This article examines the thematic parallels between (a) Paul’s portrayal of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in Phil 2:6–11 and (b) Luke’s story of the public shaming and vindication of Paul and Silas, while they were in Philippi during the second missionary journey. I draw on socioanthropological findings related to collective memory and social identity formation to suggest that the sequence of events surrounding the founding of the Philippian church (later related by Luke in Acts 16:11–40) functioned in an ongoing way as the community’s narrative of origins. The story thus served to legitimate the Philippian Christians’ social identity as a threatened minority group in the colony. Paul, now imprisoned in Rome (ca. A.D. 62), and quite aware of the enduring impact on the Philippians of events surrounding the founding of the church, frames his picture of Christ in Phil 2 in a way that resonates with this still-familiar story of the humiliation and vindication of the missionaries during their visit to the colony more than a decade earlier.

Key Words: Philippians 2:6–11, Acts 16:11–40, Philippi, Christology, parallels, humiliation, vindication, intertextuality, collective memory

Philippians 2:6–11 has attracted more scholarly attention than any other Pauline text-segment. One of the more creative avenues of exploration has involved a search elsewhere in biblical literature for intertextual

parallels to Paul’s majestic portrayal of Christ. Several candidates have surfaced, including (a) the Johannine narrative of Jesus’ washing the feet of the disciples (John 13:1–15), (b) the story of the transfiguration in the triple tradition (Matt 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36), (c) the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, as variously related in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 4:1–11, Mark 1:12–13, Luke 4:1–13), and, perhaps most influentially, (d) the temptation of Adam in Gen 3.2 I offer yet another potential parallel to Phil 2:6–11, one that intersects with Paul’s story of Christ at several points and in some rather remarkable ways: Luke’s narrative of Paul and Silas ministering and suffering in Philippi (Acts 16:11–40).

Christians at Philippi who heard Paul’s letter read for the first time would have encountered in the story of Jesus in Phil 2:6–11 a striking and unexpected status reversal. Jesus “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.”3 Instead, he took on “the form of a slave” and “became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (vv. 6–8). Then, in a divine fiat that wholly subverted the values and expectations of the dominant culture of the Roman colony at Philippi, God vindicated Jesus’ counterintuitive approach to status and power by exalting him to


3. I cite the NRSV throughout.
the highest place and guaranteeing that Jesus would be publicly honored by every sentient being (vv. 9–11).4

Paul and Silas, during their initial visit to Philippi, also experienced a profound status reversal, one that would have both surprised and delighted Luke’s readers. Like Jesus, the missionaries chose not to exploit their social status (Roman citizenship) for their own gain in the face of opposition from residents of the colony. Instead, Paul and Silas submitted unnecessarily to a beating and were then imprisoned by local magistrates (Acts 16:19–24). Just as he did for Jesus, however, God undertook on behalf of Paul and Silas, delivering them from prison by means of a well-timed earthquake. Later, as the story draws to a close, the missionaries’ citizen status is revealed, and positions of power are completely reversed, as the colony’s esteemed magistrates now humble themselves before Paul and Silas, pleading with them to leave the colony. A point-by-point comparison (in table 1) is illuminating. The proposed connections benefit significantly from further elaboration. In what follows I consider in some detail the humiliation and subsequent vindication of both the missionaries in Acts 16 and Jesus in Philippians 2. The conclusion of the essay then seeks to account for the noticeable similarities between the two narratives.

**Humiliation: Paul, Silas, and Christ**

Citizens and noncitizens were supposed to be treated differently at the court of justice in the Roman world.5 P. Garnsey elaborates on the distinction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paul and Silas (Acts 16)</th>
<th>Messiah Jesus (Philippians 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refused to exploit their Roman citizenship.</td>
<td>Did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited (v. 6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingly suffered the humiliation of flogging and imprisonment at the hands of Roman magistrates (vv. 19–23).</td>
<td>Willingly suffered the humiliation of slave status and of crucifixion at the hands of a Roman magistrate (vv. 7–8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vindicated by a sudden status reversal. Citizenship (true identity) publicly recognized and oppressors put to shame (vv. 35–39).</td>
<td>Vindicated by a sudden status reversal. Divine lordship (true identity) recognized and publicly acknowledged by all (vv. 9–11).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4. E. Schweizer noted the status concerns of the text over a generation ago (Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern [Zurich: Zwingli, 1955]). For the contrast between Roman social values and the behavior of Jesus, as portrayed in Phil 2:6–11, see my Reconstructing Honor.

as it might manifest itself in a veteran colony such as Philippi: “In a Roman colony it appears that arrest, beating, and imprisonment were normal for aliens, but that it was potentially dangerous to give citizens the same treatment.”6 The magistrates at Philippi assumed, of course, that Paul and Silas were “aliens” and treated them accordingly. When they found out otherwise, the duumviri became “afraid” (v. 38) and understandably so. For Rome had a tradition of prosecuting governors who mistreated her citizens in the provinces.7 But this, in turn, raises an obvious and pressing question. Why did the missionaries not reveal their citizen status to the magistrates at the outset and save themselves the beatings and imprisonment?8

The answer is to be found in the demographics of Philippi. When Paul and Silas were in the colony, about 40% of the population would have been Roman citizens. Slanted for social accessibility, this means that perhaps one-third of the persons who responded to the gospel in Philippi possessed citizen status.9 The legal privilege associated with the franchise was highly valued by Romans who found themselves in the provinces, far away from the capital city of Rome. Cicero explains:

Poor men of humble birth sail across the seas to shores they have never seen before, where they find themselves among strangers, and cannot always have with them acquaintances to vouch for them. Yet such trust have they in the single fact of their citizenship that they count on being safe, not only where they find our magistrates, who are restrained by the fear of law and public opinion, and not only among their own countrymen, to whom they are bound by the ties of a common language and civic rights and much else besides: no, wherever they find themselves, they feel confident that this one fact [their citizenship] will be their defence. (Verr. 2.5.167)

Residents of a Roman colony took particular pride in their citizen status. Each colony, when it was founded, was typically identified with one of Rome’s citizen tribes. Philippi’s tribe was Voltinia, and the Philippians were proud of it. Approximately one-half of all the first- and second-century Latin inscriptions unearthed at Philippi contain the abbreviation VOL (Voltinia), highlighting the person’s Roman citizen tribe. Even a two-year-old child had the expression engraved upon his tombstone:

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7. The Porcian law “visited with a severe penalty any one for beating with stripes or putting to death a Roman citizen” (Livy, *History of Rome* 10:9.4).
Nepos, son of . . . of the tribe Voltinia (VOL), (died at) two years of age, lies buried here.\textsuperscript{10}

It is fair to conclude from the archaeological data that nowhere in the Roman East were the residents of a local municipality more concerned to proclaim their citizen status than in the colony at Philippi, an assessment confirmed by the biblical materials. Only at Philippi does the issue of Roman citizenship surface in Luke’s narratives of the three missionary journeys (Acts 13–20). And only in the letter to the Philippians does Paul use formal citizenship terminology to talk about Christian behavior and eschatological expectation (1:27, 3:20). These literary anomalies are hardly accidental. The distinction between citizen and noncitizen was a defining one for the relational environment of Roman Philippi.

The preoccupation with citizenship in the colony, in turn, readily explains why Paul and Silas failed to disclose their status when first brought before the magistrates. As B. Rapske rightly notes,

\begin{quote}
the self-defense of an early citizenship claim would probably have been construed by the magistrates and populace as an assertion of commitment to the primacy of Roman, over against Jewish (i.e. Christian) customs. The signals sent would also have put the church at risk of dissolution if the new Philippian converts did not possess the Roman franchise. At the least there would have been uncertainty surrounding Paul’s commitment to his message. Converts might wonder whether only those suitably protected (i.e. by Roman citizenship) should become believers in Christ, and they might think it disingenuous for Paul and Silas to ask others to suffer what they themselves were able to avoid.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

If Paul and Silas had leveraged their Roman citizenship to avoid mistreatment at the hands of Philippi’s magistrates, they would essentially have set the stage for the establishment of a local Jesus community with a two-tiered social hierarchy—one that mirrored the distinction between citizens and noncitizens that so markedly defined the relational environment of the colony’s dominant culture.

The behavior of Paul and Silas represents an utter inversion of Roman social priorities and common attitudes toward the citizen franchise. Consider the policies of Claudius, the current emperor, policies that may have fueled preoccupation with Roman citizenship in a colony such as Philippi. Although liberal in his efforts to extend citizenship in the provinces, Claudius was adamant about preserving social and legal distinctions between citizen and noncitizen. According to Suetonius, Claudius executed persons \textit{civitatem Romanam usurpantes} (Suet. \textit{Claud.} 25). The targets of the emperor’s policies were noncitizens who pretended to be citizens.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} P. Pilhofer, \textit{Philippi}, vol. 2: \textit{Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi} (WUNT 119; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 601 (inscription 600/L229).
\item \textsuperscript{11} B. Rapske, \textit{The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 134.
\end{itemize}
The missionaries engaged in precisely the opposite behavior. Paul and Silas were Roman citizens who pretended to be noncitizens. The themes of Roman citizenship and public flogging intersect elsewhere in our sources, where it becomes quite apparent that the unjust flogging of a citizen was a direct affront to Roman social sensibilities. Cicero’s rhetoric soars, in this regard, when he prosecutes Verres for beating an innocent Roman citizen while serving as governor of Sicily:

There in the open market-place of Messana a Roman citizen, gentlemen, was beaten with rods; and all the while, amid the crack of the falling blows, no groan was heard from the unhappy man, no words came from his lips in his agony, except, “I am a Roman citizen.” By thus proclaiming this citizenship he had been hoping to avert all those blows and shield his body from torture. (Verr. 2.5.162)

Read against the background of Roman social values, the failure of Paul and Silas to leverage their citizen status during the events outlined in Acts 16:20–24 proves to be markedly countercultural. When it mattered most, the missionaries disowned the advantages pertaining to the citizen franchise and instead offered their backs to the lictor-bearers’ rods and their feet to the jailer’s stocks—all this in order to guarantee a level playing field for representatives from any social class in Philippi who might respond to the gospel.

The parallel with the behavior of Christ, described in Phil 2, is arresting. Like Christ, Paul and Silas did not consider their status as “something to be exploited” (cf. Phil 2:6, NRSV) but, instead, willingly endured suffering for the benefit of others. The affinity between the two passages relies on a particular understanding of ἀρπαγμόν in Phil 2:6.12 The NRSV (above) nicely captures the sense of the term as understood by the majority of scholars today (so also TNIV and HCSB).13 Paul’s point is that Jesus did not


13. A few commentators, however, still interpret ἀρπαγμὸν otherwise. Dunn builds on the work of J. C. O’Neill (“Hoover on Harpagmos Reviewed, with a Modest Proposal Concerning Philippians 2:6,” HTR 81 [1988] 445–49) to support the older interpretation, res rapienda, “something to be grasped” (Dunn, “Christ, Adam, and Preexistence,” 77). S. Vollenweider has recently mounted the most persuasive challenge to the dominant view of the meaning of ἄρπαγμον (“Der ‘Raub’ der Gottgleichheit: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vorschlag zu Phil. 2.6(-11),” NTS 45 [1999] 413–33). Vollenweider argues, from biblical, Jewish, and Hellenistic traditions, that the imagery reflected in the statement ἐὰν ἢ ἄρπαγμον ἢ γῆς πάσας τὸ εἶναι ἢ θεὸς should be taken in a wholly negative sense. In contrast to the hubris of god-like kings, who attempted to usurp an equality with God that was not theirs to possess, Christ did not regard “equality with God” as “Raub”/“booty” (ἄρπαγμον). It is too early to assess the impact of Vollenweider’s treatment upon the ongoing debate about the meaning of ἄρπαγμον in Phil 2:6, and the present discussion will proceed under rubric of the consensus position, which interprets ἄρπαγμον as “something to be exploited” (NRSV). Vollenweider’s essay deserves more attention here than space allows,
view his pretemporal status—and the corresponding authority that came with this status—as something to be used for his own advantage.

The passage in Philippians, moreover, pointedly underscores the fact that Christ—not his detractors or oppressors—was the one who was actually in control of his destiny throughout his progressive pilgrimage of public humiliation. Note the reflexive pronouns: ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν (v. 7); ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν (v. 8). Persons who heard Luke’s narrative of the missionaries in Philippi would have happily realized, as the story drew to a close, that Paul and Silas, too, had been fully in control all along. For throughout the series of events leading up to the release from prison in Acts 16:39, the opportunity was surely at hand for the missionaries to reveal their Roman citizenship to the colony’s magistrates, in order to avoid the physical suffering and public shaming associated with the beating and incarceration. At one point in the story, the theme of willing suffering is, in fact, explicitly emphasized. Against the expectations of the Philippian jailer, Paul and Silas refrained from exploiting the opportunity to escape from prison that was provided by the earthquake (vv. 26–28).

The particular form of hardship Paul and Silas initially endured further strengthens the proposed parallel. According to Luke’s narrative, “the

however, and some comments are in order regarding the potential implications of his findings for the project at hand.

As Vollenweider notes, his interpretation functions reasonably well in the context of Phil 2:6, whether or not one assumes that Christ occupied the position reflected in τὸ εἶναι ἸΣΑ ΘΕΟ before the incarnation. Vollenweider opts for the latter understanding (res rapienza): in v. 6b, Christ refuses to grasp at an “equality with God” that was not his before the incarnation, but which he will ultimately gain through his exaltation in vv. 9–11. Vollenweider acknowledges, however, that this view, which sharply distinguishes between “form of God” and “equality with God,” renders the interpretation of μορφῇ θεοῦ more problematic than does the reading that equates the two expressions and assigns both to Christ’s pretemporal existence (“Der ‘Raub’ der Gottgleichheit,” 428–29).

If we adopt the alternative that takes both ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων and τὸ εἶναι ἸΣΑ ΘΕΟ to refer, in slightly different ways, to Christ’s pretemporal status, we are still left (according to Vollenweider’s understanding) with a negative interpretation of the ἁρπαγμόν clause. In this case, what is meant is that Christ possessed by nature what (τὸ εἶναι ἸΣΑ ΘΕΟ) arrogant rulers sought to acquire unlawfully (“Der ‘Raub’ der Gottgleichheit,” 428). This poses somewhat of a problem for the present thesis, because the idea of the exploitation of status/authority is no longer at the semantic forefront of the expression. As Vollenweider notes, however, the Jewish and Hellenistic traditions that (a) decry the unlawful usurpation of divine equality also (b) warn against the selfish use of positions of power for personal enjoyment (Xen. Ages. 4–5; Muson. Fr. 8; Diotog. according to Stobaeus 4.7.62; Philo Mos. 1.160; Dio Chrysostom Or. 1.21; 62.1–7; 4.1 101–5; Plutarch Princ. iner. 2.780b; Alex. fort.1.9.330e; 10.332a). One could argue, then, that the latter idea (in this case, that Jesus, in contrast to earthly rulers, did not view his pretemporal status of equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage) remains strongly implied by the language of Phil 2:6b on Vollenweider’s reading of ἁρπαγμόν. Vollenweider summarizes: “So wie sich ein tugendhafter König der Wonnen von Tafel und Lager entschlägt um des Wohls seiner Untertanen willen, so entsagt der göttliche Christus der himmlischen Seligkeit” (i.e., ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων [= τὸ εἶναι ἸΣΑ ΘΕΟ]; Vollenweider, “Der ‘Raub’ der Gottgleichheit,” 429).

magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods” (16:22). I construe the reference to clothing in Luke’s account as a loose parallel to Christ exchanging “the form of God” for “the form of a slave” at the incarnation (Phil 2:6–7). With an increasing number of scholars, P. O’Brien takes the expression ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (Phil 2:6) to portray the pretemporal Christ “clothed in garments of divine majesty and splendour.” Clothing imagery seems at first glance far removed from Paul’s language in Phil 2, and it is beyond the scope of the present essay to demonstrate the viability of this sort of interpretation. There are good reasons, however (lexically, grammatically, and sociohistorically), to read the phrase as O’Brien suggests, and this, in turn, generates a parallel with Acts 16:22 that proves rather intriguing.

The beating Paul and Silas received at the hands of the colony’s magistrates advances the hypothesis in yet another way. For the physical maltreatment suffered by the missionaries in Luke’s story corresponds directly to Paul’s imagery in Phil 2:7, where the apostle depicts Christ “taking on the form of a slave” (2:7). To see why this is so we must further consider the social significance of flogging in the Roman world. As outlined above, citizenship and public flogging were mutually exclusive categories in Roman thinking. The physical beating of slaves, however, was an accepted social reality.

Jennifer Glancy, in an illuminating study of the relationship between whipping and social status, finds that “[t]he scars of a first-century body instantiate relationships of power, of legal status (freeborn, freed, or enslaved), of domination and submission, of honor and shame, and of gender.” She argues, in turn, for “a semiotic distinction between a breast

15. The use of the term exchanging here will likely strike the systematicians among my readership as problematic. It would take us far afield to consider in any detail precisely what Paul had in mind in his reference in v. 7 to Christ’s self-emptying (ἐκένωσεν). My understanding of the incarnation sees Christ taking on human nature (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος) alongside a pretemporal divine nature that remained his throughout the humiliation and exaltation described in Phil 2:6–11. I do not, however, view Paul’s concerns in the text as primarily ontological. Paul’s emphasis in the narrative relates, rather, to the profound loss and subsequent restoration of Christ’s pretemporal position or social status. By “being born in human likeness,” Christ exchanged his visible pretemporal glory (μορφῇ θεοῦ) for the ignominious appearance of a Greco-Roman slave (μορφὴν δούλου), relatively speaking. P. Oakes summarizes: “Between being like God and being like a slave, there is the widest status gap imaginable by Paul’s hearers. Paul is saying that for Christ to become human meant that deep a drop in status” (Philippians: From People to Letter, 196; see the discussion in Hellerman, Reconstructing Honor, 129–56; I find D. Jowers’ recent attempt to find ontology at the forefront of both μορφῇ θεοῦ (v. 6) and μορφὴν δούλου (v. 7) theologically attractive but exegetically unconvincing [D. Jowers, “The Meaning of ΜΟΡΦΗ in Philippians 2:6–7,” JETS 49 (2006) 739–66]).


pierced by a sword and a back welted by a whip."\textsuperscript{18} Scars left from wounds suffered in battle are marks of honor—in the words of Plutarch, “inscribed images of excellence and manly virtue” (\textit{Mor.} 331C). The theme surfaces in the context of Roman oratory: “Thus when Antonius in the course of his defense of Manius Aquilius tore open his client’s robe and revealed the honorable scars which he had acquired while facing his country’s foes, he relied no longer on the power of his eloquence, but appealed directly to the eyes of the Roman people” (Quintilian, \textit{Inst.} 2.15.7).

Scars from a beating have an entirely different sociosymbolic resonance. Public flogging in antiquity was essentially a status degradation ritual, so that “any free person who was whipped or struck suffered an injury to honor far in excess of whatever temporary pain or permanent mark was inflicted.”\textsuperscript{19} More to the point in the present connection, public beating in the Roman world was typically associated with the institution of slavery. Consider Apuleius’s description of a group of rural slaves encountered by his protagonist: “Good, gods, what scrawny little slaves there were! Their skin was everywhere embroidered with purple welts from their many beatings. Their backs, scarred from floggings, were shaded, as it were, rather than actually covered by their torn patchwork garments” (\textit{Metam.} 9.12).\textsuperscript{20} Glancy summarizes: “whipping, which brings dishonor to the one who is whipped, is suitable only for slaves, so one who is whipped, even if legally free, warrants description as servile.”\textsuperscript{21}

The parallel between Jesus as \textit{δοῦλος} in Phil 2:7—the only place in his letters where Paul uses the term to describe Christ—and the flogging of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:22–23 now becomes readily transparent. Like Christ in Paul’s grand narrative, the missionaries in Acts 16 did not regard their citizen franchise as “something to be exploited” but, instead, assumed what was tantamount to slave status in order to preserve the integrity of the gospel.\textsuperscript{22} It is little wonder that Paul, in another context, calls his scars “the marks of Jesus branded on my body” (Gal 6:17; cf. 2 Cor 11:24–25).

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{20} J. Shelton, trans., \textit{As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 176.
\textsuperscript{21} Glancy, “Boasting of Beatings,” 125.
\textsuperscript{22} Attempts to read Paul’s slavery terminology in Phil 2:7 as an allusion to Isaiah’s servant figure (Isa 42–53) or to Christ’s enslavement to corruption or to the elemental powers (Gal 4:3) are less than convincing. Dunn’s Adamic reading of the passage relies on the latter understanding, which, as L. D. Hurst has recently noted, is problematic (“Christ, Adam, and Preexistence Revisited,” \textit{Where Christology Began}, 87). What G. Fee says of the other occurrence of \textit{δοῦλος} in Philippians (1:1) applies here in 2:7, as well: “no one would have thought it to refer to other than to those owned by, and subservient to, the master of a household” (\textit{Paul’s Letter to the Philippians} [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 63). C. F. D. Moule adopted this seemingly straightforward interpretation several decades ago (“Further Reflexions on Philippians 2:5–11,” in \textit{Apostolic History and the Gospel} [ed. W. Gasque and R. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970] 268–69). The assessment finds confirmation in the association in the Roman mind of \textit{δοῦλος} and \textit{σταυρός}—both referenced in Phil 2:7–8—as profoundly shameful, mutually referential status signifiers. Thus, among the Romans, \textit{servile supplicium} (“slaves’ punishment”)
After the beating, Paul and Silas reach the nadir of their decline in honor and status, when they are imprisoned and have their feet fastened in stocks (Acts 16:23–24). Jesus, on his part, experiences the utter public humiliation of crucifixion in the account in Philippians (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, 2:8).

**VINDICATION: PAUL, SILAS, AND CHRIST**

As the story in Acts unfolds, the missionaries experience a sudden reversal of fortunes. God undertakes on behalf of Paul and Silas by delivering them from prison by means of an earthquake. The divine vindication of the missionaries—and, by extension, of their counterintuitive but eminently Christo-ethical behavior in unnecessarily submitting to the flagging and imprisonment—continues with the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his family. The following morning, the colony’s magistrates, apparently unaware of the tumultuous events of the previous evening, send for the missionaries to release them from prison. Paul’s response catches the reader by surprise: “They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves” (v. 37). The truth of the missionaries’ citizen status—like the reality of Jesus’ divine status—will not remain veiled under the temporary shame of public humiliation. God will finally vindicate his bond servants, and he will do so in the public eye. Paul’s insistence that his citizen status no longer remain “secret” nicely corresponds, in fact, to the exaltation of Christ in Phil 2:9–11.

*The Public Vindication of Jesus (Phil 2:9–11)*

Scholars have wrestled for generations with two issues in the Philippians passage that intersect with the present project. There is some debate, first of all, over the identity of “the name” that God grants to Jesus at his exaltation. Is τῷ ὄνοματι Ιησοῦ (v. 10) best understood as “the name which is Jesus” (genitive of apposition)? Or is the name in view in the phrase τῷ ὄνοματι Ιησοῦ the term κυρίος, which occurs later in the passage (v. 11)?

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(taking Θεοτόκος in v. 10 as a genitive of possession)?

A second issue concerns the nature of Christ after the exaltation. Just how are we to understand the exalted Christ vis-à-vis his pretemporal status or ontology? Was Christ not "Lord" before the incarnation? What, if anything, has changed?

Reconsideration of the ὄνομα terminology in the passage has the potential to render each of these problems a nonissue in a single stroke. I suggest that what is in view in vv. 9–11 is neither a new name for Christ nor a new position in relation either to God or to Christ’s pretemporal existence (v. 6). What is new, rather, is the public acknowledgement of the name that was Jesus’ all along.

It is important to recognize that the word ὄνομα can refer in Greek not only to the name by which a person is called. It can also mean "fame" or "reputation," much as we might say in English that a person has made a "name" for himself. In an important discussion of the language of honor in Latin and Greek, J. Lendon, in fact, squarely situates the ὄνομα word group in the semantic field of honor discourse. Thus, BDAG cites as one of the possible meanings of the word "recognition accorded a person on the basis of performance," and glosses the meaning as follows: "(well-known) name, reputation, fame." Fee rejects interpreting ὄνομα in our text in this way, because of the presence of the article (τὸ ὄνομα): "In this case the name, meaning ‘the well-


26. Questions such as these continue to attract scholarly attention. Vollenweider, for example, finds the description of Christ’s exaltation (vv. 9–11) highly problematic for an interpretation of v. 6, which assumes that the Christ occupied the position reflected in τὸ εἶναι ἐξαίρετον prior to the incarnation. On a reading such as this, the honors subsequently gained through the exaltation in vv. 9–11 would seem to lack any genuine substance: “Jesus erlangt wieder jenen unüberbietbaren Status, den er von Anfang an innehatte” (“Der ’Raub’ der Gottgleichheit,” 428; similarly A. Y. Collins, “Psalms Philippians 2:6–11, and the Origins of Christology,” BibInt 1 [2002] 366–67; C. Osiek, Philippians, Philemon [Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000] 64: “What more could be added that this heavenly being did not have before?”). Vollenweider therefore opts for the alternative view, which understands Christ to have acquired “Gottesname, Weltherrschaft und kultische Verehrung” (cf. vv. 9–11) only at the exaltation. This reading of Phil 2:6–11, however, trades an exegetical dilemma for a Christological one, as Vollenweider candidly acknowledges when he claims to have adopted the interpretation “freilich nur ‘mit Furcht und Zittern’ angesichts des langen Schattens des Arius!” (p. 429).


known name,’ probably reflects the OT phenomenon where ‘the name’ was a periphrasis for Yahweh.” Fee’s point is well taken, but I believe Paul’s emphasis lies elsewhere. Even in the OT, the “name” of God refers not only to the label or title “Yahweh.” Like ὄνομα in Greek, the Hebrew term שֵׁם, when associated with God, can pointedly connote “fame,” “reputation,” and it often does so when contextually juxtaposed with יהוה (Exod 9:16 [cf. ירתם, v. 13]; 2 Sam 7:22–23; Isa 12:4, 26:8, 55:13, 63:12–14; Jer 10:6, 14:7, 32:20 [cf. v. 17]; Ezek 20:39, 36:20–23; Mal 1:6; Dan 9:14–15; Neh 9:10 [cf. v. 6]). Interestingly enough, most of these texts recall the “name” or “reputation” that Yahweh made for himself among the nations when he delivered Israel from Egypt. We will not be surprised, then, to find Christ gaining a corresponding grant of public recognition and esteem for the marvelous act of salvation (Phil 2:7–8) by which he inaugurated the new covenant. Thus, while I agree with Fee that the phrase τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα in Phil 2:9 allusively anticipates κύριος (v. 11; both the chiastic structure of vv. 10–11 [10a ~ 11b, 10b ~ 11a] and Paul’s OT citation suggest as much), I would maintain that Paul in v. 9 has placed the emphasis decidedly on the reputation or status associated with that name.

We have good reason to believe, moreover, that the confessors in Phil 2:10 publicly acknowledge a title (κύριος/ יהוה) that Christ has possessed all along. Post-Easter reflection on the nature of Jesus led numbers of his earliest followers to associate Christ, in retrospect, with Yahweh before his exaltation. Most remarkable, in this regard, is John 12, where the author claims that Isaiah saw Christ’s glory in the familiar OT theophany in Isa 6, where the figure in view is specifically identified in the Hebrew Scriptures as יהוה (Isa 6:3, 5; cf. John 12:41). The “I am” statements in John’s Gospel point in the same direction (cf. esp. 8:58). The title “Lord” is, in fact, applied to Jesus throughout the Gospels—not often, to be sure, with the connotations suggested here, but there are representative instances even in the Synoptics where the evangelists (and/or various tradents who may have preceded them) associate Jesus with κύριος/ יהוה well before the exaltation (Mark 1:3, Luke 1:43, 11; less directly Luke 5:8, 10:17).

We cannot assign language of this sort solely to later (post-Pauline) Christological reflection, moreover, because Paul himself could talk about

29. Fee, Philippians, 221; Hoftius cites later rabbinic parallels (Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11, 110–13).
30. Alternatively, given the centrality of the imperial cult in Philippi, the arithrous construction (τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα) could conceivably allude to status of the Roman emperor, who claimed in his realm to “the reputation that is above every reputation.” As many have noted, Paul likely intended both the κύριος terminology (v. 11) and the expression εἶναι ὤν θεῷ (v. 6) to resonate against the background of emperor veneration (Fee, Philippians, 222) or, more generally, imperial power and ideology (P. Oakes, “Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians,” JSNT 27 [2005] 301–22; but note D. Burk’s recent reservations concerning overly political readings of Paul “[Is Paul’s Gospel Counterimperial? Evaluating the Prospects of the ‘Fresh Perspective’ for Evangelical Theology,” JETS 51 (2008) 309–37]).
the crucifixion of “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8; cf. Gal 6:14, 1 Thess 2:15; note also 1 Cor 7:10 and 9:14, where Paul relates Jesus traditions that “the Lord” [ὁ κύριος] gave during his earthly ministry; cf. 11:23, 26). Particularly relevant in the present connection is 2 Cor 8:9, which (like Phil 2) describes the preexistence and the humiliation (though not the exaltation) of Christ and which appears to assume that Christ possessed the title κύριος throughout: “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” We should not, therefore, restrict Christ’s identification with YHWH/κύριος to the period after his exaltation, and assume that Jesus somehow received a new title during his vindication in Phil 2:9–11. It is, rather, the public recognition of Jesus as YHWH/κύριος and the effective exercise of his universal dominion that represents the heart of what transpires in the exaltation of Christ, as portrayed by Paul in the text.

Whatever else we might tease out of the passage with respect to the traditional categories of Nicene Christology, Phil 2:6–11 is quintessentially a story of (a) the pretemporal possession, (b) the incarnational renunciation, and (c) the postresurrection restoration of Christ’s exalted status.31 And social status in the Roman world was a preeminently public commodity. I suggest we interpret the threefold use of ὄνομα in the passage accordingly. What has changed about Christ in the exaltation, then, is neither his name nor his position vis-à-vis God nor the essential nature of Christ’s pretemporal existence. What is new is the public recognition and acknowledgement of Christ’s divine status, a reality that was veiled during the incarnation.32 At his exaltation, Christ receives “the reputation/fame that is above every reputation/fame,” for now every created being will publicly acknowledge that Christ, not Caesar, stands at the apex of the pecking order of the universe—that Christ, not Caesar, is Lord. In the words of Hofius, “die zuvor ‘verborgene’ Königherrschaft Jesu Christi mit der Inthronisation zum Allherrn ‘offenbar’ geworden ist.”33

The Public Vindication of the Missionaries

The social pilgrimage of Paul and Silas in Acts 16 also involved the public revelation of a status that the missionaries had possessed but failed to disclose throughout their humiliation and suffering. In Acts 16:37, Paul proves unwilling to permit the magistrates to “discharge” him and Silas “in secret.” As J. Neyrey rightly maintains, Paul here “demands from these

32. See O’Brien’s forceful argument for taking ἐξομολογήσηται (v. 10) according to its basic meaning in classical Greek, “to declare openly or confess publicly” (Philippians, 246–50).
33. Hofius, Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11, 94. Hofius remarks here about the exaltation of Christ in Heb 1 but sees precisely the same phenomenon occurring in Phil 2:9–11 (ibid., 95).
Paul’s leverage, of course, is the missionaries’ Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37). And the reaction of Philippi’s esteemed duumviri to this brazen challenge from a nonelite, itinerant Jewish preacher provides a surprising and delightful twist to the conclusion of the conflict between the missionaries and the colony’s local aristocracy: “The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city” (vv. 38–39). In a dramatic status reversal, Paul and Silas turn the tables and emerge as social victors in their contest with Philippi’s elite duumviri. God has truly chosen “what is weak in the world to shame the strong,” as Paul elsewhere so pointedly asserts (1 Cor 1:27).

The story finally draws to a close. We discover that Paul and Silas willingly complied with the magistrates’ request that they leave the colony, but only according to a timetable of their own choosing. First, the missionaries returned to Lydia’s home. Only after “they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there” did Paul and Silas finally depart from Philippi (v. 40). The “brothers and sisters” Luke mentions became the nucleus of the Jesus community at Philippi to whom Paul would one day write the letter we now call “Philippians.”

THE ORIGIN OF THE PARALLEL

How might we account for these striking points of correspondence between Acts 16 and Phil 2:6–11? Our answer will depend, to some degree, on how much confidence we have in the veracity of the narrative in Acts. Luke has not fared particularly well as a historian in some circles. Those who question the historical reliability of Acts 16 will likely view the story as a creative attempt to portray the experiences of Paul and Silas in Philippi in a manner analogous to Christ’s paradigmatic suffering and vindication, perhaps attributing the similarities between Luke’s narrative and Paul’s to the widespread theme of humiliation-and-exaltation so central to early Christian ideology and praxis (Matt 23:12; Luke 14:10–11, 18:14; 2 Cor 8:9; Jas 4:10; Heb 2:9; 1 Pet 5:6).

It is, indeed, possible that Paul and Luke independently framed their respective stories in view of this overarching, highly influential Christo-


36. The motif is hardly an original one with early Christianity. As scholars have noted, Philo’s portrayal of Moses—exalted and honored by God after renouncing his privileged position in Egypt (Mos. 1.148–58)—closely parallels the movement of Christ in Phil 2 (and, I would add, the movement of Paul and Silas in Acts 16; Collins, “Psalms, Philippians 2:6–11,” 370–71).
logical motif. On such an account, however, the remarkable parallels between Acts 16 and Phil 2 remain unexplained. Nor can Luke’s particular tendency to portray the pilgrimage of the apostles according to the analogy of the suffering and vindication of Christ clarify the relationship between the two texts. For the story about the missionaries juxtaposes two key ideas in a manner unparalleled elsewhere among Luke’s narratives of apostolic suffering but deeply embedded in Paul’s portrayal of Christ in Phil 2: (1) a willingness temporarily to relinquish the benefits of social status in order to serve others and (2) a profound status reversal that results, in the case of the missionaries, in both (a) the humiliation of the magistrates and (b) the explicitly public vindication of God’s apostolic messengers.

Literary dependence offers itself as another alternative, and it is quite possible that Luke was familiar with Paul’s letter and patterned his Philippian narrative accordingly. This would certainly provide a ready explanation for the striking commonalities between the two texts. A lack of convincing verbal parallels, however, problematizes any explanation of the relationship between the two passages that assumes direct dependence. Potential parallels are remote, at best. In Acts 16:17, the “slave girl” calls Paul and Silas δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου. The Philippian jailer later addresses the missionaries as κύριοι (v. 30). One could conceivably argue that the former reference ironically anticipates the servile submission of the missionaries to the beating that they receive at the hands of the magistrates later in the Lukan narrative (cf. μορφὴν δοῦλου λαβόν, Phil 2:7) and that the latter corresponds to the acclamation of Jesus as κύριος in Phil 2:11. It is also the case that the term translated “stocks” in Acts 16:24 (ξύλον) is the word Luke has used three times earlier in his narrative for the cross of Christ (Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29). Paul, of course, emphasizes the humiliation associated with Christ’s crucifixion by means of an emphatic grammatical construction in Phil 2:8 (θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ). I find none of these verbal parallels particularly persuasive.

For those of us with more confidence in Luke’s reliability as a historian, another possibility commends itself. 37 I suggest that the missionaries’ initial experience in Philippi, subsequently related by Luke in Acts 16, (a) influenced the way Paul framed his portrayal of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in the letter he later wrote to the church in the colony and (b) provided the historical-contextual background for the reception

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of Paul’s story of Jesus by the Philippian ekklesia. At the very least, it is a hypothesis that invites some consideration.

To this point in the discussion I have used the term parallel(s) rather loosely, in a manner that now calls for clarification. Scholars have expended much effort in recent years to discover allusions in the NT to older textual traditions. Earlier excesses, epitomized in the proliferation of “laundry lists” of alleged parallels have now been significantly curtailed by the application of increasingly rigorous criteria for identifying NT allusions to older literature. Particularly important, in this regard, is the evaluation of verbal parallels. Thus, G. Manning introduces his helpful taxonomy of criteria for establishing the strength of an intertextual allusion by emphasizing the significance of verbal parallels: “The main criteria for the strength of an allusion to an earlier work are 1) the number of similar words and phrases 2) used in similar ways 3) when compared with other possible sources.”


A significant difference obtains, however, between the postulation of an allusion to an earlier piece of literature and the suggestion that a literary text intentionally echoes an earlier historical event. Each approach requires a somewhat distinct set of criteria to determine what counts as an allusion. Appeals to verbal parallels, although wholly appropriate for evaluating possible allusions to written documents, prove singularly inappropriate in the present connection, because I am arguing here for an allusion not to a text but, rather, to an event. A literary echo of an earlier historical occurrence must find its legitimacy elsewhere. I suggest two criteria for evaluating these allusions, criteria that relate, respectively, to (a) the relationship between the event and the text and (b) the collective memory of the recipients of the document in which the text segment is embedded.

It will be self-evident that a convincing allusion to an earlier event rests, first of all, on close agreement between (a) the details of the event in question and (b) the meaning of the text in which the allusion is found. The proposed allusion in Phil 2:6–11 to the missionaries’ earlier experience in Philippi readily satisfies the demands of this criterion. As we have seen, the parallels between the events outlined in Acts 16 and the pilgrimage of Christ in Paul’s letter are particularly noteworthy for their unfolding thematic congruence. Although lacking in strict verbal parallels, the set of correspondences appears appreciably to exceed what might independently be generated by the shared world view of early Christianity. Second, for a historical event to generate an allusion in a later piece of literature, we will expect the event itself to have been an especially meaningful one for author and readers alike. For only in the case of an exceptionally memorable experience can an author expect his readers to catch an echo of the event in a later literary allusion. Findings from the field of social anthropology suggest that this may very well have been the case for events surrounding the establishment of the church in Philippi, as related by Luke in Acts 16.

Social groups tend to legitimize themselves by means of a shared narrative of group origins, a story that attests to the group’s (often divine) beginnings at some point in the recent or distant past. The practice is especially prevalent among minority groups that find themselves in an...

adversarial relationship with the surrounding culture. Luke relates the Philippian *ekklesia*'s narrative of origins, of course, in Acts 16. Given the social location of the Jesus community in Philippi as a threatened, non-elite, voluntary association (Phil 1:27–30), it is not unlikely that the story of Paul, Silas, and the local magistrates merited retelling again and again among Christians in the colony, in the years between the founding of the church and Paul’s Roman imprisonment more than a decade later. The divine vindication of the missionaries would certainly have supplied the Philippians with a robust sense of legitimacy, where their self-identity as God’s people in the colony was concerned. And if the story of Paul, Silas, and the magistrates did, indeed, function as the community’s narrative of origins, it is not unreasonable to imagine that Paul framed his portrait of Christ in the letter accordingly.

The manner in which Paul and Silas responded to the circumstances that confronted them in Philippi would unquestionably have enhanced the credibility of Paul’s pointed challenge to the Philippians in the second chapter of the epistle. For while they were in the colony, Paul and Silas had faithfully modeled the very Christocentric mindset that forms the heart of Paul’s exhortation: “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited” (Phil 2:4–6). The fact that Jesus—like Paul and Silas—was ultimately vindicated for his countercultural approach to status and power would have rendered Paul’s epistolary allusion to his ministry with the Philippians all the more engaging and persuasive.

42. The hypothesis would be strengthened somewhat if Polycarp had recalled the events of Acts 16 in his letter to the Philippians, written around a century later. Unfortunately, he did not.

43. The way in which Paul later viewed his experience in Philippi further supports this explanation. It can hardly be disputed that the references to slavery and crucifixion in Phil 2:7–8 graphically underscore the public shame of Christ’s humiliation. The apostle’s autobiographical reflections about the debacle in Philippi demonstrate that Paul understood his treatment at the hands of the magistrates in similar social categories: “we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated (ὑβρισθέντες) at Philippi” (1 Thess 2:2a). It is also rather interesting to note that directly following the portrayal of the humiliation and vindication of Christ in Phil 2:6–11, Paul makes mention of his “presence” among the Philippians (2:12).

44. As Kreitzer reminds us, Paul’s letters were intended “to be heard in public rather than simply read in private” (“When He at Last Is First!” 114, author’s emphasis). This further underscores the significance of collective memory for the way in which Phil 2:6–11 would have been heard by the (gathered) Jesus community in the colony.