Two Neglected Textual Variants in Philippians 1

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Recent studies of Paul’s Letter to the Philippians have highlighted the epistle’s connections to the ancient institution of friendship as well as the closely related Greek and Roman social conventions of patronage and benefaction.1 These studies have drawn attention also to Paul’s emphasis on his own role in these relationships of patronage, not only as a client and recipient of financial support from the Philippians but also as a patron and a broker of divine benefaction.2 In light of this development, it would be timely to reexamine two textual variants in the first chapter of Philippians that have not received due attention.

At the end of Phil 1:7, the 27th edition of Nestle-Aland prints the following participial phrase: συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας with no indication of variation in the manuscript tradition. Most modern translations and commentaries understand μου as a possessive genitive modifying the noun that precedes it, συγκοινωνούς. The RSV thus translates, “for you all are partak-

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2 Thus, White writes, “[I]t seems to me that Paul is calling on the Philippians to fulfill their obligations to him as ‘friends,’ which may mean a play on patron–client relations as well. In this sense, Paul may be suggesting the same kind of relationship to the Philippians as he does with Philemon. There, he claims an obligation (the requested hospitable reception for the runaway Onesimus) from Philemon as his spiritual client” (“Morality between Two Worlds,” 214 n. 59).
3 The NRSV takes the further interpretive step of specifying exactly whose χάρις is at issue by translating “for all of you share in God’s grace with me.” The majority of modern commentators follow this interpretation. See, e.g., Marvin R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 10; and Markus Bockmuehl, The Epistle to the Philippians (BNTC 11; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 63.

4 A few other modern translations render the phrase in a similar fashion: The NJB, for example, has “since you have all shared together in the grace that has been mine.” A number of German commentators and a handful of scholars writing in English follow this line of interpretation as well; see the literature cited in Peter T. O’Brien, The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 70 n. 36. Of the eight authors O’Brien cites as supporting the μου + τῆς χάριτος understanding, only one briefly mentions the Greek textual variant I discuss below: Erich Haupt, “Der Brief an die Philipper,” in Die Gefangenschaftsbriefe (KEK 9; 7th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), 13 n. 1. An earlier tradition of interpretation read μου as modifying τῆς χάριτος but understood the term χάρις as a reference to the financial gift from the Philippians to Paul. Thus, William Paley translated the phrase as “joint contributors to the gift that I have received” (Horae Paulinae, or The Truth of the Scripture History of St. Paul Evinced, by a Comparison of the Epistles which Bear his Name, with the Acts of the Apostles, and with One Another [London: J. Davis, 1790], 256).

5 In Paul’s letters, one typically finds possessive personal pronouns after the noun that they modify, but there are a number of exceptions to this general rule, such as Phil 4:14 (καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει), in which the possessive precedes the noun it modifies. I shall have more to say about this verse below.

6 I consulted a reproduction of Wettstein’s 1752 edition: Novum Testamentum Graecum (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1962). Both Wettstein and Constantin von Tischendorf (in Novum Testamentum Graece [8th ed.; Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1869–72]) also note several witnesses for the reading μοι τῆς χάριτος, but this variation most likely results from a simple orthographical slip from upsilon to iota.
and Boernerianus and Augiensis should also likely be regarded as a single witness since they appear to derive from a common ancestor. Nevertheless, some weight should be granted to this particular combination. As Peter Corssen has pointed out, when the Greek text of Claromontanus is in agreement with that of Boer-nerianus and Augiensis, the reading likely goes back to the fourth-century prede-
cessor from which all three texts are ultimately derived. Yet, by the standard rules of textual criticism, a single fourth-century witness cannot take priority over the combined support of p^46 (third century), Sinaiticus (fourth century), Vaticanus (fourth century), and Alexandrinus (fifth century) for the reading συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος. While there is thus insufficient evidence to suggest that συγκοινωνούς τῆς χάριτος μου represents the earliest recoverable text of Phil 1:7, this reading could represent an early clarification of the verse and thus could provide evidence for how some early readers of the ambiguous συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος understood that phrase.

The Greek and Latin versions of the commentary on Philippians by Theodore of Mopsuestia help to illustrate this point. Likely written in the early fifth century, Theodore's commentary on Philippians survives in a Latin translation that Henry Barclay Swete suspected was produced in North Africa in the middle of the sixth century. Fortunately, a few Greek fragments also survive, and the relevant portion of Phil 1:7 is among them. Theodore writes: καὶ συνκοινωνοῦσι δέ μου...
13 Swete’s source for the Greek fragments of Theodore is a manuscript of the eleventh century, the Paris catena of commentaries, Coislin 204 (published by John Anthony Cramer in Cate

14 “Benefaction” or “act of benefaction” is a more acceptable translation for χάρις than the vague and theologically loaded term “grace.” For a compelling argument to this effect, see Zeba A. Crook’s excellent discussion in Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean (BZNW 130; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 139–48.
15 The lemma for this verse in the Latin version of Theodore’s commentary lacks the pos-

16 Bart D. Ehrman has observed and aptly described this kind of phenomenon in the early
17 Such an understanding is consonant with Paul’s assertions elsewhere that he himself is the holder of divine χάρις. In Rom 12:3, Paul speaks of “the χάρις given to” him (λέγω γὰρ διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσαις μοι; but note that a number of minuscule manuscripts add τοῦ θεοῦ after τῆς χάριτος). Later in the letter (Rom 15:15), he claims that he has written so frankly “because of the χάρις that was given to” him from God (διὰ τῆς χάριν τῆς δοθείσαις μοι ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ). He uses similar diction in Gal 2:9 (τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθείσαν μοι) and 1 Cor 3:10, which in p46 and several other manuscripts reads: κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθείσαν μοι (Sinaiti-
This interpretation of Phil 1:7 would also make the variant readings of Phil 1:11 especially interesting. For the conclusion of v. 11, Nestle-Aland prints: εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ, “for the glory and praise of God.” As the critical apparatus indicates, this reading finds a great deal of support among the ancient manuscripts and commentators, but there are a variety of other readings preserved in the ancient witnesses. Here again, the attestation of the so-called Western tradition is intriguing, for in these witnesses the emphasis is not on the deity but on Paul himself. Boernerianus and Augiensis read εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον μοι, “for glory and praise for me.” This reading is also reflected in some Latin witnesses, including the fourth-century commentary on Philippians attributed to Ambrosiaster (in gloriam et laudem mihi). That this reading goes back to a very early date indeed would seem to be confirmed by the conflate reading in what is widely regarded as our oldest manuscript of Paul’s letters, p46, which reads εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ καὶ ἔπαινον ἐμοί, “for the glory of God and praise for me.” A few commentators have flirted with the idea that either p46 or Boernerianus and Augiensis represent the earliest recoverable reading, although to my knowledge none of the major commentaries actually adopts either reading in the printed text of the letter. If the...
reading of ρ\textsuperscript{46} is in fact a conflation of two older readings: εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ and εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινόν μοι.\textsuperscript{21} then the latter (the reading preserved in Augiensis and Boernerianus), clearly the lectio difficilior from the standpoint of developing Christian orthodoxy, should be regarded as the oldest recoverable reading, as it is best able to explain the genesis of the other readings.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, this early version of Phil 1:11 would suggest that the Philippians being found “pure and blameless for the day of Christ” accrues glory and praise for Paul.\textsuperscript{23}

The understanding of Phil 1:7 that I outlined above, which highlights Paul's sense of his own importance as a broker of divine benefaction, would be quite amenable to the readings of Boernerianus and Augiensis for 1:11, and this overall understanding of Phil 1:7-11 would fit comfortably in the context of ancient Greek and Roman conventions of friendship and patronage.

\textsuperscript{21} That the reading in ρ\textsuperscript{46} is a conflation seems clear. Bruce Metzger describes the reading of ρ\textsuperscript{46} as an “astonishing . . . early conflate reading” (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament [2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], 544), and James R. Royse lists this variation unit in ρ\textsuperscript{46} as one of eight readings in ρ\textsuperscript{46} “most plausibly viewed as conflations, and indeed as conflations from readings that are now found in the Western and Alexandrian traditions” (Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri [New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 36; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008], 335).

\textsuperscript{22} That is, discomfort with the idea of Paul praising himself in such lofty terms led to the replacement of Paul’s “me” (μοι) with either “God” (θεοῦ in Sinaticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and many other witnesses) or “Christ” (χριστοῦ in Claromontanus and 1962, a minuscule manuscript of the eleventh century). The reading of ρ\textsuperscript{46} reflects a decision to resolve the conflicting readings by dividing the accolades between Paul and his God: εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ καὶ ἔπαινον ἐμοί.

\textsuperscript{23} Again, this sentiment is consistent with Paul's statements elsewhere to the effect that on the Day of Christ, the blameless state of his addressees will be a source of boasting for him, as in Phil 2:15–16 (Ἰνα γένησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι . . . εἰς καύχησις ἐμοί εἰς ἡμέραν χριστοῦ) and 1 Thess 2:19, where Paul asks, “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?” (τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπὶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως—ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς—ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ημῶν ἵστορον ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ;), but note that Codex Alexandrinus has ἀγαλλίασεως (“joy, gladness”) in place of καυχήσεως.