THE PROBLEM OF PRE-EXISTENCE
IN PHILIPPIANS 2 6–11

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FROM the ancient church to modern times there have existed two different interpretations of Phil 2 6–11. One sees the passage as making reference in vss. 6–8 only to the human existence of Jesus. The other regards vss. 6–8 as referring both to Jesus’ pre-existence and to his earthly life. In spite of its obvious difficulties, it is the latter view which dominates modern exegesis. R. H. Fuller summarizes the consensus today when he says: “The attempts which have been made to eliminate pre-existence entirely from this passage . . . must be pronounced a failure. . . .” Is such confidence justified, however? The purpose of this paper will be to test the accepted exegesis of this passage, using as a criterion the principle: a proper delineation of form leads to a correct interpretation of meaning. Such a criterion seems especially appropriate in this case since we are dealing with hymnic material.


2 The obvious difficulties of any interpretation which sees pre-existence referred to in the hymn include: (1) Incarnation is here regarded as kenosis rather than as epiphany as in most other early Christian hymns (cf. John 1 1–18; I Tim 3 16); (2) only here in early Christianity would there be a reference to a pre-existent reflection and decision of Christ; (3) the exegete is virtually committed to an interpretation of “emptied himself” as the giving up the form of God (divinity) for the form of a servant (humanity); (4) only with difficulty can the conclusion be avoided that exaltation as Lord is a higher state than being in the form of God (divinity). To read the hymn as referring to the human existence of Jesus rather than to his pre-existence, however, enables one to avoid these problems.


The Form of Phil 2:6-11 in Modern Research

In modern research two different structural schemes compete with each other for scholarly allegiance. They are associated with the names of Lohmeyer and Jeremías. Lohmeyer sees the hymn as falling into six strophes of three lines each.  

(1) Ὅσε ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων ὁχ ἄρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῷ

(2) ἄλλα ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος

(3) καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεῖς ὡς ἀνθρώπος ἑτατὲν ὑπάρχον γενόμενος ὑπῆκοος μέχρι θανάτου.

(4) διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάν ὄνομα

(5) ἵνα ἐν τῷ ἄνθρωπῳ Ἰησοῦ πάν γόνι κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγέλων καὶ καταχθόνιων

(6) καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃ τῷ κύριῳ Ἰησοῦς Χριστῷ εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

Though it has found acceptance in many places, this delineation of the form of the hymn has come under the criticism of Jeremías.

Jeremías' criticisms are basically two. First, and most important, he shows that Lohmeyer's structure fails to follow the inner parallelisms

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the passage and call it a hymn was Arthur S. Way in the first edition of his translation of the epistles (1901). Since Lohmeyer (1928), the passage has been generally taken as a non-Pauline hymn. Whether it is pre-Pauline or not is a matter of dispute. F. W. Beare, for example, argues that it is the work of a disciple of Paul (The Epistle to the Philippians, p. 30).

5 E. Lohmeyer, Der Brief an die Philipp, pp. 90 ff. Lohmeyer's criteria (p. 90) are the placement of the particles and the verbs. He regards the phrase "even death on a cross" as a Pauline addition.

6 A. M. Hunter, Paul and His Predecessors (rev. ed.), p. 123, says: "... his analysis of the hymn into six stanzas of three lines each seems to most scholars better than Jeremías' division of it into three stanzas of four lines."

of the hymn. Though Lohmeyer preserves in his arrangement the parallel between ὁ θεός αὐτόν υπερήψωσεν and ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα (vs. 9), he overlooks the parallel between γόνιν κάμψῃ (vs. 10) and γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσῃ (vs. 11), placing them instead in different strophes (5 and 6) and in different lines in their respective strophes (line 2 in strophe 5; line 1 in strophe 6). He also disregards the parallelism between ἐν ὅμοιόματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος (vs. 7) and σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος (vs. 7), placing them also in different strophes (2 and 3) and in different lines in their respective strophes (line 3 in strophe 2; line 1 in strophe 3). Second, Jeremías points out that Lohmeyer's structural scheme leaves all but strophes three and six dangling. The ends of strophes do not correspond to periods.

Using the inner parallelisms as the key to his scheme, Jeremías offers a suggested structure of three strophes with four lines each, each of which is a complete thought.8

(1) Ὁς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἤγησατο τὸ εἴναι ἵσα θεῷ
ἄλλα ἐαυτόν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβών.

(2) ἐν ὅμοιόματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπέκκος μέχρι θανάτου.

(3) διὸ καὶ ὁ θεός αὐτὸν υπερήψωσεν
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπέρ πάν ὄνομα
ἐν ἓν τῷ ὅμοιόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνιν κάμψῃ
καὶ πᾶσα γλώσσα ἐξομολογήσῃ ὃτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς.

This structural scheme has found acceptance among a number of scholars because it does less violence to the crucial inner parallelisms of the hymn.9

The problem with this formal analysis, however, is that, in order to arrive at this result, Jeremías is forced to excise not only θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (vs. 8), but also ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθόνων (vs. 10) and εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς (vs. 11). The first excision is generally accepted as legitimate on the grounds that it disrupts the structure and contains the characteristically Pauline term σταυρός. The


9 James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 50, who also in n. 3 indicates its acceptance by O. Michel and L. Cerfaux. Cerfaux (op. cit., p. 426), however, does not accept the three excisions of Jeremías. He then has three strophes with four, five, and six lines. Cf. also L. D. Strecker, op. cit., p. 57.
other two excisions, however, must be rejected. Both are non-Pauline expressions. If they are left in the hymn, however, Jeremias' third strophe is an impossibility.

The failure of both modern attempts to deal adequately with the form of this hymn raises the question anew. Is it possible, beginning with Jeremias' correct observation that the hymn is built around various inner parallelisms in strophes, each of which forms a complete thought, to discern a structure that will avoid his excisions in vss. 9–11? It will be the purpose of the following paragraphs of this paper to show that such a formal analysis is possible.

_A Proposal on the Form and Meaning of Phil 2 6–11_

The place to begin our investigation of the form of Phil 2 6–11 is with the obvious parallelism between ὑπερψωσεν and ἐχαρίσατο in vs. 9 which has been recognized by both Lohmeyer and Jeremias. If we build around this parallelism and require the strophe to be a complete thought, we come out with a three-line strophe, the third line of which is a short or half line. The boundaries of the strophe are marked out by the conjunction διό which joins the two halves of the hymn and the conjunction ἵνα which joins the two sections of the last half of the hymn.

\[
καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερψωσεν
\]
\[
καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
\]
\[
τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα
\]

The repetition of καὶ (lines 1 and 2), αὐτὸν–αὐτῷ (lines 1 and 2), ὑπὲρ (lines 1 and 3), and ὄνομα (lines 2 and 3) reinforces our conclusion drawn on the basis of parallelism and completeness of thought.

Next we may consider the clear parallelism between γόνυ καμφῆ (vs. 10) and γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται (vs. 11). Again if we build around

10 Hunter, _op. cit._, p. 123, speaks of Jeremias' excisions as "a Procrustean procedure unlikely to commend itself to many."

11 G. Strecker, "Redaktion und Tradition im Christushymnus, Phil. 2:6–11," _ZNW_, 55 (1964), pp. 63–78, offers a new structure for the hymn based upon the excision of vs. 8 as a Pauline addition. He then has two strophes, 6–7 and 9–11, each with six lines divided into couplets of twos. This proposal has been received favorably by A. Feuillet, "L'hymne christologique de l'Épître aux Philippiens (2:6–11)," _RB_, 72 (1965), p. 503. Strecker's proposal, however, raises more problems than it solves: (1) it breaks the parallelism between γόνυ καμψη and γλῶσσα ἐξομολογῆσῃται; (2) it breaks the unity of ὄν and ἄλλα in vss. 6–7; (3) it destroys the parallelism between εαυτὸν ἐκκατωσεν and ἑταπειλονετες εαυτὸν; (4) his couplets are not complete thoughts, and only with difficulty can his first strophe be considered other than an awkward sentence. Linguistic argument in such a matter can only be one strand of evidence. It cannot stand alone apart from formal considerations.
this parallelism and require the strophe to be a complete thought, we come out with a three-line strophe, this time with a short or half line beginning it.

\[Ινά ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ
πᾶν γεννήματι ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθόνιων
καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς.\]

Note that κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς is needed in the third line to complete its thought just as ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθόνιων is needed in line 2 to complete its thought. The repetition of πᾶν and πᾶσα in lines 2 and 3 and the use of ὄνοματι Ἰησοῦ in the first line and the actual name κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς in line 3 confirm our conclusions drawn on other grounds. It is also interesting to note that the short line is placed first in this strophe for two reasons. First, by placing it first it is possible to have the strophe end with a concluding liturgical phrase: εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός (vs. 11).\(^\text{12}\) Second, it allows the two strophes to be related to one another in terms of form and key words by a type of chiasmus (aa bb cc). Not only are the two short lines placed next to one another but also they are linked by the repetition of the term ὄνομα. This means that the hymn's individual strophes are not only built around parallelism but also that the strophes are related to one another by the same type of literary device.

Having seen how vss. 9–11 are constructed around inner parallelisms, we may now turn our attention to vss. 6–8. Let us begin our investigation of this part of the hymn with the parallelism between ὀμοιώματι (vs. 7) and σχήματι (vs. 7). If again we build around this parallelism and require that the strophe be a complete thought, we find another three-line strophe with a short line as the last.

\[ἐν ὀμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθέντας ὡς ἀνθρώπος ἐκταπελεύσας ἑαυτὸν
γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου.\]

Whereas the inner parallelisms of the last two strophes were synonymous parallelism, here we find a stairlike parallelism. Line 2 repeats line 1 and then carries it a step further. Here again we find key words tying the strophe together. Here they are ἀνθρώπος and γενόμενος. This again confirms our conclusions reached on other grounds.

The apparent difficulty over the length of the second line is not prohibitive because (1) such formulae sometimes do have long lines followed by short lines (I Cor 15 3–5); (2) the last strophe in the hymn has one line that is as long and one that is longer than that of strophe two; (3) the other two structural schemes do not have lines of equal length; (4) if all the strophes are to have an equal number of lines, then the strophe built around the parallelism υπέρψωσεν and ἐχάρισατο can be made into no more than a three-line strophe.

Our analysis to this point leaves us with another strophe built around the antithetical parallelism μορφη θεοῦ and μορφήν δούλου which falls naturally into three lines, the last of which is a short line.

\[ \text{ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ υπάρχων} \]
\[ \text{oὐχ ἄρταγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῷ ἄλλα ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν} \]
\[ \text{μορφήν δούλου λαβών.} \]

Again the repetition of the key terms, this time μορφή and θεός, reinforces our conclusion. The contrast oὐχ-ἄλλα guarantees that line 2 is one unit.

The result of this analysis of the formal structure of the hymn made upon the basis of the criteria of respect for the inner parallelisms of the passage and having strophes that are complete thoughts, and reinforced by the repetition of key terms, looks like this:


14 That the parallelism is antithetic is indicated by the contrasts between υπάρχων and λαβών, θεοῦ and δούλου, oὐχ and ἄλλα. In spite of the common μορφή, then, the two parts of the strophe are antithetical in an ab ba pattern. This antithetical parallelism, however, does not settle the meaning of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ υπάρχων and μορφῆν δούλου λαβών. At least two possibilities exist. (1) μορφῆ θεοῦ may refer to pre-existence and μορφῆν δούλου to incarnation. (2) μορφή θεοῦ may refer to the image of God (i.e., like Adam, possessing the rôle of ruler over creation) and μορφῆν δούλου to the likeness of a servant (i.e., like the servant, accepting the rôle of submission to God the Creator). Neither the language itself nor the inner structure of this strophe, nor the two taken together, can decide between the two possibilities. This must be decided by the relation of this strophe to the rest of the hymn, especially strophe 2. See below for a discussion of this relation.

15 Cf. Rom 12 19a; 12 31; Col 3 22b; I Thess 5 15.

16 With the majority of scholars we regard the phrase “even death on a cross” as a Pauline addition.
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(1) Ὅσ ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμον ἤγησατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῷ ἄλλα ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν.

(2) ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος καὶ σχήματι εἰρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρωπός ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπῆκοος μέχρι θανάτου.

(3) διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερήφανον καὶ ἐχαρίσατο τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα

(4) ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι ᾽Ησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἑπιγείων καὶ καταχθόνιων καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται τῷ κύριοι ᾽Ησοῦς Χριστός εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός.

A reader of the hymn would be given his clue to understand its structure by the immediate contrast between μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου which tie the first strophe together and the subsequent ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων which echoes ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ. Immediately the reader would sense that he was in the presence of parallelisms of one kind or another. This would furnish the key by which the hymn could be interpreted.

One aspect of our analysis of the formal structure of the hymn remains incomplete. Earlier we showed that not only were the individual strophes of the hymn built around various parallelisms but also the last two strophes were related to one another in the same way, that is, by inverted parallelism or chiasmus. This raises the question about the relation between the first two strophes. Read in terms of the hymn set forth here, the parallelism between the first two strophes leaps out at the reader. The first lines of each strophe begin with the same preposition (ἐν). The objects of the prepositions are terms that could be read as synonyms.17 The verbal forms of the first lines are both participles and could also be taken as synonyms.18 The ends of the second lines are also parallel. Not only are the phrases located at the same place in each strophe but also the meanings of the two phrases are very close. Both convey the idea of subordination. Each phrase, moreover, is followed by a third line which further explains the meaning of the phrase.

17 In the LXX μορφῇ and ὁμοίωμα can both translate the Hebrew יְשׁוּפָה (cf. Job 4 16; Deut 4 12). Also, where the LXX has ὁμοίωμα in Deut 4 12, Symmachus has μορφὴν (Lohmeyer, op. cit., p. 91, n. 5).

18 The verb ὑπάρχω can be used in hellenistic Greek as a synonym for εἶμι (Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 845); also, γίνομαι may be used as a substitute for the forms of εἶμι (Lexicon, p. 159).
at the end of the second line.\textsuperscript{19} It would seem, then, that strophes 1 and 2 are related to one another by means of a simple formal parallelism just as the last two strophes are related in a chiastic way. That these first two strophes are related formally in this way raises the question of how they are related in terms of their meaning. In order to determine this, two lines of argument must be considered.

In the first place, the simple parallelism which we have seen between the first two strophes is a parallelism between the two first lines (έν μορφή θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and έν ὄμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος), between the ends of the second lines (εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν and ἔταπείνωσεν έαυτόν) and the short third lines (μορφὴν δούλου λαβῶν and γενόμενος υπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου). Such a parallelism is significant because it breaks any close link between εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, μορφὴν δούλου λαβῶν and έν ὄμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος. In terms of the proposed structure, such a link is absolutely impossible. The phrase έν ὄμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος is parallel to έν μορφή θεοῦ ὑπάρχων. It is not an explanation of εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, μορφὴν δούλου λαβῶν. That the parallelism between the first two strophes breaks the link between μορφὴν δούλου λαβῶν and έν ὄμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος is significant because it has been this link that has formed the crucial point in any argument for the pre-existence of Christ in this hymn.\textsuperscript{20} Without this link, all necessity to interpret the passage in mythological terms is abolished.\textsuperscript{21}

In the second place, in the last half of the hymn (vss. 9–11), the reader is given explicit guidance regarding the relation of the third and the fourth strophes. The conjunction ἵνα indicates that the hymn intends its readers to understand the exaltation as having the purpose of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing. A conjunction διό is also present to indicate the relationship between the two halves of the hymn. With regard to the first two strophes, however, there is no conjunction to indicate their intended relationship. Since the hymn

\textsuperscript{19} M. R. Vincent, \textit{Philippians and to Philemon}, \textit{ICC}, pp. 59–60; F. W. Beare, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 82, 84.

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. the remarks of J. B. Lightfoot, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 132, and those of J. H. Michael, \textit{The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians}, pp. 83–84. The argument for pre-existence certainly cannot be based upon the language since this is ambiguous and may be taken in different ways. The clue as to how the language should be understood is furnished by the structure of the hymn. After this article was finished, I was pleased to find this very point made by Lewis S. Mudge, "The Servant Christology in the New Testament," Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1961, pp. 301 ff.

\textsuperscript{21} L. D. Strecker, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 57, observes that Lohmeyer's arrangement of the hymn leads the interpreter to see a reference to pre-existence, but Jeremías' arrangement removes the need for a mythological interpretation entirely. Taking Jeremías' strophes individually, this is true. When they are taken together in sequence they may be read in terms of pre-existence, though with difficulty.
does supply assistance to the reader in the form of conjunctions in the
two other instances where such assistance would be required, the absence
of such a term between strophes 1 and 2 must surely be meaningful.
The relation between the first two strophes must be regarded by the
hymn writer as sufficiently indicated by the formal parallelism between
them. The most natural way for a reader to take this formal parallelism
between the first two strophes, moreover, would be to regard them as
parallel statements about the same reality.

That the most natural way of reading the first two strophes would
at the same time be a real possibility in the NT period is seen from a
comparison with other units of tradition found in the epistles which are
organized around such a formal parallelism. Rom 4 25 is a good example.
The balanced couplet reads:
δς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν
καὶ ἡγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν.
The parallel structure is a clue to its meaning. The fragment does not
intend to split apart the saving effects of Jesus' death and resurrection.
Rather the two lines of the couplet are to be regarded as virtually
synonymous.22

In such units of tradition when the meanings of the parallel lines
are not synonymous, usually the language is clear and explicit so that
the contrasting meanings are apparent to the reader (e. g., Rom 1 3-4;
Col 1 15-20). In Phil 2 6-11, however, the language does not clearly
and explicitly reveal a contrast in the meanings of strophes 1 and 2.
Indeed, the very similarity of language in these two strophes inclines
the reader to take them as parallel not only in form but also in meaning.

An examination of the language of the first two strophes in Phil 2 6-8
in light of our initial impression that the two strophes are parallel state­
ments about the same reality must now be made. Since the short third
lines of the first two strophes are explanations of the statements at the
ends of the second lines, the crucial phrases are the first lines and those
at the ends of the second lines. We may begin with an examination of
the language in the first two lines.

The first line of the second strophe reads: ἐν ὅμοιωματι ἄνθρωπων
γενόμενος. How should this language be understood? It has been
noted that wherever Christ is designated ἄνθρωπος in Paul's letters
(Rom 5 12 f.; I Cor 15 20-49; Phil 2 7b-8), a contrast with Adam is in­
tended.23 It is certainly the case in Rom 5 and I Cor 15. Phil 2 6-11,

22 C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 100; cf. also Rom 3 25–26; II Tim
2 11b-12a.
23 Beare, op. cit., p. 84; Fuller, op. cit., p. 236, n. 19. Both men are ultimately
however, is a non-Pauline hymn. Should it be interpreted in the same way as Rom 5 and I Cor 15? Two observations about Rom 5 12 f. incline us to view ἄνθρωπος used of Jesus in Phil 2 as another indication of the Adam/Christ typology. First, in Romans Paul is writing to a church which is independent of his influence. Throughout Romans the apostle takes pains to speak in terms of tradition which they have in common (1 3-4; 4 25; 6 8 ff.; 8 28-30, for example). In 5 12 f. there is no indication that the Adam/Christ parallel was new to the Romans. Also, Mark 1 13 shows that the church at Rome knew such a typology.

Since the Gospel of Mark is not a Pauline document, this Adam/Christ typology must have been wider than the Pauline circle. Indeed, in hellenistic churches which used the LXX, such a reference to Jesus as second Adam would naturally have been made with the term ἄνθρωπος. Second, Rom 5 19 may possibly contain an echo of Isa 53 11 from the Hebrew text. This would point to the traditional character of the reference since Paul used the LXX. Since 5 19 is a unit, the reference to Isaiah which is traditional would have been made in the context of a contrast between the one man Adam and the one man Christ. In this case, the use of ἄνθρωπος in an Adam/Christ typology is clearly pre-Pauline. In the light of these two considerations, it seems entirely legitimate to see here in Phil 2 7b–8 the contrast between Adam and Christ indicated by the use of ἄνθρωπος for Christ.

Note, however, that the phrase does not say that Christ, like Adam, was in God’s image. Rather it says that Christ was ἐν ομοιώματι ἄνθρωπων. This can be understood in terms of the Adam/Christ parallel, however, if we reflect upon Gen 5 1-3. In the LXX the passage is understood in this sense, as vs. 2 shows: έρσεν καὶ θήλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, καὶ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς. καὶ ἐπωνυμάσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν Άδαμ, ἤ ἡμέρα ἐποίησεν αὐτούς. Then the passage says that Adam had a son, Seth, who was “in his own likeness” (_forms), “after his image” (_forms). Thus, the passage tells of one who is a son of Adam (plural) and is in his likeness. Though the LXX of Gen 5 19 translates θεούμα by κατέ εἰκόνα and 5 3 translates ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ by κατά τὴν εἴδεαν αὐτοῦ, that ἐν ομοιώματι ἄνθρωπων is a perfectly legitimate translation of θεούμα in Gen 5 3 may be seen from passages like II Kings 16 10 where the LXX renders ἄρσεν by τὸ θεούμα and II Chron 4 3 where ἄρσεν is rendered by καὶ

26 All references to the LXX come from H. B. Swete, The Old Testament in Greek.
27 The LXX translates ημέρας by κατά θεούμα in Gen 1 26.
It seems probable, therefore, that the phrase ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος is a part of the Adam/Christ typology and is intended to speak of Christ as son of Adam.

The first line of the first strophe reads: ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ υπάρχων. Since the phrase is formally parallel to ἐν ὁμοίωματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, the most natural reading of the phrase would be to take it also, if possible, as a part of the Adam/Christ typology. Is such a reading of the phrase possible? Three strands of evidence indicate that it is.

(1) μορφή in the LXX is virtually a synonym for ὁμοίωμα since the LXX translators use them both to translate ἴκνος, ἰκνόν, and ἰκνομά. Also, where the LXX has ὁμοίωμα in Deut 4:12, Symmachus has μορφήν. (2) καὶ η μορφή is used in Dan 3:19 to translate the Aramaic ἓν. While elsewhere ὁμοίωμα is used to translate the Hebrew מֵאֲשֵׁר. (3) The Peshitta renders μορφή by “demoutha.” Moreover, the connection of μορφή θεοῦ with the expression οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγέρατο τὸ εἶναι ἵσα θεῷ, which almost certainly echoes Gen 3:4, indicates that an Adam/Christ parallel is intended. It seems probable, therefore, that the phrase ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ υπάρχων is also part of the Adam/Christ typology and is intended to speak of Christ as the second Adam who has reversed the decision of the first Adam.

The first lines of strophes 1 and 2 are both to be interpreted in terms of an Adam/Christ contrast. The two lines say that Christ is both the second Adam and son of Adam. The LXX of Gen 5:1-3 certainly seems to have understood the creation of Adam in God’s image as parallel to the birth of Seth in Adam’s image. Witness the structure:

ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός τὸν Ἀδὰμ κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ . . . .
ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν Ἀδὰμ . . . .
(Ἀδὰμ) ἐγέννησεν κατὰ τὴν εἶδεαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ . . . .
ἐπωνόμασεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Σήθ.

Moreover, early Christianity knew traditions which regarded Jesus as second Adam (Rom 5:12 f.; Mark 1:18; Luke 4:1 f.) and traditions

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28 See also Isa 40:18; Ezek 1:5, 56; 21 (LXX). According to Hatch and Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint, II, p. 993, Aquila uses ὁμοίωμα in Gen 5:1.

29 μορφή renders ἰκνόν in Judg 8:18 (A); ἵσα in Isa 44:13; ἴκνομά in Job 4:16; ὁμοίωμα renders ἰκνόν in Judg 8:18 (B); ἰκνόν in Deut 4:17, 18; ἰκνόμα in Deut 4:12, 15, 16.

30 See n. 17.

31 I Sam 6:5.

32 Hunter, op. cit., p. 43, n. 1.

33 Hunter, op. cit., p. 123; Cullmann, op. cit., pp. 177 f. In the LXX ἴκνος stands for ἰκνόν (e.g., Job 5:14; 10:10). Though the LXX of Gen 3:8 reads ὡς θεοῦ, the Hebrew text reads ὡς λαχάν for the temptation of Eve and Adam in the garden.

which regarded Jesus as son of Adam (Luke 3:23 ff.). That the two different views are found side by side in Luke indicates that the early Christians saw no conflict between them. It would seem, therefore, that there can be little doubt that the first two lines are paralleled in meaning as they are in form. But what of the ends of the second lines? Can the same be said for them?

The end of the second line of the first strophe reads: εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν. This phrase, attested nowhere else in Greek, is grammatically harsh. It is explicable, however, if understood as an exact rendering of the Hebrew “poured out his nephesh” (נפשภาพ...נפש) in Isa 53:12. If so, then the phrase refers to the servant’s surrender of life. It is significant that this phrase (εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν) is explained by the short third line, μορφὴν δούλου λαβών. Since δοῦλος and παῖς are both used in the LXX to render the מנו of Deutero-Isaiah,37 since δουλεύειν is found in the LXX at Isa 53:11, and since Aquila reads ὁ δοῦλος instead of ὁ παῖς at Isa 52:10,38 δοῦλος is fitting in this explanatory phrase.39 That the early church elsewhere in the sources available to us used παῖς and νεός is not, therefore, decisive. The phrase “he emptied himself” is, thus, most probably a reference to Jesus as the servant who surrendered his life to God.

Strophe 2 has a second line which ends: ἐταπείνωσεν εαυτόν. Since this phrase is formally parallel to εαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν of strophe 1, the most natural way to read the phrase would be to see in it also a reference to the servant’s surrender of life. Is such a reading of the phrase possible? Several facts show that it is. In the LXX ταπεινὸς is used for מְנַהֵל, moreover, which is used in Isa 53:7 with just such a meaning. “He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself.”41 This is the meaning of the Hebrew, though the LXX reads

35 Jeremías, Servant of God, p. 97.
39 The only justification for the contention of Kaesemann, op. cit., pp. 342 ff. (followed by Bornkamm, Beare, and Fuller), that δοῦλος is to be understood in the sense of becoming subject to the cosmic powers is his acceptance of Lohmeyer’s structure. Once this structure is rejected, Kaesemann’s interpretation of δοῦλος must be also.
40 For example, Exod 10:3 (Brown-Driver-Briggs, Lexicon, p. 776).
41 J. Skinner, Isaiah XL–LXVI, p. 142. Only in this passage is there the meaning “he humbled himself.”
differently. Again it refers to the surrender of the servant's life to God. These facts indicate that έταπείνωσεν εαυτόν can most certainly be read as parallel to εαυτόν έκενωσεν in meaning as well as in form. Also, ταπεινώω is used in early Christianity of Jesus in connection with Isa 53 1-12 as an illustration of his attitude (I Clem 16 2, 17, a passage which is almost certainly independent of Phil 2). This makes it likely that έταπείνωσεν, just as έκενωσεν, is an echo of the servant of Second Isaiah. Both phrases, "he emptied himself" and "he humbled himself," are, therefore, to be read against the background of Isa 53. Both refer to the servant's surrender of life. In this regard, it is significant that the short third line of strophe 2 reads: γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου. The two phrases are, therefore, synonymous in meaning as they are parallel in structure.

It would seem that the formal parallelism between the first two strophes is the clue to their meaning. Indeed, any interpretation which takes them as other than parallel in meaning as well as form flies in the face of all the clues furnished the reader by the author of the hymn and takes the less probable for the more probable explanation of the language. Parallel structure points to parallel meanings. That the parallelism between the first two strophes is intended to point to a common meaning is significant because there is no question that strophe 2 speaks of the human existence of Jesus. This would mean that strophe 1 also would be a statement not about the pre-existence of Jesus but about his earthly life. Strophe 1 says that Jesus, unlike Adam, did not grasp for equality with God but rather surrendered his life to God. Strophe 2 says that Jesus as a son of Adam surrendered his life to God. Both are concerned with the decision of Jesus to be God's servant rather than to repeat the tragedy of Adam and his sons.

In conclusion, it may be said that the modern confidence in an interpretation of Phil 2 6-11 which sees there the pre-existence of Jesus followed by his incarnation and subsequent exaltation does not stand up under the test: a proper delineation of form leads to a correct interpretation of meaning. Analysis of the form of the hymn yields the conclusion that it means to speak only of the human existence of Jesus.

*Lohmeyer, op. cit., p. 94, n. 1.*
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