

## **1:27a A Manner of Life Worthy of the Gospel of Christ**

### **Worthy of the Gospel.**

Marius Victorinus: The summing up of one's whole life for a Christian is this, to conduct oneself according to Christ's gospel, to announce his grace steadily both to oneself and others, to have hope in him, to do all that one does according to his commands. For this is what it means to "conduct oneself in a manner that is worthy of Christ's gospel." A person can live honestly and uprightly, but this is not adequate to Paul's meaning. Rather we are to conduct ourselves according to Christ's gospel regardless of what happens and to do so in a worthy manner, living according to Christ's precepts and doing what Christ wants. Epistle to the Philippians 1.27.1

### **Only Do This One Thing.**

Chrysostom: All that he has said is for this single purpose, to exhort them to live a life worthy of the gospel.... What does only mean? This is the one thing looked for, and nothing else. Where this is, no hurt can befall us. Homily on Philippians 5.1.27.2

## **1:27b Present or Absent, He May Hear of Them**

### **Whether Absent or Present.**

Chrysostom: He does not imply by saying this that he is changing his mind or that he is not going to come. Rather he is saying whether he comes or not, regardless of what comes to pass, they may stand firm even in his absence. Homily on Philippians 5.1.27.4

## **1:27c Standing Firm, Striving for the Faith**

### **Stand in One Spirit.**

Marius Victorinus: There is one Spirit that prevails when we believe the gospel wisely and live in accordance with it. This is why he calls them to "stand firm in one Spirit." The soul's task is to overcome contrary feelings in the body. Therefore he in effect is calling them to "stand in one Spirit and fight together with one soul with the faith of the gospel." Epistle to the Philippians 1.27.5

## **1:28 *Fearing Nothing from Opponents***

### **Fearlessness a Work of God.**

Marius Victorinus: This work of fearlessness is part of his explanation of what it means to conduct oneself worthily according to Christ's gospel: Never be terrified, whether by adversaries or anything else.... For this very condition of being courageous tends toward our salvation. It deals a death blow to our adversaries. Yet this too is a work of God, lest we should think it part of our own work that our not being terrified should be a cause of our salvation. "For this too is of God," he says, "just as I have often told you that all things come about through the will, the mercy and the grace of God." Epistle to the Philippians 1.28.6

## **1:29 *Believing in Christ and Suffering for Christ's Sake***

### **Be Ready to Suffer for His Sake.**

Marius Victorinus: It was therefore within his purpose that he gave to us the gift of trusting in him. This was an incomparable gift. It is only by faith in him that we are blessed with so great a reward. We are to believe in such a way as to be ready to suffer for him. Epistle to the Philippians 1.29.7

### **The Gift Wholly of God but Not Denying Free Will.**

Chrysostom: He speaks of the gift of faith as if it were already granted. It is not given unilaterally from God but in a way that we can take a share in it. Even here the greater part of the share comes from God. But this gift is not given in such a way as to circumvent or overcome free will. Rather it is given to make us humble and rightly disposed. Homily on Philippians 5.1.29.10

### **Grace Both Begins and Continues.**

John Cassian: Not only the beginning of our conversion but also the continuance of it through the endurance of suffering for it are gifts given to us by the Lord. Conferences 3.15.2.11

## **1:30 Engaged in the Same Conflict**

### **We Are Engaged in the Same Struggle.**

Marius Victorinus: This is our struggle. This is our contest, our contention and our goal. This it is that leads to the crown and the palm of victory: To do all things for him, to suffer all things for him and not to turn away. You, he says, are now “engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine.” It is a conflict that implies chains, prison and all the deadly hazards that Paul has suffered. “So my sufferings,” he says, “are confirmed in you by two things: what you hear and what you see.” Epistle to the Philippians 1.30.12

### **They Bear His Tribulation.**

Chrysostom: Again he encourages them. He shows them that they are engaged in the very same struggle that Paul himself is engaged in. Everywhere they undergo the same struggles and contests. They are united with him in bearing these tribulations with him. “These are trials that you not only have heard about but,” he says, “are also seeing.” Homily on Philippians 5.1.30.13

## **2:1a Encouragement in Christ**

### **Pleading for Their Highest Interests.**

Chrysostom: See how this blessed man pleads with the Philippians concerning the things that are to their own advantage. For when he is counseling them about concord, the cause of all good things, what does he say? See how elegantly, how energetically he speaks, with what fellow feeling! “If there is any encouragement in Christ.” It is as though he were saying: “If you take comfort in Christ and if you take any account of me, if you have any thought for me personally, if you have received any good from me, listen to this carefully.” We use this way of speaking when we are making a request about a matter that we take to have the highest priority. Homily on Philippians 6.2.1–4.2

## **2:1b Love, Participation in the Spirit, Affection and Sympathy**

### **How These Terms Correlate.**

Marius Victorinus: When we are in the midst of ills and labor under the ills of the world, if we have mutual love for one another, God will be our “consolation in love.” “If, therefore,” he says, “there is this consolation in love, so that, because I love you, you console me in the midst of my ills, make my joy complete.” ... He has done well to put [the Spirit] third. For the first is to be called in Christ, the next to have love. But when both are true and they have already been called in Christ and enjoy the consolation of loving and being loved, without doubt the fellowship of the Spirit is there.... The church becomes one body when those who have been called are bound to one another in the love of Christ, when they are bound also in the Spirit and have the same “affection and sympathy.” The affection corresponds to the calling in Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit, the sympathy to the consolation of love. Epistle to the Philippians 2.1–4.<sup>3</sup>

## **2:2a Completing Paul’s Joy**

### **Being of the Same Mind.**

Marius Victorinus: Remember that God is one, his Son is one and his Holy Spirit is one, and all three are one. If so, then we too ought to be one in our thoughts, so as to “be of the same mind” with the one God. Then it follows that we are to “have the same love.” To be of the same mind pertains to knowledge, while to have the same love pertains to discipline, to the conduct of life. Epistle to the Philippians 2.2–5.<sup>4</sup>

### **Complete My Joy.**

Chrysostom: He does not want this exhortation to appear to be addressed to those who have failed in their duty. So he does not say “give me joy” but “complete my joy.” That is as if to say: “You have already begun to flourish. You have already pursued peace as I wish. Now I long for you to reach the highest levels of maturity in faith.” Homily on Philippians 6.2.1–4.<sup>5</sup>

## **2:2b *Being in Accord and of One Mind***

### **Having the Same Love.**

Marius Victorinus: What does he mean by “the same love”? That you should have the same love for another that the other has for you, not a divided love but a love embedded in life in Christ. Then he adds “in full accord and of one mind.” He seems to me to be underscoring what he has said above but in a reversed order. “In full accord” corresponds to “the same love. Of one mind” refers to the previous phrase: “being of the same mind.” Yet there is something more nuanced in this pair than in the previous one. For “being of the same mind” and “of one mind” differ only slightly. Both pertain to knowledge. “Being of the same mind” suggests a knowledge that is not yet established, yet its capacity of knowing may be seen to be the same.... “Being of the same mind” seems to be still a continuing process. It is the way to life. But “having the same love” is the way of life to which that knowing leads. 6 Epistle to the Philippians 2.2–5.7

## **2:3a *Doing Nothing from Ambition or Conceit***

### **Banish Ambition.**

Marius Victorinus: “Do nothing,” he says, “through ambition.” For many are either prone toward ambitiousness of their own accord or moved toward ambitiousness through others. All these kinds of ambition are to be banished. There is to be no inordinate ambition, whether voluntary or constrained, since both are vicious. Some rush into this ambition through speculation; others are naturally of such temper as to be ambitious. So he advises: “do nothing through ambition.” Epistle to the Philippians 2.2.5.8

### **Enslaved to Popularity.**

Chrysostom: Selfishness is the cause of all sorts of evils. From it come strife and rivalry. From these come jealousy and contentiousness. Out of this that love grows cool when we are in love with human glory and become enslaved to the honors of popularity. One cannot be both a slave to popularity and a true servant of God. Homily on Philippians 6.2.1–4.9

## ***2:3b Counting Others Better Than Oneself***

### **Count Others Better.**

Chrysostom: If you accept that such and such a person is better than you and persuade yourself of this, not only saying it but being fully assured of it, you also will happily see him honored. And if you happily give him honor, you will not be disturbed to see him honored by others. Homily on Philippians 6.2.1–4.10

## ***2:4 Looking to Others' Interests and One's Own***

### **As One Body, the Interests of Others Become My Own Interest.**

Marius Victorinus: If we think only of ourselves, we may act for our own benefit and bother only with our own affairs, our hope, our own deliverance. But this is not enough. We are truly acting for ourselves if we also have a concern for others and strive to be of benefit to them. For since we are all one body, we look out for ourselves when we look out for others. Epistle to the Philippians 2.2–5.11

## ***2:5 The Mind that Was in Christ Jesus***

### **The Mind You Are to Have Among Yourselves.**

Marius Victorinus: Above he has given two injunctions, first that they should delight in humility, then that they should think not only of their own affairs but of those of others. Then he says, "Have this mind among yourselves that was in Christ Jesus." Which of these two then do we take to have been manifested in Christ Jesus? One or the other or both? For the first, his humility, is manifest, since Christ humbled himself and assumed the character of a slave. But the second injunction could be here as well, since he bore this for others and thought of others rather than of himself. Epistle to the Philippians 2.6–8.12

### **The Mind That Was in Jesus Christ.**

Chrysostom: Our Lord Jesus Christ, when urging his disciples to undertake great works, makes himself an example. <sup>13</sup> ... This too the blessed Paul does, bringing Christ before their eyes when he urges them to practice humility.... For nothing so sustains the great and philosophic soul in the performance of good works as learning that through this one is becoming like God. Homily on Philippians 7.2.5–8.14

### **What the Hymn as a Whole Tells Us.**

Epiphanius: You see that he reveals Christ to be a man but not merely so, since he is the mediator of God and humanity.... He is trueborn God by nature with respect to his Father, but with respect to humanity he is Mary's trueborn son by nature, begotten without the seed of a man. Ancoratus 44.1

## **2:6a *Being in the Form of God***

### **Countering the Neo-Arians.**

Gregory of Nyssa: He did not say "having a nature like that of God," as would be said of [a man] who was made in the image of God. Rather Paul says "being in the very form of God." All that is the Father's is in the Son. Antirrheticus Against Apollinarius.3

### **Christ Is the Form of God.**

Marius Victorinus: God is the very principle of life. God is being itself. God contains life as a principle of life and so also understanding. But life and understanding are in a sense the form and image of what exists. What most truly exists is God. God is being itself, as many agree, and more so that which is above existence. The form of existence is motion, understanding and life.... Christ is said to be "the form of God" because Christ is life, consciousness and understanding. Epistle to the Philippians 2.6–8.4

### **The Form of God Is His Essence.**

Gregory of Nyssa: The form of God is absolutely the same as the essence. Yet when he came to be in "the form of a slave," he took form in the essence of the slave, not assuming a naked form for himself. Yet he is not thereby divorced from his essence as God. Undoubtedly when Paul said that he was "in the form of God," he was indicating the essence along with the form. Against Eunomius 3.2.147.5

### **Before He Emptied Himself.**

Origen: First one may contemplate him existing in his primary form, that of God, before he emptied himself. One will then see the Son of God not yet having come forth from him, the [incarnate] Lord not yet having proceeded from his place. But then compare the preexistent state of the Son with that which resulted from his assuming "the form of a slave" when he "emptied himself." You will then understand how the Son of God came forth and came to us and as it were became distinguishable from the One who

sent him. Yet in another way the Father did not simply let him go but is with him and is in the Son as the Son is in the Father. Commentary on John 10.18.<sup>6</sup>

### **Being God He Took the Form of a Slave.**

Athanasius: What clearer and more decisive proof could there be than this? He did not become better from assuming a lower state but rather, “being God, he took the form of a slave.” ... If [as the Arians think] it was for the sake of this exaltation that the Word came down and that this is written, what need would there be for him to humble himself completely in order to seek what he already had? Against the Arians 1.40.<sup>7</sup>

### **He Was Not Slave Before He Was Lord.**

Epiphanius: Suppose that when he became a slave he ceased being truly Lord. How then could it be said that in his coming the one who was “in the form of God took the form of a slave”? Ancoratus 28.<sup>8</sup>

### **Whether He Existed Before Mary.**

Chrysostom: How can the wretched [Sabellius] say that Christ’s existence began from Mary? This implies that before this he did not exist. But Paul says that “being the form of God he took the form of a slave.” ... The form of a slave is truly a slave and nothing less. So too the form of God is truly God and nothing less. Paul did not write that he was in process of coming to be in the form of God; rather “being in the form of God,” hence truly divine. This is as much as to say “I am that I am.” 10 Homily on Philipians 7.2.5–8.<sup>11</sup>

### **The True Greatness of Christ.**

Lucifer of Cagliari: It was he who was and is and always shall be in the form of the Father, the true Son, immutable and unchangeable because he is God and the all-powerful Son of the Almighty, who nonetheless deigned to lower himself for our salvation, so that he might cause us to rise even as we lay prostrate. On Dying for the Son of God 12.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Need to Receive the Likeness.**

Methodius: Being in the image of God, [humanity] still needed to receive the likeness. <sup>15</sup> The Word, having been sent into the world to perfect this, first of all took on our own form, even though in history it has been stained by many sins, so that we for our part, on whose account he bore it, should be once again capable of partaking in his divine nature. Hence it is now possible for us to receive God’s likeness. Think



of a skilled painter painting a likeness of himself on a surface. So we may now imitate the same characteristics that God himself has displayed in his becoming a human being. We hold these characteristics before us as we go in discipleship along the path he set out. His purpose in consenting to put on human flesh when he was God was this: that we, upon seeing the divine image in this tablet, so to speak, might imitate this incomparable artist. Symposium 1.4.24.<sup>16</sup>

## ***2:6b Equality with God Not Counted a Thing to Be Grasped***

### **Equal to God.**

Augustine: God who is eternally wise has with him his eternal Wisdom [the Son]. He is not in any way unequal to the Father. He is not in any respect inferior. For the apostle too says “who, when he was in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God.” <sup>17</sup> On Faith and the Creed 5.<sup>18</sup>

### **Equal, Not Similar.**

Marius Victorinus: What does this mean—“being equal to God”? It means that he [the Son] is of the very same power and substance [as the Father]. <sup>19</sup> ... It is in this sense therefore that Christ was equal to God. Note that Paul did not say Christ was “similar to God,” for that would imply that Christ possessed some accidental likeness to the substance of God but not that he was substantially equal. <sup>20</sup> ... Thus Christ is the form of God. The form of God is the substance of God. The form and image of God is the Word. The Word is forever with God. <sup>21</sup> The Word is of one substance with the Father, with whom from the beginning it remains forever the Word. Against the Arians 1.21–22.<sup>22</sup>

### **Whether Humility Is Lack of Power.**

Chrysostom: When someone who has the power to think great thoughts humbles himself, that one is humble. But when his humility comes from impotence, that is not what you would call humility.... It is a humility of a greater sort to refrain from “seizing” power, to be “obedient to death.” Homily on Philippians 7.2.5–8.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Equality Not Elicited by Robbery.**

Marius Victorinus: It would be a kind of robbery if two things were not equal by nature but were forced to be made equal or made equal through some accident. It therefore shows great confidence and

bespeaks the very nature of divinity when Paul says of Christ that he did not think it robbery to be equal with God yet did not consider this equality something he had to fortify. Against the Arians 1.23.25

### **To God Belongs Deity by Nature.**

Chrysostom: Suppose someone commits a robbery and grabs something that does not belong to him. Wouldn't he be inclined to hold on to it tightly, to grasp it and not lay it aside for fear of losing it? But suppose someone else possesses an estate by nature. He would not have any fear of losing it. He would not then be afraid to descend temporarily from his estate of dignity. He would know that he would suffer no loss, because it belongs to him naturally.... We are human beings. We are not divine by nature. We do not possess goodness by nature. But to God divinity belongs by nature.... His dominion was not acquired by seizure but was natural. It was not the gift of another but always stable and secure. Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11.26

### **The Logic of the Equality.**

Eusebius of Vercelli: You must choose one of two paths. Either there is a single inequality in the two [divine Father and divine Son] or there is a single equality in the glory of divinity itself. For no one is either greater or less than his own form.... This singular equality is seen not only in the concord of their willing together. It is rather in their very deity, since the form of equality is in no way divided into parts. Where there is one equality, there is no discord. Where there is one equality, neither is prior to the other. Neither is posterior nor subordinate, since there is no distinction in the united equality, which is the fullness of divinity. On the Trinity 3.4, 7.28

### **The Equality Indivisible.**

Augustine: Wherein lies the Son's equality? If you say in greatness, there is no equality of greatness in one who is less eternal. And so with other things. Is he perhaps equal in might but not equal in wisdom? Yet how can there be equality of might in one who is inferior in wisdom? Or is he equal in wisdom but not equal in might? But how can there be equality of virtue in one who is inferior in power? Instead Scripture declares more simply "he thought it not robbery to be equal." Therefore every adversary of truth who is at all subject to apostolic authority must admit that the Son is in some one respect at least the equal of God. Let him choose whichever quality he might wish, but from that it will appear that he is equal in all that is attributed to divinity. On the Trinity 6.5.29

### **The Equality as a Proof of His Eternity.**

Chrysostom: Now equality is not predicated of one subject, for that which is equal must be equal to something. Do you see how the existence of two subjects is affirmed, not two mere names without real significance? Do you hear how the Only Begotten existed before the ages? Homily on Philipians 7.2.5–8.30

### **Equality as Shared Power.**

Quodvultdeus: He did not rob, because who he was, he was by nature. Thus the omnipotence of the Father was in the Son and the omnipotence of the Son in the Father. The Father is never without the Son nor the Son without the Father. On the Creed 1.3.14–15.35

### **The Economy of the Incarnation.**

Augustine: These things are said partly on account of the economy by which the Son assumed humanity ... partly because the Son owes to the Father his existence and also owes to the Father indeed his equality or parity with the Father. The Father, however, owes to no one his being, whatever he is. On Faith and the Creed 18.37

## ***2:7a Christ Emptied Himself***

### **The Emptying Through Obedience.**

Hilary of Poitiers: To assume “the form of a slave,” he “emptied himself” through obedience. He emptied himself, that is, from the “form of God,” which means “equality with God.” On the Trinity 8.45.38

### **The Emptying Commensurate with Our Nature.**

Gregory of Nyssa: And even the word emptied clearly affirms that he was not always as he appeared to us in history.... He “emptied himself,” as the apostle says, by contracting the ineffable glory of his Godhead within our small compass. In this way “what he was” remained great and perfect and incomprehensible, but “what he assumed” was commensurate with the measure of our own nature. Antirrheticus Against Apollinarius.39

### **The Emptying Involved No Loss of Godhead.**

Augustine: He is said to have “emptied himself” in no other way than by taking the form of a servant, not by losing the form of God. For that nature by which he is equal to the Father in the form of God remained immutable while he took our mutable nature, through which he was born of the Virgin. *Contra Faustum* 3.6.40

### **Whether He Himself Changed When He Emptied Himself.**

Augustine: He “emptied himself,” not because as eternal Wisdom he underwent change. For as eternal Wisdom he is absolutely changeless. Rather without changing he chose to become known to humanity in such a humble form. *On Faith and the Creed* 18.41

### **The Emptying Hides but Does Not Curtail the Divinity in Him.**

Gregory of Elvira: We do not believe that he was so emptied that he himself as Spirit became something else. Rather he, having put aside for this time the honor of his majesty, put on a human body. Only by assuming human form could he become the Savior of humanity. Note that when the sun is covered by a cloud its brilliance is suppressed but not darkened. The sun’s light, which is suffused throughout the whole earth, penetrating all with its brilliant splendor, is presently obscured by a small obstruction of cloud but not taken away. So too that man, whom our Lord Jesus Christ put on, being our Savior, which means God and the Son of God, does not lessen but momentarily hides the divinity in him. *On the Faith* 88–89.44

### **The Emptying as an Express Image of His Glory.**

Origen: The Son, “emptying himself,” of his equality with the Father and showing us a way of knowing him, was made an express image of his substance, <sup>45</sup> so that we who were unable to see the glory of pure light that inhered in the greatness of his divinity might, through that which was made splendor for us, find a way of contemplating the divine light through the sight of that splendor. *On First Principles* 1.2.8.46

### **The Emptying Passive but Voluntary.**

Cyril of Alexandria: He let himself be “emptied.” It was not through any compulsion by the Father. He complied of his own accord with the Father’s good pleasure. *Dialogues on the Trinity* 1.47

### **The Emptying Uncoerced.**

Faustinus: If he “therefore emptied himself, assuming the form of a slave,” he was not coerced but was of his own accord made the Son of Man, existing as God’s equal in the form of God. Therefore you have the Son expressing in himself the faith proper to humans. On the Trinity 17.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Emptying as an Assumption of the Body.**

Origen: In “emptying himself,” he became a man and was incarnate while remaining truly God. Having become a man, he remained the God that he was. He assumed a body like our own, differing only in that it was born from the Virgin by the Holy Spirit. On First Principles 1, Preface 4.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Emptying as an Assumption of Flesh.**

Cyril of Alexandria: What sort of emptying is this? To assume the flesh, even in the form of a slave, a likeness to ourselves while not being like us in his own nature but superior to the whole creation. Thus he humbled himself, descending by his economy into mortal bounds. On the Unity of Christ.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Emptying as an Assumption of Humanity.**

Marius Victorinus: We must understand this “emptying himself” to consist not in any loss or privation of his power but in the fact that he lowered himself to the basest level and condescended to the meanest tasks. By fulfilling these he momentarily emptied himself of his power. Assuming flesh and human form and likeness, he suffered, died and fulfilled all the things that belong to humanity. Epistle to the Philippians 2.6–8.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Emptying Consistent with Omnipotence.**

Hilary of Poitiers: Remaining “in the form of God,” he “took the form of a slave,” not being changed but “emptying himself” and hiding within himself and being made empty within his own power. He tempered himself to the form of the human state as far as was necessary to ensure that the weakness of the assumed humility would not fail to bear his immeasurable power. He went even so far as to tolerate conjunction with a human body. Just this far did his goodness moderate itself with an appropriate degree of obedience. But in making himself empty and restraining himself within himself, he did nothing detrimental to his own power, since even within this lowliness of his self-emptying he nonetheless used the resources of the evacuated power within him. On the Trinity 12.<sup>48.54</sup>

### **The Emptying Necessary for Full Humanity.**

Marius Victorinus: How could he possibly have taken only human form and not human substance? For he put on the flesh and was in the flesh and suffered in the flesh. This is the mystery and the means of our salvation.... What therefore does it mean, "he emptied himself?" That the universal Logos was not universal in his actual being as the logos of the flesh and becoming flesh. Therefore he did not merely pretend to become a man but became a man. *Against the Arians* 1.22.55

### **The Emptying a Proof of Full Incarnation.**

Cyril of Alexandria: By this alone let the difference between the divinity and humanity in him be perceived. For Godhead and humanity are not the same in natural quality. Otherwise how has the Word, being God, been "emptied," having let himself fall among lesser beings such as ourselves? But when we speculate on the mode of incarnation the human mind inevitably sees two things commingled by an inexpressible and unconfused union yet in no way divides the united elements but believes and firmly accepts that there is one from both, who is God, Son, Christ and Lord. *Letter to Acacius* 14.56

### **The Emptying Enables Human Nature to Accommodate God's Revelation.**

Gregory of Nyssa: The Godhead is emptied so that the human nature may accommodate it. What is human, on the other hand, is made new, becoming divine through mingling with the divine. *Against Eunomius* 3.3.67.57

### **Receiving As Much As Nature Could Hold.**

Gregory of Nyssa: He "emptied himself," as the Scripture says, so that as much as nature could hold it might receive. *Ad Theophilum Adversus Apollinaristas* 3.58

### **Human Nature Made Able to Receive.**

Gregory of Nazianzus: Since he is emptied on our account when he came down (and by emptying I mean as it were the reduction and lessening of his glory), he is for this reason able to be received. *Oration* 37.2.59

### **The Emptying a Restoration of Our Nature by His Humility.**

Eusebius of Vercelli: How then did he "empty himself"? When the "form of God accepted the form of a slave," when he who is preeminently the Lord deigned to take on himself what belongs to a slave. The Word was made flesh by bearing and doing what was beneath him in his indulgence and compassion toward us. All that he possessed by nature is emptied into this his person. Having been made obedient as

a man in the true “fashion of humanity,” he has restored to our nature by his own humility and obedience what had perished through disobedience in Adam. On the Trinity 10 (9).57.60

## **2:7b Taking the Form of a Servant**

### **His Servanthood Not from a Natural Inferiority.**

Chrysostom: If it were through a natural inferiority that he undertook to bear “the form of a slave,” 62 this would not be an instance of humility. Yet Paul makes excellent use of this example as an exhortation precisely to humility. On the Equality of the Father and the Son, Homily 10.63

### **He Assumed What He Was Not.**

Gregory of Nyssa: The one who says that he “took the form of a slave” —and this form is flesh—is saying that, being himself something else according to his divine form, something else in his nature, he assumed the servile form. Antirrheticus Against Apollinarius.64

### **The Slavery as God’s Instrument.**

Clement of Alexandria: God did all things through him. Therefore he is also said to have “taken the form of a slave.” It is not only the flesh of the slave that he assumed but the very nature of a slave that he assumed. He became a slave so that he could share human suffering in the flesh. Excerpts from Theodotus 1.19.4–5.65

### **Yet His Slavery Involved No Actual Sin.**

Augustine: The Son humbled himself, taking the form of a slave. But meanwhile he remained above any slavery because he had no stain of sin. On the Grace of Christ 33.68

### **The Slavery of the Son Ends the Slavery of Sin.**

Augustine: The Lord Jesus Christ came in flesh and, having “accepted the form of a slave, became obedient even to death on the cross.” He has no other purpose than that by this dispensation of his most merciful grace he might give life to those who have become, as it were, members of his body. He is their head in order to obtain for them the kingdom of heaven. This he did to save and set free. He redeemed and enlightened those who had formerly been consigned to the death of sin. They had been languishing in

slavery, captivity and darkness under the power of the devil, the prince of sinners. On What Is Due to Sinners 1.39.70

### **The Triune God Not Exhausted in This Slavery.**

Gregory of Nyssa: The Word who appeared in the flesh was the same as the Word that was with God. 72 But the earthly flesh he assumed was not the same as the Godhead 73 until this too was changed into Godhead, so that necessarily some attributes belonged to God the Word, others to the form of a slave. Against Eunomius 3.3.62.74

### **The Will of the Father and the Son Was Voluntary.**

Marius Victorinus: The Son was sent by the Father and fulfills the Father's will. The mystery stated here is that it was by his own will that he came and assumed the form and image of a slave.... The Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father.... So what the Father willed the Son also willed, and what the Son willed the Father willed. Epistle to the Philippians 2.6–8.75

## ***2:7c Being Born***

### **Rejected Interpretations.**

Cyril of Alexandria: If we take him simply and solely to be a man made from a woman, how could he be said to be in the form equal to the Father? If only a man, how could he have the fullness that would make sense of his being emptied? What height could he have occupied before that he might be said to have "humbled himself?" How did he "come to be in the likeness of men" if he was already so by nature? Scholium 12 on the Incarnation of the Only Begotten.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Manhood Expresses Not a Change in God Himself but Development in the Divine Economy of His Revelation.**

Hilary of Poitiers: Note well the breathtaking economy by which the Son assumed flesh: Through the obedience of the one who was in the form of God [and] was emptying himself of the form of God, [he] was born as a man. In doing so, he took a new nature upon himself! This occurred not by a loss of his power and nature but by an assumption of a new condition.... Though he retained the power of his nature as God, he was in much of his earthly ministry temporarily relinquishing his exercise of the power of his nature as God as he walked as a man. The effect of this economy of order was this: The Son in his entirety,



namely, as both man and God, was now, through the indulgence of the Father's will, in union with the nature of the Father. This is what occurred to God the Son: that he became a man. On the Trinity 9.38.<sup>82</sup>

## ***2:7d In the Likeness of Humanity***

### **Not from the Beginning Invested with That Likeness.**

Gregory of Nyssa: He says of the Son that he has "come to be in the likeness and form of men." If he "came to be" in this likeness, this obviously implies that he was not invested with it from the beginning. Before coming to be in that likeness he was not fashioned according to some corporeal pattern. For no embodied form could become the pattern for what is previously not embodied. *Antirrheticus Against Apollinarius*.<sup>83</sup>

### **In Human Likeness.**

Chrysostom: What does it mean to be "in a human likeness"? Does it mean that his appearance was merely a fantasy? This would be something merely similar to <sup>84</sup> a human and not made in the "likeness of a man." For to be made in "the likeness of a man" is to be a man.... So what does it mean, "in a human likeness"? With few exceptions he had all our common human properties. The exceptions: He was not born from sexual intercourse. He committed no sin. These properties he had which no human being has. He was not only human, which is what he appeared to be, but also God.... We are soul and body, but he is God, soul and body. For this reason Paul says "in the form"—and so that when you hear of his emptying you may not suppose that he underwent change, degradation and some sort of annihilation of his divinity. Rather remaining what he was he assumed what he was not. Becoming flesh, he remained the Word of God. So it is in this respect that he is "in the likeness of men," and for this reason he says "and in form." His nature was not degraded, nor was there any confusion [of the two natures], but he entered a form. *Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11*.<sup>85</sup>

### **Not a Phantom.**

Marius Victorinus: It is not as though Paul was in the slightest uncertain about Christ's identity that he said Christ was "found in human likeness." He did not say "in human likeness" as though our Lord maybe was not truly a man but a phantom. Rather he was found in human likeness while still being God yet at the same time being truly a man in the flesh, with a physical human body that he had assumed. *Epistle to the Philippians 2.6–8*.<sup>86</sup>

### **The Metaphor of Clothing Inadequate.**

Augustine: He did not take on his humanity in the simple way that a person puts on clothes, as something exterior to him. Rather he took on human form in a manner inexpressibly more excellent and more intimate than that. The apostle has made it sufficiently clear what he meant “He was made to appear in human likeness.” He was not exhaustively reduced to being a man. He rather assumed the true human estate when he put on the man. On Diverse Questions 73.<sup>88</sup>

### **Not One of Many.**

Chrysostom: He carefully uses the phrase “in human likeness.” For Christ was not one of the many but as one of the many. God the Word did not degenerate into a man. His essence as God did not change. Rather he appeared like a man, not deluding us with a phantom but instructing us in humility. Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11.<sup>89</sup>

## ***2:8a Being Found in Human Form***

### **The Form of God Invisible.**

Gaudentius: He added “being found in human form” because the form of God, which is properly God himself, has never been seen by anyone. Treatise 19, On the Priority of the Father 28.<sup>91</sup>

### **His Humanity As Real As His Divinity.**

Basil of Caesarea: It is apparent that the Lord accepted natural feelings to confirm that his humanity was real and not illusory, but the feelings that come from wickedness, all those that besmirch the purity of our lives, he repudiated as being unworthy of his unsullied Godhead. Letter 261.<sup>94</sup>

## ***2:8b Christ Humbled Himself***

### **The Humiliation Honorable.**

Chrysostom: He honored the Father all the more, not that you may honor him less but that you may marvel all the more. Here we learn that he is truly a son who honors his father more than all else. No one could have honored God the Father more than God the Son. The measure of his sublimity corresponds with the depth of his humility. Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11.<sup>96</sup>

### **His Humiliation Demonstrates His Voluntarily Divested Majesty.**

Hilary of Poitiers: Humility is hard, since the one who humbles himself has something magnificent in his nature that works against his lowering. The one who becomes obedient, however, undertakes the act of obedience voluntarily. It is precisely through the act of humbling that he becomes obedient. On the Trinity 11.30.<sup>97</sup>

### **His Humbling Becomes Our Example.**

Cyril of Alexandria: He “humbled himself,” according to the Scriptures, “taking on himself the form of a slave.” He became like us that we might become like him. The work of the Spirit seeks to transform us by grace into a perfect copy of his humbling. Festal Letter 10.4. <sup>98</sup>

## ***2:8c He Became Obedient***

### **Salvation Through Obedience.**

Origen: He “was made obedient even to death.” His obedience teaches us that we too cannot obtain salvation except through obedience. By this means he has reconstituted the laws of ruling and being ruled, so much so that he “has put all his enemies under his feet.” <sup>99</sup> On First Principles 3.5.6. <sup>100</sup>

## ***2:8d He Was Obedient Unto Death***

### **The Death Still More Honorable.**

Chrysostom: It was a great thing—ineffably great—that he became a slave. But to undergo death was much greater. Where can anything be found more paradoxical than this? This death was the most shameful of all, the most accursed. And he in death appeared to be a reprobate. This was not an ordinary death. <sup>101</sup> Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11.<sup>102</sup>

### **That None May Fear Death.**

Augustine: He humbled himself, being made obedient even unto death, even death on a cross, so that none of us, though being able to face death without fear, might shrink from any kind of death that human beings regard as a great disgrace. On Faith and the Creed 11.<sup>103</sup>

## **2:8e *Death on a Cross***

### **He Put Death to Death.**

Epiphanius: The Word tasted death once on our behalf, the death of the cross. He went to his death so that by death he might put death to death. The Word, becoming human flesh, did not suffer in his divinity but suffered with humanity. Ancoratus 92.104

## **2:9a *God Has Exalted Him***

### **The Son of Man Exalted.**

Origen: It was not the Word of God who needed or received exaltation. For the Word was in the beginning exalted with the Father. It was the Son of Man who was exalted from lowliness. This exaltation occurred when he had glorified God in his death. Commentary on John 32.25.107

### **The Dying One Exalted.**

Gaudentius: "Therefore," he says, "God exalted him." But who was it that was exalted? Evidently the one who underwent the torture of the cross and death. It was not God himself, who is always on high throughout. Treatise 19, On the Priority of the Father 29.108

### **What Was Humbled Was Exalted.**

Athanasius: That "God has highly exalted him" does not imply that the essential nature of the Word at long last became exalted. For God the Son is and always was equal to God the Father. The exaltation is of the humanity.... The text says "he humbled himself" with reference to the assumption of the flesh. So too it says "he exalted him" with reference to the flesh. It was the human race that needed this, because of the humiliation of its flesh and because of its consequent death. Thus the Word who is immortal and the image of the Father "has taken the form of a slave" and suffered death on the cross as a man for our sake. He did this in order that he might thus present himself as an offering to the Father. It is thus as a man that he is said to have been exalted for our sake. Hence all of us die in Christ and through his death may again be exalted in Christ himself. Against the Arians 1.41.109

### **What Is Exalted Is That Which Was Made Low.**

Gregory of Nyssa: It is obvious that the highest is in need of no exaltation. Only what is lowly can be lifted to the exalted state, becoming now what it was not before. Being united to the Lord the human nature is lifted up to share in his divinity. What is exalted is that which has been lifted up from lowliness. Antirrheticus Against Apollinarius.<sup>110</sup>

### **No Injury to the Godhead.**

Chrysostom: Having said that he became a man, Paul is not afraid thereafter to predicate lowly things of him, knowing that this predication of lowly things does the Godhead no injury. It is to Christ's human nature that they apply. Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11.<sup>111</sup>

## **2:9b *The Name Bestowed***

### **The Error of Those Who Say His Glory Consists in Being Worshiped by Us.**

Chrysostom: Those who teach falsely imply that his glory lies in his name itself. The inference is that his glory consists entirely in his being worshiped by us. The implication is that he would not be glorious until he received our worship. Is this all his glory means? Those who think this way are far from the greatness of God. Homily on Philippians 8.2.5–11.<sup>114</sup>

## **2:9c *The Name Above Every Name***

### **The Phrase Conveys Ineffability.**

Gregory of Nyssa: God is "above every name." The only proper way to name God is as above every name. God exceeds every operation of the intellect. God cannot be contained in any nominal definition. This is a sign to us of God's incommunicable greatness. Against Eunomius 2.587.<sup>116</sup>

### **Still Equally God When Assuming Humanity.**

Gaudentius: The "name that is above every name" is God. It is not given to God in order that he should become God. For God the Son was the Word in the beginning with the Father. But the man assumed by the Son takes on his mission. In this way the Son of God, who had always existed, remains still equally God

when joined to the humanity that he received from the Virgin. Treatise 19, On the Priority of the Father 29.<sup>118</sup>

**Whether the Name Is an Eternal Reality Newly Revealed.**

Marius Victorinus: He received “the name that is above every name.” He received this name because of his saving word, because of the mystery of his passion, where death was vanquished by the very death of Christ. Through this grace he received the name. It was at that point that the name rightly accrued to him. But the reality to which the name pointed was already given before. The Word, the very power of God, did not become real for the first time only when it entered flesh. Rather it possessed its reality as the power, wisdom, action and work of God from the outset, when it was called the Word and when it indeed was the Word. It is that same Word that has now put on flesh ... that has received the title of Son, which title is above every name. Epistle to the Philippians 2.9–11.<sup>122</sup>

**2:10a *Every Knee Should Bow***

**He Who Has Assumed the Worshiping Nature Is Himself Worshiped.**

Cyril of Alexandria: He worships as one who has assumed the worshiping nature of humanity. It is this same One who is now worshiped as transcending the worshiping nature of humanity. 1 He is now known to be God. Scholium 34 on the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten.<sup>2</sup>

**The One God-Man Is Worshiped.**

Gaudentius: This means that after the mystery of the passion and the triumph of the ascension he who was wholly the Son of God with that which he had consented to be for our sakes, while remaining in the glory of God the Father (which means of course in the divinity of his own nature), should be adored by all the powers in heaven, on earth and below. Treatise 19, On the Priority of the Father 30.<sup>3</sup>

**The Exalted One Becomes Lowly So That the Lowly One May Receive the Fruits of His Exaltation.**

Gregory of Nyssa: This name has become superior to every name. His divinity is such that it cannot be adequately manifested merely through verbal signs, no matter how exalted they are. As the exalted One comes to be in the lowly, so the lowly One may receive in return the properties of the exalted. Antirrheticus Against Apollinarius.<sup>4</sup>

### **Worship Due to One Who Is God by Nature.**

Cyril of Alexandria: God the Word inhabited as his own temple the body taken from the woman. In this body lived a rational soul. God remade it into his own glory. On this account the Holy Scripture declares that worship is proper only to the one who is God by nature. This is what Paul means when he writes that “at the name of Christ Jesus every knee shall bow. Festal Letter 8.6.<sup>5</sup>

### **2:10b *In Heaven, on Earth and Under the Earth***

#### **Distinguishing in Heaven, on the Earth and Under the Earth.**

Origen: From a single beginning come many differences and varieties in creation. All these are now being recalled once again, synoptically in this text. They are now being viewed in relation to God’s goodness made known through the obedience of Christ. They are being drawn into a unity by the Holy Spirit. Everything is moving toward a common end, which corresponds to the goodness of the beginning. This means all those “in heaven and earth and the lower regions,” who, “bowing the knee at the name of Jesus,” have declared through this very act the tokens of their subjection. In these three appellations the whole universe is indicated. All things issue from one origin. They have been driven by their own motions in diverse ways. They are to be allotted different levels of blessedness in accord with their own willing. On First Principles 1.6.2.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Whether Incorporeal Powers Literally Bow.**

Origen: We should not understand this carnally, so as to suppose that even the heavenly bodies, which he says bend their knees, do this with fleshly limbs.... What spirit has knees? But the bending of the knees indicates that all is in subjection and observes the worship of God. Commentary on Romans 9.41.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Firstborn.**

Gregory of Nyssa: The One who once came into the world has now become the Firstborn from the dead, both of brothers in faith and of all creation. He will return to the world as judge of all the world in righteousness, as the prophet declares, when it will become clear. The name of Firstborn, which he assumed first on our behalf, will not be cast away in in those last days. Every knee will bow at the name of Jesus. He is above every name. The whole company of angels worships this One who has been called the Firstborn. They all rejoice in the restoration of humanity, whom he has restored to their original grace by becoming the Firstborn among us. Against Eunomius 3.2.48.<sup>8</sup>

## **2:11a *Every Tongue Will Confess Christ is Lord***

## **2:11b *The Glory of God the Father***

### **Humanity Re-created.**

Athanasius: The glory of the Father is that the human race not only was created but was re-created when lost. It was given life once again when dead, so as to become a renewed temple of God. For the powers in heaven also, the angels and the archangels, worship him and now worship the Lord “in the name of Jesus.” This joy and exaltation belongs to human beings, because the Son of God, having himself become a human being, is now worshiped. The heavenly powers are not offended when they behold all of us being led into our heavenly abode as we share in his body. This could not have happened in any other way. It happened only because, “being in the form of God and taking the form of a slave, he humbled himself,” agreeing to assume our bodily condition “even to death.” Against the Arians 1.42.10