both cases, Paul speaks of contrasting destinies of “them” and “us”:

---

58 Hooker agrees that in 2:21 Paul refers to the same people as in 1:15-18 (“Philippians: Phantom Opponents,” 390).
These linguistic similarities point to the fact that in both sections Paul speaks about the same group or “opponents.”

We can summarize all these parallels in one chart which would demonstrate the way of linguistic, semantic and structural connections among all the sections referring to opponents in the letter:

![Chart diagram]

However, the difference in the tone between 1:15-18 and 3:2, 19 cannot escape one’s attention and needed to be explained. We have already mentioned that 3:2, 19 has a vilificatory character, and that Paul openly blame and label the opponents. In 1:15-18,

---

59 Cf. Hooker, “Philippians: Phantom Opponents,” where she argues that there were no real opponents in Philippi, and Paul’s references to those who present danger to his readers (1:28; 3:2, 18-19) actually relate to his own opposition at the place of his imprisonment (1:15-18).
the apostle seems to be greatly concerned to emphasize the absence of the theological split in the insignificance of the rivals’ number. Yet he devotes them a sizable section in chapter1; in addition, the location of this information about “the brothers” seems to point to the reason of the writing of the letter in the first place.\textsuperscript{60} Paul continues the topic again and again and even uses a Christological hymn to support his argument against his rivals.\textsuperscript{61} Hence, the theme of “some brothers” is not transient at all.

We have already observed that in 1:15-18 Paul seems to belittle the real scope of trouble: in the section, both parties seem to be equal, though we know that in ancient rhetoric the abilities and success of opponents were usually played down. If being minimized, the negative group is equal to the positive one and it must have been much bigger in reality. This assumption is supported by 2:21: Paul splits out that “all” are driven by selfishness, and only Timothy stays by Paul/Christ’s side (οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἐαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὗ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). In 1:15-18, Paul introduces his rival rather neutrally, underlying his primarily interest in preaching the gospel. In 1:19, he involves his readers, making them the participants of the conflict and expressing no doubts they take his side: their prayers for Paul will help him to overcome his hardship. Though his rivals seek for harming him, he is far from giving up and is confident to succeed in his work with the Philippians.

We can conclude that in 1:28 Paul does not start a new theme: the ἀντικειμένοι are the development of the character which has already been introduced. In 1:27 the apostle asks his readers to close their ranks against the


\textsuperscript{61} See section 4.1.5.1 of this study below.

© University of Pretoria
opponents; and he does the same in 2:1-4: the unanimity in Christ, spirit and love 
(ἀγάπη, cf. 1:17 ἐξ ἀγάπης) are set off against the selfish motives of rivalry (ἔρωθεία, 
cf. 1:17 ἐξ ἔρωθείας). In 1:30, he connects ἀντικείμενοι to his own past and present 
ἀγών. Now his real feelings to the adversaries get out: even though they preach 
Christ, because of their attitude they deserve Inferno. In 3:17-18 Paul calls the 
behavior of many Christians (πολλοί γὰρ, cf. 2:21 ὁ πάντες γὰρ) that of “enemies of 
the Cross;” he also mentions that this situation is not something new (οὐς πολλάκις 
ἐλέγον ὑμῖν, νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω). Then Paul claims that these people are 
going to destruction (ὅν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια...), which puts “them” out of the group of 
“us” (as “we” are going to meet σωτήρ, 1:19-20).

In his conclusive admonition, the apostle makes a full circle: ὅτως στήκετε 
ἐν κυρίῳ (4:1; cf. 1:27 στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συνεθλούντες τῇ πίστει 
τοῦ εὐαγγέλιου). He pleads his readers to have a certain way of thinking: it should be 
“true” and “pure” (4:8 ἀληθῆς, ἀγνώς, etc.; cf. 1:16 ἐξ ἀγάπης and 1:17 οὐχ ἀγνώς).

We can conclude that the image of the opponents in the letter go through 
certain development: at first, Paul presents them as an insignificant group inside the 
church, which existence does not bother him; then he identifies his personal rivals 
with these of Philippians, and ultimately, he denies their (opponents) right to belong 
to the in-Christ group. The image of the opponents Paul creates, serves two goals: on 
the one hand, the apostle needs to demonstrate to his readers that he is not 
intimidated by the opponents, so the readers also should not be intimidated; on the

---

62 This second reference of Paul to something already known to Philippians allows to see the ἀγών 
of 1:30 in different light. Probably, in 1:30 he does not speak about his experience in Philippi 
described in Acts 16 and 1 Thess 2:1, but about a different situation, when the conflict took place 
inside the Christian commune.
other hand, the image must be expressive enough to make Philippians decisively dissociate themselves from the opponents. The emphasized separation of the opponents has an essential function in Paul’s argument: as his challengers do not belong to (his) group, they are disfranchised, and hence, their opinion does not matter; their critique of Paul is not relevant.

The character of the references to the opposition in the letter to Philippians does not give much for the recovery of the protagonists’ identity. At the same time, all the sections, though different in their tone, share a lot in their structure, linguistics, and semantics. That gives the base for treating the opponents in the letter as a single whole and to analyze their function in Paul’s argumentation. De Silva argues that in the letter to the Philippians, “the opponents function rhetorically as a foil… as a device.”

3.1.5 Opponents in the letter to Philippians: those, who are not “us”

In 1.18 Paul sums up the bad motives of his rivals: they preach out of προφάσει, while “good guys” out of ἀληθεία. In 1 Thess 2:5 he rejects the accusations in being προφάσει, and in 2 Cor 4 insists on being ἀληθεία, which means Paul himself was

---

63 De Silva, “No Confidence in Flesh,” 52). Cf. Hooker, “Philippians: Phantom Opponents,” 294; Nebreda distinguishes “envious and rival preachers,” “political adversaries” and “enemies of the Cross,” yet he agrees that they all function as the outgroup: “... the rhetorical and historical contexts somehow merge... the apostle makes use of the adversaries to drive his point home” (Christ Identity, 275, italic original).
accused in being προφάσει and not ἀληθεία. So, accusing others in being wrong, he at the same time underlines himself being right: by detaching “them” he is actually more concerned about “us;” by thickening the line of border separating “them” he thickens the line defining “us.” So, the apostle utilizes his opponents for his own agenda: they become part of an apophatic argument: what “we” are not.

It stands out that the apostle not just criticizes inappropriate behavior and encourages correct behavior, but he constantly puts them next to each other, contrasts them and by doing that, emphasizes the difference. It seems that this persistent comparison helps to underline their differences and at the same time, to see each of them more clearly. Being put next to its opposite, each quality or motive fills up with a sense more intensively, as black is best seen on white, and light – in darkness:

\[ \text{ἡ ἑνίκησεν ἄμεμπτος καὶ ἀκέραιος,} \]
\[ ὁ τεκνὸν θεοῦ ἄμωμα \]
\[ μέσον \]
\[ γενεᾶς σκολιάς καὶ διεστραμμένης, \]
\[ ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστήρες ἐν κόσμῳ \]

This theme of distinction, continual juxtaposition, endures and develops throughout the letter. Paul starts with the accusation of “some brothers” in selfishness and envy

---

65 See Marchal categorizes different kinds of dissociations in the letter to Philippians (appearance of reality, division from unity and difference from sameness, destruction from safety or salvation, human from divine, and “other dissociations” (Hierarchy, Unity, and Imitation, 158-166) and concludes that the argument by dissociation “lies at the heart of Paul’s argumentation in Philippians” (loc.cit., 161).
(1:15-17, 2:2-4). Selfishness and envy are nothing else but honor-competitiveness, when one aspires to gain goods (including honor) at the expense of others. As we noted in the discussion in sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of chapter 2 of this study, competitiveness can harm the unity of the group; challenging the group’s leader (Paul) ultimately means harming the group and that is how Paul’s personal adversaries develop into “enemies of the Cross” in Phil 3 (because Christ is also part of the “we”-group, which Paul and his readers belong to). If in Phil 1 and 2 we see repeating contrasting of motives, in chapter 3 the juxtaposition reaches its climax: as we have demonstrated above, the chapter is framed by the contrast of a three-lined labeling of opposition followed by a summarizing title (3:2-3 and 3:19) and a positive image of “we” (in both cases the description of “them” and “us” belong to the same semantic field: literally and allegorically “flesh” (3:3-4) is something what belongs to earth (3:19), while “spirit” and Christ (3:3) belong to heaven (3:20). In addition, Paul also uses other devices to emphasize the contrast between “them” from “us” through the entire chapter:

a) paronomasia: κατατομή – περιτομή (concision – circumcision) vv.2-3;

b) same phrases, one is negative: οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποίητες vs. πεποίησιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί (vv.3-4);

c) same nouns and different attribute: δικαιοσύνη τὴν ἐκ νόμου vs. (ἀλλὰ) τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (9);

d) same verbs and different modifiers: “live like… us” περιπατοῦμας… ἡμᾶς. – “live like… enemies” περιπατοῦσιν… τοὺς ἔχθροὺς (vv.17-18);

e) traditional opposite pair: earth – heaven (vv.19-20);
f) semantic opposition of βλέπετε and σκοπεῖτε.\(^6\)

In Phil 3 Paul states clearly that the “them-group” does not include Christ, while “we” are the “in-Christ-group”; “we” are described as καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (3:3) and σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν (3:20), while “them” are explicitly called τοὺς ἐχθρούς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (3:18).

The analysis of the “opponents sections” indicates that Paul emphasizes the difference between two groups: “us,” or a positively evaluated group – which are Paul himself, his readers, his co-workers (Timothy, Epaphroditus, and others), – and “them,” or a negatively evaluated group – opposition, challenging Paul’s leadership over the Christian community. Paul underlines the distinction between “us” (“you”) and “them” through the letter. In other words, Paul not just describes his opponents, but constantly compares and contrasts them with the group that he himself and his readers belong to.

So, with every mention of the “other” side, of the people who do not belong to his circle, Paul accentuates their difference and tries to demonstrate the contradictions between the two groups. The idea behind all the tools that Paul uses for describing (his) opponents in ch. 3 and in other chapters, is the following: with all seeming similarity, the opponents are totally different from “us”:

– as “us,” “they” preach Christ – but their motives are wrong;

– as “us,” “they” aspire to a goal; but for “them” the end would be distortion, and for “us” – salvation;

\(^6\) Βλέπετε means “to look at something in order to beware” while σκοπεῖτε “to look at something in order to imitate” (de Silva, “No Confidence in the Flesh,” 33).
– as “us,” “they” claim to be God’s people – but “they” are not, “they” are outsiders;

– as “us,” “they” have a relying flesh – but for “us” it is spirit (Christ), and for “them” – (just) flesh.

– “they” claim to serve God – but they serve to themselves.

Consequently, Paul’s point of mentioning the opponents in the letter to the Philippians are not the discussion with them, rather than using them as a background to emphasize the necessity of the “right” we-group unity. The main feature of the opponents is that they are “them,” they are not “us.” By dissociating from “them,” Paul defines “us.” That means that the opponents are a background, a decoration, an instrument which the apostle uses to help his readers realize and build their identity. By marking off “them,” Paul defines what “we” are.

A negative view on the “other” helps to build a positive view of “us.” As we have stated in section 2.1.2 of this study, the very existence of “other” is a necessity for one’s self-identity. Maintaining the borders between “us” and “them” is the key for the very existence of the group.67 Speaking about early Christians building their self-identity, Judith Lieu writes: “identity develops only in social interaction... so even where we may catch authentic glimpses of their [the ‘other’] shadows these serve only the purposes of the self being so shaped.”68

Accentuating the differences between “them” and “us” seems to be the

---

67 See Barth, “Vvedenie,” 16.
68 Lieu, Christian Identity, 314.
purpose of Paul’s references to the opposition. Comparisons with the “they”-group give Paul the opportunity to describe the “us”-group features more vividly. In that sense, the existence of “enemies” is a necessary condition for Paul’s “we”-group self-identity. The negative characteristics of “them” are to emphasize the positive characteristics of “us,” to make belonging to the “us”-group attractive.69 The only specific feature of the border between “them” and “us” is Christ; Christ is the most (the only) significant identification mark between two groups.

3.2 Positive identity: unity in Christ

The positive identity, i.e. the understanding of who “we” are, is expressed in the language used to describe and to refer to a person and to the group the person belongs to. Besides such language, one can find in the letter to the Philippians the deliberate appeals to strengthen the group bounds or/and to conduct a certain behavior or mindset appropriate to the group. It is difficult though to distinguish between explicit and implicit admonitions for unity, because the very usage of identity language supposes, reflects and strengthens the ties within the group.

69 Cf. D.K. Darko, speaking about the letter to Ephesians, notes, that the negative description of outsiders is part of “a rhetorical strategy to promote positive group identity” (“No Longer Living as the Gentiles: Differentiation and Shared Ethical Values in Ephesians 4:17-6:9,” TynBul 59.2 (2008) 318-319); Osiek writes on “the opponents” in Philippians: “They are “ogres” whom Paul can draw upon to portray rhetorical contrast” (Philippians, Philimon, 83).
3.2.1 The language of positive identity throughout the letter

The implicit positive identity is contained in the very language Paul uses to address his readers and to refer to other members of the Christian community. Being separated from his readers, the apostle obviously addresses them as “you” (2 Pl, ὑμεῖς), and himself and his co-workers at the place of the writing “we” (ἡμεῖς 3:17).

Paul underlines the fact that the Philippians share his experience (1:30); calls them to follow his (and Christ’s, and his co-workers’) way of life (2:5, 3:17, 4:9). Eventually, when Paul speaks about confrontation with the opposition, “you” becomes “we” (ἡμεῖς) (3:3, 20). He, his close helpers and his readers form one group (“we”-group); this group includes also God (as Father, 1:2; 2:11, 15; 4:9, 20) and Christ (especially in 3:7-12).

As in his other letters, Paul prefers to address his readers and to refer to his fellow-Christians using kinship-language: “brothers” (ἀδελφοί 1:12, 14; 2:25; 3:1, 17, 21; 4:1, 8), children (γενεά 1:14, γένεσιν 2:22), beloved ones (γαμπροί μου 2:12, 4:1), which indicate close and faithful relationships like these of the household members. Aasgaard notes that “the [sibling] metaphor functions as a support for unity and mutual responsibility.”

Treiblco agrees: Paul always [except for Rom 9:3] “reserves ἀδελφοί for Christians... as a boundary-constructing term... – only community members are ἀδελφοί.” The apostle speaks about his relations with

---


Timothy as these of father and child (2:25), though this probably refers rather to hierarchy in these relations as well as to the close character of them. “Paul’s use of sibling language projects roles of equality, mutual responsibility, and solidarity without denying asymmetrical relationship implied by parent-child imagery.”⁷²

Emphasizing “what they hold… in common,”⁷³ Paul also speaks about κοινωνία, the fellowship or partnership, which has already been established between him and Philippians over time (1:5, 7) and which he hopes will be developed and reinforced (4:10-14). Though in the mentioned fragments Paul means financial support he has received from the Philippian community (4:15-16), this sponsorship has also spiritual meaning (4:17-19). The important aspect of κοινωνία is a shared reality that Paul refers to when appealing to the Philippians for unity (2:1 κοινωνία πνεύματος) and speaking of his new life “in Christ” (3:10 (τὴν) κοινωνίαν (τῶν) παθημάτων αὐτοῦ).⁷⁴ Paul’s own and his readers’ “sharing” of Christ’s way of life is verbalized in terms of identifying with Christ:

3:10 (τὴν) κοινωνίαν (τῶν) παθημάτων αὐτοῦ,
συμμορφίζομενος τῷ θεανάτῳ αὐτοῦ,

21ος μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν
συμμορφοῦν τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ...


⁷³ Κοινωνία and κοινός are typical terms used to appeal to the audience to the unity (see Marchal, Hierarchy, Unity and Imitation, 92. As an example Marchal refers to Aelius Aristides, Or. 24.37).

⁷⁴ See F. Hauck, TDNT, III.798, for κοινωνία with genitive could mean “the person or thing shared” and “the person in whom there is sharity.”
The **συν-** compounds used by Paul in the letter (1:7; 2:17, 18; 2:5; 4.3) emphasize mutuality.\(^75\) The phrase **συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε** (3:17) is often interpreted as “become imitators with me,” \(^76\) also can have a connotation of “join with me in representing.”\(^77\) As with the case of father-son language, there is no doubt the idea of mutuality is present; the question is to what extent the idea of hierarchy (that Paul along with Christ being the example for Philippians to follow) is contained here.

Πολιτεύομαι and τὸ πολίτεμα (1:27, 3:20): both words are illustrations of Christian “society” and have a clear allusion to Roman citizenship, which, along with certain privileges and protection\(^78\) gave to its holders responsibility to stay loyal to the emperor and to the interests of the empire. Lightfoot notes that the verb πολιτεύομαι “seems always to refer to public duties devolving on a man as member of a body,”\(^79\) which in the context of the letter supposes that membership in the Christian commune impose certain responsibilities on a person, namely the loyalty to

---


\(^78\) In the light of the incident in Philippi described in Acts 26:12, 37, 38, this illustration in the letter to Philippians is significant.

\(^79\) Lightfoot, *St.Paul’s Letter to Philippians…*, 105, italic original.

Unlike in 1 Cor 12, there is no metaphor of the Christian community as “the body” in the text of Philippians. Yet from the reference of Lightfoot one can see that politeu,omai contain this image of of unity, which has its origin in Stoic writings (see Seneca, *De ira* 2.31.7; *Epistulae* 95.51f; 92.30; Epictetus, *Dis.* 2.5.24.ff; 10.3f). The emperor, as the head of th body, played the role of the “essential integrating factor,” very much the same as the role Christ has in the Christian community (Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians…*, 198-200).
to εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ in its struggle with the enemies συμβολοῦντες τῇ πίστει
tοῦ εὐαγγελίου (1:27). The connotation of protection is loaded in clear terms in 3:20,
where it is opposed to the distortion expecting “the enemies.” Σωτηρία and σωτήρ,
used in close connection to πολιτεύομαι and τὸ πολίτεμα (in 1:28 and 3:20
respectively) support the view that in both cases Paul means Christian community as
a state, where God (Christ) is an emperor.80

The religious metaphor ἡ περιτομή (3:3) has a clear anti-Jewish connotation
and refers to the question of who the people of God are. Though Paul states “we are
the circumcision,” the following participles contain the meaning of this metaphor: οἱ
πιστεύων θεού λατρεύσων καὶ καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκί
πεποιθότες. It is part of the polemic with the opponents, so each characteristic is a
contrast to that of the “enemies” (see section 3.2.2). The key words here are “by
spirit,” “not in flesh” and “Jesus Christ.” So, “spirituality” (which in the given
context most likely means “not belonging to this world”)81 and Jesus Christ are what
differs “true people of God” from the false ones.

We can see that Paul did not invent a new language for the “we” group; he
uses the same fictive familial language and terms, which was used in the Old

80 Tellbe believes that in 3:20 Paul describes Christian commune as a club or a voluntary association
(Paul between Synagogue, 271; see also Oakes, Philippi: From People to Letter, 199; cf.
Sergienko, “Our Polituema is in Heaven.”

Riotto argues that in 1:27 Paul instructs his readers to live ἀξίως, i.e. reputable live as citizens of
Philippi (Behaving as a Christ-Believer, 270); such interpretation corresponds to Paul’s
admonition against the external opposition of the church and with the admonition in 4.8, which
Witherington believes is adoption of non-Christian values (Witherington, Paul’s Letter to
Philippians, 67). Yet linguistic agreement between 1:27-28 (πολιτεύομαι; ἀπολέοις, ἵμων ἐκ
σωτηρίας) and 3:19-20 (ἀπολέοις ἵμων γὰρ τὸ πολίτεμα… καὶ Σωτήρα ἀπεδεχόμεθα), as well as
connections among all the references to the opposition throughout the letter (see section 3.2.4
below) allow the conclusion that the images Paul uses are also the same.

81 Cf. Phil 4:21, 22 ὃι ἄγιοι.
Testament referring to a fellow Israelite,\textsuperscript{82} in the Qumran community and also in the Greco-Roman world by associations and religious communities.\textsuperscript{83} Yet the apostle uses this language in order to “challenge the received models of ‘people’ or of ‘Israel’,\textsuperscript{84} and in case of the letter to the Philippians, also from different communities of the Roman society. The only difference of “Christian” identity language is Christ himself; relation to Christ is the identity mark of the community members.

The scholars also point to repetition of the word “all” (πάντες ἰσραήλ 1:25; 2:17, 26; 4:2, 21, 22) as to Paul’s way of encouraging cohesion of the Christian commune in Philippi.\textsuperscript{85} This word is used in the address (1:1, 4, 7 (twice)), and then in the parts of the letter with explicit admonitions for unity (1:25; 2:17, 26; 4:2), which makes a perfect connection to the next section of our study.

\textbf{3.2.2 Explicit admonitions for unity}

The section 1:27-2:4 contains the explicit admonition to the readers to unite. Marchal selects the section as a single unit on the base that it is “direct exhortation to the

\textsuperscript{83} For references to the primary sources see Trebilco, \textit{Self-Designations and Group Identity}, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{84} Lieu, \textit{Christian Identity}, 131.
community.” In 1:27-30 Paul’s main message is to close the ranks in view of enemies, while in 2:1-4 he speaks rather about rejection of honor-competition. Yet the two themes are connected, as strife and competitiveness inside community is a real threat to its cohesion: στήσετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι (1:27) correlates with εἰ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος (2:1), σύμψυχοι (2:2) is a parallel to μᾶς ψυχῆ (1:27). The difference between the two admonitions for unity is that in the first case Paul uses military-political language, and in the second one his appeal is rather an emotional, affectionate one. In both cases Paul exhorts his readers to unite for the sake of the community benefit: the words εἰς τὴν ὕμων προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως, ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὕμων περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (1:25-26) precede the μόνον of 1:27; and in 2:2 he says: πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαρὰν. Joy over the faith of Christ and the success of faith is the goal, while unity of the Christian community is a means for it.


See section 3.1.3 of this study, above.

See section 4.1.5.1 of this study, below.

The military character of συναντάσσω and στήκω is a common place for the commentators of the letter (see Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 70-72; Geoffrion, The Rhetorical Purpose, 55; O’Brien, The Epistle to Philippians, 149-150; Portefaix, Sister Rejoice, 140; Krentz, “Military Language and Metaphors,” 120; de Vos, Church and Community in Conflict, 277-278). For the political color of πολιτεία see G. Lüderitz, “What is Politieuma,” 185; Krentz, loc.cit., 113; Geoffrion, loc.cit., 25, 35-82; Nebreda, Christ Identity, 269-270.

Especially the phase εἰ τις σταλάγχω καὶ σκίτσωμαι (2:1), which “is difficult to interpret. It can be translated in variety of terms which cover feelings such as compassion, affection and mercy” (Peterlin, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 61).
In his admonition for unity, Paul mentions like-mindedness twice: τὸ ἀὐτὸ φρονητε... τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες (2:2). Strictly speaking, the call to be ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μὴ ψυχῇ / σῶμασιον has the same connotation. Yet according to Willis, the word φρονέω and its cognates, so important for the letter, has an additional semantic load, namely “envisioning the proper way followers of Christ look at their life in general society.” Willis demonstrates that ancient writers used τὸ ἀὐτὸ φρονέω (and cognates) referring to “political or social factions or allegiances” spoken about against their adversaries. Hence, the use of φρονέω in the letter to Philippians “has a basic political cast, in the sense of [Paul’s] encouraging loyalty to one leader... and a shared outlook – implying rejection of another group and its outlook.” That is Paul’s appeals τὸ ἀὐτὸ φρονητε, τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες (2:2), τοῦτο φρονῶμεν (3:15 together with ἔτερος φρονεῖτε 3:16), τὸ ἀὑτὸ φρονεῖν (4:2) are not only about a proper mind-set, yet also about identity (both positive and negative one). Silva writes: “the verse [2:5] appeals to the Philippians union with Christ and not to his attitude,” and interprets the verse like: “Be so disposed toward one another as is proper for those who are united in Christ Jesus.” Philippians must remember that they belong to an “in-Christ” group (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ἕμων ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (2:5), τὸ ἀὑτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ (4:2)), and that this group is surrounded by

91 See Peterlin, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 59.
92 The verb and its cognates are used 10 times in the letter to Philippians in comparison to 9 times in Romans and 3 more in the other Pauline writings.
94 Ibid. 182-183. Cf. Marchal, Hierarchy, Unity and Imitation, 93.
95 Willis, “Seen the Faith,” 184.
96 Silva, Philippians. Commentary, 95.
97 Ibid. 97. The interpretations of Willis and Silva goes along with Käzemann’s understanding of 2.5 and the meaning of the hymn 2.6-11, which will be analyzed in section 4.1.2 of this study (below).
adversaries. And here positive and negative identity meets.  

We can see that a significant part of the letter (sections referring to the opponents, admonitions to the Philippians themselves) contain the same idea of identity: belonging to the “in-Christ” community and dissociation from the “others.” The text of the letter “is replete... in a markedly intensified way, (with allusions) to the structure of belonging.” The language Paul uses to describe this new identity of believers in Christ is very much the same to Roman politic military vocabulary. Theissen argues that Roman rhetoric of imperial unity served as a plausibility basis for Paul’s “participation Christology,” i.e. in Christian community’s self-understanding as a group united in and through Christ.

Paul’s description of his own entering the “in-Christ” group experience is to be found in the center of Phil 3 within “vilification brackets.” In contrast to other descriptions of this event (in Gal 1:13-17 and Acts 9:3-20), Paul’s presentation in the letter to the Philippians emphasizes the change of identity, the change of the group that Paul belongs to.

---


3.3 Paul’s own example of the changed identity (3:4-11)

Paul’s self-description in 3:4-14 represents both positive and negative identities in one section (pericope). Based on his own example, the apostle pictures the difference between the two groups.

Dunn considers Paul’s self-identity being a transitional one, i.e. moving from his original identity as a Jew and dealing with his new revelation in Christ.\(^{101}\) It is rather correct if one analyzes the entire collection of Pauline writings;\(^ {102}\) however, in Phil 3:4-11, Paul’s identity is presented as not being transitional, but as a completely dislodged one: he totally rejects his past Jewishness and associates himself exclusively with Christ.

The structure of the section serves to emphasize this complete break: there are three parts: Paul’s past identity (3:5-6), the very moment of the change (3:7-8), and his “new identity”\(^ {103}\) (3:9-11).

---


\(^ {102}\) See the comparison of Paul’s continuing acknowledge of his Jewishness (Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22, (24)) and emphasizes his severance with Judaism (Gal 1:13-14; 2:19 and Phil 3:7-8) in Dunn, “Who Did Paul Think He Was.”

\(^ {103}\) Grammatically, the last piece is rather something desirable than real: Paul has rejected whatever was valuable for him in the past *in order to achieve* certain things in Christ. So, strictly speaking it is not literal identity in terms of “I am,” but rather new kind of goal-setting. See below.
3.3.1 Paul’s old identity: περιτομή ὀκταῆμερος (3:5-6)

Philippians 3:5-6, the description of Paul’s Jewish past, is introduced as the explanation (or as the base) of his reasons to rely on flesh: 3:4 καὶ περὶ ἑγώ ἔχων πεποιθησίν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγώ μᾶλλον.

Hence, the section is connected to 3:2-3, where he unites “dogs,” “evil doers” and “mutilation” under the concept of “relying on flesh.” Therefore, Paul puts his past Jewish experience on one level with “dogs” etc., which gives strong ground to read the whole section 3:5-6 as an anti-Jewish (anti-Judaizing) one.

Paul’s description of his base for “relying on flesh” consists of two major parts: one is united under the preposition ἐκ (ἐξ), referring mostly to Paul’s ethnicity, and the other one under the preposition κατά, referring to his relationships with Jewish Law (κατὰ νόμον), i.e. to his religious believes.

---

104 The collective image of “dogs,” “evil doers” and “mutilation” as those who rely on flesh is supposed in (is apparent from) the contrast ἡμεῖς γὰρ οὐκ ἐν σαρκί πεποιθότες (3:3), see section of this study 3.1.1, above.

105 Cf. Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 181.

106 φυλῆς Βενιαμίν has no such preposition; but as it has same Dative case as ἐκ γένους Τοραῆ, the preposition ἐκ is presupposed there.

107 Again, first and last lines has the Law as indirect object (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος...κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος), while the middle line does not have it (κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν). However, the zeal here is definitely zeal for the Law, as together with being a Pharisee, his persecution of the church the term itself indicates the same zeal to the Law which emerging is described in 2 Maccabees (ζῆλον νόμοῦ 1 Mac 2:28); See below.
Verse 4 clearly represents the introduction (or heading) of the following passages, which are the detailed description of what is “relying on flesh.” The position of the first line of v.5 (περιτομή ὀκτάμερος) is not clear: being interpreted in a narrow ethnic sense, περιτομή ὀκτάμερος seems to duplicate the following line ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ. Circumcision has been both a sign of Jewish nationality and a first step of keeping the Law; besides, in the given context of the letter, “circumcision” is a substitute for “relying on flesh”: ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμὲν ἢ περιτομῆ... οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες (3:3). As περιτομή ὀκτάμερος in 3:5 has no preposition and can be

108 See Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 146 for περιτομή ὀκτάμερος starts the ascending scale of the list, where each following characteristic intensifies the preceding one: a) eighth-day-circumcised (as a non-Ishmaelit, which was circumcised on 13th day (see Josephus, Ant.1.122.213-14)); b) Israelite (as non-proselyte); c) Benjaminit (as not from renegade tribe); d) Hebrew (as non-Hellenistic one, i.e. as one who keeps Hebrew language, cf. Acts 22:2-3; 21:40). But the circumcision on the eighth day is also a sign of being non-proselyte, as it could be performed only by Jewish parents; at the same time being an Israelite means being non-Ishmaelit.

109 The Israel’s covenant ideology had “the built-in tendency” to become the “ethno-centric” one (Christiansen, A Covenant in Judaism and Paul, 323, italic original). CONTRA: Lieu points out that Paul’s concentration on circumcision as identity marker contradicts with evidences of Jewish sources of the time, and he probably does it for the sake of argument (Christian Identity, 128). As for the text under consideration, Phil 3:4-6, circumcision is one of the terms Paul uses to describe some aspects of Jewish identity, including the Law as evaluative system (3:6b κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γεινόμενος ἀμεμπτος).

similarly related to both stanzas (ἐκ… and κατά…), it is rather the heading of the list than it is one of the items among the other Jewish attributes of Paul.\footnote{Cf. O’Brien, \textit{The Epistle to Philippians}, 368-369.}

Περιτομή and especially περιτομή ὀκταήμερος represent a special status of God’s chosen people: it is an identity mark of Israel, the people of the covenant; it is a dividing line between “Israel” (“we”) and Gentiles (other nations).\footnote{See Christiansen on circumcision as an identity marker, as a boundary by which “a particular identity is protected” (\textit{A Covenant in Judaism and Paul}, 332).} As a true and pious Jew (ἐκ-group), Paul was assiduous in keeping, celebrating and strengthening his identity (κατά-group). One should not make a strict distinction between “ethnical” and “religious” (if only for analytical purposes), firstly, because it is difficult to believe that a first-century Jew could ever make this distinction,\footnote{See 1 Macc, where the Law is called alternately “law of fathers” and “laws of God” 6:1, 7:23-24; (τῶν πατρίων νόμων καὶ τοῖς τού θεοῦ νόμοις); in 7:1-2, kashrut is called “law of fathers;” in 8:21, Maccabean army expresses its readiness to die “for the law and for the homeland” (ὑπὲρ τῶν νόμων καὶ τῆς πατρίδος). See R. Wallace and W. Williams, \textit{The Three Worlds of Paul of Tarsus} (London, New York: Routledge 1998) 118: “Jewish self-identification by religious allegiance rather than by political or ethnic ties was probably unique in the ancient Mediterranean world.”} and secondly, because Paul himself combines them under one concept of “the eight-day circumcision” (see above) and then rejects them all together (3:7-8).\footnote{CONTRA: Dunn takes περιτομή ὀκταήμερος as a first of seven equal lines, and argues that in 3.7 Paul rejects three last lines (κατὰ νόμων) and still keeps first three (referring to his nationality), while the fourth one (‘Ἑβραῖος ζ’ Ἑβραίων) is given a middle place, marking “the transition from an older identity still embraced (“Hebrew”) to the older identity now devalued (“Hebrew of the Hebrewes”) (Dunn, “Who Paul Think He Was,” 186). Such structure has no textual support: as it is noted above, the lines from two to four are united under ἐκ preposition; the emphasizing repetition of πάντα in 3:8 (ἡγούμενα πάντα ημῖν εἰναι… τὰ πάντα ἐξημωθῆσι) excludes any speculation about Paul’s selective renouncement of what he described in 3:5-6. Though in the other Pauline texts the apostle reserves his Jewishness, there is no base for this conclusion in Phil 3:5-8.} His zeal against the Church (3:6) was in fact the zeal for his national identity, i.e. for keeping his group boundary: in the followers of Jesus, he saw a danger for the unity of Israel

\begin{flushright}
© University of Pretoria
\end{flushright}
as religious/ethnic entity. Conceptually, both ethnically belonging and keeping the Law represent Jewish “relying” on their inherited covenant, i.e. identity and socialization within the group. This covenant, symbolized by circumcision, is very corporal or substantial: it is inherited by the very fact of being physically born into a Jewish family; it is also expressed, first and foremost, in the act of physical circumcision. In his arguments, Paul opposes “circumcision,” as a physical (fleshly, αὐτοῦ) way and as non-physical, i.e. irrelative to the circumstances of birth (i.e. belonging to the Jewish ethnos), way of entering God’s covenant (“true circumcision”). Hence, the specification that Paul’s physical circumcision has happened at the eighth day, in the context of his discourse in Phil 3, has more to do with distinguishing it from (true or spiritual) circumcision which Paul claims for “us” in 3.3, than with distinguishing him from Ismaelites or proselytes. Paul’s excursus in his own life experience is a continuation of the contrast he started in 3:2:

115 The claim of the Hellenistic followers of Jesus that one can enter the “people of God” without being circumcised destroyed the boundary between “we” as Israel and “them” as Gentiles. Diluting the boundary means disappearing of the group itself (see Barth, “Vvedenie,” 16).

116 Circumcision and covenant are actually synonyms here; Cf. Rom 15:8.

117 Cf. A.F. Segal “The language of flesh and spirit is not allegorical. It is a reference to the two kinds of Christian community – one priding itself in the flesh, circumcision; the other defining itself by means of spiritual transformation…” (Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee (New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1990) 140).
Describing his former relying on flesh, Paul speaks in terms of his belonging to a certain group and his living according to the rules of this group. First, he presents himself as a pure-blooded Jew (ἐκ…) and then claims that his socialization within this Jewish-Law group has been an absolute success: he has managed to achieve perfect righteousness (i.e. honor)\(^{118}\) according to the Law, (κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος). Election and Torah are two main pillars of Paul’s Jewish identity. Dunn notes that the special covenant with God is more rooted in Israel’s self-consciousness than even monotheism.\(^{119}\) As for a Pharisee, the Law was for Paul what defines (or identifies) the chosen people of Israel from Gentile sinners; i.e. the Law-keeping was rather “an expression of… covenant membership” than of

\(^{118}\) On the connection between righteousness and honor see H. Moxnes, “Honour and Righteousness in Romans,” *JSNT* 32 (1988) 61-77; see also below, chapter 4 of this study.

moral choice.\textsuperscript{120} It was Mosaic Law, that separates or defines (i.e. making the border) Israel from other nations. Hence, Paul’s triple reference to the Law (3:5-6) is as much about his Jewish identity, as it is his triple reference to his ethnicity (3:5). The eight-day circumcision incorporates both ethnicity and the Law.\textsuperscript{121}

Paul points out his zeal and that he persecuted the church out of it. The concept of the zeal for the Law takes a special meaning for Israel in the Maccabean period. The jealousy for the Law becomes a synonym for the fight for the maintenance of Jewish self-identity as that of the people of the Law.\textsuperscript{122} Hence, Paul’s persecution of the church out of zeal\textsuperscript{123} indicates that he saw the Christian movement jeopardizing the identity of Israel, as through faith to Jesus God-fearers entered the covenant passing over Mosaic Law.\textsuperscript{124}

In his description of his former “relying on flesh,” Paul combines all three: being a Pharisee, being a zealous persecutor of the Church and being perfectly righteous. For him, as for a Pharisee, the precise keeping of the Mosaic Law was the only way of maintaining the identity (i.e. the very existence) of God’s people of the


\textsuperscript{123} (κατὰ ζήλους διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, 3:6; cf. Gal 1:13-14).

\textsuperscript{124} Dunn: “[Paul] saw Hellenists as a threat to his own identity as a covenant member and as a threat to the covenant itself” (\textit{The Parting the Ways}, 122).
covenant; the identity and the very existence which were constantly challenging by Gentiles. So ἐν σαρκί, Paul had a full confidence of been in the privileged position as a member of the covenant (κέρδης 3.7; cf. Rom 3:1-2). Why did he decide to renounce it?

### 3.3.2 Changing point διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν (3:7-8)

In 3:7-9 Paul describes his own transition from one evaluative setting to another: what had been his gain, has become loss through Christ:

It is important to note that there is no argumentation here, no theological reasoning to

---

125 Dunn: as a Pharisee, “[Paul] wanted to draw a tighter stricter line round the “righteous,” to mark them off even more clearly from the Gentile ‘sinner’” (The Parting of the Ways, 121).

126 The timing of this change is not clear: does Paul speaks here about his experience on the Damascus road or is it his later re-thinking of the significance of (his) Jewish piousness in the light of his missionary activities among Gentiles. See D. Georgi, Theocracy in Paul’s Praxis and Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 19.
explain, and no historical reasoning to justify why Paul has admitted Christ’s superiority over everything he had considered previously as something valuable.\textsuperscript{127} Christ’s superiority is purely postulated as an axiom; it is not (even hypothetically) questioned here.

Paul’s aim here is to draw a solid line between the two worlds: one without Christ, and another one with Christ. He introduces his main idea straight away: through Christ (διὰ τῶν Χριστῶν) everything which seemed to be valuable (ἐπίνεια ἦν μοι κέρδη) turns to be rubbish. In other words, his Jewish advantage of being in the exclusive position of covenant does not stand against what Christ can offer. Paul plays with words here: Christ himself becomes the advantage (ἰνα Χριστῶν κερδήσω); and in that sense, Christ replaces περιτομή ὀκτώμερος,\textsuperscript{128} i.e. he now is the distinctive mark of those who is in the covenant with God. Paul’s Jewish worldview is changed now: the division between Jews and Gentiles has got no sense any longer, as the world is now divided by Christ.

So, Christ is not just an alternative way to enter the covenant (created especially for Gentiles in order not to trouble them with circumcision and observing the Law); it is an absolute way: in comparison to Christ, what used to be Jewish privilege is not just less valuable, but should be rejected as waste. It is rather different with Paul’s discourse in Rom 3:1-2 (“…what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect,” NAU). Here in the letter to Philippians, Paul speaks in terms of black and white, where there is no gradation

\textsuperscript{127} Cf. Gal 3, Rom 4 and the letter to the Hebrew where Christ’s superiority over Jewish worship to God is a subject of long and detailed explanations.

\textsuperscript{128} See section 3.3.1 above, for “circumcision” as a symbol of Paul’s Jewish identity.
or penumbras, no middle ground, but there is only a solid bound; and one is either here or there, either with “us” or with “them.” What Paul has rejected, is referred to his base of relying on flesh (3:4); and Christ, his new gain (new κέρδη, 3:8) is, therefore the base for his relying on the spirit (3:3 – “[true] circumcision” is “not flesh,” “Christ” and “spirit”: οἱ πνεύματα θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ θεοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες).

Though in his other texts, Paul still pays respect to his ethnical origin and is proud of his belonging to the covenant people, here he rejects both his Jewishness and his accomplishments in the Law. It obviously has a polemical reason, as 3:7-8 is a part of the discussion with “others” and arguing for the Christian community being a true people of the covenant (3:3 ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμέν ἡ περίτομη).

In 3:9-11, Paul speaks about what for he did it (ἵνα). The answer is the same: Christ. There are four verbs in the passage; and three of them (κέρδησα, εὑρέθη, and καταντήσω) are in the subjunctive aorist 1st pers. sg, which make them all conducted by the preposition ἵνα (“in order to gain Christ, and be found in him… and attain resurrection from death” – my translation, M.K.). The second verb, (γνώσα) is in

---

129 Brawley sees here an example of so-called “salience identity,” when for rhetorical reasons Paul makes his in-Christ identity salient (see section 2.1.2 of this study, above): In other contexts, for example, in Rom 11.1, the apostle’s Jewish identity is emphasized (Brawley, “From Reflex to Reflection,” 131). See also Campbell, Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity, 88, 149-51, 157-158, where he underlines that Paul does not reject his Jewish identity thoroughly, yet he compares it with that in Christ, and by doing so, builds a new reality. This supports our argument that the apostle accentuates belonging to Christ as new identity consciously, he does it on purpose. To make his readers to think about whom they relate to is his point here.

130 Most commentators view the last verb, εἴ πως καταντήσω, as belonging to the clause started in v.10 and introduced by τοῦ γνώσατα ἄντων (see Fee, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 237-337). We take καταντήσω as an equal predicate, as, according to Gundry, εἴ πως should not be interpreted as a weakening adverb (meaning certain level of doubt), but as an expression of Paul’s expectation “whose fulfillment comes from God” (V. Gundry, Paul and Perseverance (WUNT 2. Reihe 37; Tübingen: J C B Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1990) 257-258). Paul also uses particle εἴ in 3:12 (διώκω δὲ εἴ καὶ καταλάβω), which together with the εἴ-clause of v.11 has a polemical

© University of Pretoria
an infinitive aorist, which together with the Genitive define article expresses the purpose. Though there are other possibilities, it should be taken as a parallel to the other verbs.  

Paul’s reason for throwing away his previous identity is clear: Christ is mentioned in purpose, directing against “his perfectionist opponents” (ibid. 258; see also Gnilk, “Die antipaulinische Mission in Philippi,” 197).

Fee tends to view v.11 as a clause of v.10 because of the chiasm:

"so that I may know him
A both the power of his resurrection
B and participation in his suffering
B’ being conformed to his death
A’ if somehow I might attain the resurrection from the dead"

(Fee, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 329, italic original). Though semantically one can see a pattern “resurrection-suffering-suffering-resurrection,” the syntax of the Greek does not support it. There is a certain rhythm in first three lines of an alleged chiasm: there is no verb; each of the lines ends with τοῦ. The fourth “line” (v.11) is syntactically totally different, and, as we have noted, the form of verb indicates that it should be taken separately, as one of the ἵνα-group.

See Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 196; CONTRA: Collange, The Epistle of St. Paul to Philippians; Martin, Philippians.

Fee takes ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ as a penultimate purpose, while τοῦ γινώσκει αὐτὸν as the ultimate purpose (Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 327).
7 out of 10 lines. So, as in the previous passage, Christ is a central figure: in 3:7-8 he was the reason for rejecting what was valuable; here he becomes not only a new gain (κερδή / κερδήσω 3:7-3:8) and a new measure of righteousness (v.9), but also a new identity mark: as Paul savors his ethnicity in 3.5, now (in 3:10) he speaks with the same precise minuteness about his imitating of Christ’s life, almost quoting the Christological hymn (2:6-11). The pattern which is clearly made here is Law vs. Christ.

In this fragment, Paul develops the Christ-theme up to the point, where Christ becomes not just an orientation-mark, according to which he re-evaluates what he previously regarded as “gain” (διά τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Paul picks up the theme of righteousness and contrasts that of the Law and that of God (3:9). This, probably, gives some the impression that the Law and the righteousness from it is the only thing of Paul’s past that he rejects.132 But the apostle does not stop here and continues extending the Christ-topic, when Christ is not just an object, which one can gain (κερδήσω) or which is a characteristic of something (διά πίστεως Χριστοῦ), but Christ becomes almost a subject, as Paul wants to totally identify with him and literally repeat his way of life (τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτῶν 3:10-11).133 In that sense, Christ is not just something external to Paul: Christ forms the very entity of the new group

---


133 Paul presents “the γνώσει Χριστοῦ Ἰσραήλ as a distinctive mark of the Christian” (Bultmann, Γνώσεως Ἰσραήλ, γνώσεις, ἐπηγγέλμασας, ἐπηγγέλ malware in TDNT, 1:710). In 3:10-11 Paul describes in detail how he is going “to know” Christ. The detail the apostle goes into (resurrection, suffering, death) resembles the details he describes his ethnicity in (3:5). The distinction between the two ways of association with Christ in 3:9-11 is conditional: even in 3:10, where he speaks about righteousness, Paul starts with εἰρθαὶ ἐν αὐτῶ, i.e. with identification. Bultmann also notes that in Jewish usage, knowledge of God is equal to fear of God and obedience to him (loc.cit., 701) – the nuance, which correlates with hierarchy in the in-Christ group (see chapter 4 of this study, below).

© University of Pretoria
(which Paul now is a member of) – the in-Christ-group, which is, in the given context, the opposition to the Israel group (ἐκ γένους Ἰορδάνη). The righteousness that Paul wants to achieve in Christ is the righteousness in God (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην 3:10). The fact that “in-Christ” eventually means “in God,” again, connects with 3:3 οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες – the assertion that “we are” the true chosen people of God, the ones who are in the (“true”) covenant with God (“the circumcision,” ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή).

Paul’s example, hence, forms a chiasm, where he contrasts two identities, both claiming to be “circumcision,” i.e. in the covenant with God:

A’ ethnical entity (ἐκ γένους Ἰορδάνη, 3:5)
B’ the Law as evaluative system δικαιοσύνῃ τὴν ἐκ νόμου
C Shifting point (3:7-8) διὰ τῶν Χριστῶν
B’ δικαιοσύνῃ… τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (3:9)
A’ (spiritual) entity with Christ (3:10-11)

The following verses join it very closely.¹³⁴ in 3:12-14 the apostle continues speaking about his relationship with Christ. The fragment makes an ambivalent impression: Paul is being humble and clearly articulates his imperfection (3:12a, 13a), a thought that also clearly puts his ultimate goal quite high and declare that he, with all of his strength and ability, wants to be with Christ and to gain the price for being absolutely loyal to him (3:12b, 13b-14). To describe his aspiration towards

¹³⁴ Heil sees the whole chapter 3:1-21 as a chiastically structured unit (Philippians: Let Us Rejoice, 114).
Christ himself and God’s reward, he uses the same word he used to describe him persecuting the church (διωκω 3:6). That indicates that Paul still continues his thought and wants to underline that he has the same zeal and the same eagerness for his new community with Christ as he has had in his previous life as a Jew. Thus, Paul’s personality did not change: he is still the same enthusiast and pursuer of what he believes is good for the community he belongs to; he is still very competitive (see section 4.2 below). The only thing which has changed is the community his fervor is directed to. The continuation of Paul’s personal character sets off the change of his identity.

In 3:15-17 Paul asks his readers to imitate him and his co-workers, i.e. to complete the transition from the old, “relying on flesh” mind-set to the “in-Christ” one. He wants all his progenies to be like-minded as himself - that is to be totally concentrated on Christ and to view the world having Christ as the orientation mark.

Those who do not have Christ as their guiding line, automatically become “enemies” (3:18): if one does not belong to “us,” then it means one belongs to “them” and hence, is our enemy. The contrast of “earthly mind-setting” and “heavenly πολιτεία” (3:19-20) indicates (again) the spiritual character of the new commune (cf. 3:3 οί πνεύματι θεού λατρεύοντες... οίκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες). And the main feature of τὸ πολιτεία ἐν οὐρανοῖς is that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming from there to make the new identity obvious and the difference between “us” and “them” visible:
Paul's conversion to Christ has not been a conversion from one religion to another one, but as a commission for the mission to the Gentiles.\(^{135}\) The point is that as the result of his Damascus road experience, Paul stopped seeing the Law and the Jewishness as the identity markers of the covenant. The world stopped being divided by the Law into Jews and non-Jews (as Judith Lieu puts it: “the boundary line drawn is being erased”),\(^{136}\) and started being divided by Christ into Christ-followers and Christ-enemies. To enter the covenant, a Gentile does not need to be circumcised and to keep the law any more, as the new entrance to the covenant is Christ himself.\(^{137}\)


\(^{136}\) Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 128.

\(^{137}\) There is a discussion on whither Paul totally obliterates his previous Jewish identity and socialization and becomes “a new creation” (Barclay, “Paul’s story: Theology as Testimony,” in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. B.W. Longenecker. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 139-140), or his identity was rather “transformed” or “reevaluated” (Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 88-89). Campbell argues that obliteration of social and historical categories in Christ is rather an eschatological expectation, which has not been yet fulfilled. Social, ethnical, gender differences (i.e. identities) remain actual, though having “only relative significance” (loc.cit., 89).

In Phil 3:4-11 Paul clearly states obliteration of his previous identity. Formally, 3:7-8 is a *comparison*, yet in fact the contraposition *κίρος* versus *ζημία* means “significant” versus “no value, zero.” Paul literally annuls his forms identity marks displacing them with Christ. In other texts (Rom 9, 11; Gal 2:14; 2 Cor 11:22) the fact that his Jewish identity is still significant for him is obvious. Yet in Phil 3, for the sake of the argument (i.e. emphasizing his readers’ identity in Christ as the base for keeping unity), he concentrates on the absolute superiority of Christ as a source of identity and an honor-bestower.
So, previously, the main orientation mark of his self-understanding and his world-view was “covenant focused on Torah,” i.e. he viewed himself as one who belonged to the elected people of God and who keeps the Law zealously. Now Christ has become this identity mark: Paul views himself as being “in Christ” and his devotion to Christ is so intense that it demands total dedication and rejection of any other identity marks (πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι 3:8). Relation to Christ as to a border of one’s identity presupposes that one’s socialization takes place within this “in-Christ” group, which is a subject of the next chapter or our study.

3.3.3 Conclusion: Paul’s new identity in Christ

Paul’s testimony in ch.3:4-11 is a part of the discourse with the opponents in Phil 3 and overall in the letter. In Phil 3, his autobiographical passage is incorporated into the larger section dedicated to the warning against the opponents: it follows the trice-repeated “beware” and is connected to it by linguistic and semantic parallels. The apostle’s testimony here does not emphasize God’s intervention into his life (as in Acts 22:1-21) or Divine origin of Paul’s apostolic authority (as in Gal 1:13-24 ff.); the purpose of Paul’s own example here is to demonstrate the superiority of the “us”-group over the “them”-group by the transition from one group to another one.

The analysis of the passage 3:4-11 demonstrates that Paul does not bring any real argument for the advantages of being a member of the “in-Christ” group. In the

---

138 The term of Dunn (The Parting of the Ways, 23).
absence of any historical, theological or ethical reasoning, the only difference between the two groups is Christ himself. So, Christ becomes the only identification marker, dividing those, who are “in” him (ἐν αὐτῷ) from those who still think in the fleshy categories of earth (ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες).

Paul’s story is built in a way which serves to underline the specific subjects: as previously Paul’s life and self-consciousness were defined by his ethnic belonging to Israel and keeping the Law, the same way now his life and self-consciousness are defined by the personality of Christ. In the past, Paul identified himself and evaluated himself according to his biological and cultural settings; now the only reality and the only criterion for it is Christ. In that way, in resemblance of the historical Israel people of the covenant, defined by the Mosaic Law, Paul declares superiority of the new community, the true community of covenant (ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή 3:3), which is defined by Christ himself.

In Philippians 3, Paul makes a full circle arguing against the wrong identity: he warns his readers to be aware not to be “dogs,” i.e. those, who are not part of the covenant people. By his own example, he explains that the only true people of God are those who are separated off the rest by Christ.
3.4 Conclusion: accentuating new identity as an expression of the value of belonging

This chapter was devoted to the analysis of how Paul speaks about Christians’ self-understanding in the letter to the Philippians.

First, we analyzed the negative identity in the letter. We observed that the way Paul treats the opposition does not allow reconstructing the historical reality behind its image. Over the letter, the apostle refers to the opponents as to fellow Christians having personal conflict with him (1:15-18), as to some unidentified enemies, which he and the Philippians must fight with (1:27-30), and as to some ugly personalities, which have all possible vices and because of that are “enemies of Christ’s cross” (ch. 3). We established that though there was no historical character that could fit all the features of the opponents in the letter, the analysis of the opponents as rhetorical personage helps understand Paul’s argumentation. The analysis of the opposition references demonstrated that all of them, in different combinations, share linguistic, structural and semantic matches. The main characteristic of the opponents in the letter is that they are not “us,” the apostle uses the image of the enemy for the articulation of “we”-identity, to strengthen the border of the “we”-group.

Next, we looked at the positive identity language in the letter. We pointed out that though Paul and his readers were separated by distance, the apostle keeps addressing them as close friends, underlying strong ties of relationship between him and them. Family language such as ἀδελφοί, as well as very emotional character of
Paul’s addresses (Ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιθύμητοι) reflect and at the same time reinforce close, even intimate terms. Obviously, the Christian community was perceived by its members as a fictive family. The term κοινωνία reflects not only the active and mutually beneficial character of Paul and the Philippians relations, namely Paul being the spiritual leader and Philippians financially supporting Paul’s mission. Together with πολιτεύομαι (πολίτευμα), κοινωνία presents a partnership in a commonwealth. Even being separated, Paul, his co-workers and Philippians share the same reality, which differ from that of the opposition. The center of the cause, which unites all the members of the commonwealth, is Christ and dissemination of the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἡ πίστις τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), which is nothing else but the expansion of the “heavenly city” (τὸ πολιτεία ἐν οὐρανοῖς). Paul explicitly appeals to his readers to stay faithful and loyal to their Christian community (1:27-28, τοῦτο φρονεῖτε 2:5, 3:15, 4:2), and honor-competition is banned (2:2-4) as a possible reason for conflicts inside the group. All abilities and energies of the group-members must be concentrated on ὁ ἔργον Χριστοῦ.

In the third section of the chapter we examined Paul’s own example of the changed identity, his transition from the outer circle into the in-Christ group. We established that Paul’s testimony in 3:4-11 is all about contrasting his previous life and his present Christocentric world-view. He used to locate himself within the borders of Mosaic Law and Jewish culture; now, in the same terms, he identifies himself according to Christ. The figure of Christ dominates in Paul’s story; his significance is indubitable and needs no justification or explanation. Christ is the definition of reality, the identity mark, measure of value and the value itself; Paul’s
ultimate goal is total identification with Christ; and this is what the apostle wants his readers to imitate.

We could see that self-understanding of the Christian community seems to be the most significant theme of the letter to the Philippians. Admonitions for unity are to solidify the Christian group; polemics with the opposition is to set the border between “them” and “us;” Paul’s own testimony is to set the example of the correct identification – identification with Christ. This correlates to the fact that belonging to a group is a fundamental value for a collectivist society; this value does not disappear even if the group is changed. Maintaining their solidarity, dissociation from “others” is vital for the Christian community. If previously they associated themselves with a family, a nation, a religious group, now each of them identifies him/herself with Christ and his group. The relation value (see section 2.1 of this study) remains the same; the only thing that changed regarding the identity, is the identity symbol (marker): now Christ is both the border and the unifying center of church.
CHAPTER 4

PAUL’S ARGUMENTATION OF HONOR-VALUE: DEALING WITH HONOR IN A HEAVENLY SOCIETY

In the previous chapter we have established that throughout the letter Paul uses different examples to outline the boundaries of a new reality, a new dominion – that of Christ. For the “in-Christ” group, Christ is a boundary, an identity marker; and at the same time, he is the center of the group, which fastens the group together and holds it with centrifugal force (unity in Christ). The in-Christ-group by definition has a collectivist character: one’s identity is defined by “the other” – Christ; the unit here is not an individual, yet some number of the members or non-members of the “in-Christ” group; even speaking about his personal experience, Paul presents himself in terms of his relationships with others, about his displacement from one group to another one (from the “relying-on-flesh” group to the “in-Christ” one). Also by definition, the relationships inside a collectivistic group are regulated with a honor and shame system. Indeed, the honor-issue (namely, the apostle’s honor being challenged by his rivals) is one of the main themes of the letter to Philippians. And in the present section we will analyze how, in Paul’s presentation, honor-value is dealt with in the “in-Christ” group.

We will start with the Christological hymn in 2:6-11, which is agreed to be the

---

1 See sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of this study.
2 Phil 2:5-11 was first identified as a hymn by J. Weiss Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik in 1897; E.
base on which Paul builds his argumentation on in the letter. In our opinion, the apostle uses the hymn to make his point that a member of the in-Christ-group should expect to be rewarded for his/her loyalty to God as the only patron; and this loyalty must be of a total nature (up to the point of suffering and death). God is the one who bestows honor upon his loyal clients.

The hymn is very important for the structure of Paul’s message to Philippians: as

Lohmeyer described it as “ein Carmen Christi in strengem Sinne” (“a hymn of Christ in the strictest sense”) (Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil.2, 5-11 (Heidelberg, 1961) 7). See also L.J. Kreitzer and D.W. Rooke, “‘Singing in a New Key’: Philippians 2.9-11 and the ‘Andante’ of Beethoven’s Kreutzer Sonata,” ExP 109/8 (1998) 231-233; R. Martin, [Carmen Christi] A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1997) iv-lxv. The reasons for considering a section as a hymn see R. Martin, “Hymns, Hymn Fragment” in DPHL, 419-422. There is a discussion on the nature of the section: G. Fee argues that the section is not a pre-Pauline hymn, yet a piece of “exalted Pauline prose” (“Philippians 2.5-11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?” BBR ii (1992) 29-46); however, later the giveaway slips out: the section 2.5-11 “obviously sings” (idem, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 126, n.42). R.S.J. Murray uses inverted commas for “hymn” in order to “reflect an abiding lack of conviction about this fashionable identification of the genre” (“‘Disaffected Judaism’ and Early Christianity,” in “To See Ourselves as Others See Us. Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity (ed. J. Neusner and E.S. Frerichs; Scholar Press Studies in the Humanities; Chico, California: Scholar Press, 1985) 276). Amongst the recent studies, Nebreda is also not convinced of the poetic nature of the section and uses the term “so-called hymn” (Christ Identity, 288-297), though he admits that this does not have much influence on “the apostle’s overall rhetoric strategy” in the letter (ibid. 292). Witherington treats the section as a hymn, arguing that in the non-Pauline writings, the poetic description of Christ’s story adopts the same V-structure as in Philippians (Heb 1; John 1; 1 Pet 2:3) (Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 132-136).

The section 2.6-11 has been attracting so much attention that it overshadows its context and even the entire epistle (e.g. Käzemann argued that the hymn should be seen as a hermeneutical key to the whole letter (“A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2.5-11,” in God and Christ: Existence and Province (Journal for Theology and the Church 5. New York: Harper and Row, 1968) 45-88.


© University of Pretoria
Christ is the primary figure and the role-model,\(^4\) his example is located in the first part of the letter\(^5\) and is introduced by the phrase Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (2:5).\(^6\) Paul’s own story has the same plot that the hymn has: secure position – voluntary rejection of it – reward (3:5-11), and the phrase τοῦτο φρονῶμεν is repeated after Paul tells his own story (3:15, cf. 3:17). That is why after analyzing the hymn and its context, we will also see how the apostle explains “the correct attitude” on his own example and how he deals with his own honor in the Christian community. We will demonstrate that via the orientation of his readers to God as the only granter of honor and strengthening their identity as members of in-Christ group, Paul makes them to re-evaluate suffering and disgrace caused by the outsiders and to understand their hardship as a token of honor they are about to receive from God. By doing this, the apostle does not reject the honor-value, nor praises the suffering; he rather changes the set and pleads with his readers to seek for honor in the context of πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς.

\(^4\) Käsemann argued that the hymn (2:6-11) does not present Christ as a model to imitate, yet is an account of soteriological events (“A Critical Analysis”). According to him, Paul builds his ethical admonition (2:1-4) not on the example of Christ, but on the new situation (“being in-Christ”) in which believers now live (see R. Morgan, “Incarnation, Myth and Theology: Ernst Käsemann’s Interpretation of Philippians 2.5-11,” in Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2 (ed. R. Martin and B. Dodd. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998) 66). On this, see also section 4.1.5.1 of this study, below.

\(^5\) The hymn opens the probatio part of the letter and hence it is “the prime paradigm,” “the community-creating example” (Witherington, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 117). Thought Käsemann does not see the hymn presenting Christ as an example to be imitated. For his ecclesiological interpretation of the hymn see below. See critique of Käzemann’s view in Oakes, Philippians: From People, 190-191.

\(^6\) “Have this attitude,” “think this way” is one of the connotations of the phrase τοῦτο φρονεῖτε. See section 4.1.5.1 of this study, below.

© University of Pretoria
4.1 Christological hymn: Christ’s way of dealing with honor

The hymn recounts Christ’s parabolic story: his descent and exaltation. The sequel of the two is important,\(^7\) as there is a tendency to concentrate on the suffering as the only way to identify with Christ.\(^8\) The hymn starts with the statement of Christ’s original status as that of equal to God (2:6). Despite his high position, Christ decided to derogate himself (\(\alpha\lll\alpha\ \varepsilon\alpha\upiota\tau\omicron\nu\ \varepsilon\kappa\epsilon\nu\nu\omega\sigma\varepsilon\nu\ 2:7\)) and to undergo the humiliation down to death (2:7-8). For this experience, God exalted Christ (\(\delta\iota\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \o\theta\varepsilon\omicron\zeta\ \alpha\upiota\tau\omicron\nu\ \upsilon\epsilon\rho\nu\psi\omicron\sigma\varepsilon\nu\ 2:9a\)), giving him the highest honor admitted by the whole universe (2:9b-11). Paul interprets the story of Christ for the specific rhetorical needs of the letter to the Philippians.

---

\(^7\) See Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering*, 195-196.

\(^8\) The most of the scholars takes the humiliation of Christ as the central theme of the hymn (following the parallel of Paul’s appeal \(\tau\eta\ \tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\phi\omicron\rho\omicron\omicron\upsilon\nu\pi\omicron\sigma\nu\ Λ\alpha\lll\alpha\ η\gamma\omicron\omicron\omi\nu\eta\omicron\upsilon\nu\ \upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\xi\omicron\upsilon\nu\tau\alpha\upsilon\nu\ ι\alpha\upiota\tau\omicron\nu\ 2:3\) and the hymn’s \(\epsilon\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\phi\omicron\omicron\upsilon\nu\pi\omicron\sigma\nu\ ι\alpha\upiota\tau\omicron\nu\ 3:8\)). Humbleness and self-humility, i.e. avoiding honor competition by putting oneself in scantier inferior position, are considered as the new virtues of Christ followers, as it was Christ’s way of life. Hence, suffering becomes the main point and the main indication of unification with Christ. Christians are to adopt Christ’s self-denying and voluntary suffer and care for each other, as Christ was suffering for their sake: “Like Christ, the two [Timothy and Epaphroditus], as well as Paul himself, have acted out of a concern for Philippians’” (K.O. Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (SNTS MS 120; Cambridge: University Press, 2002) 142; cf. 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* (JSNTSS 36; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 92-95; see also T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Stoicism in Philippians,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; London, New York: T&T Clark, 1994) 256-290, on pp. 274-7; O’Brien, *The Epistle to Philippians*, 342-344. However, relatively recently the tendency seems to change: Martin, *Carmen Christi*, xxiv-xxv.

Seeley in 1990 and Bloomquist in 1993, in two independent studies, challenged this view. Seeley marks out the obedience (to God) as the key characteristic of Christ’s in the Philippians’ hymn (D. Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul’s Concept of Salvation* (JSOT SS 28; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 57). Analyzing the letter to Philippians from rhetorical point of view, Bloomquist argued that the theme of suffering in the whole letter and in the Christological hymn in particular had an ancillary role, helping Paul to achieve certain rhetorical aims (Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering*, 191-193); and secondly, suffering in Philippians is closely tied to the sequel suffering-vindication: “suffering points beyond itself to vindication” (*loc.cit*, 196). The point of the hymn 2:6-11 is “[the] underscoring the fact that vindication follows suffering” (*loc.cit*, 195). “Paul’s emphasis is not on suffering itself but on the experiences of Christ in their totality,” i.e. his suffering and his resurrection (*loc.cit.*, 170, italic added; arguing with Schweitzer’s suggestion that “the meaning of obedience… is: acceptance of suffering” (E. Schweitzer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (SBT 28; London: SCM Press, 1960) 62).
4.1.1 Christ’s interaction with God in terms of honor

Though the poetic character of the section 2:6-1 is agreed on among scholars, its structure is far from agreement amongst each other. This can be explained by a hypothesis that in the present text of the letter we have got a version of the original hymn, edited by Paul for his own purposes. The hymn has been attracting the attention of theologians of all times. It has been giving a lot of materials for the discussion over the pre-incarnational status and nature of Christ, over the nature and mechanics of his incarnation and kenosis and over the relation between the two. The aim of this part of our research is to analyze the honor-discourse of the section, and not the literal analysis of it or its hypothetical pre-Pauline form (though some references will be made where it is helpful for the main purpose).

As it has just been mentioned, from the literary point of view one can structure the hymn in different ways. Yet if one takes as criteria “spatial” or “kinetic” characteristics, one can see a three-phase sequence of Christ’s story: Christ being in the

---

9 Fee doubted the piece was a pre-Pauline hymn and argued that it was “exalted Pauline prose” (“Philippians 2:5-11”). On the question of genre, and on the reconstruction of the original form of the hymn, see Nebreda, Christ Identity, 288-292; Martin, Carmen Christi, xl-xlxi. For the sake of space herefrom we will call the section “the hymn.”

10 Lohmeyer was first to propose 6 stanzas with 3 lines in each (Kyrios Jesus, 5-6; cf. Silva, Philippians: Commentary, 93-94). Matthew Black sees the hymn as consisting of four twisting chiasms (the last two lines of each chiasm form the first two lines of the next one) (Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 45 (1962), 314 ff.; reference from N. Turner, Style (Volume 4 of A Grammar of New Testament Greek; ed. J.H. Moulton; Edingurg: T&T Clarck, 1976) 98). See Martin, Carmen Christi, 24-41 for other variants of the hymn’s structure.

11 See Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 101; Bockmuel, The Epistle to Philippians, 119.

12 The statement has given a lot of material for the study of early Christology, which lies beyond the limits of our topic. Anyway Christology is not the main theme of the letter to Philippians and if only one’s agenda is not the reconstruction its Sitz im Leben or its Vorlage, one’s concentration on it means “missing the point” (Whitherington, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 135-136).
image of God (2:6); Christ’s kenosis (2:7-8); and Christ’s exaltation by God (2:9-11). The journey of Christ is a parabolic one: from above down and then up again. As the first phase is expressed by only one phrase, even probably without a proper verb, the three-phase sequence is not too convincing.

However, if one analyzes the actions and interactions of the characters in the hymn, then the two-part division is preferable: there are only two active personalities in the hymn: God and Christ; and they act one after another: first, Christ expresses his obedience to God, then God (in return) bestows honor upon Christ. Besides, from the syntactical point of view, the hymn consists of two extensive sentences; in the first part Christ (implied by the relative pronoun ὁ) is the subject; in the second one the subject is God (ὁ θεός):

13 2:6a ὁς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων “which, being the image of God.” The second part of the verse, 2:6b οὐχ ἀρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ὅτα θεῷ is difficult to interpret (see below 3.2.1.2a); it can both mean Christ’s equality to God and his beginning kenosis.
I. ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων

οὐχ ἠρπαγμὸν ἤγιστο τὸ εἶναι ᾗ θεῷ,

7 ἀλλὰ οὐκ ἔκεινον οὐκ ἔσκεινον

μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν,

ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·

καὶ σχήματι εἰρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος

8 ἐταπείνωσεν οὐκ ἔσκεινον

γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου,

θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

9 διὸ καὶ (therefore)

II. ο ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ὑπερήψεισεν

καὶ ἐχαρίσατο οὐτῷ τὸ ἐπάνω πᾶν ὄνομα,

10 ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνομα Θεοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ

ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων

11 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται

ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

Both parts are united by causation (διὸ καὶ): Christ’s obedience is rewarded by God. “The καὶ marks the element of reciprocity; The καὶ implies that God on his side responds in raising Jesus. The αὐτόν is emphatic by position, as is natural in a statement of reciprocity. He emptied Himself, and God exalted Him.”

14 As the two parts of the hymn differ in style, syntax and also have different subjects (Christ and God respectively), there has been a theory that the hymn actually combines two independent Christologies (see Martin, Carmen Christi, 247-148).

There is also the “third party” in the Christ-God interaction: the heavenly, earthly and subterranean ones, which sometimes are referred to as “cosmic powers.”\footnote{See Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 128; The powers listed in 2:10-11 a called also “demonic” powers, or “all rational beings and in particular alien powers... everyone who is capable of making an intelligent acknowledgement concerning the lordship of Jesus Christ” (loc.cit. 129).}

They emerge only in the end of the hymn (though they are probably implicitly present in 2:7-8 also, see below), in the clause, and hence, they play the role of rather witnesses (if not a background) and not the main participants of Christ-God interplay.\footnote{Technically, “every knee” and “every tongue” (πᾶν γόνα 2:10; πᾶς γλῶσσα 2:11) are also subjects, and hence can also be considered as “characters.” However, both “knee” and “tongue” are members of clauses, not of the main sentence, and hence, they are dependent on the sentence of ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν ὑπερψώσει καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὅνομα and only helps to illustrate it. The subordinate position of 2:10-11 is indicated by the subordinating conjunction ἵνα and the subjunctive of καμήθῃ and ἐξομολογήσῃται; it can also be seen from 2:10 picking up the last word and developing the idea of 2:9: ἵνα ὅνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὅνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνα καμήθῃ… Verse 2:11 works as the coda (the final accord) of the hymn; though πᾶς γλῶσσα is a parallel to πᾶν γόνα, the content of its testimony refers to both two main objects of the hymn: Christ and God ὤτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός. Nonetheless, these secondary personages of the hymn create an additional aspect of the post-rewarded position of Christ. One can develop a wide discussion about the relationships between God, Christ and the universe, using the material of verses 2:10-11 (see Martin, Carmen Christi, 249-270). However, the limitations of the present investigation force us to omit this aspect of the hymn, though it will be slightly mentioned later.}

One can put it this way: the hymn describes the dynamic of relations between God and Christ, which (relations) take place on the background of the universe: it starts with original equality of Christ and God; then Christ voluntary admits/takes the subordinate position to God (which (position) involves disgrace (in front of cosmos)); and then (because of that act of Christ) God restores Christ’s status (or gives him the highest possible status) and the universe acknowledges it. In that sense, one can say that the hymn is as much theological as it is Christological, as it tells about both Christ and God, about the dynamic of relations between the two.\footnote{Fee (“Philippians 2:5-11,” 40, n.38) and N.T. Wright (The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) 84) speak about the hymn being “theological.” They both mean by that Christ self-giving is a display of his Godlikeness. In the present study, the subject of the discussion is the character of God as it is revealed in his interaction with Christ: God bestows honor upon the one, who has proven his absolute loyalty.}
4.1.2 The meaning of 2:6

The hymn starts with a statement that Christ has been an image of God, having a distinct possibility to be God’s equal (2:6):

οὗς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἤγγίσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεό

The first line of the verse presents Christ as having the highest position one can think of: he was God’s image, i.e. somebody at least comparable to God. The second line develops this idea and verbalizes the possibility of Christ being God’s equal.

The phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων is extremely difficult to translate, as the word μορφή (“form”) occurs in the New Testament only three times: Phil 2:6 (the phrase under discussion), 2:7 (μορφήν δούλου λαβών) and Mark 16:12 (ἐν ἔτερῃ μορφῇ); and in both Old Testament and Jewish literature “there is no room for positive statement about μορφή θεοῦ.” Hence, the reconstruction of the meaning should firstly be based on the understanding that the language of the hymn is mythic or mythopoetic, which means it should be rather interpreted than literally translated; and secondly, it should fit into the context of the hymn.

---

19 The survey of possible readings see Marting and Hawthorne, Philippians, 110-114; Lightfoot, St.Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 127-133.

20 Behm, TDNT, 1:742. Usually in Greek: something “which may be perceived by the senses” (Ibid. 745-46). The question is how it can stay next to θεός as God is invisible (Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 114).

21 Behm, TDNT, 1:749.

So, the obvious antithesis\textsuperscript{23} between Phil 2:6a and 2:7b demands that whatever meaning of \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \) is employed here, it should apply in the same way to both phrases.\textsuperscript{24} For now it is needed to note that among the possibilities of the meaning of \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \) here, there are: “glory” (\( \delta \acute{o} \acute{x} \acute{a} \));\textsuperscript{25} “image” (\( \epsilon i \kappa \omega \nu \));\textsuperscript{26} “mode of being” (\(Daseinsweise\)),\textsuperscript{27} and “condition, status.”\textsuperscript{28} As the focus of the present study is to analyze the dynamic of honor-shame relations, the latter connotation of \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \) is one that requires our interest.

\textsuperscript{23} “The drama of the hymn is built around the extreme contrast between God and slave, the major opposition in the first half of the hymn” (Kitterege, \textit{Community and Authority}, 78).

\textsuperscript{24} Schreiner writes: “The safest way to resolve this debate [on the meaning of \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \)] is to confine ourselves to the existing context instead of attempting to import the meaning of \textit{form} from other passages” (T.R. Schreiner, \textit{The Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ} (Downer Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2001) 171, italic original). Cf. Martin and Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, 110; Dunn, \textit{The Theology of Paul}, 204.

\textsuperscript{25} As God’s appearance in the OT was his glory (Ex 16:10; 24:15; Lev 9:6, 23; Num 12:8; 14:10; Cf. John 17:5 where Christ refers to his pre-existence as to “glory” (Behm, \textit{TDNT} 1:751). However, this reading is dismissed by the impossibility to apply the meaning to \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \delta \acute{\omega} \lambda \acute{u} \acute{\i} \acute{u} \)).

\textsuperscript{26} Dunn, \textit{The Theology of Paul}, 281-88; J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Christological Anthropology in Phil:6-11” in \textit{Revue biblique} 83 (1976) 25-50. In this case, \( \delta \acute{\i} \acute{n} \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \theta \acute{\o} \acute{u} \acute{\i} \mu \acute{a} \acute{r} \acute{h} \acute{o} \acute{u} \) is read as being synonymous to \( \delta \acute{\i} \acute{s} \acute{t} \acute{e} \acute{n} \epsilon \acute{i} \kappa \omega \nu \tau \acute{o} \acute{\i} \theta \acute{\o} \acute{u} \) (2 Cor 4:4) and \( \delta \acute{\i} \acute{s} \acute{t} \acute{e} \acute{n} \epsilon \acute{i} \kappa \omega \nu \tau \acute{o} \acute{\i} \theta \acute{\o} \acute{u} \tau \acute{o} \acute{\i} \alpha \acute{r} \acute{a} \acute{t} \acute{o} \acute{u} \) (Col 1:15) and hence, refers to Christ as the second Adam (see Rom 5:18-19; 1 Cor 15:45-47). This suggests that Phil 2:6 speaks about Christ being already a human, though 2:7 indicates that Christ’s incarnation was part of him taking on \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \delta \acute{\omega} \lambda \acute{u} \acute{\i} \acute{u} \) (\( \epsilon v n \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \theta \acute{\o} \acute{u} \) \( \epsilon v n \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \theta \acute{\o} \acute{u} \). CONTRA: Martin, \textit{Carmen Christi}, xx-xxi (”[I]n order to achieve the required result, i.e. the final glory of the last Adam, the hymn’s sequence needs to begin with how it was with Christ’s state \textit{ab initio}. The hymn’s thought cannot start from Adam of Genesis but must go behind that Adam to Him who was the archetype of Adam” (op.cit., xxi); cf. Martin and Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, 111-112.


\textsuperscript{28} Schweizer, \textit{Lordship and Discipleship}, 62; Bockmuehl, \textit{The Epistle to Philippians}; Martin, \textit{Carmen Christi}, 95-96. However, this the meaning of \( \mu \rho \phi \acute{\eta} \) as “status/position” is absent in Greek literature (Behm, \textit{TDNT} 1:742-743) with the exception of Tob 1:13 (Martin, \textit{Carmen Christi}, xx; though Behm gives a figurative meaning in Tob 1:13 as “good-pleasure” and \textit{Corp. herm.}1.13-14 (\textit{TDNT} 1:743). The latter was used by Käzemann, though later he rejected the redeemer myth as a help for understanding of Phil 2.5-11 (Käzemann, “A Critical Analysis,” 63; see R. Morgan, “Incarnation, Myth and Theology: Ernst Käsemann’s Interpretation of Philippians 2.5-11,” in \textit{Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2} (ed. R. Martin and B. Dodds. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998) 43-73, on p. 69).
Due to the uncertainty with the meaning of ἁρπαγμόν, the meaning of οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἠγέραστο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῶ has also been widely debated.\(^{29}\) The word is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, and is also very rare in Greek.\(^{30}\) The ways of interpreting the word ἁρπαγμός can be divided into two main directions: it can have an active or a passive meaning.

If the connotation of the noun ἁρπαγμός follows that of the verb ἁρπάζω, it will mean “plunder” or “robbery.”\(^{31}\) In this case, the phrase οὐχ ἠγέραστο ἁρπαγμὸν τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῶ can be interpreted as “considering himself as God’s equal one was not a crime in his position,” which means that claiming the equality with God was defensible due to the high status of Christ.\(^{32}\) As 2:6a does not have a predicate of its own,\(^{33}\) the verb

---

\(^{29}\) See Martin (*Carmen Christi*, 134-164) for the details of the debate. See Nebreda (*Christ Identity*, 302) on the clear explanation of possible meanings of the phrase.

\(^{30}\) Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 134.

\(^{31}\) This reading is stated by early Latin commentators: Tertullian *de Resurr. Carn.* 6, *adv. Prax.* 7, *adv. Marc.* v.20; St. Ambrose *De Fid.* ii. 8; St. Augustine *Sermons*, 92, 118, 183, 186, 213, 244, 264, 292, 304; *Questions on the Old and New Testaments* 97.2 *On the Trinity* 6.5 Quodvultdeus *On the Creed* 1.3.14-15 and Ambrosiaster *Phil* 2:6 (quoted by Lightfoot (*St. Paul’s Letter to Philippians*, 134-137). Lightfoot explains this reading by the mistaken translation of the construction οὐ... ἄλλα as “non... sed” which does not “bring out the idea of contrast so strongly as οὐ... ἄλλα” and by the fact that “rapinam arbitrary,” a Latin translation of ἠγέραστο, ἁρπαγμὸν, does not convey the possible passive meaning which the Greek word ἁρπαγμός has got (*loc.cit.*, 134).

\(^{32}\) Cf. S.H. Hooke, *Alpha and Omega* (Nisbet: Welwyn, 1961) 257; Barclay, “Great Themes of the New Testament: I. Philippians 2.1-11,” *ExpT* 70 (1958) 1:4-7: 2:40-44. The same meaning has Hammerich’s reading: according to him, ἁρπαγμός should be understood “to be caught up in a mystical rapture,” as the same root is used in 1 Thes 4:17 (avraigméthe ἐν κυρίῳ εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἱππέα) and 2 Cor 12:2-4 (οὕτω ἀνθρώπων... ἁρπάγεσαι τὸν τουτόν ἐως τρίτον οὐρανοῦ... ὑπὲρ ἤπειρος εἰς τὸν παράδεισον); in contrast with believers and Paul himself, for Christ being with God was no rapture, “it was his nature” (L.L. Hammerich, *An Ancient Misunderstanding: (Phil. 2.6 “robbery”)* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966) 193). Russian Orthodox tradition interprets the phrase in the same way: the equality with God is not something which does not belong to Christ; this interpretation is obvious in Russian Synodal Translation of Phil 2:6.

Pavel Florensky argues, that ἁρπαγμός does not have connotation of “robbery” or “theft,” “it should be understood as a technical term of mysticism – ‘rapture,’ ‘mystical ecstasy,’ and the whole passage takes the following meaning: ‘Иисус Христос… пребывая… в сущности Божественной (и следовательно, не нуждался в возвышении, не нуждался в том, чтобы взять себе, усвоить сущность Божественную)… то не видел в этом Своем равенстве Богу экстатического акта, и, другими словами, в равенстве Своем Богу не усматривал для Себя того возвышения над Своей природою, которое мечтают получить мистики… Вопреки тому, что обычно бывает в...
phrase οὖχ ἡγήσατο ἀρπαγμόν serves as a predicate for both the lines. Both lines are parallel to each other (Christ did not regard his equality with God being a robbery because he was his image), and hence, the antithesis (what he actually did despite of his status) starts with 2:7 (ἀλλὰ ἐαυτὸν ἐκενωσεν).

In his brilliant commentary on the epistle to the Philippians, Lightfoot explains, why the active reading of ἀρπαγμός is not adequate. He builds his argumentation on two facts: first, the particles οὐ and ἀλλὰ create a construction οὐ... ἀλλὰ, often used in the New Testament and in Pauline writings particularly, should be translated as “not so much... as ...,” “in which the first element is not entirely negated, but only toned down.” If the line 2:7a was opposite to the line 2:6b, ἀλλὰ would be rendered as ἀλλὰ ὁμως, which, by the opinion of Lightfoot, is both “unnatural” and “fails entirely to

---

33 As ὑπάρχων is a participle, δὲ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων does not has its own proper verb.

34 If one takes ἀρπαγμός as standing for “prize,” or “booty,” or even “good fortune/windfall” (if one takes the whole phrase ἀρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο as an idiom; see Martin, Carmen Christi, 143-144; Käzemann, “A Critical Analysis,” 70; Lohmeyer, Kyrios Jesus, 23ff.), the antithesis starts at 2:6b. In fact, the antithesis disappears, as there is almost no thesis: the latter is shorten to δὲ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (what Christ was), which first, has no predicate, and second, lengthwise looks rather scanty next to the 2:6b-7 (what Christ decided to do).

35 Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 133-137.

36 This usage of the construction is very often in the New Testament: Mk 9:37, Mt 10:20, John 12:44, Acts 5:4.


38 BDF, 448.1.
explain the emphatic position of ἀρπαγμόν. The second argument of Lightfoot is that early Greek commentaries support the passive reading, when ἡγῆσατο ἀρπαγμόν τὸ εἶναι ἵνα θεω is interpreted as the act of Christ’s self-humiliation already.

The reading of the ἀρπαγμός is in its passive meaning as “prize” or “booty,” which has already being possessed (res rapta) or yet needs to be gained (res rapienda). The difference between res rapta and res rapienda is significant for the estimation of whither Christ had the equality with God before his kenosís, or he gained it only after his incarnation and death. Foester defines the word in some middle way, as “a possibility soon to materialize which must not be lost” (see below). The two passive meanings are not mutually exclusive: Their common ground can be found in the possibility to understand ἀρπαγμόν ἡγεῖσθαι as a proverbial expression meaning “to

39 Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 134.
40 Ibid. 135. Lightfoot refers to Euseb. H.E. v.2, Ecl.Proph. iii.4, Eccles.Theol. i.13, 20; Origen Comm. Jo. vi.37, Comm. Rom v.2, x.7; Pseudo-Athanasius Hom. de sem. ii.; Isidore of Pelusium Epistles iv.22; Cyril of Alexandria c.Jul. vi. Interestingly enough that Russian Synodal Translation (RST) reads it as “не почитал хищением быть равным Богу” (“he did not consider being equal to God as robbery.” RST follows Church Slavonic text (“не воехисе”), which reads literally: “no robbery considered to be equal to God”), which in its turn was made from Greek by Cyrill and Methody in IX CE, and checked against Greek manuscripts in XIV CE.
41 See Martin, Carmen Christi, 137-139.
43 Heen supports this view that Christ’s equality to God should be seen not already possessed (E.M. Heen, “Phil. 2:6-11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule: Isa Theou and the Cult of the Emperor in the East,” Paul and the Roman Imperial Order (ed. R. Horsley; Harrisburg, London, New York: Trinity Press International, 2004) 138). “The text suggests that such a divine status (τὸ εἶναι ἵνα θεω,) was granted to Jesus in response to his life of service and obedience (vv.7-8)” (Ibid. 139). That means that v.2:6b refers to something (i.e. Christ’s divine honors) which temporally follows vv.7 and 8 and belongs to vv.9-11. The problem here is that according to grammar, present-tense participle of the line 2:6a (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων) cannot be separated from the verb ἡγῆσατο – both acts happen simultaneously (D.B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basis, An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Syntax, and Greek Word Indexes (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 625-626), which means that Christ’s “being in the form of God” also belong to his pose-exaltation state.
44 W. Foester, TDNT, I:473.
45 Martin, Carmen Christi, 149.
regard as a lucky find/windfall.” In 1971, Hoover, having done a meticulous analysis of Hellenistic use of the term ἀρπαγμός, made the conclusion that the line 2:6b should be translated as “he did not regard being equal with God as something to take advantage of” – the view which now is held as a standard one.

In all variants of the passive reading of ἀρπαγμόν, the connotation of 2:6b is changed into the opposite one to that in case of active reading: Christ rejects his equality to God, i.e. Christ rejects to grasp (or to hold on) the privileges he could easily have (or has already got) and line 2:6b is parallel to line 2:7a: Christ’s decision not to claim the equality with God (i.e. not to claim the privileges this equality imply) is materialized in his kenosis. That is, Christ’s rejection of equality means that his descending from the highest status of being in God’s image begins with 2:6b. And as the refusing of the equality with God is Christ’s first step of renunciation of his high status, 2:6b is to be seen as a parallel to 2:7a-8.

[Diagram]

---

46 See for details Martin, Carmen Christi, 143-144.
49 Silva argues that “v.6 is simply concerned to state negatively what the main verbs in vv.7-8 state positively” (Philippians: Commentary, 103). See also Nebreda, Christ Identity, 305.
The difficulty with this reading is that syntactically and structurally it is rather complicated: First, line 2:6a is the opposite to all the following lines up to 2:9, which makes it kind of hanging in midair; second, μορφή θεοῦ (2:6a) is obviously antithetically parallel to μορφή δούλου and the four lines can be viewed as a chiasm; this chiastic structure is also supported syntactically: v.6b and v.7a both are sentences with proper verbs; and v.6a and v.7b both are clauses with participles:


Martin and Hawthorne object this interpretation: first, this reading makes hymn being theological, and not Christological, as it gives an interpretation on what does that mean to be equal to God); second, the tension between v.6 and v.7 is lost; third, there is also a problem with 2:6a: while it is rather concessive (“though he was in the form of God”), and according to Moule (see above), it becomes causative (“because he was in form of God”) (Martin and Hauthorne, Philippians, 116).

From historical-cultural perspective this reading is also difficult: v.6a (μορφή θεοῦ) becomes parallel to 7b (μορφή δούλου) which is nearly impossible (cf. Käsemann, “A Critical Analysis,” 48 critique on Lohmeyer). One can speak about pious “servant of God,” which lot is suffering in this world; Christ can also be regarded as a servant or the one who takes “an image of a servant” (see John 16); and the church struggled to accept the passion and death of Christ (i.e. the disgrace of Messiah). God cannot be seen as a servant or as one serving to someone else. It can be possible in the mind of 20th century Christian theologian, but not in the mind of 1st century man.

From literary point of view it also does not make much sense as seen 2:6a being revealed in the following lines steals away the drama of the hymn.

Kittredge says: “The drama of the hymn is built around the extreme contrast between God and slave, the major opposition of the first part of the hymn” (Community and Authority, 78).

The chiasm is noted by Martin, Carmen Christi, 37.

The positions of the verbs in the first part of the hymn also make the passive reading of ἄρπαγμός difficult: We have verbs in 2:6b, 2:7a and then only in 2:8a; all other lines contain participles (all present tense, which means they concur with the verbs). Hence, v.2.6 should be seen as one sentence (as it contains only one predicate):54

οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο

δὲ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων

τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θείῳ

The proposed structure also helps the understanding of 2:6a δὲ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων: Christ’s “being in form of God” and his “being equal to God” have overlapping connotations. If 2:6a speaks about Christ being “in form of God,” 2:6b55

CONTRA: Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 114-15, as they see the equality with God as only the possibility, which Christ could “snatch” (2:6b), but decided to obtain it through κένωσις and obedience. Their “chief criticism” is that if Christ has already hold the equality, “it loses the essentially dramatic quality of the saga, envisaged as the odyssey of Christ who held his “station” (μορφή) in the divine glory as a springboard from which he might have seized such equality with God but chose otherwise” (loc. cit., 115, italic original). The objection is, however, that if Christ has already been equal to God, his decision to renounce it is even more dramatic, as it not only makes higher the status he gave up; it also makes the reason for his decision different: snatching the equality with God has already been proven as a fruitless task by Adam and Satan; so Christ decided to take another route. Or he surrenders his equality to God out of truly selfless desire to render homage to the

54 ὑπάρχων is a participle; τὸ εἶναι is an infinitive; hence, neither of them can take on the role of the predicate. The only proper verb here is ἡγήσατο.

55 CONTRA: Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 114-15, as they see the equality with God as only the possibility, which Christ could “snatch” (2:6b), but decided to obtain it through κένωσις and obedience. Their “chief criticism” is that if Christ has already hold the equality, “it loses the essentially dramatic quality of the saga, envisaged as the odyssey of Christ who held his “station” (μορφή) in the divine glory as a springboard from which he might have seized such equality with God but chose otherwise” (loc. cit., 115, italic original). The objection is, however, that if Christ has already been equal to God, his decision to renounce it is even more dramatic, as it not only makes higher the status he gave up; it also makes the reason for his decision different: snatching the equality with God has already been proven as a fruitless task by Adam and Satan; so Christ decided to take another route. Or he surrenders his equality to God out of truly selfless desire to render homage to the
refers to the same status being rejected: “‘the being equal with God’ is precisely another way of saying ‘in the form of God.’”\textsuperscript{56} “In both cases [2:6a and 2:6b] the idea of status stands at the forefront,”\textsuperscript{57} and in that sense, 2:6 states something opposite to the statement of 2:7 (\(\text{ἀλλὰ ἐὰν τὸν ἐκένωσεν}\)).\textsuperscript{58}

The word \(\text{μορφή}\) stands for the appearance of something.\textsuperscript{59} Christ’s existence “‘in the form of God’ implies that outside of his human nature Christ had no other manner of existing apart from… being in possession of all the characteristics and qualities belonging to God.”\textsuperscript{60} Though one can speculate about different attributes of God which Christ shared before his incarnation, the author of the hymn seems to be interested in God’s status as the Supreme Being. This assumption is supported by the fact that both Christ’s acts – a negative one (he \text{did not} hold on to his equality with God, \(\text{oùχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγῆσατο τὸ ἐἶναι Ἰσα θεῷ}\) and a positive one (he \text{did} take on the form of slave, \(\text{μορφὴν δοῦλον λαβῶν}\)) – form a contrast of the highest status and a lowest one (\(\text{θεός} \text{ and } \text{δοῦλος}\)) (see section 4.1.3).

We can conclude that though there are more arguments for seeing \(\text{oùχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγῆσατο τὸ ἐῖναι Ἰσα θεῷ}\) as a parallel to 2:7a \(\text{ἐὰν τὸν ἐκένωσεν}\), this preferable reading does not go without difficulties. The reason for that is that \(\text{τὸ ἐῖναι Ἰσα θεῷ}\) is a very powerful claim: it draws one’s attention by itself and has the strongest ties with \(\text{ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων}\). So, though \(\text{oùχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγῆσατο τὸ ἐῖναι Ἰσα θεῷ}\) is the first

\textsuperscript{56} Hawthorne, “In the Form of God,” 104.

\textsuperscript{57} Hellerman, \textit{Reconstructing Honor}, 134.

\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Marting and Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, 117.

\textsuperscript{59} Behm, TDNT, I:742-743.

\textsuperscript{60} Martin and Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, 114.
step of Christ’s kenosis, it still points to his highest status as God’s equal and “form of God.” That fact makes possible the middle interpretation of ἄρπαγμών made by St. Chrysostom: “Suppose someone... possesses an estate by nature. He would not have any fear of losing it. He would not then be afraid to descend temporally from his estate of dignity... to God divinity belongs by nature... His dominion was not acquired by seizure but was natural.”

Thus, being in God’s form, Christ had the right to claim equality with God. For the purpose of the present study it is important to underline that he knew he had this right, that is why he was able to consider not to exploit it (2:6.b). In the ancient Mediterranean world claiming the equality with someone meant defiance (see ch.2 of the present study). As honor was treated as a limited good, peers constantly fought for it, challenging each other. On the other hand, no honor-challenge was possible between two unequal persons: A legitimate superior one was by definition more honorable than an inferior one. Besides, the honor of an ultimately superior one (such as a king or god) transformed into grace – an unchallengeable honor; the defiance of grace was a crime/blasphemy.

---

61 Cf. Hellerman agrees that 2.6b states Christ’s real equality to God (Reconstructing Honor., 134-135), yet at the same time “Christ’s disposition or attitude toward that status” (Hellerman refers to S.E. Fowl, “Christology and Ethics in Philippians 2:5-11,” in When Christology Began, 140-153, on p. 142.


63 Cf. Martin, Carmen Christi, 148; S. Vollenweider argues that the hymn and God-Christ relationship in it should be seen against the hubris of the Hellenistic kings and rulers, against Biblical and Jewish traditions about usurpation of equality with God by kings and rulers (“Der ‘Raub’ der Gottgleichheit. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vorschlag zu Phil.2.6(-11),” NTS 45/3 (1999) 413-33; see also Heen, “Phil 2.6-11 and the Resistance,” 138-9).

64 The understanding of οὐχ ἄρπαγμων ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵνα θεός as “he did not consider his equality to God as robbery” would fit perfectly, yet as it was explained earlier, it seems there is more data
In the hymn, Christ is named God’s image. It is stated, he was equal to God (2:6b οὐχ ἄρταςεμον ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ὑπα θεῷ). Though he did not take advantage of it, he was God’s peer. And hence, Christ was able to challenge God: The rivalry was a natural relation between two equals.

4.1.3 The essence of Christ’s kenosis: obedience to God

Though it was expected that Christ would oppose God,65 he choose to do something quite different: ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν. As the point of v.6 is Christ’s divine honor – his equality to God, his being in the same form as God, the very status of his – is what he deprived himself of (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν) is this very status of his; the terms describing his kenosis support this view.66

Instead of keeping the position of God’s peer, Christ not only decided not to challenge God (2:6b), more than that, he deliberately deprived himself of this power, i.e. he positively admitted God’s superiority. The inferiority of Christ’s new status is emphasized in the hymn by the expanded description which reaches its climax in picturing the shameful and agonizing death on the cross.67 One can say that 2:6 is an

---

65 Especially in the light of the myth of Satan (Is 14:12-15; Slavonic Enoch 29:4-5; Life of Adam and Eve 12-17). On the resemblance between Philippians’ hymn and the myth on Satan see Martin, Carmen Christi, 157-161.

66 By kenosis we mean the events described in both 2:7 and 2:8, i.e. both verbs ἐκένωσεν and ἐπαίνωσεν.

67 The last phrase θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ can be Paul’s addition to the original text of the hymn (Martin, Carmen Christi, xlix). Even without this (additional) phrase (ὑπήκοος μόχρ θανάτου, “obedient up to death”) refers to the ultimate obedience.
introductory verse, which is to accentuate the caliber of Christ’s decision as well as to clarify the meaning of his *kenosis*; after all, for what he did, God exalted him.

Though all three verbs of the hymn (ἡγήσατο, ἐκένωσεν and ἐπάπνευσεν) refer to Christ depriving of his high status as God’s equal, the verb *keno,w* seems to be the main one: It has an emphatic position following the οὐ ... ἀλλὰ construction, i.e. it is the main act of Christ. Technically, the verb ταπείνωσεν also follows οὐ ... ἀλλὰ, yet not directly. That is why the Christ’s event, which (as we have established above) starts in v.2.6b was given a name *kenosis*. Christ emptied himself, i.e. he gave up all the possession/status/power he had had. The verb *keno,w* literally means “to make empty,” “to pour out” (Gen 24:20); the figurative meaning can be “to deprive of content or possessions.” As in the text of Philippians the verb has no object, there is a discussion about what exactly Christ deprived himself of. As the structure of the hymn points out at 2:6 (the pre-kenotic condition of Christ) as at the subject of deprivation/rejection, the meaning of ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν depends on one’s understanding of 2:6, i.e. on how one see

---

68 Martin and Hawthorne turn down the assumption that Christ has given up something (particularly, his divinity, as they argue against kenotic theory of incarnation), and propose to read the hymn in the light of Chalcedonian creed: “the Philippian text does not say that Christ gave up anything. Rather it says that he added to himself that which he did not have before: “the form of slave,” “the likeness of human being.” Thus the implication is that at the incarnation Christ became more than God, if this is conceivable, not less than God” (Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 121). Yet one should also carefully distinguish between theological value of Chalcedonian creed and that of a hymn in one of Paul’s letter: beside time difference between the two, in contrast to the creed, the hymn hardly has its purpose to give exact and full wording of Christological formula; however, though the hymn can reflect certain aspects of Paul’s Christology, the apostle’s main point here is not teaching about Christ’s nature, yet about certain attitude he wants his readers to adopt.

69 In passive mood the verb means “to languish/pine away” (Jer 15:9), or “to make no meaning or effect” (Jer 14:2).

70 Martin and Hawthorne give the versions: he emptied himself of his glory (Plummer); of his independent exercise of authority (Hendriksen); of the prerogatives of deity (Lightfoot); of the insignia of majesty (Calvin, Lightfoot); of the “relative” attributes of deity (Gore, Forsyth, Mackintosh); of being equal with God (Oepke, TDNT III:661). They conclude that the hymn “gives no clue as to the object of Christ’s self-empting,” and hence, any assumptions are speculative (Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 117).
Christ being ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and his (potential or real) equality to God.

We propose to see v.7 (ἐκένωσεν) as a repudiation of the form of God (as 2:7b μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν is a direct antithesis to ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων); and v.8 (ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν) as explicit subordination to God in terms of humiliation (against God) and total obedience to Him and in that sense referring to τὸ εἶναι Ἰσα θεῷ. Taking into account the syntactical role of the verbs, and continuing the view of 2:6 offered above, the first part of the hymn can be seen as the following:71

Or:

71 To remind: the author of this paper does not have any pretensions to find a perfect scheme; her purpose here is to analyze God and Christ interaction in terms of honor.
It is important to note here that the participles of the verb construction \(\varepsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\ έκένωσεν\) (2:7a) include both Christ becoming a slave and him becoming a human (2:7b,c). Both lines (b and c) bear the sign of parallel to 2:6a: From the phrase \(\varepsilon\nu\ \mu\omicron\rho\omicron\phi\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\ ο\upiota\ υπάρχων\) picks up the word \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\phi\eta\); while 2:7c takes the preposition \(\varepsilon\nu\+\)Dative. As we know, Jesus from Nazareth was a free man, hence \(\mu\omicron\rho\omicron\phi\eta\ δο\upsilon\lambda\omicron\ να\lambda\beta\omicron\nu\),\(\varepsilon\nu\ \delta\omicron\omicron\rho\omicron\mu\omicron\iota\omicron\omega\omicron\tau\omicron\iota\nu\)\(\gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\sigma\nu\)\(\kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\chi\omicron\omicron\mu\omicron\iota\tau\iota\epsilon\iota\nu\\)\(\omega\zeta\ \alpha\nu\iota\theta\rho\omicron\iota\omicron\nu\)\(\omicron\iota\theta\rho\omicron\iota\omicron\nu\). 72 The next line clarifies that “a slave” here means “human,” who by definition is lower than God: beside physical limitations, humans are finite beings: they are mortal (cf. 2:8b). 73 So, Christ kind of squeezed himself into the form of a servant: He became a human and hence, confined himself from exercising his powers

---

72 It should be mentioned that we do not interfere here with the sphere of systematic theology and do not speak about Christ losing his divine nature in the process of kenosis. Augustine says “he… emptied himself in no other way that by taking the form of a servant, not by losing the form of God. For that nature by which he is equal to the Father in the form of God remained immutable while he took our mutable nature” (Contra Faustum 3.6; quoted from Ancient Christian Commentary, 242). The author of the present study speaks exclusively about Christ’s status as equal or inferior to God, as it is pictured in the hymn.

73 Christ’s voluntary transition from ethereal/celestial category to the terrestrial one represents the historical event of incarnation; for the present discussion, it also indicates indirect introducing of the third party of the drama: “spectators,” which are explicitly named in 2:10-11 (see below).
and his honor as equal to God as divine being, “he concealed that dignity which was his.”\(^{74}\) The servile status of his (μορφήν δοῦλου λαβών) points on the deprivation of his rights as God’s equal. He renounced himself from his significance and ultimately submitted himself under the power of God (see also 2:8).

The δοῦλος word-group is used (beside the direct description of slave and slavery) in a Jewish context “as the usual linguistic form for the relation of the subject to the king in the despotic monarchies of the ancient Orient,”\(^{75}\) and – especially important for the present study – to describe one’s attitude to God. This religious usage of the word is “the sharpest possible antithesis to that of Greek and Hellenistic world;”\(^{76}\) and especially for the Semitic tribes – relations with God (Baal, Adon, Adonai/κύριος).

In Semitic languages deity is represented as Lord, which reflects the concept of God as bearing “the stamp of unconditional majesty and absolute superiority to man.”\(^{77}\) Any other attitude towards God, besides being his δοῦλος, “implies disobedience and betrayal.”\(^{78}\)

Rengstorf also argues that μορφή δοῦλου describes Christ’s new situation of incarnation, and not his attitude (which comes into play only in v.8 with obedience and humbleness).\(^{79}\) Yet Christ’s attitude towards God is present already in 2:7: the decision

---

\(^{74}\) Theodore of Mopsuestia Phil.2.2; see Ancient Christian Commentar, 242).

\(^{75}\) Rengstorf, TDNT, II: 266.

\(^{76}\) Ibid. 267

\(^{77}\) Ibid. 268.

\(^{78}\) Ibid. 268.

\(^{79}\) Ibid. 278-279). Because obedience is explicitly mentioned only in 2.8, its importance is disputed by Bornkamm, who argued for the interpretation of the term δοῦλος as referring exclusively to incarnation, not to humiliation of Christ (G. Bornkamm, “On understanding of the Christ-Hymn,” in Early Christian Experience (New Testament Library; Harper and Row, 1969) 112-122). After all, one should not expect from Pauline texts being strictly logical (see Martin, Carmen Christi, 194; Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 102).
to empty himself and to change the mode of existence in the first place was his own decision, and not that of God or of blind fate.\textsuperscript{80} The reflective character of both acts of Christ is clearly articulated by the reflexive pronoun \textit{ἐαυτός: ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν; ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτόν;} in 2:7 this reflective pronoun is emphatically placed before the verb (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν).\textsuperscript{81}

Obedience was the key element of Jewish piety: obedience to God, an absolute submission to him and conformity to his will, is what was understood as true piety in late Judaism(s).\textsuperscript{82} Malina and Neyrey point out that “[b]y responding in obedience, Jesus assumed the most virtuous posture possible in Israel’s culture, that of the obedient son (see Heb 3:2; Phil 2:9).”\textsuperscript{83} It is remarkable that Paul picks up the term “obedience” right after the hymn and calls upon his readers to be “obedient in everything” – “Ωστὲ, ἀγαπητοί μου, καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκοόωστε (2:12) as it is the key point of the hymn (see section 4.1.5).

Because this subservient attitude towards God was considered as a righteous one in Judaism, Christ’s image in the hymn is sometimes paralleled to the image of God’s servant in Isaiah 53. Yet the corresponding between Phil 2:6-11 and Isaiah 52-53 is not that obvious and supposes a number of linguistic alterations, conceptual and sequential

\textsuperscript{80} Cf.: “the obedience of Christ belongs to his pre-incarnate choice (cf. Heb 10:5ff.)” (Martin, \textit{Carmen Christi}, 193).

\textsuperscript{81} The syntax of \textit{kenosis} – object-predicat (2:7), predicat-object (2:8) – is paralleled by the syntax of Christ’s exaltation – object-predicate, predicat-object ἀὑτὸν ὑπερῴσωκεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο ἄὑτῷ (2:9).

\textsuperscript{82} See Bousset and Gressmann: “To the mind of late Judaism religion is obedience (ὑπακοή)... Humble, servant-like (knechtliche) submission of the human will to God’s almighty, inscrutable will, acting according to His commandments, comprehensible or incomprehensible, at every moment of life – this is piety (Frömmigkeit)” (W. Bousset, H. Gressmann, \textit{Die Religion des Judentums} (HzNT, 1926) 375, quoted by Schweizer, \textit{Lordship and Discipleship}, 55, and also by Martin, \textit{Carmen Christi}, 192).

\textsuperscript{83} B. Malina, J.H. Neyrey, \textit{Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew} (Foundation and Facets; Social Facets; Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1988) 123. The quotation refers to the Gospel according to Matthew.
Two main differences between Christ in the Philippians’ hymn and the Servant in Isaiah 52-53, relevant to the present analysis, are the following: first, the term πατερ in Isa 52:13 has an honorific character, while δολο in Phil 2:7 is a part of Christ’s kenosis; and second, the theme of obedience is absent in Isaiah, while in Philippians it is important. In other words, the voluntary character of Christ’s humbleness and the emphasis on his obedience (ἐαυτὸν ἐκείνωσον; ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου) contrasts with forced suffering of the proudly God’s servant in Isaiah.

The theme of obedience makes many scholars see the parallel between the hymn and the myth of Adam. Though the chart of comparison of Adam and Christ looks convincing at first sight and can work as a foil: Christ’s rejection of equality with God and choosing to be obedient to him contrasts with Adam’s disobedience (Rom 5:15-19), the parallel between Adam and Christ of the hymn is not full. First, it supposes the similarity of the original positions of Adam and Christ, which, as we could see, is problematic: the hymn explicitly speaks about Christ’s equality to God, so the points of departure in the stories of Adam and Christ cannot be seen as parallel ones. It is also not clear, whither the serpent’s words towards Eve “you will be like gods” (Gen 2:3-5)

84 For the discussion see Martin, Carmen Christi, 183-190; Seeley, Noble Death, 51-56.
86 Seeley argues that Isaiah’s Servant Songs (Is 52-53) is hardly connected to Phil 2:6-11: a) “the lack of exact correspondence in language; 2) the lack of sequential correspondence [cf. Martin, Carmen Christi 186]; 3) the switching must be assumed between the LXX and Masoretic text; 4) the failure of the songs to parallel the central position given to obedience by the hymn [cf. Williams, Jesus’ Death, 49]; 5) conceptual gap between the Songs and the hymn” plus two more: “6) the failure of the hymn to develop any of the seemingly fertile soteriological material in the Songs [cf. Martin loc.cit., 317; P. Stanley, Christ’s Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1961) 101-2]; 7) the absence of any hint of pre-existence in the latter [the Songs]” (Seeley, Paul and Noble Death, 56).
should be interpreted as Adam’s desire to challenge God. Another important issue is that Christ’s incarnation, him becoming a human, is part of his act of obedience (2:7) which had already taken place, while for Adam humanity was the only way of existing.\(^8\)

The only real Biblical parallel between Rom 5:19 and Phil 2:6-11 is remarkably that in both sections obedience (\(\uparrow\)ακ\(\chi\)ή; γενόμενος \(\uparrow\)τ\(\kappa\)ος) is presented as the essence of what Christ did. However, different implications of this obedience are made: Rom (5:17-19) speaks about the opposite consequences for humankind of Adam and Christ’s deeds, while in Phil 2:6-11 the lot of human race is out of concern (see below).

Christ’s *kenosis* does not end at him becoming a human,\(^9\) it continues in explicitly verbalized self-humiliation and obedience up to death (2:8). At the same time, his death is an ultimate expression of his humanity, as a deity cannot die;\(^10\) so all the lines of 2:7-8 are bound together, as they all describe Christ’s new position against God. This new position is the opposite to the one described in 2:6, where Christ is presented as God’s equal with the corresponding self-evaluation (“he considered himself as equal to God,” paraphrase); in 2:7-8 Christ voluntary and entirely submits himself under God’s superiority.

The verb ταπείνω (\(\varepsilon\)ταπείνωσε\(\nu\) \(\varepsilon\)\(\alpha\)\(υ\)\(τ\(\delta\)ν, v.8) develops and deepens the theme. If the first verb (\(\varepsilon\)\(\alpha\)\(υ\)\(τ\(\delta\)ν \(\varepsilon\)\(κ\)\(\acute{\iota}\)\(ν\)\(ω\)\(σ\)\(ε\)\(ν, v.7) refers rather to his pre-incarnate equality to God, then “he humbled himself” explicitly accentuates the new inferior position of Christ. It also has a participle which explains the meaning of Christ’s humbleness: he became

---


\(^9\) Rengstorf sees ὄμοιωμα ἀνθρώπου as the lowest possible point on the way of the *kenosis* of Jesus, since there is no term which stands in greater contrast to κύριος or θεός than δούλος” (TDNT II:278).

obedient (γενόμενος ὑπήκοος). His obedience is also vividly depicted, so the whole theme of humbleness is amplified:

“he humbled himself” → “he became obedient” → “up to death” → “up to death on the cross.”

It is important to accentuate the fact that the hymn tells exclusively about Christ and God’s relations. The text of Philippians gives no reason to see Christ’s kenosis as having any relation to or concern about human race. Though many interpreters see Christ of the hymn as having undergone death “for the benefit of others,” the text itself gives no base for such conclusion. There is no “for us” in the text of the hymn or in its context, no sign of God’s love towards a human being, or human sinfulness, or salvific meaning of Christ’s death in the hymn or in its closest context. The hymn tells about Christ’s and God’s interaction and not about the meaning of Christ’s event for humankind. If the reference to the salvific meaning of Christ’s death was not in the

---


92 Cf. ὑπέρ ἡμῶν in Rom 5:8, 1 Cor 5:7, Gal 3:13, 1 Thess 3:1 (ὑπέρ ἡμῶν in 1 Cor 1:13, 11:24); διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν Rom 4:25; ὑπέρ τῶν ἀμαρτών ἡμῶν 1 Cor 15:3 and Gal 1:4.

93 Käzemann sees the description of Christ’s incarnation in the hymn as a reference to the soteriological event, and because of this interprets the hymn soteriologically (Käzemann, “A Critical Analysis”). Nebreda speaks about “Jesus’ radical self-identification with the human race” (Christ Identity, 312). As it was mentioned in the Introduction, we try to keep to social analysis of the hymn, without unnecessary theological constructions.

94 On the matter of Christ’s faithfulness to God being transformed into saving faith of his believers (πίστις Χριστοῦ as both “faith of Christ” and “faith in Christ”), see Williams, Jesus’ Death, 47-49; Bultmann, TDNT, V:197-208. The transition was influenced by Maccabean tradition: in 4 Macc (Antioch ca. 35-40 AD): “a human death could be beneficial for others because it was regarded by God as effective for the ransom of their lives, the expiation of their sins” (Williams, loc.cit., 253) “For hellenized Christians… beset by the problem of sin and the scandal of Jesus’ execution, [the] fundamental similarities [of Jesus’ death and deaths of martyrs in 4 Macc] can hardly have gone unnoticed. The idea that the precipitous and undeserved death of an exceptionally worthy person can effect expiation for the sins of others served as the lens through which the crucifixion of Jesus could be viewed and understood. When that happened Christians could affirm not only that God raised Jesus from the dead but also that his death was meaningful in itself. Because God regarded Christ crucified as a means of expiation for all men (Rom 3:25), Gentile as well as Jew could now confess: “Christ died for our sins” (1Cor 15:3)” (ibid.).
original version of the hymn, why did Paul not interpolate it as he probably did with 2:8c θεανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ? The answer is that Paul has a different agenda here.

Martin argues, that Christ’s obedience, as a part of Christ’s incarnation, underlines “the reality of his identification with us men,” and hence, to whom he was obedient is not important. Yet the fact that Christ was obedient to God is the key for the understanding of the hymn. It is true that obedience is natural for humans in terms of human bondage to the elements. In that sense, of course, by the act of incarnation, Christ became “obedient” or subordinated to immaterial powers, and also to physical forces and laws, as he took on physical restrictions of the human body, and ultimately, human mortality. The question is what comes first: obedience or incarnation? If obedience is just a part of being a human, then what did the idea of becoming a human come to Christ from? We believe that obedience lied in the bottom of Christ’s decision to come to earth, and that logically we see Christ’s incarnation being a part (continuation) of his obedience, and not his obedience being a part of his incarnation.

Another argument is that though becoming a human made Christ mortal, the cause of his death was not natural. The text underlines how he died: θεανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, which definitely cannot be arrogated to natural causes. Even if the last phrase had been added by Paul, the listeners to the original version of the hymn must still know Christ’s story, and for them the reference to Christ’s death was nothing else but the

95 See discussion in F.W. Beare, *The Epistle to Philippians* (Black New Testament Commentaries. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1959) 85. Martin and Hawthorne note that the word love is absent in the hymn, though if the hymn was really about God’s giving and selflessness, this word would make a perfect sense (*Philippians*, 116).

96 Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 227.


98 And Martin actually agrees on it, see his *Carmen Christi*, 193.
reference to the cross.⁹⁹ Hence, though theoretically one can speculate about Christ’s obedience to some unidentified cosmic powers, in the particular context of the hymn this is not the point. Christ’s death on the cross is the terminal of his obedience, which started from his deliberate renunciation of claiming equality to God (2:6b).

The hymn indicates the only reason for Christ’s incarnation, suffering and exaltation: his obedience to the Father. Williams points out that “Jesus is exalted by God precisely because ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου;”¹⁰⁰ Kitteredge says that though the traditions about Jesus being “a slave of all” and obedient to God (“Gethsemane tradition”) did exist in early Christianity, in the text of the Philippians’ hymn “the mythological pattern of reversal of status dominates the interpretation of Jesus’ death.”¹⁰¹ In the hymn we see the perfect example of the “advancement loyalty” – one’s rise social status for personal loyalty to one’s master.¹⁰²

We can conclude that the extended description of Christ’s humiliation in the hymn accentuates the difference between his pre- and post-kenosis positions. All his deprivation, suffering and death are the result of his decision to become God’s inferior, i.e. the result of his voluntary submission to God’s power and not to stay his equal. In terms of honor, Christ becoming God’s inferior means that Christ chooses a certain route of achieving honor: not by competing with God over it, yet by submitting to God as to his ultimate superior one, by serving God with absolute loyalty and obedience.

⁹⁹ See especially 1 Corinthians: ὁ λόγος γὰρ ὁ σταυρὸ (1:18), ἡμῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον (1:23), and τῶν θανάτων τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε (11:26); see also Gal 5:11; 6:12, 14; Rom 6:5-6.
¹⁰⁰ Williams, Jesus’ Death, 49, italics added.
¹⁰¹ Kitteredge, Community and Authority, 78, italics added.
Christ’s kenosis is not just accidental failure in his honor-competition with God; it is his voluntary admission that God possesses glory – unchallengeable and unlimited honor. The owner of glory can bestow honor upon the one whom he or she finds worthy. That is exactly what happens in the second part of the hymn (2:10-11).

4.1.4 God as the ultimate significant other

God rewards Christ for his obedience, for the fact that he acknowledges God as the god, i.e. as the ultimate honor bestower. Christ does not compete with God, but demonstrates total obedience and loyalty to him, which makes Christ a perfect client of God the patron. In return, God, the owner of grace, bestows honor upon Christ.

Christ’s move from his original status against God is two-fold: he puts himself on a lower level against God by taking “a form of slave” and becoming a human; secondly, his attitude towards God is explicitly articulated, since his humiliation is expressed in terms of obedience. The point is that the hymn conveys not only the status difference between God and Christ, but also Christ’s very attitude towards God: he voluntary takes the lower status to God (he is not been humbled, but humbled himself, ἐαυτῶν ἐκένωσεν), and he also explicitly admits his own (Christ’s) subordinate position (γενόμενος ὑπόκοος). So, it is not only formal correlation (higher/lower), yet rather acknowledgement of God’s authority.
As Christ did not claim his rights of equality, but voluntarily surrendered his honor to God, subordinated to him up to the point of death, God bestowed upon him the highest honor ever (2:10). Hence, Christ’s obedience to God, his voluntary subordination to him, is what is valued and rewarded by God when he exalts Christ.

The connection between what Christ did and how God reacted to it is expressed by the conjunctive pair διο καί where διο points out that “the inference (διο) is self-evident.” While some scholars say that the reward of “self-sacrificing, morally good acts” is normal for the imperial power, others argue that it is “the wholly unexpected.”

Christ’s incarnation and death are pictured as his obedience to God, while his glorification is presented as his exaltation over the creation and spiritual powers, though the first and the last lines of the hymn’s second part refer to God the Father (διο καί ὁ

---

103 Here, again, we can see the rhetorical extremes: obedience is total (ὑπήκουσ μέχρι θευστοῦ), glorification is universal (ἀυτοῦ ὑπερήψασαν καί ἔχαρισετ αὐτῷ τὸ δύναμα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν δύναμι...). Cf. the extremes of Paul’s language on opponents: salvation against distortion.

104 Bloomquist argues against the concentration of Christ’s suffering as the key virtue; he says that in the hymn, suffering has an auxiliary role as something which leads to vindication (Bloomquist, The Fuction of Suffering, 196). It must be added that rather suffering-vindication sequel points beyond itself to the reason which causes both suffering and vindication – to the obedience to God.


107 Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 209 n. 68). See Martin arguing that the context of the hymn excludes the possibility of God “rewarding” Christ, as Paul’s exhortation in the letter is to rebuke any self-seeking (Martin, Carmen Christi, xxxvii, 231ff.). CONTRA: Oakes argues that Martin is closer to the Stoics ethics than to the New Testament one: in Heb 11:6 the awaiting of a reward is clear (Philippians: From People to Letter, 203). See also Nebreda, who notes: “the exact relationship between διο and καί is debatable, but the emphasis of the expression is clear” (Christ Identity, 311, n. 141.). Cf. Silva, Philippians: Commentary, 115.
Christ’s reward, his new status is described in 2:10-11 as the cosmos acknowledging Christ’s highest status; and God the Father still stays as the source of this honor:

9οιο καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερῆψαν
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα,

10ὅτα ἐν τῷ ὄνόματί Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ
ἐπουρανίων
καὶ ἐπιγείων
καὶ καταχθονίων

11καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται
ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός εἷς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

This extended description of Christ’s glorification is to balance the detailed story of his kenosis in the first part of the hymn. The cosmic powers being absent in the first part and explicitly present in the second part of the hymn means that in the first part Christ’s position is correlated with God, and in the second part – with God and creation. One’s correlation with others is nothing else but one’s identity. That is in the first part of the hymn Christ is identified exclusively by his relations with God; in the second part,

108 Though some argues that the last words (εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός) does not belong to the original hymn and has been added by Paul (Käsemann, “A Critical Analysis,” 89; Martin, Carmen Christi, 273-4), it connects the last line with the first one: Christ’s original status and his final position meet making a perfect closure for the hymn. R. Martin argues: ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός εἷς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός is “…a liturgical conclusion of the entire hymn. All praise, honor and power finally belong to God the Father. The ultimate note of the hymn is thus not… the lordship of Christ, but the glory of the Father… the last line forms a sort of doxology which rounds off the whole” (Martin, loc.cit., 273).

109 Silva underlines that God’s reaction to Christ’ action has “social, political” effect (Philippians: Commentary, 108). Cf. Nebreda, Christ Identity, 312.

110 Identity is an answer to the question: Who am I? Whom I belong to? See section 2.1.2.
cosmic powers become witnesses of his new mode of relations with God: Christ stays in
submissive position to God, so his (Christ’s) exaltation can be seen only against a third
person, which is the cosmos. In his new status, Christ is above all the creation (2:10),
yet still under God (κύριος ήρωις Χριστός εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός). The name given
to him by God is above “every name;” “every knee” is to bow before his new name;
“every tongue” is to confess that Christ is “to the glory of God the Father.” In other
words, cosmos is the foil, which Christ’s glorification is seen against.

Honor is a social phenomenon, it works only inside a group. So in the hymn,
cosmos is “the other,” the one who by paying homage to Christ indicates that he has
been honored. Yet cosmos is not the significant other; it is not the one who distributes
honor; this role belongs exclusively to God. God is the subject of the second part of the
hymn: ó θεός αὐτὸν ὑπερήψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα; “cosmic powers”
are the subjects in the clauses; their predicates (κἀμψη, ἐξομολογήσται) are
subjunctives introduced by the proposition ἵνα. That means God is the principal actor;
all other characters are either objects (Christ, αὐτὸν, αὐτῶ) or subjects of subordinated
clauses (πᾶν γόνυ, πάσα γλῶσσα) – the clauses which are adverbial modifiers of the
main sentence.

Though it is obvious that “cosmic powers” existed also during the time of
Christ’s kenosis, their opinion or their attitude to Christ’s humiliation is not mentioned.

111 The “inclusive-styled rhetoric works simply to subordinate all under a figure described in terms of
exclusive rule” (Marchal, Hierarchy, Unity, and Imitation, 134).

112 Ralf Martin interprets the last phrase of the hymn (ὅτι κύριος ήρωις Χριστός εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός) as the one which argues “against the idea that there is any rivalry within Godhead” (Martin,
Carmen Christi, 276).

113 See sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4.

114 Cf. Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 150 “Paul’s market transition in subject from Christ to ὃ θεός
(v.9) draws attention to the exalted status of the One who honores Jesus.”
“Cosmic powers” are out of Christ and God’s interaction in the first part of the hymn; Christ’s *kenosis* is described exclusively in terms of his relationship with God. And as there is no sign of Christ’s status being evaluated by any other scale yet in correlation with God, for the plot of the hymn, no one’s evaluation matters. God is Christ’s significant other; and more that that, God is his ultimate honor-bestower. Christ does not receive honor from anybody but God: at the beginning he was God’s equal, yet decides not to *compete* over honor; he surrenders himself to God, waiting for God to bestow honor upon him.

Being taken out of the context of the hymn, i.e. out of the context of the exclusive God-Christ relations, what happened to Christ is not the deed of honor. In the Mediterranean culture, where honor is treated as a limited good and is the subject of constant competition, humiliation is shameful. Yet again, competition takes place only between equals, and humiliation can be seen as such only if the humiliated one used to have a higher social status. A fortiori unequal social statuses leave no place for honor competition: one cannot compete with a king; a slave cannot be humiliated by his master. Quite the contrary: in patron-client relations, a humble service to a patron, an absolute loyalty to him is rewarded and hence, honored.115 This is the process described in the hymn. The “status dissonance” – a slave of God is above the whole universe – has its “plausibility basis” in the process of social mobility, one of the features of Roman

---

115 “Servanthood or... slavery Christ takes on is seen in entirely positive light” (Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to Philippians*, 167). See also D. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990) 1-50 on the positive meaning of slavery in Greco-Roman society: “being connected to someone in power, even if only as slave, was the next best thing to being in power oneself” (*loc.cit.*, 30), “a slave of a local power broker or of respected aristocrat could... hold considerable power and respect. A slave of Caesar was even higher, potentially holding power and enjoying an informal status rivaling important free provincials” (ibid. 48). See also Theissen, *Social Reality*, 190-193.
society.\textsuperscript{116} So, the conjunctive pair διὸ καί is the “self-evident inference” because, by his total loyalty and obedience to God, Christ has earned the honor being bestowed upon him.

Therefore, the key point in evaluation of Christ’s behavior is his choice of his identity, his significant other, his court of reputation, i.e. his source of honor and status. What group does he belong to? From whom does he expect the evaluation (honor)? With whom does he identify himself? He has chosen the God-group, and in this group the only approved behavior, the only correct attitude to God is obedience, loyalty to him and accepting honor exclusively from him. In the God-group, rejection of one’s own honor or refusing to get honor in competition with others is not something shameful; it is the very admission of God’s absolute superiority and his exclusive holding of honor. If such a behavior means one’s humiliation in the eyes of others (e.g. cosmic powers – μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὀμοιόματι ἄνθρωπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εἰρθεῖς ὡς ἄνθρωπος), it does not matter, as “others” are not members of one’s court of reputation. Christ’s humiliation in the eyes of creation is nothing but the by-product of Christ-God interaction; it is not its original purpose. Christ chooses God as his vis-à-vis,\textsuperscript{117} his significant other – his only one, whose opinion does matter.

The concept of honor/shame regulates relationship in a group and serves to encourage the members to conduct a certain behavior.\textsuperscript{118} If one is in God’s group, it implies certain behavior, the behavior which is approved by God. One cannot enter honor-competition with God: God has no equals, and his honor is unchallengeable by

\textsuperscript{116} See Theissen Social Reality, 195. “Christ had a diametrically opposite status before God and before the world… He took upon himself the greatest possible status dissonance” (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{117} Cf. Martin, Carmen Christi, 192.

\textsuperscript{118} See sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4.
definition. One cannot enter honor-competition with anybody else either: God is the only source of unlimited honor in this group. That is why Christ was rewarded: he received honor from the source of honor (significant other) of the God-group for the behavior proper for this group; and he is honored in the terms of that group: κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

4.1.5 The hymn's context: application of the hymn

The hymn 2:6-11, as it has been demonstrated, states God as the ultimate honor-bestower and Christ’s obedience to God as the exemplary way of gaining honor: instead of competing for honor, Christ achieves it by keeping absolute obedience to God. The context of the hymn is devoted to the same ideas: the verses preceding it speak about the advantage of the unity over the competition; the verses following it speak about obedience and loyalty leading to honor.

4.1.5.1 Unity and rejection of the competition (2:1-5)

The hymn is introduced by the phrase Τοῦτο [γάρ] φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (2:5), which refers to the connection with the previous text.119 And the previous...

119 “...the anacoluthon involved in τοῦτο standing alone seems to cry out for a connective, whether γάρ or οὖν or καί (each of which is found in a variety of witnesses)” (B. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (2nd edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994) 545). The absence of any of such a connection can be explained by the fact that 2.5-11 was a beginning of
text, as we have demonstrated in 3.2.2, contains Paul’s admonition for unity in the light of the opposition threatening the very existence of the Philippian Christian community. The direct introduction to the hymn (2:5) is traditionally interpreted as “have the same mind/feelings/attitude Christ has.” As we also mentioned in 3.2.2, Willis demonstrated that the phrase τοῦτο φρονεῖτε “draws upon a background of political loyalties based upon common purpose (or a common leader). These loyalties are most commonly set in opposition to other groups (fractions).”¹²⁰ That is, the introduction to the hymn continues Paul’s theme of closing the ranks in withstanding the opposition.

The Willis’ view of 2:5 goes along with that of Käzemann, though for different reasons. Käzemann believed that ἐν Χριστῷ must be treated in Paul’s terms as “in the realm of Christ.”¹²¹ That is Philippians must have the attitude to one another, which is appropriate for those who are in the realm of Christ.¹²² According to Käzemann, the hymn does not contain any moral example, yet points to the soteriological event, which brings believers into the realm of Christ. One of Käzemann’s arguments is that the second part of the hymn (Christ’s exaltation) cannot be imitated.¹²³

¹²⁰ Willis, “Seen the Faith as Paul,” 192.
¹²³ Cf. Nagata: Christ cannot be imitated as in the second part of the hymn “he becomes the passive recipient and the object of God’s own act” (T. Nagata, Philippians 2.5-11. A Case Study in the Contextual Shaping of Early Christology (PhD dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981) 264); Cf. Martin, Carmen Christi, xiv. CONTRA: Oakes; his argument is: “Both Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors provided examples for their subjects: those who are in their realm… The Emperor’s… acts were, ipso facto, inimitable – yet they could be regarded as ethical example” (Oaks, Philippians: From People to Letter, 190).
In our interpretation, the second part of the hymn is the object of imitation as much as the first one is, as it is supported by the wider context of the letter. Hooker argues that “Pauline ethics does not consist simply on an exhortation to be like Jesus” and that it also depends on the believer’s “being in Christ.” And, she continues, one should not oppose these two grounds of ethical admonition: “it is not a case of either/or, but of both/and.” Schneider holds a similar view: “The admonition in 2:5 in context is to call to imitate Christ. The second part of the verse… should not be understood as to imitate Christ. The words δι καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ …designate what is true of believers in light of their union in Christ.”

The hymn, which is to illustrate ἐν Χριστῷ, presents Christ’s attitude as being characterized by the absolute obedience to God as to the ultimate significant other. Christ has decided to reject honor competition and has chosen to gain honor by staying loyal to God, his patron, despising shame and death. This is the only attitude which can enable the Christian group to survive, and this is the idea Paul wants his readers to grasp. Continuing the topic of withstanding the enemies and struggling for the gospel (1:27-30), Paul appeals to the fact of his readers belonging to the Christ’s group (2:1), the apostle convinces them to be united (2:2), not to enter honor competition (2:3) and to seek for the interest of the group (2:4):

---

124 See section 4.2.2 of this study below, for the discussion on the parallels of the hymn (2:6-11) in Philippians 1:21-26, 3:7-21).


Unity

1.27...stíkte te éi éni pneúmatai,

μία ψυχή

sunaθλοῦντες...

Christ’s group

Εἰ τις οὖν παρακληθεὶς (ἐν Χριστῷ),
ei ti paraklhseis (en Christi),
ei ti paramubion agapi,
ei tis koinwnia pneuma,
ei tis splanchnia kai oiktirmoi,

2plerwoste mou tai xeran

Unity

τὸν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε,
ton to auton frounthe,
ti hν autiν ργπεν εχοντες,

loyalty

σύμψυχοι,
sympsychoi,
to en frounontes,

Rejection of

3μηδὲν κατ’ ἐριθείαιν

muδηn kata’ eritheian

the competition

μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν ἄλλα τὴ ταπεινοφροσύνη

allhλous hγoumenoi uperexountas eautwν,

Pursuing

4μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἐκαστὸς σκοποῦντες

muθ τα eautwn ekastos skopoountes

the group’s interests

ἄλλα [καὶ] τὰ ἑτέρων ἑκαστοι.

Loyalty

5Τούτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

to Christ

The hymn
Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε is an appeal to the unity and solidarity in Christ, to loyalty to his group. Christ himself did not take part in the honor competition, yet chose to receive honor passively, via submitting himself to God – the honor bestower. Competitiveness, a behavior so natural for any ancient Mediterranean person, can easily endanger the interest of the group, especially in the context of an external threat. That is why humility and obedience to the superior one, to the head of the group are virtues in a military situation.\(^{128}\) Paul expects his readers not to act out of strife and conceit (ἐρυθεία and κενοδοξία) yet to be humble (ταπεινοφροσύνη) and work for the success of the group as a whole. In that sense, the hymn illustrates τοῦτο φρονεῖτε as much as it explains ἐν Χριστῷ.

Paul sees the danger which the Christian community meets in Philippi; he says it is very much the same which he himself is experiencing being in prison (Phil 1:30). Jealousy and adversary can torn the church apart; that is why he entreats his readers to share Christ’s outlook and to see for honor being granted to them from God as a reward. Paul’s call to his readers in 2:1-5 is twofold: he wants them to be united in Christ and he wants them to leave behind honor competition. The appeal of 2:5 has a double connotation: Philippians should conduct the behavior, which is appropriate for the members of the in-Christ community;\(^{129}\) and they should follow Christ’s example of gaining honor within the “in-Christ” group. They must not fight for honor with each other; they must stay loyal to the group (to the Christian community) and by this they must stay loyal to God himself.


\(^{129}\) In Käzemann’s terminology, “the realm of Christ,” cf. 1:27 Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύσθε.
4.1.5.2 Obedience of the children (2:12-30)

After the hymn Paul makes a conclusion: ὡστε, ἀγαπτοί μου (2:12). The theme of obedience is taken by the apostle as the main output of his citing of the hymn: …καθὼς πάντοσε ὑπηκοοῦσατε… μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε (2:12). He appeals to the Philippians’ obedience and asks them to continue with it and to work out their salvation “with fear and trembling,” which is also a metaphor of obedience and describes a respect and submission to God’s will. Salvation here also refers to honor, which God gives to his loyal servants. In 2:14 Paul gives instruction on what exactly his readers are to avoid: πάντα ποιεῖτε χωρίς γογγυσμῶν καὶ διαλογισμῶν, though having a connotation of avoiding disagreement within community, should be interpreted in the light of the following clause 2:15: the “crooked and depraved generation” (which seems to do everything with grumbling and quarrel) is opposed to the “children of God” (τέκνα θεοῦ ἁμώμα). The main characteristic of a “good child” is obedience, hence 2:14 should be understood as “do everything without any sign of disobedience.” The exemplary honor achieved here is

130 Cf. Kittredge: the apostle uses the hymn to encourage obedience (Community and Authority, 99). (Kittredge sees the main idea or the hymn as a shift of powers (loc.cit., 82)). Cf. Martin and Hawthorne giving to the section 2:12-18 the title “Application [to the hymn]: To Obedience, with Paul as Model” (Philippians, 135).

131 Martin and Hawthorne translate the phrase straightly as “obediently” or “holding oneself in weakness” toward the will of God (Philippians, 141-142).

132 Salvation here refers either to God's help in suffering (1:19-20) or to the future glorification (3:20-21), or both.

133 See Martin, Carmen Christi, liii; Peterlin, Paul's Letter to Philippians, 127; Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 143-144.

134 Cf. Rom 1:30, 2 Tim 3:2 γονέων ἀπεθανείς “disobedient to parents” as a part of vice list. See also Lk 1:17 …ἐπιστρέψαι καρδιάς πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα καὶ ἀπεθανεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δίκαιων – the righteous mindset will be given to disobedient [children]. Cf. Mt 21:28-32: though the point of the parable is different, it is important that an obedient child was not supposed to argue with his father.
that of well-behaved (i.e. dependent and obedient) children: blameless and harmless, without fault (ἀμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι… ἀμωμα). These terms with an α-prefix are also the terms of a woman’s honor, which is gained through passive avoiding of reprehensible behavior and certainly not through competition (cf. 2:3 μηδὲν κατ’ ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν).

In the Timothy-Epaphroditus section, Paul explicitly moves from being obedient to God to being obedient to himself as to the leader. In vv.20-22 Paul describes Timothy’s outstanding eagerness in service. In v.20 it is his care for the Philippians, in v.21 – service to Christ (seeking for Christ’s profit), and in v.22 it is his service “in gospel,” but actually “service to Paul” is also meant. The nature of Timothy’s work, as it is described by Paul, characterizes the apostle’s understanding of Christian community (3:22): τὴν δὲ δοκιμήν αὐτοῦ γινώσκετε, ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐδούλευσεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (“his loyalty is known to you, because as son to the father he served with me in the gospel” – italic added, MK). Ὡς πατρὶ τέκνον means here Paul’s dominative and authoritative role in his and Timothy’s collaboration, rather than just “intimate, personal” or “affectionate relationship.” The echo of the hymn is obvious in 1.30. Epaphroditus was risking his life “for the work of Christ” μέχρι θανάτου, which is a clear reference to Christ’s obedience “up to death” (2:8).

The behavior of Timothy and Epaphroditus are the perfect examples of Christ’s mindset presented in the hymn (2:6-11). They do not compete for honor, yet they

135 See section 4.2 of this study below.
136 O’Brien, The Epistle to Philippians, 234.
137 Cf. O’Brien, The Epistle to Philippians, 325. CONTRA: Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 155-156. Yet if the apostle wanted to emphasize his and Timothy’s equality, he would write ὦς ἀδέλφῳ σὺν ἀδέλφῳ. (cf. 2:25 reference to Epaphroditus as to brother and co-worker).
demonstrate absolute obedience and loyalty to Paul and the Christian community, and for that they are receiving respect and honor from the community and from God himself (v.29 τοίς τοιούτοις εντύμους ἔχετε). That way of achieving honor via submission to the group’s rules, obedience to its leader and absolute loyalty to it “up to death” has clear parallels in the hymn, which makes Christ of the hymn an example to imitate.

**4.1.6 Conclusion**

The analysis of the hymn and its nearest context demonstrates that Paul uses this piece of early Christian poetry in order to promote unity within the Christian community using a two-fold idea: firstly, he wants his readers to leave aside honor-competition which can easily jeopardize the unity of the community; and secondly, he wants them to take an inferior position and stay loyal and obedient to the church leaders (i.e. to himself). This strengthening of unity and giving up any inner disagreement is important in the light of the danger that the Christian community faces.

Christ, the main orientation mark, is presented as the one, who himself rejected the competition and behaved as loyal and as an obedient one; for that, he was rewarded by God. It is emphasized that Christ did not claim honor he could claim; yet he chose to subordinate to God alone and despite any hardship, suffering, shame and death, he stayed loyal and obedient to God. For that, God praised Christ and made the universe to admit Christ’s honor.

Christ gains honor not in honor-competition, yet via association with God as with
an honor-bestower. He gains honor not as a rival over his peer, yet as a loyal servant of a
powerful patron. God as a patron, as an honor-bestower, is Christ’s only significant
other; and this is an exemplary behavior Paul wants his readers to adopt.

The text preceding the hymn (2:1-5) is about unity and loyalty to the in-Christ
group. The repetition of ἐν Χριστῶ appeals and “have same mind” appeals is to
promote the sense of identity, of belonging to the in-Christ group. Believers are to
behave as it is appropriate to the members of this group: they must act for the interests
of the whole group, not each of them individually. They must not compete for honor
with each other, but look for honor from God alone.

The apostle promotes the virtues of obedience and loyalty also by the secondary
eamples of Epaphroditus and Timothy: their hard work for the interests of the
community, their avoiding honor-competition, their absolute loyalty to Paul is to
strengthen the community in the face of the outer danger.

Members of the in-Christ group are encouraged to live out their identity: for the
in-Christ group, God is the only honor-bestower; hence to achieve honor within this
group, Philippians must serve God in obedience and loyalty, as good children of God the
Father. That is, the value of honor and aspiring for it is not rejected within an in-Christ
community; yet the certain way of gaining honor – via honor-competition – is banned as
threatening the unity and hence the very survival of the group.

In the next section, we will see how Paul deals with his own honor-issue in the
text of Philippians.
4.2 Paul’s own dealing with honor throughout the letter

Paul’s dealing with honor in the letter to the Philippians is closely connected to the issue of the community’s unanimity. It is not something unusual: as it was demonstrated in section 2.1 of this study, the very nature of honor is based on one’s dependence on the community and its evaluation. In Philippians 3, in his polemics with the opponents, Paul speaks about his former way of life as about a perfect example of “relying on flesh” (3:4), in contrast with “relying on no flesh” and “serving to God in the spirit, boasting in Jesus Christ” (3:3 οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύουτες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες). As after presenting his own experience, the apostle speaks about his hope to receive honor from God (3:10-11, 14; 3:21), it is clear that the whole passage is not only about identity, yet also very much about honor.

4.2.1 New source of κέρδη

Speaking about his former κέρδος, his relying on flesh, Paul does not mention any material goods (like wealth or well-being); he speaks exclusively about his place in a certain social group. The apostle’s base for “confidence in flesh” or his “gain” (κέρδος) is described in seven lines, where the first one is kind of a heading, while the next three refer to his lineage and the last three, united by the preposition κατά – to his
socialization:\textsuperscript{138}

These two important factors – belonging to a respected family (ascribed honor), and behaving in a respectful manner, fulfilling the expectations of his group (achieved honor) – form a base for his “confidence in flesh,” i.e. for being in a secure position within his social group. The successful socialization of Paul, his honor, is described in the terms of the Jewish group he belongs to: his lineage was meaningful within Hebrews (’Εβραῖος ἢ Ἰερουσαλήμ, \textsuperscript{139} he keeps the Law (ὁ νόμος), i.e. the norms of his Jewish society and fights against the enemies of the group (3:6a).\textsuperscript{140} The final definition of his κέρδος is “blameless” in terms of “righteousness according to the Law” (3:6b κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τήν ἐν νόμω γενόμενος ἁμεμπτος).

All this “gain” (κέρδος), all this confidence in flesh, i.e. secured social position, was rejected by Paul for the sake of Christ (3:7-8). The apostle changes his goals and

\textsuperscript{138} See section 3.3.1 of this study.

\textsuperscript{139} Pilhofer sees here resemblance of typical Roman self-representation (\textit{Philippi. Band 1}, 122-126). CONTRA: Witherington argues that the section is addressed to Judaizers (\textit{Paul’s Letter to Philippians}, 199).

\textsuperscript{140} See Bockmue1 on Paul positioning himself here as an (ex-)member of radical Pharisee group, which aspired both to observing the Law and punishing those who break it (\textit{The Epistle to Philippians}, 200-203) Cf. Ps 105:29-31.
his orientation mark, yet the nature of his aspiring to honor remains the same: Paul speaks about the new situation in the same terms, which he uses to describe his former way of life:

“relying on flesh” ↔ [“relying on no flesh”]

That can indicate that the model remains the same, only the labels are changed.

The first opposition (κέρδος/κερδήσω 3:8) contrasts “my” gain and gaining Christ himself; 3:9 demonstrates the opposition of two kinds of righteousness, one is repudiated in order to gain another one:

The point of contrast here is obvious: the Law is opposed to God; and the righteousness from God has an additional quality as being gained through faith(fullness) (of Christ). Interpreting this verse in sociological terms and trying not to get involved into doctrinal discussion on justification by faith, one can say that Paul opposes here two courts of reputations.

---

141 See section 3.3.2 of this study.
142 On the usage of διώκω in 3.6 and 3.9 see section 4.2.2.
143 There is a direct grammatical parallel between two opposite attributes: substantiaive article in Acc + preposition ἐκ.
The Greek word δικαιοσύνη etymologically can be traced to the name of a goddess Δίκη, the one who helped Zeus to judge, i.e. to see what is right and what is wrong. It refers to a divine principle of law, to what is right, legally, to a way, manner, or custom. That is that every group has its own definition of righteousness, and the righteous person is the one who conforms to the group’s rules and acts for the group’s best interests. As the Jewish group includes God, the Law which is believed God gave to his people becomes that rule or custom, living according to which a person (not every person, yet the member of the Jewish group) can become a righteous one. The word δικαιοσύνη (righteousness) in a Jewish context has a social connotation in a sense that it describes a relationship between God and man. Yet it is not just personal relationship, it is a corporate relationship: to be able to have relationship with God, one has to be a member of a Jewish group, which in its turn is defined by the Law.

Faith (πίστις) is mentioned twice in the description of the new righteousness (within the in-Christ group), to which Paul aspires (3:9). Greek πίστις means “trust,” “confidence,” as well as “reliability” and “faithfulness;” in a religious sense it describes man’s relationship to God. In the Hellenistic period, the verb πιστεύειν was used to express “the idea that there are gods,” “the attitude of πιστίς is … a religious attitude to the degree that in it a man…actualizes his relationship to God.” In the Old Testament, he’êmîn has the same connotation: it “embraces… personal relationship between God

145 (or the customs and traditions of the group are sanctified by attributing the status of God’s law).
146 Sanders puts it this way: “the pious… think that they are true Israel in the sense that they live as Israelites should” (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 408, italic original).
147 See section 3.3.1 of this study.
149 Ibid. 182.
and man… an expression of the particular being and life of the people of God which stands both individually and collectively in the dimension of a vital divine relationship.”

Neyrey notes that “faithfulness” (fides), is “the most important element” of God’s patronage relationship.

The notion of faith(fullness) was also important for Romans in terms of the structure of the empire. Latin fides (πιστις) “is the key Roman concept… [it] represents Roman ‘identity marker.’” Faith(fullness) or loyalty to Rome (fides) distinguished the nations of Roman empire from its enemies. That is, faith(fulness) is an essential element of patronage relationship: it supposes first, a long-term (life-long) mutual obligations (“denotes a relationship of reciprocity”) and second, “there is always a hierarchical difference.”

That is, faith supposes that first, a person includes God (gods) into his/her universe (or rather he/she enters God’s universe); and second, God is a significant other, the one who’s opinion matters, the one who delivers honor (in the given context – righteousness).

150 Weiser, TDNT VI:196.
154 Ibid. 20. God is a faithful in the sense that he keeps his promises to his people (1 Cor 1:9; 1 Thes 5:23-24; Rom 9:7). Yet it is the inferior party of the relationship who is supposed to be faithful to the patron (Nebreda, Christ Identity, 146, 250). On “faithfulness” and loyalty as part of patron-client relationship see section 2.2.2 of this study (above).
155 Stegemann, “Coexistence and Transformation,” 20. “[T]he transformation of hostile relations between Tome and those outside of its empire to fides-relations establishes… Rome as the dominating power and the conquered as the subjugated peoples” (ibid. 21).
If the phase τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ is seen as objective genitive, it has the meaning “through faithfulness of Christ.” One can see here the reference to the hymn (2:6-11), which presents the faithfulness of Christ up to death on the cross.  

So the phrase speaks either about gaining righteousness of God for the very fact of entering His group (the entering becomes possible through Christ’s event),  

or about gaining this honor from God by following Christ’s way of faithfulness. The next passage (3:10-11), where Paul describes his imitation of Christ supports the latter reading.

We can summarize that Paul’s “righteousness from God, through faithfulness” mean positive evaluation (honor) within the group which includes God and Christ. The key point of the difference between “righteousness from the Law” and “righteousness from God” is the source of honor, the group which forms the “court of reputation.” The double mentioning of πίστεις can refer to two faithfulnesses: that of Christ, which gives one the opportunity to enter the community of God, and our personal (Paul’s) faithfulness to God (to his community),

156 On faithfulness of Christ see R.B. Hays, The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3.1-4.11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Witherington, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 204-205. CONTRA: Dunn argues that objective genitive here is sometimes forced, particularly in Phil 3:8-9 πίστεις Χριστοῦ “is used in close proximity” with ἡ γνώσις Χριστοῦ ἠρωῦ, and the latter definitely cannot be read as an objective genitive (J.D.G. Dunn, “Once more, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ” in The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3.1-4.11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 251).

157 Cf. “[T]he larger argument Paul here conceives… justification in relational terms” (“and might be found in him” (Holloway, Consolation in Philippi, 138, n.39, referring to P. Bonnard, L’épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens et l’épître aux Colossiens (CNT 10; Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1950) 65); cf. Sanders “participational terms” and “belonging to Christ… determines the whole thrust and point of the passage” (Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 505).

158 See section 4.2.2 of this study.


160 Witherington says that διὰ here should be interpreted as “through” (not “in”), i.e. faith is “the objective means by which one has obtained this righteousness (Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 205).

161 First time πίστεις Χριστοῦ, preposition διὰ+Gen., and second time without Χριστοῦ, preposition ἐπὶ+Dat.

© University of Pretoria
which allows to gain a reward from God.  

We can conclude that the two kinds of “gain” (“righteousness”) Paul contrasts speaking of his own experience, have no conceptual difference: both are “gains,” confidence, boast, i.e. successful socialization, yet in different contexts: the former one is in the context of Paul’s ethnic and religious group, where the Law is an identity mark and the source of honor; the new “gain”/“righteousness” is found in the context of a different group, the group which includes God and Christ as identity mark(s) and source(es) of honor. The only difference between the two “gains” is their sources.

That is, Paul wants now to socialize and to gain status within the borders of God’s (“in-Christ”) group. He does it by exercising the rules of his group and following the example of Christ as it is described in the hymn 2:6-11.

4.2.2 Christ as the source of honor and source of identity

Paul has decided to enter “the realm of Christ;” he does not explain why, he just claims ὁ ὑπέρχος τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ. The apostle does not confine himself to entering “the Christ’ realm;” he also wants to repeat Christ’s way in every single step of it: he wants to participate in his suffering and death (τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ 3:10b) in hope to attain his resurrection (3:11). The positive outcome of such imitation prevails the suffering Paul has to endure to achieve...
it: the suffering and death of Christ, in which Paul is to participate is mentioned between two lines where he expresses his hope for the resurrection (3:10):

\[
10 \text{τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, }
\]

\[
11 \text{εἰ πως καταντῆσαι εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.}^{164}
\]

Veses 20 and 21 continue and develop the idea of resurrection, including all the members of the “in-Christ” group, which makes the theme of glory and reward to excel the theme of suffering. As in the hymn of Philippians 2, in chapter 3 suffering is a by-product, an episode (though significant) of the main goal – honor received from God in resurrection.\[^165\]

The correlation of status left for the sake of status gained is the same in the story of Jesus and the story of Paul:\[^166\] in the hymn of Phil 2:6-11 the original status of Christ as equal to God is expressed in only one line (2:6a),\[^167\] and his exaltation by God takes a half of the hymn (2:9-11); in Philippians 3, the extended presentation of Paul’s past “gain” (3:4-6) serves to underline the superiority of Christ (3:7-11). Paul’s continuing identification of Christ’s suffering and death ([(ἡ] κοινωνία [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, 3:10) leads to the future reward of cosmic

---


165 Witherington points that suffering is a part of confirming in the image of Christ, it is a part of sharing in his resurrection (Paul’s letter to Philippians, 205).

166 Cf. Marchal, Hierarchy, Unity, and Imitation, 142.

167 The second line οἷς ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵππα θεῷ refers to Christ’s decision not to stay equal to God. See section 4.1.2 of this study.
dimension, also is similar to that of Christ: τὸ βαρβατόν τῆς ἡμεροθείας τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (3:14), κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός... μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα... ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σῶματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατά τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα (3:20-21).\(^{168}\) That is, Paul’s decision to prefer Christ is his decision to choose Christ’s way: the way of suffering for the sake of future glory.

The story of Paul’s life presented in Philippians 3 resembles the Christological hymn (2.6-11) linguistically and conceptually. Both Christ and Paul share the parabolic pattern of their stories: Christ voluntarily renounced his privileged position as God’s equal, submitted to God up to death, and as a result received the highest honor bestowed to him from God. Paul also had a position of honor (3:5-7; γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος), rejected it for the sake of being with Christ (3:8-9, 10b); he is looking forward to the reward he is about to receive from God (3:20-21). Paul’s current situation of suffering and his future reward are described in similar terms with *kenosis* of Christ and his glorification:\(^{169}\)

- Christ’s name is repeated in the end of the passage as it is in the hymn: κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (2:21; 3:20),\(^{170}\)
- The body of Paul and his followers is currently “humiliated” (ὁ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν 3:21), yet it is about to be transformed into “the body similar

---

\(^{168}\) Cf. μεγαλυθήσεται Χριστός ἐν τῷ σώματι μου (1:20).


\(^{170}\) Note also the references to the Lord Jesus Christ in the beginning of description 3:8; and mentioning of Jesus Christ in the end of shorter section 3:14.
to that of Christ of glory” (σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ);

- Paul describes his future salvation, the changes that are about to happen with his “body” in the same words which are used in the hymn referring to Christ’s renouncing of his status: μετασχηματίζω (3:21) and σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος (2:7); σύμμορφον (3:21) and μορφήν δούλου λαβών (2:7).

In the section 4.1 we have demonstrated that the Christological hymn of Phil 2:6-11 presents the essence of Christ’s way: it is admitting God as the only source of honor, the only significant other, the only honor-bestower. The same happens with Paul, as he describes it in Philippians 3: he rejects any other “confidence” for the sake of looking for honor from God alone (ἡ ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη, where ἐκ θεοῦ is emphatically put in the first place).

Paul has left his already possessed honor (i.e. positive evaluation by his former group) for the sake of getting honor from God alone. His former honor, the one he used to have in his original group, was limited by the borders of this group – the Law (ἡ δικαιοσύνη τὴν ἐκ νόμου). The honor Paul expects to receive from God has a cosmic dimension: it comes from heaven (3:20), it involves getting under God’s power, which submits everything to its sway (3:21).171 The example of Christ, as it is presented in the hymn (2:6-11) demonstrates that God’s glorification of his loyal servant overpasses every possible source of honor ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων. Christ is named as the reason of Paul’s choice to change his identity and his source of honor, and that is why Paul refers to the hymn several times: honor, with which God rewards to his

171 Cf. 2:10-11: “conceptually the notion of subjecting (ὑποτάσσω) of all things to Christ is found in Phil 2:9-11” (Schreiner, The Apostle of God’s Glory, 170.)
loyal servants (the honor one gets within τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς), is so much bigger than what one gets within the “earthly group” (οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες)\(^{172}\) that they can be compared as “salvation” and “distortion.” It turns out that the main point of conflict with the opposition is the source of honor (see below).

That is, proclaiming Christ his only source of identity in Phil 3:7-11, Paul also means that Christ is his only source of honor. Honor here is secondary to the identity; source of honor is determined by the source of identity; at the same time, one’s source of honor is an indication of one’s identity.

### 4.2.3 God as the only source of honor: the conflict of identities

The theme of honor correlates with the theme of identity throughout the letter. In the very beginning, Paul informs his readers about “some brothers,” whose honor-challenge of him caused separation (1:15-18).\(^{173}\) The same theme of strife, envy and competitiveness repeats throughout the letter (2:3, 4, 21) and over and over again Paul asks his addressees to stay united (1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2), which indicates that the problem was not a single instance.\(^{174}\) The story of Paul’s changed identity is located in the middle of his most severe attack against opposition (3:2 and 3:18-19). In the section 3.1 of this study we have established that the main and the only recoverable accusation against the opponents throughout the letter is their wrong identity: they are not “ours,”

\(^{172}\) Phil 3:19-20, cf. 1:28.

\(^{173}\) See section 3.1.1 of this study.

\(^{174}\) See sections 3.1.1.3, 3.1.4 of this study.
they are not “in Christ.” The apostle reassures the Philippians that he will be honored by God, and he calls them to unify against the opponents (1:20, 28). In 1:18-20 Paul underlines that he is not getting involved into honor-competition, yet is confident of getting the reward from God for the Gospel to be spread (1:19), i.e. for the fact of expanding of the Christ community.

In Philippians 3, the theme of reward from God is incorporated into the theme of identity and unity of the group. On a bigger scale, the theme of reward/honor from God serves to the argument against the opponents, which frames chapter 3:

3:2  a) Blaming the opponents
3:3  But we are…serving to God, boasting in Christ
3:5-6  b) Wrong identity
c) Wrong honor
3:7-8  d) New identity: Christ
d’) New honor: that from God through Christ
3:9-11  c’) Serving to God to receive honor from Him
3:15-17  b’) Admonition to unity
3:18-19  a’) Blaming the opponents
3:20-21  But we are… about to receive honor from God

The connection between identity and honor is perfectly seen in 3:9 (the contraposition of righteousness from God and that from the law) and 3:19-21 (the final destination of

---

175 Beside some personal issues between Paul and his rivals; see sections 3.1.5 and 3.3.3 of this study, above, and section 4.2.3, below.

176 τούτῳ μοι ἀποθηκεύειν ἐς σωτηρίαν (1:19). Paul hardly speaks here about his hope to be released from prison (for “salvation” in 1.19 understood as Paul’s winning the trail, see Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 312). 1:28 and 3:21 σωτηρία/σωτήρ have clearly eschatological meaning. The parallel of 1:20 and 3:21 (glorification of Paul’s body in Christ) support this view.

177 Paul gets in through conforming to Christ and following his way (3:10-11); he wants his readers to stay unanimous (3:14-15).
both groups are expressed in similar terms of glory: δόξα / τὸ σωμα τῆς δόξης. The nature of honor, its essence remain the same: it is the approval (the positive evaluation) or reward from the significant other, from the group one identifies oneself with.

The apostle carefully notes that he has not yet reached his goal of being rewarded by God (3:12-14); honor, bestowed by God, is seen as eschatological resurrection. The specific language Paul uses here indicates that within the in-Christ community honor is delivered for the work for the good of the group (cf. 2:29-30).

Philippians 3:12 is difficult to interpret: διώκω δὲ εἰ καὶ καταλάβω, ἐφ᾽ ὃ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. The last part of the phrase, κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, (“I had been captured by Christ Jesus”) refers to the fact that Paul changed his identity and became a member of the Christ’s group. In the first part the same verb καταλαμβάνω is used, yet now in an active mood and with no object. The section was usually interpreted as a reference to the perfectionist opponents (Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 205). Though they have some reservations though, noting that Paul’s rhetoric here is to affect his readers, to encourage them to get to know Christ, rather than to fight against the opponents (ibid.).

The verse is also seen as an evidence of power game within Christian community: Castelli interprets this verse as promoting Paul’s higher position within Christian congregation: Paul’s example “imbues the model with a privileged and unattainable status” (Castelli, Imitating Paul, 89). Brawley argues that as in 3:12-14 Paul speaks on “his own incomplete state,” he cannot be “an example of unattainable status” so much as “a fellow traveler on the way of life imprinted by God’s power” (Brawley, “From Reflex to Reflection,” 134).

Yet if we take into consideration Christ’s glorification (2:9-11) which is supposed to be repeated in his follower’s lives (3:11, 21), we can see that the incompleteness of this status is caused by two factors: first, the full identification with Christ will be reached only in eschatological future, when believers will have glorified bodies Christ had (3:21), i.e. it happens only after resurrections and hence goes beyond the limits of this life (The word ἐδικαιώμη, which P⁴⁶, D and other Western manuscripts have here, can refer to the judgment of Christ after his return, i.e. to the eschatological future (see Silva, Philippians: Commentary, 187; Withreington, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 209); second, this overcoming of the limits can refer to the God’s glory (i.e. to the honor God bestows upon his faithful servants) at to an unlimited good. Everyone can have a part in it; nobody’s status is “unattainable”: as God’s honor is unlimited, Paul’s working for Philippians’ success in faith (i.e. helping them to gain honor from God) does not decreases his own (Paul’s) honor, yet multiplies it (1:25-26; 4:1).

In the first case, in passive voice, κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, the object is “me:” “I was apprehended by Christ” means nothing but “Christ apprehended me.”
meaning of ἐφ’ ὁ can be causal or consecutive, yet it is definitely not the comparative one; the point is that the meaning of the verbs in both parts of the phrase should be rather the same.

If Paul wants to do something – the same what Christ did to him – and he does it in the context of aspiring for the reward from God, and also giving to the fact that the combination of διόκω and καταλαμβάνω is used both in LXX and Ancient Greek as “pursuing and capturing.” 3:12 can be a hint to Paul’s missionary activity. Such verbalization of his ministry is a clear reference to his former lifestyle within his former identity: in 3:6, speaking about his status within the group of those who rely on the flesh he says: κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Philippians 3:6 belongs to the section on Paul’s former κέρδη: his activity in persecuting the church was one of his main merits within his former group.

However, 3:13a and 3:14 add to the meaning of διώκω and καταλαμβάνω as to the aspiration to and getting the reward (correspondingly): ἐγὼ ἐμαυτῶν οὐ λογίζομαι κατεληφθέναι….κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἀνω κλῆσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Paul utilizes the athlete metaphor διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον, so the

On the opinion that the object is missing on purpose, as a polemic with Gnostics, see Martin and Hawthorne, Philippians, 206.

180 See Fee, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 346, n. 31; 430, n.28; Bockmuehl agrees with the meaning “because” (The Epistle to Philippians, 221). See also Witherington inclining to “because,” as it suits the context (3:14) and also “better suits the hortatory character of the whole discourse” (Witherington, Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 209).

181 Cf. 1 Cor 13:12 …τότε δὲ ἐπεγόνωμαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγόνωμην. Here the different conjunction is used (καθὼς) and the subject and object change their places: “I will know [the Divine] in a similar way (I) am known [by the Divine].”

182 Martin and Hawthorne suppose that the meaning of καταλαμβάνω “shifts slightly” in the second part of the phrase, so Paul “had been gasped” by Christ, and not he wants “to comprehend” Him, that is, Christ’s personality (Philippians, 208).

183 See LXX Exodus 15:9, Joshua 2:5, 1 Sam 30:8, Hos 2:7. See also Herodotus ix.58; Lucian Hermot 77 (reference from Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 152).
connotation of διώκω is “aspiring.” Yet the same metaphor used in 1 Cor 9:24-27,184 in the context of Paul’s hard work in “gaining” (κερδέω) people for Christ and the gospel.185 That is, two ideas can be loaded into 3:12: Paul’s preaching the Gospel and recruiting new people for Christ and his desire to be rewarded by God: “I aspire to get people into the community of Christ], wherefore186 I was captured by Christ.”

Being a Jew, Paul persecuted the church because he believed it threatened Jewish identity; he was doing nothing but guarding the borders of the group.187 Now the group has changed, yet the type of activity for which Paul expects to get honor remains the same. He works for spreading of the gospel; he also guards the Christian community from its diffusion by the opponents (both inner ones and from the outside). That is, he works for expanding the in-Christ group and maintaining its boundaries. The reward (honor) in both cases is given to the one who works for the strengthening of one’s group (by following the group’s rules (i.e. exercising the group’s identity) and keeping the boundaries (again, maintaining the group’s identity). That is the conflict of honors between the two groups (the contraposition of “relying on flesh” / “relying on no flesh” and “righteousness from the Law” / “righteousness from God”) is nothing else but the conflict of identities.

184 1 Cor 9:24: εἰς δὲ λαμβάνει τὸ βραβείον οὕτως τρέχετε ήνα καταλάβητε.
185 1 Cor 9:19-21: πάσιν ἐμαυτῶν ἑωυδολώσα, ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω – the connection of δουλόω and Christ’s morphēν δουλόω λαβῶν of Phil 2:7 can be a topic of separate investigation; ... ἵνα κερδάσω τοὺς ἀνάμι... ἵνα τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς κερδήσω... and especially important in the context of this discussion v.23: πάντα δὲ ποιώ διὰ τὸ εἰς ταγέλιον, ἰνα συγκοινωνῆς αὐτοῦ γένως – Paul “gains” people into the community of Christ in order to fulfill his participation in this community.
186 Lightfoot sees this meaning of ἐδυναμώσα as a preferable one (St. Paul’s Letter to Philippians, 152).
As the apostle belongs to the entity which includes the immortal God and resurrected Christ, death does not frighten him (1:21-23). At the same time he believes that εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κείμαι (1:16), that is why his life, work, and even death for the sake of community is his “advantage” (μοι καρπὸς ἔργου 1:22). He calls his readers “my joy and my crown” (χαρά καὶ στέφεινός μου 4:1), and looks for Christian community success and development (1:25-26; 4:17b). Paul does it not only because of his personal affection: if he manages the community of Christ to stay loyal and obedient to Him, he receives reward from God: …εἰς καύχημα ἐμοί εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἐκπίστασα (2:15-16).

That is, for the apostle, one’s service to the church is at the same time one’s service to God himself. Paul has decided to enter the group of Christ and has chosen God as his source of honor. Like Roman local elite were serving to the emperor by fulfilling their duties as heads of polices and regions, for Paul, working for the success of that group of Christ is his service to God himself. In the same way, the service of his co-workers to the apostle is considered as their service to the Gospel (2:21-22); this work of Timothy and Epaphroditus builds for the good of the Christian community and hence, it is also service to God and Christ (2:25, 30; 4:18). The work for the good of the community is honored within the in-Christ group and will be rewarded by God (2:29-30; 3:17; 4:3). That is, humbleness and “looking for the

---

188 Ἐμὸι γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος… ἀναλίῳ καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι. Physical death means for Paul total union, bounding, identification, “being” with Christ. In the light of 3:7-11, death as κέρδη can be seen as imitation of Christ, and hence, Χριστοῦ κέρδημα.


190 See section 4.1.5.2 of this study.
interests of others” (2:2-4) is not rejection of honor per se, but rejection of looking for honor from any source other than God.

As patron/client type of relations, being a model of Roman empire, helped to overcome disconnection of the provinces, the same way emphasizing Christ as the only honor bestower become an important argument against opposition in the letter to the Philippians. Any rival within the Christian community (including challenging Paul’s leading position (1:15-17)), is seen as seeking after honor not being bestowed by God, yet being won in honor-competition, and is considered a treason: it does not only weakens the community, which would be torn apart by inner rival; as identity and source of honor are connected inseparably, an alternative source of honor (not God alone) is a sign of changed identity. The admonition to avoid any strife and competition with the Christian commune is given in the context of conformity to Christ (2:1-5).

Looking for an alternative source of honor, these πολλοί (3:18, cf. οἱ πάντες 2:21) are in fact looking for an alternative source of identity, and hence, they stop being “brothers.” That is why, in Paul’s rhetoric, “some rival brothers,” through their strife and selfishness, which jeopardizes the unity of congregation, evolve into “the enemies of

---


192 See Eisenstadt, Roniger, Patrons, Clients, 52-58; Theissen, Social Reality and the Early Christianity, 272; see also section 2.2.2 of this study.


194 See section 4.1.5.1 of this study.
Christ’ cross.” God and Christ, the only patrons of the “in-Christ” group, bestow honor to their faithful clients. For the members of the in-Christ group, the only legitimate way of gaining this honor from God is to work for the good of the community, submitting to the group’s leaders and awaiting for the reward; the only legitimate source of honor is God and Christ.

We can conclude that in the letter to the Philippians Paul gives much attention to the theme of honor; in the apostle’s language, honor is overlapping with the theme of identity. The apostle does not invent a new way of gaining honor; the model he promotes is typical for patron/client relationship. In the community of Christ, God is presented as an exclusive honor bestower; one can gain honor only by obedience to the group’s rules and work for the community’s growth and strengthening. The purport of life for Paul is to identify with Christ and to repeat his way in humbling obedience to God, selfless service to the Christian community and future glorification in resurrection.

4.3 Conclusion: Πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς: keeping values, changing identity

In this chapter of the study we have analyzed how the letter to Philippians presents dealing with honor in the Christian community. Two major sections of the letter were examined: the Christological hymn (2:6-11) and Paul’s testimony of his own change of priorities (3:4-14), as long as other fragments, where the issue of honor is touched.

195 On the connection of the opponents references throughout the letter, see section 3.1.4 of this study.
The hymn is closely connected to its contexts, and the aim of its using is to support Paul’s main idea: within the Christian commune honor is to be achieved passively, by obedience and loyalty to the group patron(s) and definitely not by competition with other members of the group. The analysis of 2:6-11 indicates that the Christological hymn is not praising suffering *per se*. Christ’s *kenosis* and death is a by-product of his absolute obedience and loyalty to God.

The context of the hymn was analyzed in order to see how Paul uses it for his purposes. The introduction to the hymn (2:5) can have a double connotation: an appeal to stay in Christ and an appeal to imitate him. The boarder context supports both aspects: Phil 2:1-2 summons the readers to stay “in Christ;” while Phil 2:3-4, 12, and the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus are rather about following Christ’s example: they teach Philippians to avoid honor competition, to stay obedient to God and his commune. Such behavior must be honored (2:29) and emulated by the community: no doubts, Paul means Timothy and Epaphroditus among “us,” whom Philippians should imitate (3:17).

Philippians 3 contains the climax of Paul speaking about his honor. He explains in detail how successful and respectful he used to be when he was a member of the Jewish commune. Rejecting his old *kērōn*, he does not stay empty-handed; he rejects his previous identity and his socialization *in order to* find a new identity. Having entered “the realm of Christ,” i.e. having found his new identity in Christ, Paul starts his way in repeating Christ’s way of faithful and obedient service to God and his community, in hope to receive from God honor similar to the one Christ has received for his obedience. As previously Paul gained his honor (*dikaiosūnē ἓκ νόμου*) for his belonging to a
respectful Jewish family (3:5), for zealous observation of the Law and the borders of his former group (3:6), the same way now the apostle wants to find himself having honor ascribed to him by the very fact of his belonging to the in-Christ group (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, ἢ ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνης 3:9a) and second, having honor bestowed to him by God for his work for the group’s success (1:18-20; 2:16; 4:1) the same way Christ did – ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει (3:9b-11).

So, it is not a just rejection of honor; it is rather the replacement of borders, i.e. the changing of group-identity. The theme of honor is interweaved with the theme of group-identity throughout the letter. Paul sees God as his patron and expects reward from Him for his work for the good of Christian community; the well-being of his co-members and expanding of the “in-Christ” group is his goal, as that means for him increasing prize from God. Any rival within the group can jeopardize its stability and growth, so the apostle argues against it claiming that any competition and strife damages the congregation and is a deed of hostility against the patron of the group – against Christ himself (3:18). Paul insists that God is the only legitimate honor-bestower for the members of the “in-Christ” group.

From the analysis of certain sections and also from the overall argument developed by the apostle in the letter to the Philippians, we can see that honor is an important subject of it. Paul is anxious about honor issues; he is very sensitive to it as any other person of his time and culture. We also noted that honor-discourse in the letter goes along with identity-discourse: the topic of honor always has the themes of belonging, unity, and opposition as its context.
We can conclude that in the letter to the Philippians, the apostle’s understanding of honor is very much the same as a non-Christian one (particularly, as Roman patron/client model of relations). Being a member of the in-Christ group, Paul gains his honor from the fact of belonging to the group of Christ and via service to its patron (i.e. Christ himself), via loyal and selfless work to the community of Christ. He looks for an ascribed honor, honor bestowed from God alone, for honor strongly within the in-Christ group. For Paul, rejecting honor-competition is the declaration of God being the only honor bestower; in addition, avoiding competition works for the good of the commune. He still values honor and aspires for it, yet in terms of his new group.

Having his identity changed and having become a member of τὸ πολίτειμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς, Paul has not changed his value-orientation. Two most important values remain the same: belonging to a group and honor.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Humans are social beings, and socialization – belonging to a group and finding one’s place in this group – is one of the main human psychological necessities. The fact that the need for socialization, together with the need and ability to reflect on this socialization, are something that unites the human race through time and cultures makes social studies of the New Testament relevant to the needs of the contemporary church.

As any other kind of text, biblical texts reflect social structures to which their authors and original audiences belonged to. The New Testament texts, and especially Paul’s letters, were intended and created in order to instruct and to help their readers to build their new social identity as members of Christian community. Social-psychological approach to Biblical texts draws so much attention in recent decades: it helps us to understand the mentality of the culturally and temporally remote writers and original readers of the texts; it also helps us to see the significance of these texts to nowadays readers.

The aim of this study is the analysis of social concepts of honor and identity in Paul’s letter to Philippians.
5.2 Survey of the study

In the first chapter (Introduction) methodology has been defined. It was noted that any attempt to reconstruct social patterns embodied in the text (cognitive discourse analysis) should be based on thorough exegesis. That is why this research is a combination of text analysis and social analysis.

The research gap was also addressed. Social studies of New Testament texts are especially helpful for an understanding of early Christian identity: how the community viewed itself and the outer world. We had to point out difficulties in terminology, especially in the usage of the term “(social) values.” The confusion of the concept is a common neglect: more evident manifestations of values are often taken for values themselves. The relation between values and identity is not defined; as a result, what happens with values, when identity is changed, is not clear.

Paul’s letter to Philippians is the perfect example for the analysis of relations between social values and identity. The researchers agree that in the letter, the value of honor is rejected by the apostle, and that suffering (which was considered as something shameful in Greco-Roman culture of the 1st century) is declared as being a new value: God rewarded Christ for his suffering and self-denial; and Christians should imitate him in suffering and love to their brothers.\(^1\) There is an inconsistency though. The unexpected and illogical aspiration to suffering of Christ and his followers (instead of a natural desire of honor and success) has to be explained as super-natural intervention.

A hypothesis has been proposed: in the letter to Philippians, Paul does not speak about changed values: rejecting honor and praising suffering. Rather, he speaks about changed identity, i.e. about changed significant other. The events and circumstances are evaluated by Paul from the perspective that God is the only bestower of honor.

In chapter two of this study, the main terminology for the research have been clarified. The definitions of values, culture and identity, were given; the correlation between these concepts was described. The two main analytical categories of the study were defined, and the relations between them ascertained. Values are invisible, often non-verbalized “definition of rationality,” “of the desirable,” which determines behavior of an individual. In this research, the social values, i.e. the orientation of a person in society, is under consideration.

A group is defined as a number of individuals, who consider themselves and are considered by others as “a group.” Values, shared by a group, in different ways are embodied in norms of behavior, in the group’s heroes and symbols. Together, values and their embodiments form culture. As same value can be practiced differently in different groups, different cultures can share same values, but they practice these values differently.

Identity is built upon the visible part of culture, i.e. upon values embodiment and not upon values themselves. So, people can have different identities, yet share the same values. Identity is understood as a sense of belonging (to a group); it sets a border between “me” (“us”) and “them,” i.e. it has positive and negative connotations. Belonging to a group gives a person a sense of worth. Identity forms an

---

evaluation system: “significant others” are those who are within the group; the evaluation of non-members is not significant.

Honor is a part of the honor/shame system, especially strong in collectivist societies (i.e. in the societies where the relational value is oriented to the belonging to a group); the system regulates behavior of the group-members by praising the correct behavior and shaming the wrong one. A person is sensitive to honor (i.e. to the judgment of the group) only if he/she relates him/herself to this group. The source of honor (a significant other) is always a member(s) of one’s group: inclusion into a group means inclusion into an evaluation system. The very fact of belonging (identity, association) gives a person a sense of worth. That is, identity and honor go together: changing of identity supposes changing of source of honor; and changing of source of honor means changing of identity.

The social value system of ancient Mediterranean culture type is characterized by strong group orientation (collectivism) and specifically treatment of honor as limited good. In the Greco-Roman world two basic models of honor-dynamic existed: one could get honor via achieving, when honor was won in contest with other group-members, and via ascribing, when honor was bestowed onto a person for loyalty and service to a patron. It was noted that honor-competition could contradict to the interests of the group; and quite the contrary, patronage strengthened the structure of the group: it was the patronage system which allowed Romans to keep their huge empire together.

At the end of chapter one of this study, the cultural features of ancient Philippi were described. It was concluded, that the addressees of Paul’s letter lived in the city, which though being historically mainly a Greek one, by the middle of the 1 st
CE was highly Romanized. The significant part of the elite population was Roman veterans and their descendants, and the Roman influence in the city was strong. It was concluded, that one can expect Philippi dwellers to be group-oriented people, practicing both honor-competition and patronage as ways of achieving honor.

The third chapter of the study was devoted to the analysis of Paul’s language of identity in the letter to Philippians. As the letter contains some bright references to the opponents, we have started with parsing the negative identity in the letter. Some opponents could be characterized as the apostle’s personal rivals (1:15-18, 2:21), other references have a vilificatory character and do not provide any reliable information about who these opponents were (1:27-30; 3:2, 18-19). It was demonstrated however, that all cases of the apostle’s mentioning of the opponents could be seen as being referred to one (the same) group, whose main feature was not belonging to “our” circle. It was concluded that the role of the opponents in the letter is to provide the background, on which the identity of Christian group can be seen.

Next, we researched the positive language of identity in the letter. Addressing his readers and referring to his co-workers, Paul uses kinship language (“brothers”), which indicates close relationships within the Christian commune. The apostle calls Philippians and Timothy “his children,” which points to his leading position. The repeated admonition “to think the same” (τοῦτο φρονεῖν 2:2,5; 4:2) has a double connotation: to share the same attitude and to stay in alliance with Christ and each other (i.e. with “in-Christ group”). There are several direct appeals to stay united and to leave aside honor competition (1:27, 2:2-4, 3:14); military and political language used in the letter (1:27-28; 2:16; 3:12-14, 20) is to make the Philippians to unify and be ready to protect their group, which is an “in-Christ group.”
Paul’s own testimony of identity change was also examined. The section 3:4-11 of the letter contains both positive and negative identities of Paul. He contrasts his former life, the life within the borders of the Jewish community and Mosaic Law, and his present self-understanding, the one which has Christ as an identity-mark. Being “in-Christ” is Paul’s new identity; God is Paul’s significant other, the one who gives him both the sense of belonging and a sense of worth.

We have concluded that the theme of Christian community’s self-understanding is one of the most important ones in the letter to Philippians. References to the opponents, together with admonitions to unity are to strengthen the sense of belonging among the members of the congregation. Paul’s own example is to demonstrate that the new identity “in Christ” is much more significant than any other former one; it is his “salient” identity in the giving context. Strong orientation of the members of the Christian commune to their group reflects the common dependence of an individual on his/her group in collectivist societies.

In the fourth chapter of the study we analyzed how dealing with honor in the Christian community is presented in the letter to Philippians. We have started with parsing the so-called Christological hymn (2:6-11), which plays an important role in the argumentation of the letter: it is to give the exemplary attitude of the Christian community members. We have demonstrated that the hymn tells about Christ taking the only right position towards God – the position of a servant, who is loyal and obedient to his master to the point of death. God is presented as the only source of honor, who bestows honor onto his faithful servant in the eschatological future. The context of the hymn supports our findings: it is introduced by an appeal to leave

---

3 Brawley, “From Reflex to Reflection,” 131.
honor competition and to unite as members of the “in-Christ” group (2:1-5). Right after the hymn Paul calls his readers to stay obedient and to work for the good of the community without competing for honor with each other (2:12-18). Timothy and Epaphroditus are examples of the utter devotion to the interests of the “in-Christ” group, whose (devotion) includes acknowledgement of Paul’s leading position (2:19-30); this kind of behavior is honored within the community (2:29 τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους ἔχετε). That is, the hymn and its context promote getting honor from God alone, via loyal service to his community; getting honor via honor-competition with other members of the “in-Christ” group are prohibited. Such attitude would strengthen the position of the Christian group and help it survive in the hostile environment.

Paul’s own example of dealing with the honor issue was examined by analyzing his own testimony in 3:4-21 and other sections of the letter. Speaking about his conversion to Christ, the apostle uses the language of honor. He describes his former life as a Jew in terms of his successful socialization in the community of the Law; he underlines the high social status he gained in this group. All this was rejected for the sake of Christ himself and the position similar to his (resurrection and glorification by God). The apostle still aspires for honor, yet now the source of it is God and Christ. Paul is determined to stay loyal to Christ’s community and to serve to it despising any difficulties, sufferings or death. Expecting eschatological glorification (honor) from God (1:20; 3:13-14, 21) makes meaningful hard selfless work for the interests of God’s group and obedience to God, which can cause suffering and even death from the enemies of God and his group.
The language Paul uses speaking about his experience within the “in-Christ” group indicates that Christ is both source of honor and source of identity for the members of his group. Honor, by definition, is dealt with in the context of one’s group. Within the “in-Christ” group, honor and identity are explicitly overlapping: Paul wants “to be found in Christ,” and “to gain Him.”

The interdependency of honor and identity is perfectly seen in how Paul treats the opponents in the letter. Paul starts with mentioning the honor-rival within Christian community; he returns to the topic over and over again, underlining the necessity to unite, to leave aside any competition and to work selflessly for the good of the “in-Christ” group. The members of the Christian community expect to be rewarded in the future resurrection, by God himself, for the loyal service to God in building, expanding and strengthening of his Church. Every time Paul speaks about receiving honor from God alone, it is done within the context of identity in Christ and appeal for the unity of the commune. If one considers oneself a member of God’s group, one is supposed to have God as one’s only significant other, the only source of honor. Competing over honor with other members of the group does not only jeopardizes the group’s unity and weakens the group; it is a factual renouncing of God’s universal lordship; rejecting him as the only honor-bestower. That is why in Paul’s rhetoric, “the rival brothers” become “the enemies of Christ’s cross.”

We could see that Paul did reject neither honor nor aspiring to it; he did not invent new ways of achieving honor either. The pattern he promoted was very much the same the Roman Empire was built on: the centralized distribution of honor by the only patron served to strengthening of the group. What Paul did should be called
“recasting the roles,”⁴ “change of interpretive framework,”⁵ relocating the borders, or rather, using terminology of this research, changing the identity in which the honor-gaining ritual was practiced.

Paul points to God as to the only source of honor; he points to the service to God and God’s group as to the only way of gaining honor. So, it is not new values invented, but the same values practiced in a different group. Values remain the same; what has been changed is identity.

5.3 Conclusions

Various cultures and societies of Mediterranean region, having different identities, still shared the same value of belonging to a group; they all had a similar honor/shame system. Identity is not based on values, it is based on symbols, heroes; identity is the answer to the question: Whom do I belong to? Who is my significant other? That means that the fight between Christians and non-Christians was not about the value of honor per se, but about who is the hero, the bestower of honor: God and Christ, or the emperor (or the Mosaic Law). The bestower of honor is the ultimate “significant other;” and who is one’s significant other depends on what group one belongs to.

Therefore, when in the 1st century a person entered a Christian commune,


⁵ Watt, “Radical Social Redefinition and Radical Love,” 129.
his/her system of values did not change. He/she remained oriented to the group and aspiring to honor. What changed was his/her identity: the person became a member of a different society – a Christian group, a group which included God and Christ as the ultimate honor bestowers. The person’s seeking for honor now took place in the borders of this new group. Competing for honor with other members was not the suitable way of gaining honor within this group: first, it questions the position of God as the ultimate honor bestower; and second, it could jeopardize the group’s stability, which was undesirable especially in the hostile environment; it damaged the group’s interests and hence, the interests of God, who was the ultimate Lord of the group. In the Christian group, honor could be gained only by one’s association with God: by serving his interests, by staying loyal and faithful to him, even if such loyalty could cost suffering and death. This strategy of gaining honor was typical for the Roman imperial system, where service to the emperor and selfless fight for the imperial interests were honored by the authorities. As Lendon puts it: “Honor is one of history’s strong forces… it can thwart the state, destroy the state or make the state impossible… But placed at the service of the community, honor can create, and preserve, an empire.”

That is, for Paul, honor was an important issue and a powerful tool for building and strengthening the Christian community identity and unity. Common for Mediterranean cultures relational values – belonging to a group and aspiring to the high evaluation by this group (to honor) – were practiced now in the “heavenly society,” πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς.

Avoiding shame for females, this gender issue, could be also changed, as Solevåg demonstrates in her “Perpetua and Felicitas – Reinterpreting Empire.”

5.4 Contribution of this study

First of all, this research is based on the shoulders of other scholars. Some of them have spoken about the fact that it is not values, but their identification with Christ is what differed followers of Jesus from their Jewish and Gentile neighbors. In his concluding chapter to Exploring Early Christian Identity, Bengt Holmberg notes that the identity of Christian movement was not based on its unique ethical teaching (because this teaching was not unique); their identity was “bound up with… identity of their confessed Lord, Jesus of Nazareth.”8 Andrie du Toit points out that in the letter to Romans, “Paul saw God as being the ultimate source of the new identity of believers,” and that “the most remarkable aspect” of seeing themselves as part of God’s family was that it gave the believers “an unheard-of dignity,”9 that is, for the followers of Jesus, God was both the source of identity and the source of honor. Identity was changed; correspondingly, the source of honor was also changed; yet the very values of belonging and honor remained. As van der Watt refers to the Johannine community: “The value system is not devalued, but the way the value system is interpreted is altered.”10

Having analyzed Paul’s understanding of honor and identity in the text of the letter to Philippians, this work has made three major contributions to the studies of the New Testament texts:

1. This study offers a coherent methodological approach, a fully sociological

---

8 Holmberg, “Early Christian Identity,” 175.
analysis of the text. All the characters of the text, all the members of the in-Christ group – Paul, his readers, Christ and God – are included in one social set, which follows a single social conduct – that of a 1st century Greco-Roman one. In the words of Smith, “we subordinate our reading of [the text]… to the cultural constrain present to… [its author].”\textsuperscript{11} The Greco-Roman cultural matrix grants us all “the necessary dynamic context.”\textsuperscript{12} There is no need for ideological/theological insertion(s) into social analysis of the text in order to explain, why Christian social values allegedly contradict with these non-Christian ones.\textsuperscript{13}

2. This investigation helps to clarify the terminology used for social-anthropological approach to the New Testament texts, which have not been done before. Particularly, the concepts of values and honor are investigated; values, honor and identity are put in one coordinate system; the relations between them clarified. As it was addressed in chapter 1 (Introduction) of this study, social-anthropological and social-psychological approach to the biblical texts, though having a history of decades,\textsuperscript{14} and elucidating the motives of biblical characters’ behavior, failed to explain why honor, this “provital value” of a Mediterranean person, was rejected by members of the Christian movement. \textit{This study demonstrates that honor was not rejected, and values were not changed. What was changed is identity, and hence the source of honor.} Christians identify themselves with Christ, and receive honor from God alone. That is why they are not supposed to participate in honor-competition, and that is why they are able to despise suffering and shame: they believe they will

\textsuperscript{11} Smith, \textit{Marks of an Apostle}, 156.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} See Nebreda, \textit{Christ Identity}, 64.
receive honor from God. That is, the Christian community did not invent new standards of honor; it promoted a new identity, a new source of honor: God and Christ.

3. This study offers a new point of view for the interpretation of the Christological hymn Phil 2:6-11. The hymn, traditionally understood as praising suffering, is seen as promoting the only source of honor – God. According to the proposed understanding of honor and identity dynamic, Paul uses the hymn to teach his readers that being a member of the “in-Christ” group means to seek honor only from God, which involves total obedience to God’s will, avoiding honor-competition, and working for the good of Christ’s community.

5.5 Applications

The study has some practical applications. The understanding of honor as a natural human need in approval by a group deprives aspiring for honor of negative evaluation as something not appropriate for a Christian. This understanding also makes the “honor issue” of ancient Mediterranean person close and comprehensible for the contemporary reader; it makes Bible texts more relevant. The human desire to be accepted and positively evaluated is not something a Christian must get rid of; after all, it is not possible due to biological and psychological features of a human being. The church should not force a person to do something he/she is not capable of. Becoming a Christian means changing one’s identity, i.e. changing one’s court of reputation, one’s significant other. Following Paul the apostle, we need to teach
people how to see for honor which God gives: to stay loyal to God and to work for the good of his community. Aspiring for honor is not a negative “non-Christian” desire; it can benefit the church. The point is not if one looks for honor or not; **the point is from whom one looks for honor, because this is what defines one’s identity.**

5.6 Perspectives for further studies

There are a lot of potential for further studies of different aspects of honor and identity in Biblical texts.

1. In this research, Paul’s letter to Philippians was a test-case, in which, to our opinion, the discussion over honor and identity was most evident. Other New Testaments texts should also be analyzed on the subject of dealing with honor and identity in the community of Christ.

2. The historical and theological process of transforming the idea of aspiring for honor from God despising suffering into aspiring to suffering for God should be investigated.

3. There are studies on parallels for Christians’ and Stoics’ understanding of humanity and human identity. The comparison of Christians’ and Stoics’ understanding of the significant other and honor should also be investigated.

---

Both Paul and Stoics universalism, i.e. understanding humanity and human identity as a corporate, universal one, was “the basis for formulating a concrete set of moral rules for political communities” (Lee, *Paul, Stoics and the Body of Christ* (SNTS MS 137; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 65).
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Reference Works


**Secondary Literature**


Brodd, J. and J.L. Reed (editors). *Roman and Religion. A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-


205


Cotter, W.C.S.J. “Our Politeuma is in Heaven: The Meaning of Philippians 3.17-21.” Pages 92-104 in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of*


Denzey, N. “The Limits of Ethnic Categories.” Pages 489-507 in Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches. Edited by A.J. Blasi, J. Duhaime, and


____. “Epilogue.” Pages 197-214 in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*. Edited by P.


Florensky, P. “Ne voschichenie nepcheva” [“He did not consider it robbery”]. Pages 143-188 in Sochinenia v 4 tomach. Tom 2 [Writings in Four Volumes. V.2.]. Moskva: “Misl’,” 1996.


Freyne, S. “Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew’s and John’s Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus.” Pages 117-143 in “To See Ourselves as Others See


Hakola, R.” Social Identities and Group Phenomena in Second Temple Judaism.” Pages 259-276 in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from*


Jeremias, J. “Zu Phil 2.7 ΕΚΕΝΩΣΕΝ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ.” Novum Testamentum 6 (1963): 182-188.


Summary

The aim of this study is the analysis of social concepts of honor and identity in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

In the first chapter, the research problem is formulated and the appropriate methodology, which could address the issue under investigation, is chosen. It was observed, that in the social studies of the New Testament texts, the key analytical categories – honor, identity and (social) values, – as well as the correlation between them, were not properly defined. At the same time, the text of the letter to the Philippians demonstrates that to aspire for honor is not totally rejected within Christian community (1:20; 2:29; 3:14). The discourse analysis (discovery of social patterns embedded in the text) was taken as main methodological approach; clarifying of social concepts and text analysis were main tools used to test the hypothesis: In his letter to the Philippians, Paul does not argue to reject honor as a social value, yet he promotes a new identity and new source of honor; aspiration to honor within one’s group remains the same for non-Christians and for “heavenly society.”

In the second chapter, the main terminology is defined. So, “value” is an often non-verbalized, invisible conception, which determines one’s understanding of the desirable or rationality. The same values can have different embodiments in different cultures; the same values can be shared by different groups. Identity is based on the visible manifestations of a culture; people of different identities can share the same values. Honor is a positive evaluation of one’s behavior; it is very significant for every collectivistic society. The source of honor is at the same time the source of identity: the
one whose opinion matters, whose approval is valuable is the one with whom a person associates/identifies him/herself.

In the **third chapter**, the language of identity in the letter to the Philippians is analyzed. Paul pays a lot of attention to his readers’ new identity “in Christ.” He accentuates their distance from the non-members of the group (negative identity); he insists on their unity, mutual support, and call to leave aside any inner quarrel or competitiveness in order to concentrate on the survival and development of the “in-Christ” group. His own example of changed identity demonstrates that Christ gives Paul both a sense of belonging and a sense of worth. Strong orientation of the members of the Christian commune to their group reflects the common dependence of an individual on his/hew group in collectivist societies.

In the **fourth chapter**, the issue of honor in the text of Philippians is investigated. The Christological hymn (Phil 2:6-11) and its context presents the only appropriate way of behavior and hence, gaining honor within the “in-Christ” community: God is the only honor-bestower; one must stay loyal to the community and obedient to its leaders despite suffering and death. Paul’s account of his own experience demonstrates that he is anxious about honor, yet he seeks it exclusively in terms of the “in-Christ” group: God is the only source of honor; hence honor must be achieved strictly via loyal service to God and his group. Any attempt to gain honor in competition with other members of the “in-Christ” group is interpreted as treason, as it denies the status of God as the only honor-bestower.

In the **fifth chapter**, the findings of the research are summarized. It is concluded that social values of “heavenly society” are very much the same as these of a non-Christian one. Belonging to a group and positive evaluation of this group (honor) –
these common for Mediterranean cultures relational values – are still most significant for the “in-Christ” group members. The only thing which is changed is identity (and hence, the source of honor): for Christians, God and Christ are an exclusive source of identity and an exclusive source of honor. Hence, the “in-Christ” group and the outer world both share the value of honor; the only difference between them is the source of that honor (i.e. identity). Values remain the same, identity is different.