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ETHIC VS. KERYCMA: EXPLORING VULNERABILITY AND
EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPIANS HYMN

Karen McClain Kiefer

Abstract - Paul's cruciform theology of self-emptying as modeled by Christ is radically displayed in the hymn of kenosis referenced in his letter to the Philippians; and scholars have disagreed as to whether this hymn serves as a moral imperative to follow Christ's example, or a celebration of the soteriological act of God. Both are credible interpretations, yet it is argued that it brings too much to bear on the marginalized who seemingly have little or nothing left to self-empty. However, Paul and theologians throughout the ages offer this message as applicable to all, and recent scholarship suggests this kind of kenotic act may actually be liberating, especially in the most unlikely of applications - the abused.

INTRODUCTION

Depending on how one casts Paul, he can emerge as an exalted author and model of Christian faith or a heinous villain dismissing the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the marginalized. There are perhaps as many interpretations of Paul and his letters as there are readers of Paul. Regardless of the view one holds of him, it is difficult to ignore the tremendous impact Paul's writings, instruction, and the interpretation of both have had in shaping the theology of Christianity over the millennia as well as responses to current ethical and moral issues.

Understanding Paul's theology is crucial in understanding

Paul himself, his instruction, and the implication of his message in current situations. Paul's theology is at the heart of his instruction in letters to various churches. Labeled "cruciform," this theology reveals the paradox of being "*in Christ*," namely, that one "dies" in order to truly live in the New Creation and find eschatological hope *with Christ* in eternity.¹ Primary to Paul's cruciform theology is the humble "act" of kenosis which illumines the absurd paradox of celebrating ultimate power through radical, self-emptying humility, the very paradox through which humanity is redeemed. We see this nowhere more fully than in the hymn in Philippians chapter two. Yet, the interpretation of this act is as hotly argued as is Paul himself, and the reception of his theology of kenosis has significant implications in current ethical and moral issues. Therefore, it is through this hymn (Phil 2:6-11), that I will examine the central act of humility - the kenotic act of Christ - as the foundational instruction for Christians, and how that notion has been extremely controversial across time, especially today. This paper will address the context of the letter and interpretation of the hymn; the theology and paradox of kenosis as Paul uses it in the hymn; and the reception of kenosis then and now, with a final consideration of its counter-intuitive potential to redefine power and bring about healing and liberating effects, even in cases of abuse. In doing so, I will consider whether the primary purpose of kenosis as described in the hymn is an ethical, moral imperative² to imitate Christ or a kerygmatic, soteriological event to celebrate God's saving act of the Incarnation; and demonstrate that this determination carries with it significant implications on ethical issues today, including applications in situations of abuse.

THE HYMN OF KENOSIS

Paul obliterates the usual notions of power and vulnerability

through his embodiment of the kenotic message in the hymn in Philippians chapter two. His exhortation of this self-emptying message while a prisoner gives the text all the more meaning for Christians, then and now. It is easily argued that *where* Paul wrote the letter is less significant than the fact that we know he wrote it *while* imprisoned. Therefore, the question, “from where?” regarding this portion of Philippians is most significantly answered, “from prison.” The powerful impact of this kenotic text is amplified when one considers he was a prisoner when he wrote the instruction to rejoice. He was empty of material comforts when he wrote about the self-emptying of Christ and exhorted Christians to do likewise. Paul may be misunderstood and misappropriated by many, but one thing that should be clear to all is that Paul embodied his teaching... he “walked his talk.” Therefore, he commands a unique kind of authority that is absent from church leadership in many ways today. Paul was literally willing to die, and joyfully so, at any time in carrying out his mission to spread the gospel and to encourage Christians to do the same. This willingness is true of Christian martyrs, but the impact and the reach that Paul had in the earliest churches forming at that time made his joyful suffering all the more spectacular and pedagogical.

Paul’s embodied message is anything but straightforward, however, and the same is true for its interpretation by scripture scholars and theologians who disagree whether its primary purpose is as an ethical, moral imperative to imitate Christ, or as a kerygmatic, soteriological event to celebrate God’s saving act of the Incarnation. Consideration of these two opposing views follows, with arguments from specific scholars on both sides of the debate.

THE KENOTIC ACT AS A MORAL IMPERATIVE

Because of Paul’s embodied kenotic teaching and the text

leading up to the hymn (Phil 2:2-5) which exhorts the Philippians, “in humility value others above yourselves,”³ many scholars apply an ethical interpretation to the hymn. This opinion may differ depending on whether one views the text from within the epistle and therefore from Paul’s view, or “based on what the hymn originally meant, not Paul’s use of it.”⁴ Considering the very personal nature of his letter to the Philippians, Paul’s view of the text he includes appears to be vastly important. Why he uses the text and hymns that he does, and the context in which he uses them is perhaps more important than the text itself in some cases, as his choices reveal information about the state of Christianity at that time. It seems to be generally agreed that the text of 2:6-11 is pre-Pauline, with the phrase, “even death on a cross,” added by Paul.⁵ Given Paul’s cruciform foundational theology, there is clearly a strong message conveyed by appropriating that hymn in this letter, a message that fits with his mission to spread the gospel. If pre-Pauline, the hymn would already be recognizable and hold meaning for many. Paul could then use it as a pedagogical tool to introduce or broaden an understanding of Christ in a familiar context, and yet draw unique distinctions by appropriating the text to show the particular characteristics of Christ, such as his self-emptying humility that leads to his exaltation.

Vincent Smiles adopts this ethical, moral interpretation of the hymn and develops his argument verse by verse, applying two different Christological interpretations of the Christ event – the preexistence and Adamic views – as described in what follows.⁶ In the *New Colledgeville Bible Commentary* Smiles writes, “Paul presents Christ’s loving and humble attitude as the model for Christian morality,” and distinguishes six three-line stanzas dealing with: beginning (2:6), emptying (2:7), dying (2:8), being exalted (2:9), being named (2:10), and being glorified (2:11).⁷ “The first half comprises Christ’s actions, the second half God’s.”⁸

Put another way, the first half depicts the humiliation of Christ, the second half depicts the exaltation of Christ. One cannot get past even the first phrase of this text without running into extreme polarity over the appropriate translation of individual words and what Paul meant by them.⁹ This polarity exposes the much deeper, perpetual Christological controversy with which the patristic fathers wrestled and which is still hotly debated today.¹⁰ The interpretation of “form” in the very first phrase of the text (2:6) has sparked opposition between those who take a preexistence view and those who hold an Adamic interpretation. The former tend to see Christ as the Divine Redeemer who descends to creation to reveal the nature of God and enlighten humanity who then ascend with the Redeemer to the heavenly realm – the realm of the mind and spiritual world in Hellenistic application. The latter tend to emphasize a historical view of salvation history, a Jesus who moves and acts in time, and a Spirit always present in creation, ordering and then suspending chaos. In this view, humanity does not need to transcend their bodies but discipline (“order”) them, with Christ as an ethical exemplar. Regarding “form” as referenced in 2:6, those with a preexistence view interpret the phrase as “in the form of God,” in line with John 1:1, whereas those favoring an ordering, ethical Adamic view envisage in that verse the antitype of Adam, who also was “in God’s image,” analogous to Gen 1:26-27.¹¹ Also regarding 2:6, these same two camps differ in how to interpret *harpagmon*, “something to be grasped,” regarding equality with God. Smiles suggests that Adamic interpretation more likely finds this to mean “something to be *grasped at*” versus “something to be *held on to*.” A preexistence stance would likely support “something to be held on to” as it implies that Christ as Divine Redeemer always existed in equality with God.

“Emptying” in 2:7 is perhaps the most controversial and divisive word in the hymn. Again the two viewpoints are divided.

The preexistence interpretation aligns this use of the word with the incarnation as found in John 1:14 (“the Word became flesh”) and “can properly say that it was precisely in being a ‘slave’ (not in spite of it) that Jesus revealed who God is.”¹² He became a slave by emptying himself, he did not always exist as a slave - he was not a slave in his “preexistence.” The Adamic view “focuses on the contrast between human arrogance (‘You will be like Gods’ – Gen 3:5) and Christ’s humility,”¹³ highlighting a moral initiative to imitate Christ - the second Adam who redeemed the first.

Philippians 2:8 (“he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross”) is the heart of Paul’s cruciform theology, and stands at the center, and turning point, of the text. Smiles argues that this verse represents the moral imperative that Paul gives to the Philippians. In 2:9, emphasis turns from Christ’s actions and the humiliation of Christ to God’s actions and the exaltation of Christ. It begins with one word of enormous impact: “Therefore.” In this “therefore,” the turning point occurs and the humiliation of Christ is connected with his exaltation. This “therefore” points to Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant,” the one who bore our infirmities, was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins and led like a lamb to the slaughter, and who was then also raised high and greatly exalted.¹⁴ Here the one who is obedient, humble, and sacrificed was ultimately exalted. And now, so is Christ. Smiles is quick to point out that Isaiah’s and Paul’s texts do not imply that suffering is rewarded, but that victory can be attained *through* suffering. The preexistence view “sees Jesus being raised again to his previous exalted status. . . The Adamic view takes at face value that God ‘highly exalted’ Jesus and ‘gave him a name’ [2:10] he did not previously have.”¹⁵ This latter view does not deny Jesus’ divine nature but “simply says that it was *not yet so fully* articulated.”¹⁶

Interestingly, Smiles points out that in the text immediately following the hymn, Paul exhorts the Philippians to “work out your

own salvation” (2:12) but usually “salvation, for Paul, is exclusively God’s work” (1 Thes 5:9).¹⁷ More in keeping with the Adamic view on this point, Paul seems to say that “humans have a part in the salvation of themselves and of those close to them (Rom 11:14; 1 Cor 7:16; 9:22); believers’ conduct does matter.”¹⁸ Therefore, it can be argued that an ethical interpretation of kenosis has a strong place in Paul’s text.

THE KENOTIC ACT AS SOTERIOLOGICAL EVENT

Counter to the kenotic act as a moral imperative, scholars favoring the soteriological view of the Philippians hymn argue strongly for interpretation through the lens of the Incarnation as opposed to an ethical lens. Ernst Käsemann disagrees with the idea that the purpose of Phil 2:6-11 is an ethical one, especially as he considers also the pre-Pauline text as it was supposedly originally written, not only as Paul used it. Robert Morgan describes Käsemann’s view, “[T]he Christ-hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 is not to be understood in ethical terms as providing an example of humility for Christians to imitate, but rather in kerygmatic terms as a drama of salvation.”¹⁹ He sees this text as a soteriological event rather than a moral exhortation. “What is described here is not the relationship of Christ to God, but an event, a ‘drama’ with its successive phases.”²⁰ The interpretation of 2:7a is key to understanding Käsemann’s point,²¹ which seems to integrate the two poles (preexistence and Adamic views) somewhat. The soteriological drama he describes “assumes that v.7a refers to the act of incarnation, not to a decision by the preexistent Christ, and not to the historical Jesus alone.”²² What is celebrated is God’s saving act, the incarnation, not an ethical model. He sees a great disservice in reducing this text to a moral imperative alone.

THEOLOGICAL RECEPTION OF KENOSIS AND POWER

Reception of the Philippians hymn and its kenotic message brings insights into this debate on the primary purpose of the passage, and also illumines views of power and conformity which still remain relevant. Therefore, it is important to consider the reception of Paul's kenotic message over time, beginning with it how it was received and applied in the community to whom it was addressed. Paul appears to have a very warm relationship with the Philippians. In this epistle, Paul indicates a close, mutual friendship with this community and he expresses deep affection for the Church at Philippi.²³ Consistent with Vincent Smiles and an ethical interpretation of the Philippians hymn, Wayne Meeks and John Fitzgerald specify that Paul's purpose in writing to the Philippians is "to shape his Christian friends' phronēsis, their practical moral reasoning, so it will conform to that exhibited by Christ in the liturgical poem that he quotes in 2:6-11."²⁴ Paul himself is a model for this conformity described in the hymn as self-emptying and he exhorts the Philippians to use Christian phronēsis to maintain unity, to put others above themselves.²⁵ For Paul, then, it seems "self-emptying" is indeed a practical moral practice for Christians.

The idea of a self-emptying Messiah jettisons any common notion of power, then or now, especially in a location and time dominated by Roman oppression. The Philippians hymn serves as a critical commentary on power in the empire.

That the one who was humiliated and crucified by Roman power is declared universally sovereign directly challenges the empire's version of how to achieve world rule. The story of a self-emptying Lord not only subverts Caesar's claims to universal dominion but also turns the whole Roman value system of what constitutes honor and power on its head.²⁶

The extreme paradox of sovereignty through kenosis and power through weakness serves as the foundation for Paul's cruciform theology, yet it would likely have been received by his hearers as absurd. One would think that any conversion to a religion with such a message - the call to imitate a redeemer who emptied himself to the point of death - would only occur after the hearer wrestled with the conundrum of this paradox. That Christianity spread and has persisted throughout the ages is a miracle in itself and perhaps the greatest testament to the authority of the message. However, the idea of exaltation despite suffering (Phil 2:9-11) is not a new idea to the Jews. The prophet Isaiah has written about it in Scripture passages on the *Servant of the Lord*, and especially in the *Suffering Servant*.²⁷ Additionally, highly gnostic Hellenists may have accepted the idea of self-emptying without great difficulty, as they did not uphold the temporal, especially the human body, as important but rather as a cage imprisoning the soul. To deny bodily needs even to the point of death could have been viewed as liberating by some who heard Paul's gospel message preached. The difference for Paul, and for Christianity, is that God's power in the resurrection of the body is inextricably linked with the death of Christ, so as to be one event.²⁸

Throughout Church history, interpretations of the Philippians hymn and the idea of kenosis have varied and sparked great Christological debate over the nature of Christ and to what degree he did or did not empty himself of divine properties.²⁹ What detail Paul does not explicitly provide in his portrayal of the nature of kenosis, and therefore the human and divine nature of Christ, has been argued in patristic councils, particularly Nicaea and Chalcedon, and debated even today. Reception of this text, its theology and its moral implications have also varied. Theologian Sarah Coakley observes that patristic exegesis of Phil 2:6-11 was so immensely significant that it yielded material of overwhelming complexity and density. With Origen alone one encounters 219 discussions of the

hymn.³⁰ “Any pert generalizations about patristic interpretation of this matter would therefore be foolhardy.”³¹ However, she cites Friedrich Loofs’ suggestion:

[P]atristic exegesis of ‘kenosis’ could conveniently be tidied into three categories: (a) that which straightforwardly identified the subject of the ‘emptying’ as the *logos asarkos*; (b) that which adopted a ‘Pelagian’ reading... and saw the ‘historical Jesus’ as *earning* his name above every other name by a human act of obedience; and (c) a third, median category... which brought together elements of the first two categories by seeing the ‘decisive’ act of ‘emptying’ as the Logos’s Incarnation, the implications then being wrought out in the ‘historical Jesus Christ’, such that there was a ‘*co-existence*’ of the ‘*forma Dei*’ and the ‘*forma servi*’.³²

The discussion illumines the controversy of the divine-human tension in Christ and whether or not he underwent any transformation or was emptied of any divine attributes. Category (b) is dismissible as heretical for Coakley, and for considerations of this paper as well, although one cannot discount the importance of works in Christian faith. Coakley ascribes Cyril and Nestorius, both committed to divine impassibility, to categories (a) and (c). Loofs positions Tertullian and Origen in (a), and Augustine and Hilary in (c). Coakley gives special attention to Gregory of Nyssa, as she finds him to be a little more ambiguous on this complex issue. “Gregory simultaneously accepts the ‘Alexandrian’ tradition of the Incarnation involving an actual, ontological transformation of the human in virtue of the Logos’s kenosis, but also insists on the integrity of a (particular) human being, Jesus, as being the tabernacle where this transformation occurs.”³³ The critical difference from the later models of Cyril and Nestorius is that, “in Gregory’s understanding of the transformation of the human in Jesus, the process is not immediate. Rather it is throughout the lifetime of Jesus’ ministry, life, and death – and supremely and decisively in the resurrection – that this purification and transformation occurs.”³⁴ It is not

purification from sin but more of an Irenaean concept of moving from immaturity to maturity, effected in totality in humanity. In this idea of a gradual transformation of the human, Gregory deflects the volatile concerns of Cyril and Nestorius against a ‘mingling’ or ‘mixture’ of the divine and human nature of Christ. In the resurrection the progressive absorption of the divine characteristics by the human, as Gregory describes, is found complete.³⁵

Over a millennia later, in the twentieth century, Hans Urs von Balthasar addressed kenosis as a fundamental doctrine about God’s relation to the world, and therefore linked it to the Trinity as a dramatic event.³⁶ This event view, like Käsemann’s, testifies to the cosmic view of the Christ event in creation, and links the cross to the New Creation and God’s eternal story. Edward Oakes finds Balthasar’s related Christology as “perhaps the most radically kenotic Christology of all, for that kenosis has now become an event within the Trinity itself.”³⁷ Influenced by the *I-Thou* relationship as described by Martin Buber and the theology of the *Other*, Balthasar sees the Trinity as a model of kenosis, as each person of the Trinity “is constituted through the free self-giving of the one toward the other. *Kenosis* in this sense refers to the *ekstatic* movement of the one toward the other, the self-destitution in favor of the other.”³⁸ This kenotic self-destitution makes space for the reception of the other, and “opens a space for God’s love to be present as a self-constituting empowerment.”³⁹ Here, Balthasar opens up the idea of divine reception - as experienced by the divine, within the Godhead. Aristotle Papanikolaou explains Balthasar’s idea. He states, “[D]ivine personhood is a received existence. In the reception of the ‘other’ the divine persons ‘receive’ their own divine personhood... the Trinity is . . . ‘a community constituted by differences which desire the other.’”⁴⁰ For Balthasar, divine personhood “has direct relevance for human personhood insofar as the Trinity as an event of self-giving love is known only through the incarnate Christ.”⁴¹

He connects human personhood with the Trinity, "Insofar as Jesus Christ as God-man is the image of God's Trinitarian existence, human personhood as *imago dei* must be an *imitatio Christi*." Balthasar sees the mission of Christ as part of his identity, and the kenotic event in Philippians as Christ taking the form of humble obedience. With the Trinity as a model and Christ as an example of mission, humans, then, "become 'persons' in and through an obedient response to God's call or mission."⁴³ Accordingly, just as Paul instructs the Philippians, Balthasar says we are also called to imitate the humble self-emptying, self-giving of Christ for others. Since the Trinity is relational, so too are humans, for we are made in the image of God. Just as the Trinity is a community in which each desires the other, "human existence is movement toward self-transcendence, toward the other."⁴⁴ It is in community that we live out our mission and glimpse the divine.

This idyllic view of divine and human personhood as a model and mission for kenosis is not so well received by those who do not see self-emptying as applicable to all, or to all situations, especially those who have been marginalized or abused. Yet, paradoxically, the idea of kenosis may still provide an answer and a kind of healing liberation.

LIBERATION THROUGH THE PARADOX

In Paul's cruciform theology, power itself is turned upside down as God enters humanity through the self-emptying of Christ. However, kenosis "as obedience, humility, and self-sacrifice has a negative history as well, [as] feminists over the past century, and especially the last half-century, have made clear, this understanding of *kenosis* has been used throughout the history of Christianity to maintain women in situations of oppression."⁴⁵ Many feminist theologians, including Daphne Hampson, argue that women have

been self-sacrificing for centuries in unhealthy ways that diminish their dignity as human persons. Papanikolaou affirms, “Women have every reason to be suspicious of an ethic of *kenosis*.”⁴⁶ Hampson equates *kenosis* with powerlessness when applied to women. She attributes the dichotomy of powerfulness and powerlessness, as found in the Philippians notion of *kenosis*, as essential male constructs based on male understandings of power – that an all-powerful God, contrasted with a weak, fragile and seemingly insignificant creation, divests of power to come as a humble servant. She sees this kind of *kenosis* as instructive to men as to what males need to do without regard to the human female condition. “‘It is as though men have known only too well their problem, and so have postulated a counter-model.’ Useful as it may be for men, it is ‘inappropriate for women.’”⁴⁷ Hampson and other feminists reject the paradigm. “The call for *kenosis* as a breaking of the self so that God may be present has no meaning for women who are denied a self within patriarchal and oppressive structures.”⁴⁸ Hampton sees no relevance in the *kenotic* model for women.

Sarah Coakley counters Hampson’s critique of *kenosis* by considering empowerment through *kenosis* as “power-in-vulnerability.” As an example, she suggests prayer which she finds inherently *kenotic* as one empties oneself to God, to make space “in order to receive the presence of God” and to be empowered.⁴⁹ Coakley seems to suggest *kenosis* accompanied by *plerosis*, or “filling.” In this view *kenosis*, as applicable to prayer, is an emptying in order to be filled. While this notion of *kenotic* empowerment may provide some hope for the marginalized, a question still arises as to how far this *kenotic* model can be taken.

Papanikolaou explores whether the notion of *kenosis* has a place in situations of abuse. He discovers the answer in the way one views sin in situations of abuse and what one is called to empty from oneself. The sin involved in abuse is “evil which happens to the

victim and not that for which they are responsible.”⁵⁰ The personal notion of sin “must be replaced with a relational understanding.”⁵¹ The shattering of trust affects the survivor’s ability to be vulnerable and to relate to others. Given Balthasar’s relational Trinitarian model of *kenosis*, vulnerability in order to give to and receive the other is primary. The isolation that a survivor often experiences and even desires is counter to what is necessary for healing. “[I]n order to move past destructive patterns, the survivor will need to reach out to others... *no one can face trauma alone.*”⁵² The kind of healing called for is *kenotic*: “If healing results through a set of relations in which there is, to use spatial metaphors, space for care, self-love, trust and vulnerability, then such relations are necessarily *kenotic.*”⁵³ So it begs the question, what is to be emptied? Papanikilaou provides a powerful answer, “[I]n a situation where the self itself is dissipated, what is emptied? What could possibly be given? What an abused victim is emptying is fear, fear of the other created by the abuse. In emptying this fear, the abused victim is, to borrow from Coakley, making space for the presence of the other in order to be empowered.”⁵⁴ Therefore, it can be argued that seeking help is part of a *kenotic* act. *Kenosis* becomes a form of a different kind of power than the male paradigm that feminists like Hampson criticize; it becomes *empowerment*. Kenotic faith perhaps holds the greatest hope for the marginalized and abused, those who know suffering. Therefore, they are already connected to Christ through his suffering, and empowered by it. For them, the incarnate Christ is directly relevant, the hope for their own redemption from their fear and suffering, and their link to the power of the Resurrection.

CONCLUSION

No matter how one views power, then, or Paul, his instruction to the Philippians in the first century is as relevant and impactful

to Christians today as it was in the first century, and involves both the saving act of God through Christ as power-in-weakness and the moral imperative to imitate him through self-emptying. The two are inseparable. *Kenosis* is at the heart of this cruciform theology, which we are still called to embody as Christians in communion with others. Through *kenosis*, power itself is turned upside down as the New Creation is ushered in and God enters humanity, incarnate in our world. This paradigm shatters the framework of power over vulnerability that human structures favor; and in this paradigm, *kenosis* is indeed a liberating, saving act, as we paradoxically empty ourselves in order to be filled so that we in turn can follow Christ's ethical example. Shifting one's own perspective of what must be self-emptied holds the key to receiving Paul's message and ultimately the promise of the Resurrection.

Notes:

1. Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Paul*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 146.
2. Based upon the terminology used by scholars cited in this essay, "ethical interpretation" and "moral imperative" are used interchangeably, as are "kerygmatic" and "soteriological" in reference to the kenotic Christ event.
3. Phil 2:3.
4. Robert Morgan, "Incarnation, Myth, and Theology: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Philippians 2:5-11", *Where Christology Began*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 55.
5. Morgan, 50; Smiles, 626; Cf., Phil 2:8.
6. "Preexistence" and "Adamic" are the terms given these two viewpoints in *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary*. In the *Pauline Letters* course, SSNT 422 at Saint John's School of Theology & Seminary, taught by Charles Bobertz, the terms discussed for these views were "Hellenistic" and "Apocalyptic," respectively. The former indicates a Greek view of a wholly transcendent God "breaking in" to the world which can then be saved by ascending to the divine. The latter indicates the Jewish sensibility of humanity redeemed through the Christ event which returns

creation to its “right order.”

7. Smiles, 627.

8. Ibid.

9. “Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,” Phil 2:6.

10. Due to the constraints of this paper and the complexity and volume of material surrounding the broader Christological controversy, I will not venture very far into a discussion of the controversy, but highlight only a few viewpoints as relevant to the exploration of this project.

11. Smiles, 627.

12. Smiles, 628.

13. Ibid.

14. Cf., Is 52:13 – 53:12; Also Cf., Is 49:1-7.

15. Smiles, 628.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 629.

18. Ibid. One could easily launch into the argument of justification by faith vs. works - another volatile, perpetual controversy which is outside the scope of this paper.

19. Morgan, 43.

20. Morgan, 60.

21. “Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,” Phil 2:7a.

22. Morgan, 60.

23. Cf., Phil 1:3-8.

24. Meeks and Fitzgerald, 87.

25. Ibid.; Cf., Phil 2:2-4.

26. Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 155.

27. Cf., Is 52:13-53:12 as mentioned previously, and also Is 49:1-7.

28. Cf., Charles Bobertz, SSNT 422 class notes, “Wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1-2.”
29. Numerous volumes of material have addressed this issue. I will not tackle it in this paper beyond a brief survey of a few theologians and consideration of how this Philippians hymn and its portrayal of kenosis has been received at a couple points in time.
30. Sarah Coakley, “Does Kenosis Rest on a Mistake? Three Kenotic Models in Patristic Exegesis” *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 249.
31. Ibid.
32. Coakley, 249. She cites Friedrich Loofs, art. “Kenosis,” in ed. James Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), VII, 680b-87b.
33. Coakley, 257. Cf., Gregory of Nyssa, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (GNO) II/2, 126.
34. Coakley, 257.
35. Ibid., 258.
36. A Swiss theologian and Catholic priest, Hans Urs von Balthasar is considered one of the most important Catholic theologians of the 20th century, frequently challenging modern sensibilities from a Christian lens.
37. Oakes, 239.
38. Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Person, Kenosis and Abuse: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Feminist Theologies in Conversation,” *Modern Theology*, 19:1 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, January, 2003), 47.
39. Papanikolaou, 47; 46.
40. Ibid., 47.
41. Ibid., 48.
42. Ibid.
43. Papanikolaou, 49.
44. Ibid., 50.
45. Ibid., 41.
46. Ibid.
47. Papanikolaou, 43.

48. Ibid., 44.
49. Ibid., 45.
50. Ibid., 53.
51. Ibid.
52. Papanikilaou, 55.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.