In my most recent post on Christology I began to speak about the “incarnation” Christology found famously in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, 2:6-11. There are a lot of other things I want to say about this passage, all of them relevant to the issues I’ve been discussing. The first and most important thing is that it has been widely recognized by scholars for a very long time that this passage is something that Paul appears to be quoting, that it is not simply part of the prose letter. Moreover, it is frequently called (probably wrongly) a “hymn” (that’s probably wrong because – as I’ve been told by an expert in the field of ancient music, it doesn’t actually scan as music). But in any event, it is highly structured in a balanced fashion and thus seems to be more like a poem than like prose. The reasons for thinking that Paul is quoting rather than composing it are pretty compelling, and I will get to them eventually. For now I want to point out the rhythmic structure.

To urge their service for others, the Philippians are told: “have the same mind in yourselves that was also in Christ Jesus” and then the poem/hymn about Christ begins:

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