

## The Literary Form of Philippians 2.6-11:

The literary form of this passage has been debated again and again. Below are listed some of the ways in which scholars have attempted to answer the primary question: 'How are we to set down the lines of this hymn, or poem?' Other questions have included: 'Can we discern an earlier form/an original form?' and 'How do we interpret the passage?'

- 1) E. Lohmeyer (*Kyrios Jesus*, Heidelberg, 1928, 2nd edition 1961, pp.5f)  
It is formed as: six stanzas, each of three lines, with three stresses to a line.
- 2) J. Jeremias (*Studia Paulina*, Haarlem, 1953, pp.146-154)  
There are three stanzas of four lines apiece (i 6,7a; ii 7b-8; iii 9-11) with certain lines omitted (that are viewed as Pauline amplifications).
- 3) R.P. Martin (*Carmen Christi*, pp.36-38)  
It is a series of couplets capable of antiphonal recitation: A 6a,6b; B 7a,7b; C 7c,7d; D 8a,8b; E 9a,9b; F 10b-11.
- 4) G. Strecker, (*ZNW* 55 (1964), p.70; also R. Deichgraber... and J.-F. Collange...)  
It constitutes two stanzas: 6-8 and 9-11.
- 5) C.H. Talbert ('Pre-existence in Philippians 2.6-11', *JBL* 86 (1967), pp.141-153)  
It constitutes four stanzas, each with three lines.
- 6) Morna D. Hooker ('Philippians 2.6-11' in E. Earle Ellis and Erick Grasser, eds., *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kummel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978, pp.151-154)  
It is a presentation in two stanzas, each with ten lines, which as a whole includes all the passage without excisions and is all of Paul's doing, there being no earlier/original version.
- 7) Gerd Theissen (*The New Testament*, tr. John Bowden, T & T Clark Ltd., 2003, pp.9f.)  
It consists of two strophes; the first of nine lines; the second of eight lines.

Below, I present my own attempt at describing the layout and form of this passage: it is in three parts (**abb'**), which are themselves composed of three pieces (**abb'**), which also are composed of three pieces (**abb'**). The annotation is as follows: **a** is the opening/introductory piece; **b** is the first development; and **b'** is the second, paralleling, development which completes the whole. The 'hymn', if that is what it is, is most likely the work of the writer of Paul's letter: it utilises his writing style (**abb'**); evidences his (**bb'**) balancing of *οὐχ* with *ἀλλὰ*; and demonstrates his use of *ὄς* and *ἵνα* to begin new pieces (all are found commonly in *Paul's* letters). I maintain as well that **abb'**, as a writing style, is in evidence in every book of the New Testament. That in itself raises other issues.

**In the Greek:**

**In a Literal Translation:**

<p>2.6- 2.11</p>	<p>ὅς  ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ  ὑπάρχων  οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο  τὸ εἶναι ἴσα  θεῶ,  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 ἔχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα  τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομα,  ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ  πάν γόνυ κάμψῃ  ἐπουρανίων  καὶ ἐπιγείων  καὶ καταχθονίων,  καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται  ὅτι κύριος  Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς  εἰς δόξαν  θεοῦ  πατρὸς.</p>	<p>He(Who)  in form of God  subsisting,  <u>not</u> robbery deemed (it)  to be equal  with God,  <u>but</u> himself he emptied  form of a slave taking  in likeness of men becoming;  and in respect of appearance  being found as a man  he humbled himself,  becoming obedient  until death  and death on a cross,  wherefore also God him highly exalted  and gave to him the name  the one above every name;  that at the name of Jesus  every knee should bend  in heaven  and on earth  and under the earth,  and every tongue should confess  that Lord  Jesus Christ (is),  to glory  of God  Father.</p>
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