Sergio Rosell Nebreda

Christ Identity

A Social-Scientific Reading of Philippians 2.5–11

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht



© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

Herausgegeben von
Jan Christian Gertz, Dietrich-Alex Koch,
Matthias Köckert, Hermut Löhr,
Joachim Schaper und Christopher Tuckett

Band 240

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Sergio Rosell Nebreda

Christ Identity

A Social-Scientific Reading of Philippians 2.5–11

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

ISBN 978-3-525-53254-6

ISBN 978-3-647-53254-7 (E-Book)

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen/
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht LLC, Oakville, CT, U.S.A.
www.v-r.de
Alle Rechte vorbehalten. Das Werk und seine Teile sind urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung in anderen als den gesetzlich zugelassenen Fällen bedarf der vorherigen schriftlichen Einwilligung des Verlages. Hinweis zu § 52a UrhG: Weder das Werk noch seine Teile dürfen ohne vorherige schriftliche Einwilligung des Verlages öffentlich zugänglich gemacht werden. Dies gilt auch bei einer entsprechenden Nutzung für Lehr- und Unterrichtszwecke.
Printed in Germany.
Druck und Bindung: ♁ Hubert & Co, Göttingen

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Contents

Chapter I: Introduction

1. *Status Quaestionis* 25

2. The Reading of the *Carmen Christi* in a New Light 27

3. Outline of Analysis 31

4. Concluding Remarks 33

Chapter II: Reading Ancient Texts through Social Identity Theory

1. Description of the Task 35

2. Social Identity Theory: Description 36
   2.1 Defining Identity 42
   2.2 Identity: Born or Made? 44

3. Potential Limitations of the Chosen Approach 46
   3.1. Modern Theories Applied to Ancient Texts 46
   3.2 Lack of (Ancient) Evidence 49
   3.3 History *vs* Sociology 50

4. Identity in the First-Century Mediterranean World 52
   4.1 Identity for Paul 52
   4.2 Social Identity Theory and the Mediterranean World 54

5. Group-Identity Formation in Philippi 60
   5.1 Identity and Ethnicity 61
   5.2 The Source of Social Identity according to Philippians 63

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Chapter III: The Larger Context: First-Century Mediterranean Society through the Social Sciences

1. Introduction 67

2. Reading Ancient Texts 69
   2.1 Emic-Etic 70
   2.2 Reading Perspective 74
      2.2.1 Social Scripts 75
      2.2.2 High and Low Context Societies 76

3. Curse and Blessing of 'Modelling' 77
   3.1 Advantages of Being Explicit 79
   3.2 Heuristic or Prediction Tool? 79
   3.3 The Problem of 'Fixed' or Inflexible Models 81
   3.4 One Model *vs* Many Models? 81

4. The Context: The Pre-Industrial Society 83
   4.1 Characteristics 83
      4.1.1 Hierarchical 84
      4.1.2 Wide Gap between Rural and Urban Settings 85
      4.1.3 Division of Labour 86
      4.1.4 Strong Group-Based Character 86
   4.2 Structures 87

5. First-Century Circum-Mediterranean Region 88
   5.1 First-Century Mediterranean Values? 89
   5.2 'Pivotal' Values Re-Examined 90
      5.2.1 Honour and Shame 91
      5.2.2 Limited Good Perception 98
      5.2.3 Kinship 106
   5.3 The Person in This Context..... 106
      5.3.1 Dyadic Personality 107
      5.3.2 Agonistic Experience 110
      5.3.3 Patronage 113

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

6. Conclusions 115

Chapter IV: The Roman Colony of Philippi

1. Introduction 119

2. The Roman Colony of Philippi. 121
   2.1 History, Archaeology. 121
   2.2 Religion(s) 129
      2.2.1 Literary, Religious Myths 132
      2.2.2 The Imperial Cult 134

3. Rome's Mission to the World 140
   3.1 An Empire of Honour 142
      3.1.1 Granting of Privileges 143
      3.1.2 Patron-Client Relations 145
   3.2 Romanisation: *Urbanitas*, *Humanitas* and *Romanitas* 147
      3.2.1 Romanisation towards the West 154
      3.2.2 Romanisation towards the East 155
         3.2.2.1 Conquest of the Admired 156
         3.2.2.2 Changes in Property 157
         3.2.2.3 Preliminary Conclusions 160
   3.3 Identity in the Graeco-Roman Context 161
      3.3.1 Philippi as Colony 163
      3.3.2 Living in the Colony 164
         3.3.2.1 Day to Day Living 165
         3.3.2.2 Voluntary Associations 166
         3.3.2.3 Roman Citizenship 166

4. Paul's Experience in Philippi 168
   4.1 Paul's Visits to Philippi 168
   4.2 Acts: A Reliable Historical Source? 171
   4.3 The Incident at Philippi as Test Case 174
      4.3.1 Setting up the Scene 174

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

4.3.2 The Charges 176
4.3.3 What Then? 181

5. Conclusions 183

Chapter V: Paul: A Man under Constraint

1. Introduction 185

2. Paul through Many Lenses 186
2.1 Paul according to Himself 186
2.1.1 A δοῦλος of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1.1) 187
2.1.1.1 Slavery in Greece and Rome 189
2.1.1.1.1 Sources of Slavery 190
2.1.1.1.2 Justification of Slavery 192
2.1.1.2 The Slave's Status 194
2.1.1.3 Slavery as Social Death 197
2.1.2 Slavery Redefined: A Model of Discipleship 199
2.2 Luke's Portrait of Paul: The Roman Citizen 205

3. Suffering in Paul: A Theology of Discipleship 208
3.1 Prisoner for Christ's Sake (Phil. 1.13) 212
3.1.1 Incarceration and Shame 213
3.1.2 Incarceration and Paul's View of Discipleship 215
3.2 Abased but Content (Phil. 4.11–12) 218
3.3 Apostolate and Suffering 219
3.4 The Persecutor Persecuted 219

4. Leadership in Paul's Style: *Imitatio*, Control or Both? 222
4.1 Power Relations 222
4.2 A δοῦλος in Command? 223
4.2.1 *Imitatio Pauli* and/or *Imitatio Christi*? 224
4.2.2 Living the Cruciform Life 230

5. Conclusions 231

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Chapter VI: Corresponding with the Communities

1. Paul: The Letter-Writer Apostle 233
1.1 A New Way of Being in Touch 234
1.2 How to Understand Written Correspondence in Antiquity 235
1.2.1 Written Letters to Be Read Aloud 236
1.2.1.1 Oral/Aural Elements 236
1.2.1.2 The Role of the Emissaries 238
1.2.2 Letters Addressing *Ad Hoc* Situations 239
1.2.2.1 *Ad Hoc* but Universal also 240
1.2.2.2 Not Thorough but to the Point 241
1.2.2.3 Danger of 'Mirror-Reading' 243

2. Philippians through a Socio-Rhetorical Approach 244
2.1 Provenance 247
2.2 The Importance of the Social Location for SIT 249
2.3 Is It All in the Style? (Letter-Forms) 251
2.3.1 A Friendly Letter 253
2.3.2 A Unified Letter 257
2.4 Structure of the Letter to the Philippians 259

3. Recipients: the Crux of Generalisation in the *Umwelt* of the Roman Empire 262
3.1 The Christian Community at Philippi (the Ingroup) 263
3.1.1 Demographic Figures 263
3.1.2 Prosopographic Description 264
3.1.3 Conclusions Concerning the Recipients 265
3.2 Adversaries: the Many Faces of the Outgroup 266
3.2.1 Envious and Rival Preachers (1.15) 267
3.2.2 Political Adversaries (1.28) 269
3.2.3 Enemies of the Cross (3.2, 18–19) 271
3.2.4 Concluding Remarks on the Adversaries 275

4. Philippians Aimed at Identity Formation 278
4.1 Paul's Purpose(s) 278

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

4.2 The Centrality of Christ as Identity Model 283

5. Conclusions 285

Chapter VII: The Source of Identity: The So-Called Christ-Hymn

1. Introduction 287

2. A Closer Look at 2.[5]6–11 288
   2.1 The Question of Genre 288
   2.2 Philippians 2.6–11 in Its Present Context 293
   2.3 Divisions/Movements 297
      2.3.1 First Act: Christ's High Existence (2.6) 299
      2.3.2 Second Act: Christ's Humiliation (2.7–8) 304
      2.3.3 Third Act: Christ's Exaltation (2.9–11) 311
   2.4 The Christ-Hymn and Its Literary *Sitz im Leben* 316
      2.4.1 Phil 2.6–11 and the Literature of that Time 317
         2.4.1.1 The Hymn to Augustus 319
         2.4.1.2 Christ's Lordship *vs* Caesar's Empire 321
      2.4.2 Christ and Religious Myths 324

3. The Function of Philippians 2.5–11 329

4. The Christ-Hymn: Alternative Living in the City 341

5. Conclusions 344

Bibliography 349

Index 385

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Preface

The present book is the outcome of years of intense research focused on Paul's letter to the Philippians, attempting to understand how the young Christ-following community could have received the apostle's message mediated by those in charge of reading it outloud in public. My discovery, some years earlier, of the vital role the social sciences played in understanding the ancient text opened a door which allowed me to investigate the matter with a clear sense of direction and insight. Today I cannot conceive of a better way to look at Scripture than that which is both informed by ideological/theological matters in combination with the social sciences. I hope the end result will satisfy those who read it with similar questions in mind.

As with any academic piece of work, much of my particular reading of Philippians is based on biblical scholars, historians, anthropologists and other social scientists, who so helpful have been along the way. Many others –colleagues, editors, students– have also contributed either by revising some of the chapters or the totality of the manuscript, by way of frank dialogue over a cup of coffee or simply by sporadic comments from which I have also benefited. Special mention is reserved for Dennis Byler, Mark Abbott and Jonathan Rowe –all of them from SEUT– who read all or parts of the work and clarified it with their valuable suggestions. Stephan J. Joubert, my mentor at the University of Pretoria, was key in bringing the best out of me in the course of the writing of the dissertation; his suggestions much improved the work. Jan van der Watt, and Andries van Aarde made my short stay in Pretoria a pleasant one, putting at my disposal everything I needed, and more. I am also thankful to my employer, OMS Inc. and to Seminario Evangélico Unido de Teología (SEUT), where I have taught for more than ten years, for granting me a sabbatical to focus on the completion of the project.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my wife Annette and our three wonderful children, Andrea, Josh and Pieter, who have always been a source of encouragement and are a wonderful bunch where to feel completely at home. They replicate the Christ identity I refer to in the book in ways that constantly call me to the core values of the gospel.

El Escorial, Spain
November, 2010

Sergio Rosell Nebreda

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Abbreviations

Classical Sources

Ael	Aelius Aristides
AdRm	*Ad Roma*
Euol	*Euology of Rome*
Dis	*Discourse*
Apol	Apollodorus (Pseudo-Apollodorus)
Bib	*Bibliotheca*
App	Appian of Alexandria
BCiv	*Bella Civilia*
Apul	Apuleius
Asc	*Asclepius*
Met	*Metamorphoses*
Aristop	Aristophanes
Vespae	*Vespae* (Wasps)
Aristot	Aristotle
EthEud	*Ethica Eudemia*
EthNic	*Ethica Nicomachea*
Met	*Metaphysica*
Pol	*Politica*
Rhet	*Rhetorica*
Cic	Cicero
Amic	*De Amicitia*
Att	*Epistulae ad Atticum*
Balb	*Pro Balbo*
Caecin	*Pro Caecina*
Cat	*In Catalinam*
DeOr	*De Oratore*
Div	*De Divinatione*
DivCaec	*Divinatio in Caecilium*
Fam	*Epistulae ad familiares*
Fin	*De Finibus*
Flac	*Pro Flacco*
HarResp	*De Haruspicum Responso*
Imp Pom	*Pro Lege manilia (De Imperio Cn. Pompeii)*
Leg	*De Legibus*
Luc	*Lucullus*
Off	*De Officiis*
PartOr	*Partitiones Oratoriae*
Phil	*Orationes Philippicae*
Planc	*Pro Plancio*
QFr	*Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem*
Quinct	*Pro Quinctio*
Sen	*De Senectute*
Tusc	*Tusculanae Disputationes*
Verr	*In Verrem*
Columella	Columella

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Rust	*De re rustica*
Dem	Demosthenes
Cor	*De corona*
Dig	*Digesta*
Dio	Cassius Dio
HistRom	*Roman History*
Or	*Orationes*
DiodSic	Dioduros Siculus
DiogLaert	Diogenes Laertius
DionHal	Dionysius of Halicarnassus
AntRom	*Antiquitates Romanae*
Dem	*De Demosthene*
Pomp	*Epistula ad Popeium Geminum*
Epict	Epictetus
Diss	*Dissertationes* (also known as *Diatribiai [Diatr]*)
Eur	Euripides
Bacch	*Bacchae*
Gaius	Gaius
Inst	*Institutiones*
Galen	Galen
Pulse	*On the Pulse*
Gellius	Aulus Gellius
Noct att	*Noctes atticae*
Hdt	Herodotus
Hist	*Historiai*
Hom	Homer
Od	*Odyssea*
Hor	Horace
ArsP	*Ars Poetica*
Carm	*Carmina* (also known as Odes [Od])
CarmSaec	*Carmen Saeculare*
Ep	*Epodes*
Iamb	Iamblichus
Protr	*Protrepticus*
VPyth	*Vita Pythagorae*
Isoc	Isocrates
Dem	*Ad Demonicum*
Paneg	*Panegyricus*
Jos	Flavius Josephus
Ant	*Antiquitates Judaicae*
Ap	*Contra Apionem*
BJ	*Bellum Judaicum*
Vit	*Vita*
Juv	Juvenal
Sat	*Satirae*
Livy	Livy
Hist	*History of Rome*
Longus	Longus
Dafnis and Cloe	
Lucan	Lucan
Bell Civ	*Bellum Civile*
Luc	Lucian of Samosata
Cat	*Cataplus*

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Peregr	*De morte Peregrini*
Quo Hist	*Opera III: Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*
Somn	*Somnium (Vita Luciani)*
Tox	*Toxaris*
VerHis	*Verae Historiae*
Mart	Martial
Ep	*Epigrams*
Spect	*Liber spectaculorum*
Men	Menander
Georg	*Georgos*
Treat	*Treatises*
Min	Minucius Felix
Oct	*Octavius*
Ov	Ovid
Am	*Amores*
ArsAm	*Ars Amatoria*
Met	*Metamorphoses*
Pet	Petronius
Sat	*Satirycon*
Phaed	Phaedrus
Append	*Appendixes*
Philo	Philo of Alexandria
Abr	*De Abrahamo*
Agr	*De Agricultura*
ConfLing	*Confusione Linguarum*
DeusImm	*Quod Deus sit Immutabilis*
Flacc	*In Flaccum*
Jos	*De Iosepho*
Leg	*Legum allegoriae*
LegGaj	*Legatio ad Gaium*
MigAbr	*De Migratione Abrahami*
OmnProbLib	*Quod omnis Probus Liber sit*
OpMund	*De Opificio Mundi*
Plant	*De Plantatione*
QG	*Quaestiones et solutions in Genesin*
Som	*De Somniis*
SpecLeg	*De Specialibus Legibus*
VitMos	*De Vita Mosis*
Philostr	Flavius Philostratus
VitAp	*Vita Apolonii*
Pl	Plato
Alc Maj	*Alcibiades major*
Apol	*Apologia*
Ep	*Epistulae*
Gorg	*Gorgias*
Leg	*Leges*
Phaed	*Phaedo*
Plin	Pliny (The Elder) Gaius Plinius Secundus
NHist	*Naturalis Historia*
Pliny	Pliny (The Younger) Gaius Plinius Caecilius
Ep	*Epistulae*
Tra	*Epistulae ad Trajanum*
Plut	Plutarch

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Mor	*Moralia*
Am	*Amatorius*
Amic Mult	*De amicorum multitudine*
Def	*De Defectu Oraculorum*
Precep	*Precepta gerendae rei publicae* (Precepts of Politics)
VitPar	*Vitae Parallelae*
Aem	*Aemilius Paulus*
Ag	*Agiatis*
Alex	*Alexander*
Ant	*Antonius*
Brut	*Brutus*
Caes	*Caesar*
Dem	*Demostenes*
Lyc	*Lycurgus*
Is. Os.	*De Iside et Osiride*
Per	*Pericles*
Pomp	*Pompeius*
Polyb	Polybius
Porphy	Porphyry
Christ	*Contra Christianos*
PsDem	Pseudo-Demetrius
Ep Typ	*Typoi Epistolikoi*
Quint	Quintilianus
Orat	*Institutio Oratoria*
Sen	Seneca (The Younger)
Apocol	*Apocolocyntosis*
Ben	*De Beneficiis*
Clem	*De Clementia*
Cont	*Controversiae*
Ep	*Epistulae*
Ira	*De Ira*
Tranq	*De Tranquillitate Animi*
Vit Beat	*De Vita Beata*
Strabo	Strabo
Geog	*Geographica*
Hist	*Historical sketches*
Suet	Suetonius
Aug	*Augustus*
Calig	*Gaius Caligula*
Iul	*Divus Julius*
Ner	*Nero*
Tib	*Tiberius*
Tac	Cornelius Tacitus
Agr	*Agricola*
An	*Annales*
Germ	*Germania*
Hist	*Historiae*
Val Max	Valerius Maximus
Varrus	Marcus Terencius Varrus
LingLat	*De Lingua Latina*
Rust	*De Re Rustica*
Varus	P. Quintilius Varus
RelAnt	*Religious Antiquities*

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Vel Pat	Vellius Paterculus
Hist	*History of Rome*
Virgil	Virgil
Aen	*Aeneid*
Ecl	*Eclogae*
Geo	*Georgica*
Xen	Xenophon
Oec	*Oeconomicus*

Early Christian Literature

Apologists, Apostolic Fathers

Diog	*Epistula ad Diognetum*
ClRm	Clement of Rome
1Cl	*Epistula Clementis ad Corinthios*
Did	*Didache*
Epiph	Epiphanius
Pan	*Panarion (Adversus haereses)*
Ign	Ignatius
Eph	*Epistula ad Ephesios*
Mag	*Epistula ad Magnesios*
Phld	*Epistula ad Philadelphos*
Pol	*Epistula ad Polycarpum*
Rm	*Epistula ad Romanos*
Smy	*Epistula ad Smyrnaeos*
Trall	*Epistula ad Trallianos*
MartPol	*Martyrdom of Polycarp*
Mel	Melito of Sardis
Pas	*Homilia in Passionem Christi*
Pol	Polycarp
Ep	*Epistula ad Philippenses*
Ps-Cl	Pseudo Clement
Hom	*Homilies*

Greek Fathers

Chrys	John Chrysostom
Ep ad Phil	*Epistula ad Philippenses*
ClAl	Clement of Alexandria
Str	*Stromata*
Eus	Eusebius of Caesarea
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*
PE	*Praeparatio Evangelica*
Ire	Irenaeus
EpFlor	*Epistula ad Florinum*

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Haer	*Adversus haereses*
Or	Origen
Cels	*Contra Celsum*

Latin Fathers

Aug	Augustine
CivD	*De Civitate Dei*
Trin	*De Trinitate*
Cyp	Cyprian
Ep	*Epistulae*
D. Chr	Dio Chrysostom
Or	*Orationes*
Hier	Hieronymus/Jerome
VirIl	*De Viris Illustribus*
Vulg	*Vulgata*
Lact	Lactantius
Inst	*Divinae Institutiones*
OpD	*De Opificio Dei*
Tert	Tertullian
Apol	*Apologeticum*
PraescrHaer	*De Praescriptione Haereticorum*

New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

AcAnd	Acts of Andrew
AcPaulThec	Acts of Paul and Thecla
AcPaul	Acts of Paul
AcPt	Acts of Peter
3Cor	*3 Corinthians*
2En	2(Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch
GPh	Gospel of Philip
4Mac	4 Maccabees
MartPtPaul	Martyrdom of Peter and Paul
PssSol	Psalms of Solomon
SibOr	Sibylline Oracles

Late Christian Authors/Writings

ApConst	*Apostolic Constitutions*
ApTrad	*Apostolic Tradition*
ThAq	Thomas Aquinas
Sum	*Summa Theologica*
VitPol	*Vita Polycarpi*

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Gnostic Literature

CorpHer	*Corpus Hermeticum*

Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

ApAb	Apocalypse of Abraham
AscenIsa	Ascension of Isaiah
3Mac	3 Maccabees
OdesSol	Odes of Solomon
PssSol	Psalms of Solomon
SibOr	Sibylline Oracles
T12P	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
TAsh	Testament of Asher
TDan	Testament of Dan
TAb	Testament of Abraham
TJac	Testament of Jacob
TJos	Testament of Joseph
VitAdEv	Vita Adae et Evae

Mishnah, Talmud and Related Literature

Erub	*m. Erubin*
M. Abot	*ʾAbot*
M. B. Qam	*Baba Qamma*
M. Peʾah	*Peʾah*
M. Šabb	*Šabbat*

Nag Hammadi Codices

AcPtTwAp	Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles

Papyri

P. Mich	Michigan Papyri
P. Oxy	Papirus Oxyrhynchus

Qumran Literature

1QS	The community rule Manual of discipline

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Journals and Reference Books

AA	*American Anthropologist*
AB	*Anchor Bible*
ABD	D.N. Freeman (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., New York, 1992
AEth	*American Ethnologist*
AHR	*The American Historical Review*
AJEC	*Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
ANET	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, 1954
AnQ	*Anthropological Quarterly*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römichen Welt*
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ARA	*Annual Review of Anthropology*
ARPsy	*Annual Review of Psychology*
AS	*Ancient Society*
ASR	*American Sociological Review*
AV	Authorised Version
BA	*The Biblical Archaeologist*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BCH	*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*
BCHSuppl	*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique Supplément*
BDAG	W. Bauer/F.W. Danker/W.F. Arndt/F.W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago, ^{3}1999
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament
BHT	Beiträge zur historichen Theologie
BI	*Biblical Interpretation*
Bib	*Bíblica*
Bibl	*Biblica*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BJSoc	*The British Journal of Sociology*
BMCR	*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	*Biblical Research*
Bsac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CAnth	*Cultural Anthropology*
CB	Cuadernos Bíblicos
CB.NTSer	Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CE	*Cognition and Emotion*
CH	*Church History*
CIL	*Corpus Incriptorum Latinum*
CLNT	Cómo Leer el Nuevo Testamento
CP	*Classical Philology*
CQ	*The Classical Quarterly*
CrA	Critique of Anthropology
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*
CuAnth	*Current Anthropology*
DNTB	C.A. Evans/S.E. Porter (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Downers Grove, 2000

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
DPAC	A. di Bernandino (dir.), *Diccionario patrístico y de la antigüedad cristiana*, 2 tomos, Salamanca, 1991
DPL	G.F. Hawthorne/R.P. Martin (ed.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Interpreters*, Downers Grove, 1993
EA	*Estudio Agustiniano*
EB	*Estudios Bíblicos*
EDNT	H. Balz/G. Schneider (ed.), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols., Grand Rapids, 1990–1993
EE	*Estudios Eclesiásticos*
EEGSc	*Environmental and Engineering Geoscience*
EJS	*European Journal of Sociology*
EJSPsy	*European Journal of Social Psychology*
EJT	*European Journal of Theology*
Encounter	*Encounter*
ERSP	*European Review of Social Psychology*
Ethos	*Ethos*
ExpTim	*The Expository Times*
FGH	F. Jacobi (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Leiden, 1954 1964
FIRA^2	*Fontes Iuris Romani Anteniustiniani*^{2}
FN	*Filología Neotestamentaria*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FuP	Fuentes Patrísticas
GNB	Good News Bible
GNC	Good News Commentary
GNT^4	Greek New Testament 4th edition
GR	*Greece and Rome*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HR	*History of Religions*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HTK	Herders Theologischer Kommentar
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HvTSt	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
InSoc	*International Sociology*
Int	*Interpretation*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHC	*Journal of Higher Criticism*
JHI	*Journal for the History of Ideas*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JIH	*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*
JRAI	*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*
JR	*The Journal of Religion*
JRH	*Journal of Religious History*
JRS	*The Journal of Roman Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Suplement Series

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

JSR	*The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KJV	King James Version
LH	*L'Homme*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	H.G. Liddell/R. Scott/H.S. Jones (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (with revised supplement), Oxford, ^{9}1996
Man	*Man*
MFL	*Marriage and Family Living*
MTZ	*Münchener theologische Zeitschrift*
MUSJ	*Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*
NA27	*Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 27th edition, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1995
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Clarendon Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
Neo	*Neotestamentica*
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NovTes	*Novum Testamentum*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTD	*Das Neue Testament Deustch*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
Numen	*Numen: International Review for the History of Religions*
NVGL	*Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, Nestle-Aland, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1979
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
Past and Present	*Past and Present*
Phoenix	*Phoenix*
PolPsy	*Political Psychology*
P&R	*Philosophy and Rhetoric*
PSPB	*Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*
Queen	*Queen: a journal of rhetoric and power*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RBL	*Review of Biblical Literature*
RelSRev	*Religious Studies Review*
ResB	*Reseña Bíblica*
RevPhil	*Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'historie anciennes*
RivB	*Rivista biblica italiana*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
R&T	*Religion and Theology*
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SBLDS	Society for Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSPS	SBL Seminal Papers Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SCSSH	Society for Comparative Study of Society and History
Semeia	*Semeia*
SK	*Skrif en Kerk*
SM	*Studia Moralia*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

SocAn	*Social Analysis*
SocAnth	*Sociological Anthropology*
SocP	*Social Problems*
SocRel	*Sociology of Religion*
SP	Sacra Pagina
SR	*Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion*
ST	*Scripta Theologica*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
Them	*Themelios*
TDNT	G. Kittel/G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Translated by G.W. Bromiley), 10 vols., Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
ThTo	*Theology Today*
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Chapter I: Introduction

1. Status Quaestionis

Glancing at the sheer volume of research centred on Philippians 2.6–11, any serious student of Scripture is taken aback.[1] Is there then anything *else* to add which has not been previously accounted for? In the course of my research I have become familiar with the salient scholarship on the subject, but I still believe this study can add to a better understanding of the passage, since I focus on two important elements in Phil 2.6–11 namely, identity formation and what the text might have effected in the intended recipients.

One of the problems we encounter when we study this well-known text is the nomenclature used to describe it. The simple fact of calling it a 'hymn' is in itself a strong statement about its supposed liturgical use, its provenance, and Paul's latter appropriate or inappropriate use of it. Any particular (re)-construction of the social milieu, however, strongly affects the outcome of the researcher's conclusions, as it was clear in Bousset's 1913 *Kyrios Christos*, who studied the text, typical of the *religiongeschichtliche Schule*, in the context of the Hellenistic Christian communities in Syria under the influence of a *Kyrios*-religion.[2] Bousset's approach, however, has found little support since new insights about the early worship of Jesus came to light.[3] Impelled by the debate Bousset's work stirred, Lohmeyer produced an insightful study, *Kyrios Jesus*, in 1928, which marked a new era. Lohmeyer attended mainly to the structure and original background of the text, and "settled" the issue of its *Gattung* as a pre-Pauline hymn, edited by the apostle to fit with his theology. I contend that such a preoccupation with the provenance of the text (*viz.* the original community which produced it) has to a certain degree obscured the study of its *function* within the larger context of the letter. The reconstruction

[1] M. Bock*muehl*, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, [4]1997) 115: Bockmuehl observes that it is "a passage which in the twentieth century has been the subject of an uncontainable deluge of scholarly debate, quite possibly more so than any other New Testament text."

[2] W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1970 [German original 1913]). Bousset thought that the title *Kyrios* was a Hellenistic appropriation on the part of the early church, indicating Jesus had been divinised in the same way the Greeks and the Romans had done with their heroes.

[3] R.J. Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2.9–11", in R.P. Martin/B.J. Dodd (ed.), *Where Christology Began. Essays on Philippians 2* (Louisville: Westminster, 1998) 128–39.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

of both its possible liturgical setting and its original function has produced a sort of circular reasoning. My study takes the text's present location as the starting point from where to understand its function, since it had –primarily, although not exclusively– the Philippian Christ-following community in mind.[4]

A second landmark in the study of the Christ-hymn was Käsemann's study 'Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2.5–11', in 1950. Käsemann denied any possible ethical interpretation of the text.[5] For Käsemann the hymn (and for that matter Paul) never tried to present Christ as a *Vorbild*, rather it displayed a soteriological drama where readers are *only* invited as observers, not as imitators. The hymn, then, has to do with soteriology and eschatology, not ethics.[6] However, while the text cannot be reduced to mere ethical example, the ethical element cannot be dismissed either.[7] The matter is not yet fully settled, as new studies on Phil 2.6–11 demonstrate, but I believe it is impertative that the text is studied in relation to the larger context of the letter.[8]

Paul's letters were *ad hoc* correspondence, that is, written in order to address situations in the communities he established. This does not mean that there is not a generic component to Paul's theology; after all we possess a Pauline *corpus* as evidence of the influence his *letters* exerted in the Church. The 'gospel according to Paul' presents a peculiar way of understanding the incarnation, the person of Jesus, and the character of God; that much is clear. But, having said this, we know that Paul wrote to a *particular* community in the Roman colony of Philippi which surely understood his letter in a peculiar way, which is seldom taken into consideration when interpreting Phil 2.6–11.

This *ad hoc* understanding is crucial when studying the letter, since it forces the interpreter to scrutinise the historical context in order to understand its message, better informed both of the local circumstances and the occasions. The goal is to assess the letter to the Philippians on its own merits, attending to how the local situation is addressed in the letter. However complex

---

[4] L.T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (rev. ed. London: SCM, 1999) 374, affirms that, although it is important to ascertain a plausible *Vorlage* for the hymn, there are more pressing elements: "Certainly of greater significance is the content of the hymn, and how it functions for Paul as part of his larger argument in Philippians."

[5] R. Morgan, "Incarnation, Myth, and Theology: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Philippians 2.5–11", in Martin/Dodd, *Where Christology Began*, 43–4. Käsemann was opposing the liberal Protestant ethical idealism tendency of his own day, which presented a reductionist view of the Biblical texts.

[6] E. Käsemann, *Ensayos Exegéticos* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1978) 76–7.

[7] C. Basevi/J. Chapa, "Philippians 2.6–11: The Rhetorical Function of a Pauline 'Hymn'", in S.E. Porter/T.H. Olbricht (ed.), *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 338–56.

[8] To date, Martin's study on the hymn continues to be the best source on the history of its interpretation. R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2.5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (rev. ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

this relationship might be, it is the only way the letter can speak unheeded, as the Philippian community would have first received it. This is not a denial that Paul's exhortations have a more general applicability beyond their immediate context; only that the *ad hoc* component requires greater attention.[9] An example may help my point. Since I find no relevant evidence of a strong Jewish influence in the colony, due to the lack of Jewish presence and of a synagogue in the area during Paul's time, we need to ask, 'How could the Christ-following community have understood texts such as 3.5–11, where Paul presents his honourable pedigree in clear Jewish fashion?' I am not suggesting, though, that Paul's symbolic universe could not include Jewish conceptions in Philippians, after all he identified himself as one, but that something different is to emerge *if* we focus on how the recipients *might have received* his words.

2. The Reading of the *Carmen Christi* in a New Light

Phil 2.6–11 is truly a familiar text to Bible interpreters, the paradigm of christological discussion. However, just as ancient interpreters of the Hebrew Scriptures spoke of the 'seventy sides' (*Shivi'm Panim*) of the Torah, I think we can approach the text from yet another angle, focusing on its function as a vehicle for *social* communication, part and parcel of its social milieu, but aiming at transforming the Christ-following community, in search for an identity which ultimately derives from Jesus the Christ as described in the hymn.

Paul cannot escape his own cultural conditioning and, therefore, makes use of common stereotypes and forms of understanding difference that reveal his mentality as a Mediterranean person in the first century AD. For these reasons I approach the study of Phil 2.6–11 using social-scientific methodology. This does not mean relinquishing a theological emphasis; rather, it is a statement that 'ideology alone' will not reveal the complexity of this text. Thus, I devote a great deal of space to discuss some salient features of first-century Mediterranean society.

As ancient rhetoric has shown us, texts are vehicles for social communication. What has been at times forgotten is that texts were meant *to affect/effect something specific* in the recipients. Most studies I have come across either take for granted a mechanical type of 'social/ideological transference', automatically ascribed to the addressees, or present ambiguous results, as if (text)-function and social setting were two independent realities. In the course of my research on Philippians I have realised I was not the only per-

[9] Cf. E. Adams, *Constructing the World. A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

son approaching the Christ-hymn from new angles; some of them – may I add – quite close to my own! J.H. Hellerman's monograph: *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi. Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* was one of these. Hellerman's thorough and well-written study, using a social-scientific approach in order to discern how the honour and shame model could be applied to this text, lacked, in my opinion, a concrete 'social seat' (i.e., a 'real community') to complement his particular reading.[10] The questions I have in mind are: How would have the Philippian Christ-following community received Paul's words?[11] Do we have to assume that Paul's comprehension of 'life' and 'ethos' was readily accepted as *the* proper way for the community? I soon realised that in order to answer these questions I needed to go beyond the performative dynamic of the text many specialists *assumed* in their work and venture into new areas for the purpose of assessing its possible effects.[12]

The goal of my study is to assess the apostle's implicit *strategies* as well as to recognise his aims of creating a social identity based on Christ-orientation as displayed in Phil 2.6–11, which Paul himself affirms he follows (3.12–13). I also assess if such strategies resulted both in a concrete perceived behaviour and an understanding of their social identity as they lived in the colony. In doing this I believe that we can bring together "soul and body"; that is, ideology and social structures, without stressing one at the expense of the other.[13]

I approach the text under the premise that Paul portrayed an example of self-giving and self-humiliation as a paradigm of Christ-like identity. In this way the Philippian Christ-following community could live out the good news in the midst of a context where identity was based upon privilege and the search for honour. Such a model of identity, I conclude, is not merely the

[10] J.Z. Smith, "The Social Description of Early Christianity", *RelSRev* 1/1 (1975) 19–25, on p. 19: "We have been seduced into a description of a *Sitz im Leben* that lacks a concrete (i.e., non-theological) 'seat' and offers only the most abstract understanding of 'life'."

[11] In the course of this study I explain why I use this expression rather than the traditional term 'Christian'. Some scholars defend the need to rethink our terminology lest we fall into the trap of projecting modern conceptions and prejudices on ancient groups. I am not totally convinced about these efforts, since neologisms need to be explained and nuanced in order to convey this new sense. We must also face the fact that most current scholarship still remains faithful to traditional labels, which makes the option stand out as a *rara avis* amongst the rest. It is true that Christ-followers did not use the name χριστιανοί as self-designation until the second century AD, although some Roman historians used it (e.g. Tacitus *An* 15.44). *Cf.* B. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1998) 371. My preference is to use 'Christ-followers' when speaking about the Pauline communities and 'Christians' from the second century onwards in order to stress this chronological distance. See also W.S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008) 12.

[12] For some clarifying comments on the Pauline indicative-imperative formulations, see V.P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) and D.G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference. A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethic* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2005) 94.

[13] R. Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research", *NTS* 26 (1980) 164–79, on p. 175.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

result of theological reasoning, but based both on Paul's own experience at Philippi (Acts 16) and his present imprisonment (Phil 1.14).

Paul the apostle, who established a network of communities across the Roman Empire, was a person under great pressure, since his understanding of the gospel met with strong opposition in some quarters. There is also an existential tension in Paul, as a 'man between aeons'. While he writes this letter from prison, Paul struggles to decide whether to remain in his present situation or 'be with the Lord', but ultimately opts to remain because he believes he is still needed to strengthen his communities (Phil 1.25). I contend that *Paul's suffering is a key to his identification with Christ*. As a consequence of his repeated sufferings (cf. Phil 1.12; 1.29–30; 2.17; 3.8–10) the apostle arrived at a deeper comprehension of Jesus the Christ. Perhaps his shameful experience at Philippi (1 Thess 2.1–2) influenced his writing, for both the local situation he addressed at Philippi and his own imprisonment seem to confirm this.[14] Paul concludes that society's common search for honour (as opposed to the loss of honour he experiences for Christ's sake; 3.8–11) is futile (1.28). There is an alternative way, displayed in the hymn that can help transform their life, and it has to do with *Christ-like identity*. But, what are the sources that sustain such an understanding so that they can display a life style worthy of their calling? How are they to live in *politeia* (the public realm) in the midst of a society invaded by the love of honour and status? After all, Paul reminds the Philippian Christ-followers that they need to be focused on life in the city (πολιτεύεσθε), but in a manner "worthy of the good news of Christ" (1.27), for only from this *kyrios* come salvation and status (3.20–21).

A good starting point from which to commence our research on Paul's first contact with Philippi is the text of Acts 16, which narrates his experience of rejection at the colony, which surely left a mark on the apostle. It is clear that there is something in the background that triggers Paul to present the information the way he does in Philippians. I base these insights on the following observations. First, Paul writes several times about examples of humility and service (Epaphroditus, Timothy, Paul, and then, of course, Jesus Christ) to a church that has been supporting his ministry from the beginning and for whom Paul feels a strong token of appreciation. Why so much emphasis on humility, humbleness and service if they have been an example of generosity and self-giving to him? The 'struggle' between the two principal women in the church (4.2) cannot possibly be the reason for writing the entire letter. This 'disunity issue' is placed right at the end and would force the readers/

[14] Several 'suffering-lists' appear in his letters (Rom 8.35; 1 Cor 4.10–13a; 2 Cor 1.8–9; 2 Cor 4.8–9; etc.), proof that such experiences of rejection not only strengthened Paul's role as a 'person on a mission', but also shaped his own theological thinking. This may just seem to be a passing comment, but upon closer observation several elements stand out as he writes to the Philippian Christ-following community.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

hearers to recall all that has been read/said in light of that, a view hardly sustainable after close scrutiny. There is, of course, a great deal of disunity that has arisen in their midst, no doubt, as many have shown.[15] And I add to these possible reasons the struggle they are undergoing as the imperial values threaten to undermine core 'Christian' values represented, above all, through Philippians 2.6–11.

Second, Paul refers to the Philippians using a Latin form of the vocative (φιλιππήσιοι, based on Latin *Philippenses*), not the usual Greek (φιλιππεῖς or φιλιππηνοί). Why? Assessing the status of the colony in the eastern part of the Roman Empire helps us understand the kind of privileges possessed by Philippi. Perhaps this is one of the great problems within the community that Paul is trying to correct through the presentation of concrete examples of self-giving behaviour. If we tie their *natural* superiority complex with Paul's experience at Philippi during his stay there, it is feasible that he wants to correct an erroneous notion of their identity that threatens the core of the Christ-following community. Honour is at stake here, yes, but in the context of *identity*, in the realm of the gospel Paul is conveying to them.

Third, much has been written about the supposed identity of the 'enemies' and 'opponents' in the letter. Philippians 3 implies we are dealing with Jewish-Christian teachers, but even then the core of the argument deals with their reliance on an identity based on merit and honour. Perhaps, then, the 'enemy' has become more of an insider than what some interpreters had originally entertained. The issue at stake is *filotimia*, which seems to be all-prevalent in the colony and threatens their Christ-like identity.

Finally, the repeated references to 'participation', 'sharing', 'working together' – by the use of παν- and συν- terminology – point towards the creation/solidification of a new identity that stands out in the face of a world of privilege. Paul invites the *entire community* to participate in this (1.1), and presents an alternative life in opposition to a system based on the love of honour at the exclusion of others. The opposition they suffer is indeed a *gift* (1.29); part and parcel of the true Christ-like identity that they experience as they practice ταπεινοφροσύνη (2.4).

[15] D. Peterlin, *The Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); C.S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts. The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (SBLDS 168; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999); P. Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001).

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

3. Outline of Analysis

My approach follows a structure that aims at arriving at a clear understanding of the Christ-hymn and its function within the Philippian community. In order to do so chapters II and III present a thorough description of the methodology used. In chapter II I explain *Social Identity Theory* (henceforth SIT) – which focuses on how groups form a common identity – and why I think is germane to a better understanding of Paul's letter within a culture characterised by "collective persons."[16] As with any social-scientific approach which uses contemporary theories and applies them to ancient texts (which in turn reveal 'social worlds', that is, ways of relating and common understanding),[17] there are great advantages as well as potential pitfalls. One of the strengths of the social-scientific method is that it allows me to make explicit both my perspectives and point of departure. Then follows an attempt to define what we mean by 'identity' and how it is formed. Is it something with which we are born or something that is construed during our life-time? I then focus on group-identity formation in Philippi, which presents some elements that ultimately influence the make-up of the Philippian community, amongst these, no doubt, the Christ-hymn.

In chapter III I discuss the anthropological and sociological filters to be applied to first-century Mediterranean society. I focus on how we go about reading ancient texts as readers who come from modern cultures, distant both in time and by geography. I address the perils of implicit familiarity with biblical texts and ancient society, and respectfully try to bridge the gap between the 'then' and the 'now'. I focus on the *emic-etic* element, the social location of the interpreter, and the proper way to read ancient texts using 'models' derived from cultural anthropology.

Our discussion leads to a definition of first-century Mediterranean society and to an assessment of its main characteristics, both general (advanced agrarian, pre-industrial city, structures, high context society, etc.), and particular (human relations, the person in context, etc.). There are a number of contested areas in this way of reading the evidence that I discuss in some detail.

In chapter IV there is a transition to a lower level of abstraction. It is impossible to study how the Philippian Christ-following community received Paul's letter unless their historical/social context is described. I look at its history within the larger context of Roman expansion, alluding to what some scholars have called a process of 'romanisation'. Since the term is contested

[16] B.J. Malina/J.J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) 23.

[17] Cf. W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University, 1983) 8.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

and I have not found a straightforward definition of it, I propose my own model of romanisation adapted to the local context of Philippi. This process was more than merely conquering of new territories, since it also worked on the symbolic and ideological levels. Rome's ways were pressed into 'other peoples', who needed to have their "customs softened" (so thought Pliny the Elder *NH* 3.39). How did this empire, based upon privilege and honour, influence local populations? How was life experienced in Philippi? These questions are addressed in turn to offer us a window into the life of the colony. As we can see, the level of abstraction has lowered substantially and we are defining with more accuracy both the community who received the letter and its author.

In chapter V we get closer to Paul, limiting the focus to the evidence in Philippians. We disclose how Paul identifies himself through his presentation to his Philippian audience. Two elements stand out from the rest. First, he describes himself as a 'slave of Christ Jesus' (1.1), in close reference to the Christ-hymn. Second, the apostle, now in chains, often speaks of sufferings as an experience of close identification with the way of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in order to understand Paul's way of writing, we need to (re)-construct the ancient setting and assess both how slavery and suffering were perceived in antiquity. Only then can we have a balanced view of the issues at stake. I suggest that suffering becomes for Paul a key element in defining his identification with Christ. Paul does not ascribe suffering an absolute value, as if it had an intrinsic power to transform human beings, but he reads his own experience as mirrored in the example set by Jesus in the Christ-hymn. Jesus became a slave and suffered to the utmost as example of ταπεινοφροσύνη. When this 'virtue' is placed in its social milieu, we soon discover how radically counter-cultural it was. The way of Christ is not merely an 'exemplar of virtue', but a radical call to an alternative orientation in life. The symbolic world needs to be reconfigured, not merely based on ideology, but firmly established on personal examples (Jesus, Paul, Epaphroditus, etc.), and against negative ones (*viz*. "enemies of the cross"; 3.18).

Chapter VI concentrates on the letter, and I address critical issues surrounding both it and the 'hymn' itself. Reading ancient letters was something different to what scholars do nowadays. If we want to have access to the way in which the Philippian community understood the letter, we need to describe the process in some detail. I use an *emic* perspective in order to elucidate this complex process.

The book concludes, in chapter VII, with a thorough study of 2.5–11. Verse 5 is included because it determines how the hymn is to be read in the context of the letter. I describe the *three movements* of the Christ-hymn and arrive at conclusions concerning identity-formation. The hymn discloses God's way of

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

assessing ταπεινοφροσύνη, in clear contradiction to the traditional Graeco-Roman value-system. For Paul, the most powerful source of encouragement, serving as an appeal to the community to exercise such a counter-cultural virtue, is that God places his approval of Christ's orientation in his life and death. If God himself assesses Christ's choice in this manner (2.9), is there any reason why the Philippians should do otherwise? First century Mediterranean society had its own hymns as well, by which I mean narratives that shaped its way of thinking and of perception of life, so it is illuminating to contrast the Christ-hymn with these other hymns. After all, Paul's gospel was not solely 'religious' but political as well.[18] I centre, therefore, on the function of Phil 2.5–11 and what it tries to affect in the community.

4. Concluding Remarks

I am aware that opting to focus on certain areas may leave others unattended or partially undisclosed. I have tried to get as close to the evidence of Philippians as possible. Some may criticise my approach as myopic, but I appraise Philippians on its own merits rather than by using other letters of Paul (i.e., Romans) as the centre around which I base my argument.[19] For some, looking mostly at Philippians may amount to nothing more than a way of evading ideologically-charged discussions of Paul's theological concerns. This has not been my intention. Instead, I have focused on Philippians because my interest is to learn how the community that received the letter would have understood the apostle's words. As a focused search, it adds to a more accurate comprehension of the letter as an *ad hoc* document, not merely from an ideological point of view, but as part of a larger social context.[20]

[18] By this I mean two things: 1) religion was an intrinsic part of 'life', since people did not perceive a separation between the 'sacred' and the 'secular', and 2) *political* refers to life as it was lived in the public domain (life in *politeia*), in contrast to the domestic sphere (the *oikia*), although the two were not necessarily antithetical. Some scholars understand this 'political' sense solely in reference to the Roman Caesar and the Imperial cult, but recent studies show that much more is at stake here. Cf. B.W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

[19] J.A. Smith, *Marks of an Apostle: Deconstruction, Philippians, and Problematizing Pauline Theology* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), has aptly dealt with the issue.

[20] Campbell, *Creation*, 11.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Chapter II: Reading Ancient Texts through Social Identity Theory

People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as they are who they say they are.[1]

1. Description of the Task

The purpose of this chapter is to explain why I have chosen *Social Identity Theory* (SIT) to access the social and ideological scenario Phil portrays. Although the New Testament reveals a variegated gamut of what we term 'Christian identity', my search is concerned with what Paul tries to accomplish in the Philippian community *via* written communication. I focus on what Paul *actually* wrote, discerning the elements in the letter that point to the consolidation of a Christ-like identity.

Throughout this study I begin from a higher level of abstraction in order to get as close as possible to the social context of the Philippians. I want to discern the kind of social interactions, experiences and ways of understanding, etc., typical of a Roman colony on Greek soil in first-century AD, which can then be used to interpret life in the colony at Philippi. Issues of nation, race, religion, etc., play a critical part in the total make-up of the Philippians.[2] SIT can help us avoid the danger of *reductionism*, i.e., using a lower level of explanation to explain all higher-level phenomena.[3] I thus focus on how the ideas, contexts, and social dynamics expressed in the text shaped the life and practice of *communities*.[4] With this in mind, we will move from a higher level of abstraction into the more concrete matrix of daily life.

---

[1] D. Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University, [4]2003) 3.

[2] R.L. Rohrbaugh, "'Social Location of Thought' as a Heuristic Construct in New Testament Study", *JSNT* 30 (1987) 103–19, called into question much of the scholarship done under the rubric of 'the sociological approach to the New Testament', claiming that the relationship between thought and social location was at best vague, and produced indefinite results. He defended making *explicit* the methodology used and a deeper knowledge of original conditions rather than projecting modern ideas under the guise of a sociological approach.

[3] M.A. Hogg/D. Abrams, *Social Identifications. A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London/New York: Routledge, 1988) 12.

[4] SIT demonstrates its incisiveness especially here, since too many New Testament specialists explain social groups in terms of the properties of the individual. Individuals are ultimately the ones who need to apply the basic insights to daily life. But when we refer to the world of the New

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

2. Social Identity Theory: Description

Social Identity Theory was developed in the 1970's by Henri Tajfel, a sociologist of Polish-Jewish background.[5] Influenced by his own tragic personal and family experience during World War II, Tajfel sought to explain how group-identity was formed and why these processes gave rise to prejudice (at different levels) towards other groups.[6] Tajfel found (based on earlier experiments carried by Sheriff in the 1950's) that the simple fact of seeing oneself differently constitutes a significant part of one's identity, since "something only is to the extent that it is distinguished from something else."[7] We are what we are because *they* are not what we are.[8] It is crucial to keep this in mind, since *difference* is an important constituent in identity formation.[9] SIT argues that humans function not just as individuals, but as part of a broader socio-cultural domain which is in fact assumed in the corporate first-century Mediterranean society, where "people strive to achieve a positively valued social identity."[10] This particular socio-cultural domain then influences how people perceive themselves, their kin and other groups.

The insights afforded by SIT clarify how groups relate to each other and how they understand themselves as different from the outgroup. I focus on group formation because "we are no longer satisfied with … idealistic individualistic theological understanding of the biblical texts. We have rediscovered that biblical literature is about the problems and experiences of real people."[11] The apostle Paul is not merely displaying his own theological understanding before the Philippians; he aims at influencing them to align themselves in the light of such concepts. His concern is firstly with the group, not the individual, as we tend to assume.

Testament, its texts are composed in the context of the larger group. We need to develop models for social and personal identities. Cf. P.F. Esler, *Galatians* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998) 43.

[5] The idea that social identity derives from group membership had been assessed earlier (G.H. Mead in 1934), but Tajfel discerned the implications for intergroup behaviour; cf. R. Brown, *Group Processess* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, ²2000), 311.

[6] This was established by his first experiments on the "minimal group"; cf. Hogg/Abrams, *Social Identifications*, x.

[7] P.F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans. The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) 19.

[8] H. Tajfel, "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations", *ARPsy* 33 (1982) 1–39.

[9] The importance of difference should not be exaggerated. Who we think we are is also a matter of autobiography; of what we know about ourselves, or how we believe ourselves to be; cf. A.P. Cohen, *Self Consciousness. An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994) 120.

[10] N. Ellemers, "Social Identification and Permeability of Group Boundaries", *EJSPsy* 18 (1988) 497–513, on p. 497.

[11] R.A. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Continuum, ²1994) 3.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

Social psychology involves the study of groups but distinguishes between large–scale social categories (race, nation, etc.) and smaller collections of individuals. The latter is considered a group. Brown discusses the meanings that account for the description of 'group'. These are varied, but he comes up with three major lines of thought: 1) common fate (i.e., the Jews during WW II); 2) social structure (family), and 3) face-to-face interaction with one another.[12] Only 2) and 3) can be used to refer to small groups like that of the Christ-following Philippian community. These definitions, though, lead to a more subjective one, people's *self-categorisation*, which is one of SIT's main focuses.

Early social psychology dealt solely with group interaction and failed to egage with the way groups furnish the individual with an identity. However, it quickly overcame these limitations by focusing also on *the group in the individual* (the *social identity approach*). Hogg and Abrams affirm that the "central tenet of this approach is that belonging to a group (of whatever size and distribution) is largely a *psychological* state which is quite distinct from that of being a unique and separate individual, and that it confers *social identity*, or a shared/collective representation of who one is and how one should behave."[13]

SIT involves three central concepts: categorisation, identification, and comparison. The first, *categorisation*, includes the idea that in order to understand objects or persons, we categorise them to make sense of their social context. This process helps to simplify the world around us. We thus refer to people as 'blacks', 'whites', 'women', 'children', 'poor', etc., for as we assign a category to a person, we immediately receive feedback on certain salient aspects that help us comprehend our own environment. Tajfel summarizes this process in two correlated hypothesis: 1) "if a category is imposed on a set of stimuli ... such that some of the stimuli fall into class A and the remainder into class B, this will have the effect of enhancing any pre-existing differences between the two categories"; and 2) "differences within the categories will be attenuated."[14] People find out things about themselves by knowing what categories they belong to, and they define appropriate behaviour by reference to the norms of groups they belong to, but they can only do it as long as they have the ability to define who belongs to the group, that is, as long as they perceive their group as different from others.

The second important idea is *identification*. People identify with groups to which they think they belong. Thus, once they have categorised, people are able to identify with certain characteristics in groups that reinforce their

[12] Brown, *Group Processess*, 2–3.
[13] Hogg/Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 3.
[14] Brown, *Group Processess*, 2.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7

sense of belonging. Identification has two facets. On occasion this identification becomes *corporate*, that is, people tend to think in terms of 'us' versus 'them', or 'we' versus 'they'. At other times they think of themselves in terms of 'I' versus 'you' (sing.) or 's/he', within a personal emphasis. These two sides refer to the self-concept, and they are termed *social identity* and *personal identity*. Thus, "social identity refers to that part of a person's self-concept (admittedly from a much larger whole) that derives from his or her membership in a group."[15] SIT presents three aspects to this identification:

> A cognitive recognition (of belonging to the group, membership);
> Evaluative connotations (of value added to such belonging); and
> Emotional investment ('*us* Romans', '*we* Jews').

This accounts in the first place for what we call *ingroups*, that is, people with whom we identify in a real, concrete way. We perceive ourselves as the same or identical to other people). Secondly, the *outgroups*, that is, people we understand to be different from us, with whom we do not identify. "The social definition of who you are – your race, religion, sex, academic major – can also imply a definition of who you are not. The circle that includes 'us' excludes 'them'."[16] People decide which objectifications to which they are emotionally attached, become their proactive identities, taking into account the context and the interests concerned.[17]

The final concept is social *comparison*. The basic idea is that belonging to certain groups provide people with a positive self-concept, which makes them feel good about themselves. People gain a certain measure of self-esteem and group prestige as they compare themselves with other groups.[18] In normal circumstances we opt for that which we consider to be better than the other. By extension people perceive themselves positively; since social comparison is done in such a way that they receive positive feedback by comparison and/or contrast. Although first-century Mediterranean culture has been conceived as corporate and characterised as dyadic personalities, Hinkle and Brown warn that we could envisage a group in a collectivist culture which is not particularly given to intergroup comparison.[19] This implies that a "second dimension

[15] Esler, *Conflict*, 20.

[16] D.G. Myers, *Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, [2]1987) 502.

[17] Holland, *Identity*, 4.

[18] R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity. How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997) 37.

[19] S. Hinkle/R. Brown, "Intergroup Comparison and Social Identity: Some Links and Lacunae", in D. Abrams/M. Hogg (ed.), *Social Identity Theory: Constructive and Critical Advances* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990) 67.

© 2011, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 978-3-525-53254-6 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-647-53254-7