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JESUS CHRIST IN THE LIGHT OF PHILIPPIANS 2,5-11
EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- THESIS SUMMARY -

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SUMMARY

The present work focuses on the passage included in verses 5-11 of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians and on how the teaching about the divine-human Person of our Savior Jesus Christ is reflected in this place. From the earliest times of biblical research, this passage has been the subject of numerous studies and interpretations. For Christians from the Early Church as well as for those from the following centuries, this pericope has been a powerful testimony to support and definitively formulate teachings regarding the Person of the Savior, especially aspects related to His humanity and divinity. St. Gregory of Nyssa appreciates that through these words, St. Paul shows that "everything that is the Father is also in the Son"¹ and Eusebius of Caesarea says that "(St. Apostle Paul) recognized Christ and no one else as being the Son of God. The body that Christ took over was called "the form of a servant" and "the Son of man." But as for that birth which, unknown to all, was from the Father and before all ages, He was the Son of God."²

The present research is divided into four main chapters, preceded by the preliminary part and followed by the chapter dedicated to conclusions. In this work, it is desired to achieve a comprehensive approach to the ways in which the passage from Philippians 2,5-11 can contribute to the deepening and grounding of the teachings regarding the divine-human Person of the Savior Jesus Christ. Through this study, we wish to present the mentioned subject with particular care to the context in which this text was drafted and received, to the ways in which exegetical and theological study can contribute to the presentation of a pertinent and well-argued vision as well as the main directions of patristic and modern interpretation.

The passage from the Epistle to the Philippians included in the second chapter, verses 5-11, can be received as a Christological hymn. Although the arguments supporting this assertion are not entirely uncontested, we can say that they are more than plausible and make more sense than theories that argue the opposite.

Ralph Martin, following the thesis initially proposed by Lohmeyer, demonstrates that this pericope is structured in a clear rhythmic form and that the language used seems to have a

¹ M. J. EDWARDS, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, 8)", InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1999, p. 237.

² M. J. EDWARDS, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, p. 239.

liturgical character.³ From this point of view, it seems natural to consider in our turn that the evidence we have, including the possible framing into stanzas and the presentation of Pauline additions proposed by Fr. Vasile Mihoc⁴, naturally classify this text in the register of New Testament hymns.

Regarding the author of this text, it is difficult to make a statement considering that both the theory of pre-Pauline origin and the Pauline one are supported by solid arguments. If this hymn comes from the early Church, then several curious contextual aspects are justified, such as the presence of several "hapax legomena", some of which never appear again in the New Testament, the obvious differentiation from the contextual discourse, the absence of certain ideas specific to St. Apostle Paul, etc. The other variant explains other curiosities, such as the author's decision not to make any reference to signal the introduction of a foreign text, as is his custom, or the impressive thematic continuity that this passage has, fitting so well in explaining and highlighting the themes of unity and humility that the author talks about. In conclusion, we lean towards the pre-Pauline origin variant, arguing that the text has obvious poetic features and that there are numerous linguistic differences that are not usual for St. Paul.

Verse 5 is the link between the Christological hymn and the rest of the epistle. The verb "φρονεῖτε", usually translated as "think", refers not just to a mental process, but also involves an attitude or behavior in accordance with the thinking it refers to. It is not a call to an isolated act, to a different fleeting glance, but has broader connotations, including constant concern and respect for the call to which it refers.

The role of the community and the individual in understanding and implementing this way of thinking has a dual aspect: it must be perceived from both a community and individual standpoint. This way of thinking must be realized at an individual level before being expressed in community relations.

The variety of interpretations for the expression "in Christ Jesus" can be reduced to two main approaches. On one hand, the expression could refer to Christ's way of thinking, which believers should adopt. On the other hand, it could refer to the responsibility of the community to behave worthily as people living "in Christ." The entire Christian conduct should be

³ David A. BLACK, „The Authorship of Philippians 2:6-11: Some Literary-Critical Observations”, *Criswell Theological Review*, II, 2 (1988): 269-289.

⁴ Vasile MIHOC, „L’hymne christologique de l’Épître aux Philippiens dans son contexte (Phil 1,27-2,18)”, in Paolo Lunardon (ed.), *Per me il vivere è Cristo (Filippesi 1,1 – 3,21)*, Benedictina, Roma, 2001, p. 102.

motivated by Christ's work of redemption, and believers should draw their strength and example from it. This "thought" is not just a fleeting impulse, but rather a life attitude, reflected in humility and in seeking the good of others.

The meticulous analysis of the Greek term "μορφῆ" in the context of describing Christ's divine nature reveals the complexity and linguistic ambiguity highlighted in the multitude of studies available for this topic. In this paper, we emphasized not only the literary interpretation, but also the philosophical perspective, showing that μορφῆ has connotations that go beyond physical appearance or form. The unique character of this term makes it possible to refer to the very essence or nature of an entity, a deeper meaning approaching the concept of οὐσία or being. This could mean that, when referring to Christ, μορφῆ suggests the sharing of the divine nature, not just a visual. In conclusion, interpreting the term μορφῆ in the context of describing Christ as being "in the form of God" and subsequently "in the form of a servant" is crucial for understanding conceptions about Christ's nature and identity. The sense of this word, as interpreted in the analysis above, presents Christ not merely as a visual manifestation of God or a simple representative of divinity, but as possessing the very being or divine nature. At the same time, His incarnation is presented not merely as an external or symbolic change, but as an authentic assumption of this nature. Therefore, in this sense, interpreting the term μορφῆ provides an extremely valuable perspective on St. Paul's conception of Christ's identity and the mystery of His incarnation.

The analysis of the term "ὑπάρχων" highlights Christ's continuous and uninterrupted form of existence as "being by nature God". This implies not only Christ's pre-existence, but also His eternity. The use of ὑπάρχων instead of the more common Greek verb "εἶμι" (to be), highlights the idea of continuity, rather than just existence per se. This linguistic detail reveals that incarnation does not mean that Christ renounces His divinity or temporarily ceases to be God, but that the Incarnation is presented as the starting point in which His Person receives not only the traits of human nature but humanity in its fullness, becoming a true man and continuing to exist at the same time as true God.

Also in verse 6, there is a term unique in the New Testament writings and extremely rare in Greek literature: ἀπραγμὸν. There are a large number of possible interpretations, making the process of receiving and interpreting the text difficult. St. John Chrysostom shows that in this way it is expressed that Christ, although He was equal to the Father and in all ways like Him, chooses to become a man and to humble Himself for the good of humanity. This perspective contradicts the heretical visions that have crystallized over time, such as those of Arius, who

claimed that Christ is the first creature of God and not equal to the Father. or formal representation of it.

Several directions of interpretation are mentioned in modern literature, without reaching a clear consensus. These include several proposals as follows: 1) Jesus was equal to God before the incarnation 2) He renounced this equality to become a man 3) He obtained equality with God through death and resurrection.

Our conclusions gravitate around the fact that Jesus had a real equality with God before the incarnation and that He saw this equality not as something to be seized or held by force, but as an opportunity to use what is His for the good of humanity. Also, He did not seek to use this status to avoid the incarnation and self-sacrifice, but chose to humble Himself through the incarnation, to become the Mediator between God and men. Hoover's interpretation suggests that Jesus' death was a deliberate act of self-sacrifice, a divine act of self-giving, which revealed the true nature of God's love for humanity. Christ through His sacrifice restored humanity's relationship with God, becoming a worthy model to follow for all of creation.

Christ Himself, the Son of God, empties Himself (self-emptying), taking the form of a servant and becoming like men, thus becoming a man. In other words, Christ, who is one with the Father in divinity, limited the manifestation of divine glory, accepting the boundaries of humanity. Therefore, the Son of God Himself allows Himself to be alienated from His own glory, without losing His divine identity, to get closer to the sufferings and needs of humanity. Christ's self-emptying does not mean losing His divinity or renouncing the divine nature. Through this kenosis, Christ manifests His divinity in a veiled way and chooses to face suffering and death without using His power to restore the relationship with God of human creatures but also to free them from sin.

This vision is important in analyzing the way in which Christ manifested in the world, how He chose to incarnate and live among us. At the same time, it shows us the model that Christ proposes for the lives of all who believe in Him, a model that St. Paul presents through this wonderful hymn: a life of humility, self-renunciation, altruistic love, and devotion to the good of others.

To a large extent, in verse 8 we find a comprehensive explanation of what Christ's humility means and how St. Paul presents it as a model to be followed by the believers in Philippi. We have seen that the reflexive pronoun "He humbled Himself" shows that everything Christ did was a voluntary act, accepted in full authority. There is a great difference between

patiently receiving what you are obliged to receive anyway because you have no possibility to change things, and receiving with patience and love what you could avoid if you wanted to pursue your own interest.

The exaltation is more than a reward for Christ's sacrifice on the cross, it is the crowning of an entire life lived in perfect obedience to God and in the service of others. It is the divine approval of the way Christ lived as a man, demonstrating the profound and intimate relationship between divinity and humanity through

Examining the context and connotations of this name, the text suggests that Jesus is associated with the name "κύριος" in the sense of the equivalent for YHWH and that this is the dignity he receives through exaltation. Being above all names, this name cannot be attributed to a creature, but only to the Creator. Moreover, the name implies universal dominion, an attribute that only belongs to divinity.

The significance of the Father's bestowing of the name to Jesus, and the dignity conferred with it, demonstrates the cooperation between the two natures, where the human nature was elevated to full obedience and submission to God, and the divine nature was lowered or "emptied" to the point where the cooperation between the two reached its highest level.

Without a doubt, the Christological hymn in Philippians remains a substantial text for biblical research and for the teaching of faith concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. In just six verses, this passage manages to encompass vast themes about Christ's work, about His divinity and humanity, and also to offer a special example for all Christian believers.

Interpreting the results of this work, we can deduce that advancements in modern research methodologies provide remarkable opportunities for a deeper understanding of biblical texts, even within the context of established Patristic tradition. In this work, we have tried to integrate elements from the contemporary study toolkit in order to highlight Patristic interpretations and Eastern biblical research of Christ.

In the specific case of the passage from Philippians 2:5-11, we support the idea that the pericope can be interpreted as a Christological hymn. Although there are arguments against this thesis, the plausibility and coherence of the arguments in its favor lead us to subscribe in this direction.