With this post I plan to end the rather long-running thread that began with a basic question several blog members asked me. Some weeks ago I was posting on the unusually important “Christ Poem” of Philippians 2:6-11, where Paul appears to be quoting a poem about Christ, composed earlier and probably by someone other than himself, in which Christ is said to have been a pre-existent divine being who gave up his divine status to become a human and suffer and die, who was then, as a result, exalted up to heaven and made the one to whom all the universe would eventually bow down and worship.

The claims of that poem might seem rather unremarkable to anyone not familiar with the history of early Christianity. Hey, isn’t that just what Christians say about Jesus?

But for those who do know how ideas of Christ evolved over time, in the early decades and centuries of the Christian religion, it is an absolutely extraordinary poem. Already BEFORE the vast bulk of the NT was written there were followers of a virtually unknown impoverished, itinerant preacher from a rural backwoods of the empire who was executed for crimes against the state who were saying that he had been made equal in authority with God and the one to whom every living being would bow down before at the end of time? Really? Within 20 years or less of the man’s *death*??

My posts tried to explain how to interpret the poem and its remarkable Christology, and to show that it appears to be quoted by Paul, rather than composed by him for this letter. That would make it earlier than the letter, and thus one of our earliest statements about Christ in existence, several decades, say, before the Gospels were written.

And so some readers asked whether it might be possible that it was not originally part of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, but a later insertion – or “interpolation” – into his letter by a later Christian with a later understanding of Christ. Since we don’t have the original of Paul’s letter, how would we know?

That launched me into…

This post is about one of the most important passages of the entire New Testament. Was it originally there or not? If you want to find out, you’ll need to belong to the blog. Joining is easy and inexpensive, and every penny goes to help those in need, a growing number as we all know so well. So think about joining — you’ll not only be helping out others, you’ll be giving yourself a gift in these hard times.

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