



# A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship

By Ralph P. Martin

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Philippians 2:5-11, long cherished and mined for its riches, has shaped the very language and architecture of orthodox Christian confession of Christ. Whether in contemporary worship or devotional reading, all Christians have found this Pauline passage speaking with memorable and evocative power. Yet few scriptural texts have generated as much interpretive comment and controversy. Close inspection of its lines raises important questions of the meaning of terms, the principal affirmations regarding Christ's nature and work, the function of these verses within the argument of Philippians and the possibility that the poetry of verses 6-11 reveals the shape of an early Christian hymn. And if these verses constitute a hymn, what does it disclose of its original setting and the nature of early Christian worship? Ralph Martin's study of this passage was originally published in 1967 under the title *Carmen Christi* and then reissued in 1983 with a new preface. For thirty years it has been widely and uncontestedly recognized as the indispensable work for any serious interpretation of Philippians 2:5-11. Now reissued as *A Hymn of Christ*, this classic work includes a new preface that brings readers abreast of critical issues in the interpretation of this text since 1983. Once again a foundational volume on Pauline theology is made available to students of Scripture.

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#### About the Author

Ralph Martin (1925-2013) was a distinguished New Testament scholar and a significant figure in the post-World War 2 resurgence of British evangelical scholarship. Born in Anfield, Liverpool, England, his early education was interrupted in 1939 by the war, and he was conscripted to work in the coal mines of Lancashire. After the war he pursued ministerial training at Manchester Baptist College and in 1949 earned his B.A. at the University of Manchester. In 1963 he completed his Ph.D. at King's College, University of London. In 1969 Martin joined the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where he would serve as professor of New Testament from 1969 to 1988, and director of the graduate studies program beginning in 1979. He resumed his teaching there in 1995 as Distinguished Scholar in Residence. Throughout his academic career he stayed involved in preaching, teaching laypeople and other pastoral ministry. He was the author of numerous studies and commentaries on the New Testament, including *Worship in the Early Church*, the volume on *Philippians* in The Tyndale New Testament Commentary series, and *2 Corinthians* and *James* in the Word Biblical Commentary, for which he also served as New Testament editor.

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