

## THE PAULINE BACKGROUND OF THE CHRISTOLOGICAL HYMN IN THE EPISTLE TO PHILIPPIANS 2: 6-11. AN INTERROGATION OF THE PATERNITY AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** This research tries to explore an insufficient area of romanian biblical studies, and also to offer pertinent solutions. The question of christological hymn paternity it's inadequately treated, that's why I started this original research. First I interrogated the most highlighting theories of modern scholars (a pre-pauline composition; an adamic christology; hymn inspired by the Servant of the Lord; an midrash technique; a subsequent composition introduced within the epistle), then I elaborated my own pro-pauline argumentation. Another challenge was the construct of an accurate translation of the hymn, forced by ours precarious translating tradition, that occurs many fallacies synonyms.

**Key-words:** paternity, pseudoepigraphy, interpolations, modern theories, translating errors.

### Preliminaries

This consecrated Christological hymn (2:6-11) is part of the category of "doctrinary-didactical-liturgical hymns" (*Ephesians 5:14; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Titus 3:4-7; Revelation 22:17*) and many of the ground teachings of the primary Christianity are comprised within the corpus of these hymns<sup>2</sup>. It is an early Christological hymn addressed to the Philippians, although some researchers

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<sup>2</sup> M. Alferd Bichsel, "Hymns, Early Christian", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman (ed.), 3, Doubleday, New York/London, 1992, p. 350.

doubt this<sup>3</sup>, insisting on the fact that the style of these six verses (6-11) is completely different both from the preceding verses and the following ones. Certainly, this hymn may be considered the nucleus of the other early Christian hymns, inoculating several key theological perspectives<sup>4</sup>: the pre-existence of Christ; embodiment and Crucifixion; Resurrection and He's irradiance as transforming efficiency in the world<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, some still doubt his integrity<sup>6</sup>, without a solid basis, considering it to be a citation by Saint Apostle Paul from an previous epistle<sup>7</sup>.

The purpose of this Pauline hymnographic creation is to awake in the hearts of the Philippians humbleness and condescension, by offering the unique and true paradigm: Christ's humbleness<sup>8</sup>. Recent interpretations have taken into discussion the problem of μορφῆ θεοῦ from verse 6a, researchers wondering whether one may speak here of Christ's pre-existence. Though other problems have not been completely solved yet, most of the scholars agree upon the fact that μορφῆ cannot be used with a philosophical meaning as: "form, being", except for G. Fee<sup>9</sup>,

<sup>3</sup> Gordon D. Fee, "Philippians 2:5-11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?" in *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, (1992), 2, p. 30: "My concern in this brief paper is a modest one: primarily I want to call into question the whole matter of the passage as a hymn, which, despite most scholarship to the contrary, it almost certainly is not..."

<sup>4</sup> W.J. Porter, "Creeds and Hymns" in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig A. Evans, Stanley E. Porter (eds.), InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2000, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 2, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, <sup>2</sup>1997, pp. 171-189.

<sup>6</sup> For example, theologian Ernst, based on an inventory of the words *hapax legomenon* found throughout the hymn (ἐν μορφῆ θεοῦ; τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ; δούλου; ἐκένωσεν etc.) comes to the conclusion that these do not subscribe to the Pauline preaching and thus the hymn does not belong to Saint Apostle Paul. See Josef Ernst, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser*, coll. *Regensburger Neues Testament*, Otto Kuss (Hrsg.), Verlag Friedrich Pustet, Regensburger, <sup>6</sup>1974, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi. Philippians II. 5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, coll. *Society for new Testament Studies Monograph Series 4*, Matthew Black (ed.), Cambridge university Press, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 42-43: "Now it is obvious, irrespective of the reason which may be given for the fact, that the verses 5-11 clearly interrupt the flow of the hortatory theme, and this points to the conclusion that the section has been inserted at this juncture as a citation by the Apostle of what would seem to him to be the appropriate quotation to support to support his admonition to the Philippian Christians".

<sup>8</sup> John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary. New Testament*, vol. 2, Victor Books, Dallas, 1983, p. 653.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, coll. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Ned B. Stonehouse), F.F. Bruce, Gordon D. Fee eds.), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p. 204: "We encounter difficulties with respect to the manner in which Saint Paul has understood this word, and by translating it into English we do not have a proper correspondent. *Morphē* was probably the most suitable term to underline both the reality of the divinity (*being in very nature God*) and the metaphorical reality (*taking the very nature of a servant*); the term suggest the idea of *form, nature* not in the meaning of an external reality as they are sometimes recognized, but those characteristics and qualities which are intrinsically essential. Here, he takes note of what really characterizes a **given reality**".

P. O'Brian<sup>10</sup> and Hawthorne who declare: “μορφῆ θεοῦ is the essential nature and character of God”<sup>11</sup>. Although there are still discussions whether μορφῆ (“form, nature”) may have a syntactic basis in εἰκὼν (“image, icon”), respectively δόξα (“glory”), J. Dunn considers that this hymn is a manner of describing the character of Christ's service without referring to His eternal existence or to His equal nature<sup>12</sup> with God the Father. Bornkamm also thinks that verses 6-8 refer only to Christ's historical existence<sup>13</sup>, but we will detail on these theories in the following sections.

A new perspective regarding the background of our hymn is presented by R. Martin<sup>14</sup>, who proposes the image of the servant of YHWH from Isaiah

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<sup>10</sup> Peter T. O'Brian, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A commentary on the Greek Text, coll. The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, (I. Howard Marshall, W. Ward Gasque eds.), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991, p. 210 -2011: “In conclusion, *morphē* refers to the form which expresses most profoundly and truly the being which it represents... The expression does not refer simply to an external appearance, **but it suggests Christ's preexistence**... He was into God's nature sharing the same glory. *En morphē Theou* corresponds to *John 17:5* (with the glory I had with You before the world begun) and reminds us of *Hebrews 1:3* (is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being)”.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ. Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1997, p. xix. Haberman, for example, states that one cannot talk about pre-existence or Embodiment within the hymn, and O'Connor showing skepticism regarding the matter of pre-existence, tries to comment the hymn from the point of view of *sophia*, wisdom, although other scholars doubt this theory. See J. Habermann, “Präexistenzaussagen im Neuen Testament” in *Europäische Hochschulschriften*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris, 1990, pp. 149-156; Jerome Murphy O'Conner, “Christological Anthropology in Phil. II, 6-11” in *Revue Biblique*, LXXXIII (1976), pp. 25-50; George E. Howard, “Phil 2:6-11 and the Human Christ” in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XI (1978), pp. 369-372; C.A. Wanamaker, “Philippians 2:6-11: Son of God or Adamic Christology”, in *New Testament Studies*, XXXIII (1987), p. 182; John Paul Heil, *Philippians: Let Us Rejoice in Being Conformed to Christ*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, 2010, p. 87: “In the period prior to His Incarnation, Christ was in the nature (*morphē*) of God, which means from the point of view of the existence, that Christ was identified or characterized as being God (2, 6a)... He considered (*hēgēsato*) His equality with God (2, 6b) as part of His divine nature”.

<sup>12</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996, p. 114: “The common opinion according to which, Philippians 2:6-11 starts by speaking of Christ's pre-existence and then of His Incarnation, is in all cases rather a presupposition than a conclusion, a presupposition that proves once again to be crucial in establishing how you must interpret certain terms of the hymn”.

<sup>13</sup> Günther Bornkamm, *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum Gesammelte Aufsätze*, band 2, coll. *Beiträge zur evangelischen rausgegeben*), Chr. Kaiser Verlag, München, 1959, p. 179.

<sup>14</sup> R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi. Philippians II. 5-11...*, p. 51.

45<sup>15</sup> as an prototype of Christ in the Pauline hymn, and many other theologians recognize the verbal similarities and the connections in terms of ideas between *Isaiah 53* and *Philippians 2:5-11*, which are too obvious to be avoided. And this perspective leads to the following conclusion: Christology based on “God’s servant” is encountered only in Acts and 1 Peter, thus there is no trace of Pauline mark in the hymn, that is why J. Geiselman<sup>16</sup> and V. Taylor<sup>17</sup> doubt about the Pauline paternity of the hymn, for it may be a subsequent development of the ulterior Christological circles in which the Pauline influence was not that great or it wasn’t present at all. Besides these main exegetical directions (God’s servant from *Isaiah*; the sufferance of the rightful; the problem of *sophia*; a comparison Adam/Christ) that we have mentioned above, some scholars speak about the presence of the Jewish exegetical technique called “midrash” in the making of the hymn<sup>18</sup>. But this perspective is not very well supported, since besides *Isaiah 45:23*, there are no other references in the Old Testament<sup>19</sup>, and the efforts to render the connections between *morphē* and *doulos* from *Philippians* with the vocabulary of the Septuagint, are almost obsolete. To conclude, it is hard to draw a unanimous opinion from the perspective of the modern biblical research regarding the background of the Christological hymn.

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<sup>15</sup> It is obvious the fact that the Christological hymn is inspired by the image from *Isaiah 45:23, vv. 10-11* speak about kneeling before Jesus, and of the fact every tongue will confess Him; this perspective represents the clearest direction of monotheism in the entire Old Testament. The name “God” which *Isaiah 45* gives only to God Himself is now shifted on a Christological direction, Jesus is Lord and true God. The same thing may be said regarding the use of the name of Christ within the hymn. See J.H. Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects” in *The Messiah*, J.H. Charlesworth (ed.) Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1987, pp. 21-22. Probably the *Philippians* listened to Saint Paul many times, in a doxological context, using the text from *Isaiah 45:23*. See Klaus Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh, 1972, pp. 134-135.

<sup>16</sup> Josef R. Geiselman, *Jesus der Christus*, Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stuttgart, 1951, p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in the New Testament Teaching*, Macmillan & Company, London, 1958, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Takeshi Nagata, *Philippians 2:5-11: A Case Study in the Contextual Shaping of Early Christology*, (PhD. Thesis presented at the Princeton Theological Seminary), 1981, p. 283; M. Bockmuehl, “The Form of God (Phil. 2.6): Variations on a Theme of Jewish Mysticism” in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XLVIII (1997), p. 1-23.

<sup>19</sup> Conzelmann states that Saint Paul used references to the Old Testament only when he had dialectic debates with the Jewish or when he was forced to use them; and the knowledge from Torah which Paul inoculated to the *Philippians*, were transmitted orally, not in writing. See Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1969, pp. 166-170.

## The original Christological hymn and its accurate translation

Before questioning the paternity of this hymn of the early Church, we will present the Greek original of the text<sup>20</sup>, according to the pattern of the famous critical edition of the New Testament in Greek<sup>21</sup>, “NA28”, offering in the same time a translation that tries to maintain the nuances of the hagiograph.

Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς. (*Philippians 2:5-11*)

“In your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being<sup>22</sup> within<sup>23</sup> very nature<sup>24</sup> God, did not consider a

<sup>20</sup> Taking into account the fact that the oldest manuscript available for the modern research is the so-called p<sup>52</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> century) containing approximately 5 verses of the Gospel after John, and the oldest witness of our text is p<sup>46</sup> also known under the name of P. Chester Beatty II (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century), discovered in Fayum (Egypt) or probably among the ruins of a monastery close to the antique Aphroditopolis, nowadays deposited at the University of Michigan; I don't think we can speak of other original in the basic meaning of the word. See Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, *The Greek-English New Testament*, 28<sup>th</sup> Edition, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2012, p. xxvii; Bart D. Ehrman, Michael W. Holmes, “The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research. Essays on the *Status Quaestionis*”, coll. *Studies and Documents*, (Eldon Jay Epp, ed.), vol. 46, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, p. 6; Philip W. Comfort, David P. Barret, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton Illinois, 2001, p. 201; Keith Elliott, Ian Moir, *Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament. An Introduction for the English Readers*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1995, pp. 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> Aland Barbara and Kurt, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, *The Greek-English New Testament*, 28<sup>th</sup> Edition, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> The verb in the participle form, present tense ὑπάρχων which is translated correctly “being existing” (meaning the Romanian gerund), also has a series of reductionisms in the space of translations, because some of the editions translate it with the past tense “He was, He existed” (ESV 2008; NAB 21995; NAS 1977; etc.), respectively “was” (ZUR 2008). But we notice the plus of the synodal editions, which translate the word correctly with “being”. See John F. Tipei, *Limba greacă a Noului Testament*, Editura Cartea Creștină, Oradea, 2002, pp. 109-110; Constantin Georgescu, *Manual de Greacă Biblică*, Editura Nemira, Bucharest, 2011, pp. 219-220; Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of the New Testament Syntax. An Intermediate Greek Grammar*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, pp. 271-276; David Holton, Peter Mackridge, Irene Philippaki-Warbuton, *Greek. An Essential Grammar of the Modern Language*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, pp. 118-119.

booty<sup>25</sup> the one essence with God<sup>26</sup>. But He emptied Himself [of all glory]

<sup>23</sup> The Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica, underlined the measure of “within”, the one that renders the image of a dynamic action, or of a synergy, to the detriment of the prosaic and static “in”, for only “within” we find the measure capable to replace you through personal effort in the real equilibrium. Christ being eternally “within” the nature of God, means that He is “within” the same being with the father and the Holy Spirit, that is why I have chosen in my translation to use this word, emphasizing through it the dynamism of the cooperation of the Holy Trinity in the work for the redemption of the world. See Constantin Noica, *Devenirea întru ființă*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1981, p. 129, 137-159.

<sup>24</sup> The noun μορφῆ may mean “form, nature”; if in our case the second term is obvious, in the text from *Galatians 4:19* the first term seems to prevail: μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῆ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν (until Christ is formed in you). See Barclay M. Newman, *A concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 21993, footnotes 4096-4097; Barbara and Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, footnote 18726; Hermann Cremer, Julius Kögel, *Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Verlag Friederich Andreas Perthes, Stuttgart, 1923, pp. 736-738. To remain in the space of the German research we will also add the fact that the edition Zürcher Bibel (ZUR 2008) translates μορφῆ with “Wesen” meaning “nature”. The same word is also used by the *New International Version* (NIV 2011). The synodal translation and the edition of the Bible corrected and improved in vocabulary by † Bartolomeu Anannia propose the somewhat forced term of “image” although εἰκὼν cannot be found within the text, as we can see for ourselves however, in a footnote, Anania explains his choice: “the verb *ypárho* is far more complex than the common auxiliary (“to be”); it is constructed on the idea of original existence, substantial and perpetual, that excludes the idea of temporality, inconsistency or alteration”. See † Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură...*, p. 1684, footnote c.

<sup>25</sup> The noun in accusative ἀρπαγμὸν literally defines the action of a rapt, the action of taking forcefully another person’s belongings, says Louw-Nida, also involving a blitzkrieg. Its interpretation within our hymn must point to the fact that after the Incarnation Jesus did not prey on the divine nature, it wasn’t necessary since it belongs to Him from eternity, the Father was not stripped of His own divinity. See Johannes E. Louw, Eugene A. Nida, *Greek- English Lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains*, United Bible Societies, New York, 21989, footnote 57235; A. Bailly, *Abrégé du dictionnaire Grec-Français*, Hachette Librairie, Paris, 1901, p. 118. In this case it is beneficial the second article of the Creed: “...light of light, true God of true God...”. Theologian Ovidiu Sferlea, based on the studies of Jaeger and Hoover, claims that *harpagmon* in the context of an advantage, immediate profit no longer keeps a violent connotation and its translation may be: “Christ, although He was in the divine image, *did not stand on His equality with God*, but made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant”. He also says that this translation variant comes closer to the understanding of *res retinenda* that has a lexical and grammatical coverage. See Ovidiu Sferlea, “Filipeni 2, 6-7a în versiunile românești ale Sfintei Scripturi, cu o scurtă privire asupra controverselor teologice ale secolului al IV-lea” in *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa*, LVI (2011), 2, pp. 17-18. Another direction of research is given to us by Vollenweider, who states that the root of our text can be found in the Jewish and Hellenistic biblical tradition that speaks about the usurpation of the kings that considered themselves to be God’s equals. Christ’s humbleness comes to propose precisely their correction, His divine royalty is not based on usurpation. See Samuel Vollenweider, *Horizonte neutestamentlicher Christologie, Studien zu Paulus und zur frühchristlichen Theologie*, coll. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 144, Jörg Frey, Martin Hengel, Otfried Hofius (Hrsg.), Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2002, pp. 263-284.

taking the very nature<sup>27</sup> of a servant, being made in human likeness and in His appearance<sup>28</sup> being like a man. He humbled himself by becoming<sup>29</sup> obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow<sup>30</sup>: in heaven and on earth and under the earth<sup>31</sup>; and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father”.

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<sup>26</sup> I noticed that most of the modern editions change the topics of our verse, placing the so-called action of the rapt to the end (ASV 1901; ESV 2008; NAB <sup>9</sup>1995), although in the text considered to be original, the end of the verse brings into discussion the theme of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, according to the witness A, B, G. Revising the translation, I paid special attention to this detail, maintaining strictly the topics, according to the pattern of the French and German editions (TOB 1988; ZUR 2008).

<sup>27</sup> If in the previous verse we translated μορφη with “nature” because it referred obviously to the eternal quality of Christ to be equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, this time the aorist participle of the verb λαβών which describes an action that took place before the action of the regent verb took place and that can be translated with the gerund as well (“taking”), offers the material necessary to a coherent translation of μορφη: the action of self-humbling of our Savior (ἐκένωσεν) is well determined from a temporal point of view, and it is the expression par excellence of the Incarnation, but without affecting the hypostatic union of the Son with the Father, so it is just a facet, that is why I chose the variant “appearance” instead of the famous translations (“form” or “image”). See D.F. Hudson, *Teach Yourself New Testament Greek*, Association Press, New York, 1960, p. 57; Alexander Buttmann, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek*, Warren F. Draper Publisher, Washington, 1891, p. 288-308.

<sup>28</sup> The noun σχῆμα has as a primary meaning rather what you can know about someone in his exterior form, studying only the appearances, according to the form of this world about which Saint Paul speaks in ( *1 Corinthians 7:31*). In fact, the text tells us, and the whole Pauline theology as well (*Hebrews 2:18; Colossians 1:15* etc.), more than it implies, Christ did not assume just an exterior human appearance, but he assumed the entire human nature, being born by the Holy Virgin Mary; that is why we can speak dogmatically of the two natures of Christ (Chalcedon, 451). See Barbara and Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon...*, footnote 26097; J.H. Moulton, G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1930, p. 619.

<sup>29</sup> The verb γενόμενος being an aoristic participle may be translated into Romanian, depending on the context, with the gerund. Its main meaning is the idea of birth into existence, to become, to revive; it is precisely the reason for which to translate it with the verb “to do”, as most of the Romanian editions have done, is just a nuance of the text, more or less appropriate. The Greek vocabulary uses for this action words such as: ποιέω respectively πληρώω – but not γίνομαι!

<sup>30</sup> The verb κἀμψῆ is an aorist in the subjunctive, that communicates an action theoretically contemplated as achievable, it does not offer the certainty of the achievement of the action, that is why it is correctly translated with: “to be able to bow, to be able to kneel”.

<sup>31</sup> We translate with “in heaven”, “on earth” and “under the earth” because ἐπουρανίων and ἐπιγείων and καταχθονίων are adjectives in the plural.

## Objections of the negative critique

Some scholars state that while developing his theology, Saint Paul inspired both from the Pharisee's doctrine borrowing the same correspondents (*Acts 22:33*), and from the Hellenistic philosophy, borrowing the concept of *μορφῆ* to describe the same reality known in the text from *1 Corinthians 7:31*<sup>33</sup> (when he refers to the form, respectively to the nature of God or of a thing says W. Schenk, Saint Paul uses the term *σχῆμα* and not that of *μορφῆ*). Others state that in the early Church existed this custom to recite texts from the memory (without reading them from manuscripts), most often accompanied by a theatrical mimic<sup>34</sup>, a case which may apply also to this troublesome Christological hymn<sup>35</sup>, if it proves to be a reciting or a Pauline improvisation from a liturgical popular hymn<sup>36</sup>. And other scholars such as J. Allen, M. Najim or C. Wanamaker state that this hymn already circulated

<sup>32</sup> Samuel Belkin, "The Problem of Paul's Background", in *Journal of Biblical Studies*, nr. 1/1935, p. 42; Henry John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*, Macmillan and Co. Limited, London, 1900, pp. 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus: Kommentar*, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1984, p. 185. Here I think that the German scholar W. Schenk is a little hasty because if what he says were true, within the corpus of the Christological hymn *morphē* shouldn't be placed near *schēma* – and yet in vv. 6-7 we find: *μορφῆ* respectively *σχῆματι*. My solution regarding this issue is the following: Apostle Paul is much more original than we may understand at a first glance, a genius knows how to express himself differently while presenting the same idea, but always complementary. In order to express the interior force of a thing or character, Paul uses either *schēma* (*1 Corinthians 7:31; Philippians 2:7*) or *eikon* (*Colossians 1:15; 1 Corinthians 11:7; 2 Corinthians 4:4*). But when he speaks of the very interior nature, the ontological given uses the term of *morphē* and such is the case of *Philippians 2:6*. Saint Evangelist Mark does not use the word *μετεμορφώθη* randomly when he speaks of Jesus' transfiguration, aiming to the exact change of Christ's nature in front of His disciples, revealing them His divine nature as well, since what they knew up to that moment was only the human nature.

<sup>34</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, "Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? 'Orality', 'Performance' and Reading Texts in Early Christianity", in *New Testament Studies*, no. 3/2014, p. 321.

<sup>35</sup> In the world of the biblical scholars different opinions have been recorded regarding the identification of the poetical texts within some epistles or revelations. See Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1967.

<sup>36</sup> Scholar J. Collange says that precisely the constructions "even death on a cross" (*8c*) respectively "to the glory of God the Father" (*11c*), prove through their useless recurrence the fact that they are improvised. See Jean-François Collange, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens*, coll. "Commentaire du Nouveau Testament", vol. Xa, (F. Bovon, P. Bonnard, M. Bouttier, eds.), Delachaux & Niestlé Éditeurs, Neuchâtel, 1973, pp. 78-79. See also Adolf Deissmann, *St. Paul. A Study in Social and Religious History*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1912, p. 169; Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl. Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Liturgie*, coll. „Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte", band 8, (herausgegeben von Karl Holl und Hans Lietzmann), Bonn, 1926, p. 178.



within the Church, during the service and Saint Paul used it to appeal to humbleness and condescendence<sup>37</sup>. D. Guthrie<sup>38</sup> too states that the Epistle to Philippians is without a doubt a Pauline composition, except for the Christological hymn, which does not fit the style and language of Saint Paul. We will imprint further on the main theories through which the unity and organicity of the epistle is doubted, referring especially to the paternity of the Christological hymn of the Epistle to Philippians.

### 1. A pre-Pauline composition

Within the space of biblical researchers the following statement are made: the text 2:6-11 has every chance to be a pre-Pauline creation<sup>39</sup>, most probably a chant belonging to the service<sup>40</sup>, with the help of which the Apostle Paul strengthens his enthusiastic argumentation<sup>41</sup>. The fascinating and mysterious character of the text unravels the parameters of the early Christian faith, although there still are debates regarding its origin: some state that the hymn derives structurally and rhythmically (concentric parallelism<sup>42</sup>) from the Aramaic poetical thinking of the Church from Jerusalem<sup>43</sup>; others speak of a gnostic accent through the underlining of the ideas referring to a heavenly entity that comes down on earth out of obedience,

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<sup>37</sup> *The Orthodox Study Bible*, prepared under the auspices of the Academic Community of St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, California, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2008, p. 1613; Charles A. Wanamaker, *Philippians*, in vol. "Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible", (James D.G. Dunn, John W. Rogerson eds.), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003, p. 1397.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, (editie electronica), Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1990, p. 390. Comparative to Guthrie, German biblicists Kummel, Wikenhauser and Schmid speak about a few other pericopes of the epistle as being pseudo-epigraphies, late interpolations respectively several epistle grouped into a single one (3:1-2; 3:2-4, 3; 4:10-20). See Werner Georg Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg, 1973, pp. 291-292; Alfred Wikenhauser, Josef Schmid, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Herder, Freiburg, 1973, pp. 500-502.

<sup>39</sup> Jean-François Collange, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens*, p. 75; R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi. Philippians II. 5-11...*, p. 42-43; D.A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Zondervan Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, p. 499.

<sup>40</sup> William MacDonald, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, Bielefeld, 1997, p. 949.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Murdoch, *Epistola către Filipeni*, Editura Lumina Lumii, Sibiu, 2007, p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> Nigel Fabb, *Language and Literary Structure. The linguistic analysis of form in verse and narrative*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ernst Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus. Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2, 5-11*, coll. „Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften“, band 18, Carl Winter Verlag, Heidelberg, 1928, pp. 65-68.

for it to become later an leader both over the heaven and over the earth<sup>44</sup>; and others mention a powerful Hellenistic influence through the use of the noun *Kyrios* (Lord) – name given by the Greeks to their deities<sup>45</sup>.

The German theologian J. Ernst based on an inventory of the *hapax legomenon* words that occur within the hymn (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ; τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ; δούλου; ἐκένωσεν etc.) draws the conclusion that these do not subscribe to the Pauline preaching, hence the hymn does not belong to Saint Paul<sup>46</sup>; although another scholar, D. Lightfoot<sup>47</sup> speaks about the infinity of options that an author of classic Greek has when constructing a phrase, options that are indefinite numerically. Ernst's arguments with the help of which he strengthens his critical position are rendered according to three great directions: stylistically, linguistically and contextually, by the famous work of the researcher R.P. Martin<sup>48</sup>. This scholar would also support in his last commentary on this hymn (1997) Ernst and Lohmeyer's opinions regarding the fact that the stylistic<sup>49</sup> and linguistic<sup>50</sup> arguments prove the existence of another author. But he also brings into discussion a third argument, based on a contextual evidence, stating that the hymn interrupts abruptly the linear flow of the Pauline paraenesis comprised between 1:27 – 2:18. Thus we have to deal with an independent register<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> I. Howard Marshall, „The Christ-Hymn in Philippians”, in *Tyndale Bulletin*, no. 19/1968, pp. 107-108.

<sup>45</sup> Ralph P. Martin, Brian J. Dodd, *Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1998, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> See Josef Ernst, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser*, coll. „Regensburger Neues Testament”, Otto Kuss (Hrsg.), Verlag Friedrich Pustet, Regensburger, 1974, p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> David W. Lightfoot, *Principles of Diachronic Syntax*, coll. “Cambridge Studies in Linguistics”, vol. 23, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> The synthesis of his arguments is the following: there are a lot of stylistic proofs that denote the texture of a poem (the rhythmical quality of the phrases, the presence of the concentric parallelism, the presence of several foreign words etc.), and because of these we have in front of us a liturgical literature and not an epistolary one; too many *hapax* words can be found within the Christological hymn and this timidly indicates another author; the corpus of the hymn (2:6-11) interrupts the linear paraenetic flow up to it, constituting an independent thematic unity. See R.P. Martin, *An Early Christian Confession*, The Tyndale Press, London, 1961, pp. 10-17.

<sup>49</sup> The stylistic arguments proposed (respectively the concentric parallelism and the metrics of the Jewish poems) wish to prove the fact that from the point of view of the texture, the section 2:6-11 rather indicates a liturgical ethos not an epistolary one.

<sup>50</sup> Linguistic arguments discover a lot of terms that are atypical for the Pauline sermon (*morphē; harpagmos; hyperypsoō*), these *hapax legomenon* point to the idea of a preexistent liturgical piece, very different from the homiletical-epistolary language.

<sup>51</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ. Philippians 2: 5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1997, pp. 42-44.

## 2. An Adamic Christology

The supporters of this theory state that the author of the hymn has as a starting, the interpretation of Christ as the second Adam, since the expression  $\mu\omicron\rho\varphi\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  respectively may constitute allusions to the image of the first Adam in *Genesis 1:26-27*<sup>52</sup>. Jesus Christ presented as having divine nature, He comes in close relationship with the image of the first man created in God's image, a worthiness that Christ shares to His descendants<sup>53</sup>. Although the terminology used may generate certain problems of interpretation (in *Philippians* the term  $\mu\omicron\rho\varphi\eta$  is used but the book of Genesis speaks about  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\kappa\omicron\nu\alpha$ ), yet there are studies that have shown the fact that the nouns *morphē* and *eikóna* are synonyms, and they both point to the same reality<sup>54</sup>. This double adamic reference to Christ, acknowledges the soteriological significance of the second Adam by underlining the pre-existence of the Son of God<sup>55</sup>. Hence, we have to deal here with a combination of ideas and concepts – to which the term “glory” (*Philippians 3:21*) is affiliated, which subsist in a close relationship with the theology of creation of the first man<sup>56</sup>. J. Dunn finds here two Christological levels presented within the Christian theology of the first century: the free choice of Adam followed immediately by death and the glorification of the second Adam governing the whole creation. This hymn presents such an adamic Christology<sup>57</sup>.

Although there are powerful voices that speak about this adamic influence in the writing of the hymn, argument that indicates an author that belonged to the Christian-Judaic circles, the scholar N. Wright<sup>58</sup> states unbendingly that this passage represents the adamic Christology of Saint Paul. We tend to give credit to this

<sup>52</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker, *Philippians...*, p. 1398.

<sup>53</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964, pp. 390-391.

<sup>54</sup> Matthew Black, “The Pauline Doctrine of the Second Adam”, in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 2/1954, p. 170.

<sup>55</sup> Jeffrey S. Lamp, “Wisdom in Col 1: 15-20: Contribution and Significance”, in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, no. 1/1998, p. 49; Olimpiu N. Benea, “The Christological Hymn in Colossians 1, 15-20. New Perspectives in the Contemporary Biblical Thought”, in *Analele Științifice ale Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă*, vol. 8: 2004-2005, (Ioan Chirilă, Dorel Man, ed.), Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 380.

<sup>56</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, p. 74.

<sup>57</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1980, pp. 114-115.

<sup>58</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, T. & T. Clark, London, 1991, pp. 57-58.

perspective, for within the theology of Saint Paul, the second Adam, “a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) is Christ<sup>59</sup>. An adamic typology of Saint Paul (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ) of which the specialists say it is inspired from a Hellenistic, rabbinic and Judaic background<sup>60</sup>, but at the same time keeps its original note.

### 3. Hymn inspired by the Servant of the Lord (YHWH)

A totally different perspective is offered by Jeremias and Romaniuk<sup>61</sup> who identify the key episodes of the chants of the Servant of the Lord that belong to the prophet Isaiah (49-53), with the image of μορφήν δούλου from 2:7. The french biblicist E. Jacob said that the Jews have identified from early times the expression “servant of the Lord” with the embodiment of Messiah, because no matter the given options, the choice and the mission of the servant cannot be separated from Israel’s vocation<sup>62</sup>. Many of the early Jewish Christians believed uncompromisingly that between the faith in Jesus as the glorified Messiah and the Mosaic Law coming straight from God, there is a powerful relationship. That is why they forced the gentiles to live in syntony with the nomosic precepts<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Der Erste Korintherbrief*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1977, pp. 374-375.

<sup>60</sup> Paul J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15. Connecting Faith and Morality in the Context of Greco-Roman Mythology*, coll. „Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament”, vol. 360, (Herausgeber Jörg Frey), Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2014, p. 211; Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia. A Traditio- Historical Study of Paul’s Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15*, coll. „Supplements to Novum Testamentum”, vol. LXXXIV, (C.K. Barrett, P. Borgen, J.K. Elliott eds.), Brill, Leiden, 1996, pp. 174-181.

<sup>61</sup> K. Romaniuk, “De Themate Ebed Yahve in soteriologia Sancti Pauli”, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 22, 1961, pp. 14-25; Joachim Jeremias, art. “παῖς θεοῦ”, in *Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, band V, (Hrsg. Von Gerhard Kittel), Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1954, pp. 676-713.

<sup>62</sup> Edmond Jacob, *Vechiul Testament*, trans. by Cristian Preda, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 114-115. But about this Messianic parallel between the servant of the Lord from Isaiah and the servant from Philippians, the Holy Fathers have spoken, starting from the servant from Isaiah to quote the Christological hymn from the Epistle to Philippians. See Origen, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*, tomus I, P.G. 14, col. 37A-D; Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarium in Isaiam prophetam*, tomus V, P.G. 70, col. 538B-D; Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate libri duodecim*, P.L. 10, col. 270A-B: “in order to assume the form of servant, He made himself nothing through obedience. He emptied himself of the divine nature, which means equality with God.”. About Saint Augustin, for example, it is very well known the fact that this hymn redefined his notions of humiliaty and humbleness, shaping his moral precepts. See to this respect Stephen T. Pardue, *The Mind of Christ: Humility and the Intellect in Early Christian Theology*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, London, 2013, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003, p. 161.

In both cases says M. Orsatti<sup>64</sup> regarding this hymn, humiliation is the result of conformation to the redemption plan, and the glorification that follows is an immediate consequence designed by God. The expression διὸ καὶ from *Philippians 2:9* finds its correspondent in the Hebrew *laken* - διὰ τοῦτο from (*Isaiah 53:12*).

T. Tobin<sup>65</sup> when arguing his position according to which the author of the hymn is Saint Paul, brings into discussion the issue of the pre-existence, because the arrangement of the notions: μορφῆ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (*being in very nature God*) and μορφὴν δούλου λαβών (*taking the very nature of a servant*) become inexplicable in case you don't operate with the idea of pre-existence. This contrast emphasizes rather the conditions of the existence than the steps of Christ's earthly life. The whole hymn, says Tobin, unravels three conditions of Christ's existence: being in very nature God (2:6); taking the very form of a servant obedient to death (2:7-8); exalted by God to the highest place (2:9-11). These ideas can also be found in several hymns of the New Testament (*John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:3-4*), so, Tobin says, all these texts have their roots in the Jewish tradition and wisdom (*Proverbs 8:22-31; Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach 7:21-8:1*), so the hymn from 2:6-11 cannot be Pauline<sup>66</sup>.

R.P. Martin which I have mentioned before, says that a possible vision of Saint Paul about Christ, as the Servant of the Lord is at least improbable. Christology that implies the theology of the Servant of the Lord may be found referentially in the books: *Acts*<sup>67</sup> and *1 Peter*, and it is completely absent from the Pauline writings. Hence, this theology of the Servant of the Lord, is in itself a solid argument that challenges the Pauline paternity of the hymn<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Mauro Orsatti, *Poemul Bucuriei: Introducere la Scrisoarea Sfântului Apostol Paul către Filipeni*, Editura Buna Vestire, Blaj, 2004, pp. 63-64.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas H. Tobin, *The World of Thought in the Philippians Hymn (Philippians 2:6-11)*, in vol. "The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune", Brill, Leiden, 2006, p. 93.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas H. Tobin, *The World of Thought in the Philippians Hymn...*, p. 94.

<sup>67</sup> The renowned professor Morna Dorothy Hooker correlates the image of the Servant from *Isaiah 53* with the text in *Acts 8*, on the background of the suffering for the sin of the others, but the perennial motivation remains the subject's complete humbleness and humility, an idea that point directly to the passions of Christ. See Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament*, Wipf & Stock Publisher, Eugene, 2010, p. 114; R.T. France, „The Servant of the Lord in the Teaching of Jesus”, *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 19/1968, pp. 26-52.

<sup>68</sup> R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi. Philippians II. 5-11 in Recent Interpretation...*, pp. 51-52.

#### 4. The Midrash technique

The noun *midrash* comes from the Hebrew root *drš*, which can be translated by “to search; to ask, to question”, having more than 150 occurrences within the Masoretic Text (but as noun, *mdrš* can only be found twice: *2 Chronicles* 13:22; 24:27). The term can also be found in the Qumran literature, where it was used for the study of the law, judicial investigations or for the interpretation of the Scripture<sup>69</sup>. T. Nagata refers to this last meaning of the word in his PhD. thesis<sup>70</sup>, when he states that vv. 10-11 of the hymn are only an allusion to LXX *Isaiah* 45:23, and not a direct quoting. It is rather, says he, that this use of the text from *Isaiah* 45:23 within *Philippians* 2:10-11 observes a *Midrash* technique: the most important aspect of the use of *Isaiah* 45:23 resides in this *Midrashic* connection between the vision of the prophet Isaiah and that of the author of the hymn which speaks about the glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ – πᾶν γόνυ (*every knee*)<sup>71</sup>. From this scholar’s ideas one may conclude that the author of the hymn was familiar to the *Midrash* technique for the interpretation of the Scripture, thus placing him within the rabbinic circles. But one may state as well that the *Midrash* technique of interpretation was not completely unknown to Saint Paul, because his formation as a theologian takes place “under Gamaliel” (*Acts* 22:3) a great teacher of the Law. Another scholar, C. Burney says that in the development of the text from *Colossians* 1:16-18 Saint Paul<sup>72</sup> offers a *Midrashic* exposition of the first word of the Scripture (בְּרֵאשִׁית) as well as of the perspective from *Proverbs* 8:22. These verses of the Christological hymn from the epistle to Colossians are a development of those from *Proverbs* 8:22: κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.

<sup>69</sup> Craig A. Evans, Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2000, p. 889.

<sup>70</sup> Takeshi Nagata, *Philippians 2: 5-11: a case study in the contextual shaping of early Christology*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary), University Microfilms International, 1985, pp. 282-283.

<sup>71</sup> This nominal reference (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός – 2, 11) used by Saint Apostle Paul introduces the reality of a Person different from the father, representing in original a cultic development of the theology of the Old Testament referring to the names of God during the period of the early Christianity. See Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, coll. *Bibliothèque de théologie. Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée*, tome 1, Desclée/Cerf, Paris, 1958, pp. 201-202.

<sup>72</sup> Many of the biblical scholars consider that neither this Christological hymn addressed to the Colossians (1:15-20) does not rightfully belong to Saint Paul, being either an interpolation operated within the text by the author of the Epistle to Ephesians, according to R. Wilson, or a pseud-epigraphy according to H. Holtzmann: Robert Mc L. Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, coll. *International Critical Commentary*, (J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, G.N. Stanton eds.), Bloomsbury T&T Clark, London, 2014, p. 59; Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1911, pp. 73-74.

Without a doubt, says C. Burney<sup>73</sup>, Apostle Paul uses the term “in the beginning” from *Genesis 1:1*: ἀρχῆν and *Proverbs 8:22*: ἀρχὴν with a special intention: referring to Christ.

W. Davies also speaking about the rabbinic background of the Pauline theology states that the word *rêshîth* from *Proverbs 8:22* was used by the rabbinic Judaism as a possible explanation of *berêshîth* present at the beginning of the Scripture. That is why when Paul says in his epistle to Colossians that Christ is: πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως (*the firstborn over all creation*), he actually thinks of the rabbinic word *rêshîth* of the entire creation<sup>74</sup>. But even though his rabbinic formation is obvious, Apostle Paul is rather original when he speaks about *berêshîth* in the terms of Christ’s preexistence, because from the researches made<sup>75</sup>, it seems that the old Synagogue couldn’t conceive such a perspective.

We will only say that the title of Χριστός (v. 11) is the reference of the early Christianity speaking Greek to the recognition of Jesus’ messianity, a name used very often by Saint Paul in his epistles – the first writings of the New Testament<sup>76</sup>. Surely a rabbi who is very familiar to the *Midrash* technique from the early times of the Church, would never have used such an attribute for Jesus. For example, Rabbi Abbahu in his work “Jeruschalmi Thaanith” (65b, 68-70) strongly denies both Jesus’ divinity and His Ascension to Heaven, considering all these to be lies<sup>77</sup>.

## 5. A subsequent composition introduced within the epistle

This theory speaks about a subsequent interpolation, based on the myth of the “heavenly man” belonging to the gnostic circles of Iranian origins<sup>78</sup>, although

<sup>73</sup> Charles F. Burney, „Christ as the APXH of Creation”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 27, no. 106 (1926), p. 174.

<sup>74</sup> W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1980, pp. 151-152.

<sup>75</sup> Hermann L. Strack, Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch: Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments und die Offenbarung Johannis*, dritter band, C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München, 1926, p. 620.

<sup>76</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, SCM Press, London, 2006, pp. 218-219.

<sup>77</sup> Hans G. Kippenberg, Gerd A. Wewers, *Textbuch zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte*, coll. *Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament*, band 8, (Herausgegeben von Gerhard Friedrich), Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1979, p. 203.

<sup>78</sup> Jack T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background*, coll. *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series*, vol. 15, (Matthew Black ed.), Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 66-69.

J. Reumann denies this perspective stating that the existence of such a myth within the corpus 2:6-11 cannot be proved<sup>79</sup>. The myth can be found in a complete form in the so-called “Hermeneutical literature”, that presents man as having a divine nature, but being captive in a dark and mean world, from which he must free himself to the kingdom of light. Regeneration is explained in terms of “born again from God” (XIII 7-14: ἐνθεῶ ἑγένεσιν), that potentially may free the *interior man* from the burden of the substance<sup>80</sup>. The original man was made in divine image and this prototype being freed from the corruptible nature can carry after him the burden of all the people<sup>81</sup>. The “Poimandres” brochure belonging to the mentioned literature comprises important concepts such as (*morphē; ísa Theō; doúlou; thanátou dè staurōū*) that can also be found in 2:6-11, as K. Berger reminds us<sup>82</sup>.

The theory in its essence is not very convincing because in the early Church the eschatological teaching about Jesus Christ refers both to His attribute of Judge and of Savior, that is why Saint Paul addresses to the Thessalonians speaking about Christ as the One that will redeem us from the coming wrath (*1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*); and when he says to the Philippians that Christ the Savior will come to change their lowly body into a glorious body (*Philippians 3:20-21*), we definitely meet here an idea common to the early Christians<sup>83</sup>, and not ideas taken from an Iranian tradition.

### A pro-Pauline argument

Despite all these modern theories that are not convincing, this Christological hymn bears without a doubt the signature of the great Apostle Paul. The most important Pauline hymns of the New Testament all begins with the relative pronoun

<sup>79</sup> John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, coll. *The Anchor Yale Bible*, vol. 33B, (John J. Collins ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008, p. 336.

<sup>80</sup> Romano Penna, *Ambiente Histórico-Cultural de los Orígenes del Cristianismo: Textos y comentarios*, Editorial Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, 1994, pp. 214-215.

<sup>81</sup> R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi. Philippians II. 5-11...*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>82</sup> Klaus Berger, Carsten Colpe, *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Neuen Testament*, coll. *Texte zum Neuen Testament*, band 1, (Herausgegeben von Gerhard Friedrich und Jürgen Roloff), Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1987, pp. 287-288.

<sup>83</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Teología del Nuevo Testamento*, Ediciones Sígueme, Salamanca, 1981, p. 126; Karl Staab, *Cartas a los Tesalonicenses. Cartas de la Cautividad*, coll. *Biblioteca Herder. Sección de Sagrada Escritura*, vol. 98, (Alfred Wikenhauser y Otto Kuss eds.), Editorial Herder, Barcelona, 1974, pp. 268-269.



ὃς (“Who”), a detail that we consider to be nothing else than a mark of Saint Paul’s originality (*Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 3:16*). Moreover, some of the key concepts of the hymn can be found in other Pauline writings too, as is the case of the construction: ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς (“Jesus Christ is the Lord”) that can be also found on Pauline texts such as (*Romans 1:7; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 8:6; 12:3*). As for the liturgical formula: εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς (“to the glory of God the Father”), the German scholar W. Schenk says that it can be found in the majority of the Pauline epistles and thus this text is a creation of Saint Apostle Paul<sup>84</sup>.

We noticed that when Saint Paul uses a very famous early source to develop his discourse, he mentions it every time, either directly or indirectly: “as some of your own poets have said – *Acts 17:28*; what does the Scripture say? – *Romans 4:3*; for Isaiah says – *Romans 10:16*; in the Law is written – *1 Corinthians 14:21*; this is why it says – *Ephesians 4:8*; here is a trustworthy saying – *2 Timothy 2:11*; one of Crete’s own prophets has said – *Titus 1:12*”. Or the famous Pauline quote: “as it is written” whose occurrence is impossible to present here, that is why we will mention only a few places: *Romans 3:10; 4:17; 8:36; 1 Corinthians 1:19; 2:9; 2 Corinthians 9:9; Galatians 3:13; 4:27* etc. We believe that if Saint Paul had inspired from a certain source in writing this Christological hymn, he would have mentioned it as he used to, even indirectly, and for this reason we will state that the Christological hymns (*Philippians 2:6-11; 1 Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 3:4-7*) are entirely Saint Apostle Paul’s creation. It is true that at least in the writing of the Christological hymn addressed to the Philippians, Saint Paul borrows words that belong to the Jewish vocabulary (δοῦλου) or to the Hellenistic one, gnostic respectively (μορφῆ; ἀρπαγμὸν; ἴσα θεῶ; θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ etc.), but here Paul acts according to the pattern of the great poets who, before writing their works, goes and borrows important ideas from all the universal literature.

Regarding the objections of the negative critique which says that the stylistic of the hymn proves the paternity of a different author, precisely because of the *hapax* words that seem to be foreign from Saint Paul’s vocabulary, S. Porter states that in the study of the Greek language of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, one may observe that the number of phrases, words, examples that an author used in writing is impossible to quantify. Potentially speaking the variants that an author of Greek language could choose were infinite<sup>85</sup>. That is why we must not be surprised by

<sup>84</sup> Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus: Kommentar...*, p. 191.

<sup>85</sup> Stanley E. Porter, D.A. Carson, *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics. Open Questions in Current Research*, coll. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, vol. 80, (electronic edition), Sheffield Academic Press, London, 1993, p. 114.

the fact that we come over new words in Saint Paul's epistles, some of them are certainly borrowed from the culture and literature of the epoch<sup>86</sup>, but many others are a part of the originality of the Pauline style. For example, other fragments unanimously acknowledged as being Pauline (*1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Corinthians 11:21-29*), count in a very small space an unusual number of words that are not characteristic to the Pauline predication, but from a stylistic and rhythmic point of view they belong to the apostle of the nations<sup>87</sup>. M. Vincent says that every writer presents through his work a lively breath, that is why he cannot restrict his vocabulary only to the words and phrases that he used in a recent previous work. For example, Saint Paul uses approximately 43 *hapax* words only in the epistle to Ephesians, over 100 in Romans and more than 200 in 1 Corinthians<sup>88</sup>. Researcher J. Furness<sup>89</sup> strongly states in his turn that the verdict according to which the vocabulary, context and poetical form of the section *2:6-11* couldn't belong to Saint Paul is not a convincing one and, thus, it cannot be credited.

The verbal parallelisms between *Philippians 2:6-11* and *John 13:3-17* are not at all random, both narrations reveal a mature apostolic thinking (*John 13:4* finds a strong correspondent in the "making himself nothing" from *Philippians 2:7*; the wrapping of the towel around his waist from verse 5 is very similar to the theme of the slave from *Philippians 2:7* and *John 13:13* sends to the perspective of the glorification of Christ as κύριος in *Philippians 2:11*). Certainly this kerygma represents both for John and for Paul an intrinsic understanding of the Person of Christ both sharing in this point a common thinking<sup>90</sup>. We may also say that the intentions of the fragments are similar. John's narration condenses Christ's teaching from *Mark 10:43-44*, and the example of Christ's self-humiliation is a logic continuation of the examples of Christian humbleness, with the help of

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<sup>86</sup> To these borrowings Saint Paul furnishes a Christian sublayer, thus recuperating the concepts in favor of the Church, as it is the case of the famous discourse from the Areopagus (*Acts 17:28*). This practice was not totally unknown to Saint Gregory the Theologian either, who borrows important terms from the pagan poet Callimachus in order to write his Christian poems. For more details see Cătălin Varga, „Sfântul Grigorie Teologul – un poet la curțile Cuvântului. Fragmente dintr-o poezie a Spiritualității Ortodoxe”, in *Tabor*, no. 8, august 2013, pp. 43-44.

<sup>87</sup> D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, p. 500.

<sup>88</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, p. xxix.

<sup>89</sup> J.M. Furness, „The authorship of *Philippians 2: 6-11*”, in *The Expository Times*, no. 8, 1959, pp. 240-243.

<sup>90</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, coll. *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 43, (David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker eds.), Word Books Publishers, Waco, Texas, 1983, pp. 78-79.

which Saint Paul starts his passionate argument (2:1-5). The Christian community from Philippi is encouraged by Saint Paul in order to gain a group identity, eliminating every manifestation of individuality through the cultivation of the feeling of unity, humbleness and self-giving (2:1-4). Within all this context the Christological hymn doesn't seem to be an independent unity, as the negative critique suggests, but part of a whole (2:1-11)<sup>91</sup> in which the paradigm of Christ's humbleness is proposed, the Pauline example (2:17- 18; 3:4-17) and last but not least, Epaphroditus' example (2:25-30) – models of Christian humbleness to inspire the Church from here, especially the behavior of the sisters Euodia and Syntyche, two faithful women with divergent opinions.

Scholar W. Kümmel<sup>92</sup> also speaks on the unity and organicity of the epistle, and sees in the motif of joy (1:4; 2:2; 3:1; 4:10), in the motif of the unconditional thankfulness (1:21; 4:12) and in the motif of the complete trust in the Church (1:9; 4:1. 18) the clear proof of an organic and original letter. At another level, we may say, all these motifs can be found in the Christological hymn as well (the joy of making himself nothing, the condition of the servant of the Lord who dies on the cross as an expression of the unconditional thankfulness and last but not least Christ's complete trust in the Father).

Another convincing argument on the theme of the organicity of the epistle is brought to discussion by C. Grappe<sup>93</sup> who sees a good thematic correspondence between the texts 2:5-11; 2:1-4 respectively 2:12-18 and 3:20-21. The subordinate conjunction "Ὡστε from v. 12 induces a logical and easy to follow line between vv. 5-11 and the paraenesis resumed with the beginning of v. 12, a line that establishes the formal convergent points of the obedience of Christ (2:8) but also from the faithful (2:12). The text from 3:20-21 (the condition of the faithful) can also be found in the corpus 2:6-11 (the condition of Christ), speaking about the measure with which Christ will work amongst His believers, transfiguring their lowly bodies into glorious bodies.

Besides this argument, I would like to bring to the debate a single question that awaits its answer: if this hymn already circulated within the early Church long before the writing of the epistle to Philippians, as some scholars suggest, and

<sup>91</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker, *Philippians*, in vol. "Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible...", p. 1397.

<sup>92</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg, 1973, pp. 293-294.

<sup>93</sup> Christian Grappe, „Aux sources de la christologie – Quelques remarques sur la structure, les représentations et l'originalité de l'hymne de Philippiens 2, 5-11 à la lumière notamment de traditions vétérotestamentaires et juives", in vol. *Philippiens 2, 5-11: La kénose du Christ*, (Matthieu Arnold, Gilbert Dahan, Annie Noblesse-Rocher eds.), Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2013, pp. 24-26.

if this hymn was so well known, how come that no other author of the New Testament refers even unintentional to its existence when he chooses to speak about Christ's humbleness and glory? Could he have omitted such a liturgical-doctrinaire-parenetic concentration of the Person of Christ?

### Conclusions

It is rather difficult to establish exactly the background of this Christological hymn, because the specialists' opinions are very different, and the credible sources to use for our work are missing. While the majority of the modern exegetes offer a series of suppositions: the hymn is a rereading of Paul from one of his previous letters; the expression  $\mu\omicron\rho\varphi\eta$  betrays a Hellenistic philosophical culture; this hymn is a manner of rewriting the character of Christ's service; the image of the Servant of the Lord in *Isaiah* 45 becomes the prototype of Christ, so there is no Pauline print here; the text of the present hymn is the outcome of the rabbinic technique "midrash"; this hymn is a subsequent development of the gnostic circles that activated later on etc., the author of this paper tends to consider it a pure Pauline creation. The evidence (stylistic aspects and ideatic motifs of the hymn; the presence of the relative pronoun  $\delta\varsigma$  in almost every Pauline creation – *Philippians* 2:6; *Colossians* 1:15; *1 Timothy* 3:16; the organicity of the text 2:6-11; the lack of any mention of a possible external source; the originality of this hymn within the given context; the verbal parallelisms between the great Apostles John and Paul regarding the issue of Christ's humbleness etc.) although they are not as rich as the modern objections, they indicate a single author: Saint Apostle Paul.

Our approach was not an easy one taking into account the lack of such a preoccupation within the environment of the Romanian biblical identitary Orthodox studies, that is why the novelty of this subject and its importance speaks for itself. We hope that this research proves to be a useful and fruitfull tool for the field of isagogy of the New Testament.