

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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¹ See, e.g., Stanley K. Stowers, “Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in *Philippians*,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 1, *Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (ed. Jouette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 105–21; and L. Michael White, “Morality between Two Worlds: A Paradigm of Friendship in *Philippians*,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 201–15.

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).

ers with me of grace.”³ This is a grammatically sound interpretation. Yet *μου* could just as easily be read as modifying the noun *χάριτος* (this possibility is reflected in the translation of the KJV: “ye all are partakers of my grace”), which would accent Paul’s role as a broker and dispenser of his own divine benefaction.⁴ As it stands in Nestle-Aland, the phrase is ambiguous. The latter understanding, however, would be somewhat more likely if *μου* were in a position after the noun *χάριτος*.⁵ What is interesting is that the so-called Western witnesses of Paul’s letters do in fact show this reading, *συγκοινωνοὺς τῆς χάριτός μου*. Nestle-Aland obscures this point by not including this reasonably well-attested reading in its critical apparatus. Modern commentaries have followed suit in not noting this variation unit.

Older editions of the Greek NT do document this reading. In his edition of 1752, Johann Jakob Wettstein reported that *τῆς χάριτός μου* appears in the Greek text of four Greek-Latin bilingual codices: Claromontanus (sixth century), Sangermanensis (early ninth century), Boernerianus (ninth century), and Augiensis (ninth century).⁶ It is true that this collection of manuscripts does not represent four independent witnesses, since Sangermanensis is certainly a copy of Claromontanus;

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 Gefangenschaftsbriebe* (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.⁷ 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 Boernerianus and Augiensis, the reading likely goes back to the fourth-century predecessor from which all three texts are ultimately derived.⁸ 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 $\sigmaυγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος$.⁹ While there is thus insufficient evidence to suggest that $\sigmaυγκοινωνούς τῆς χάριτος μου$ 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 $\sigmaυγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος$ understood that phrase.¹⁰

The Greek and Latin versions of the commentary on Philippians by Theodore of Mopsuestia help to illustrate this point.¹¹ 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.¹² Fortunately, a few Greek fragments also survive, and the relevant portion of Phil 1:7 is among them. Theodore writes: $\kappa\alpha\iota \sigmaυγκοινωνούς \delta\epsilon \mu\omega$

⁷ See W. H. P. Hatch, "On the Relationship of Codex Augiensis and Codex Boernerianus of the Pauline Epistles," *HSCP* 60 (1951): 187–99.

⁸ See Peter Corssen, *Epistularum Paulinarum codices Graece et Latine scriptos Augiensem, Boernerianum, Claromontanum examinavit inter se comparavit ad communem originem revocavit*, I-II (Programme des Gymnasiums Jever; Kiel, 1887, 1889). I was unable to obtain a copy of this work; I rely on a summary of its arguments found in Nils A. Dahl, "0230 (= PSI 1306) and the Fourth-century Greek-Latin Edition of the Letters of Paul," in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black* (ed. Ernest Best and R. McL. Wilson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 79–98; reprinted in *Studies in Ephesians: Introductory Questions, Text- & Edition-Critical Issues, Interpretation of Texts and Themes* (ed. David Hellholm, Vemund Blomkvist, and Tord Fornberg; WUNT 131; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 211–30.

⁹ If p^{46} supported the "Western" reading, one could make a case for the reading $\sigmaυγκοινωνούς τῆς χάριτος μου$ dating to the second or third century based on the arguments of Günther Zuntz to the effect that " p^{46} alone with one Western witness can be right against the whole of the other tradition" (*The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* [London: Oxford University Press, 1953], 159). Zuntz's argument is perhaps more pertinent with regard to the variant reading in Phil 1:11 that I discuss below.

¹⁰ It is thus unfortunate that Nestle-Aland does not indicate this variant. Even if a variant reading in a given manuscript has no obvious claim to be the so-called original reading, it may nevertheless provide clues as to how early readers understood the text in question.

¹¹ I refer to the edition of Henry Barclay Swete, *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni: In epistolas B. Pauli commentarii* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880), 1:202–3.

¹² For the date of composition and translation of the commentary, see Swete, *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni*, 1:lvii–lxiii.

τῆς χάριτος τὸ αὐτὸν λέγει· ἐπειδὴ γὰρ αὐτὸς εἰλήφει χάριν ἀποστολῆς εἰς τὸ πιστεύειν ἑτέρους, ὁ πιστεύων ὡς εἰκὸς ἐκοινώνει τῆς χάριτος.¹³ Theodore's exposition of the verse does not especially clarify the question of how to construe *μου* ("For since he himself received an act of benefaction for apostleship in order that others might become faithful, the one who is faithful quite reasonably shares in the benefaction"¹⁴), and his citation of the end of the verse also remains ambiguous (the isolation of *μου τῆς χάριτος* from *συνκοινωνούς* by the particle *δέ* notwithstanding). The Latin translator, however, removes any confusion by rendering the Greek *συνκοινωνούς δέ μου τῆς χάριτος* unambiguously as *comparticipes gratiae meae*, "partakers in *my* benefaction."¹⁵

By placing *μου* after *χάριτος*, the Greek of the bilinguals could well represent a similar interpretive clarifying move.¹⁶ Given the comparable construction involving the participle *συγκοινωνήσαντες* in Phil 4:14 (*καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει*), in which *μου* clearly modifies the noun that follows it ("You all have done well by sharing in *my* distress"), it is quite possible that Paul's first readers in Philippi understood his words in Phil 1:7 in just this way, as emphasizing that it is by virtue of their support of Paul during his bondage that they had become partakers of the benefaction that Paul himself had originally received.¹⁷

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 *Catena Graecorum Patrum in Novum Testamentum* vols. 6 and 7 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1842–43]; reprinted under the same title in 1967 by Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim). For the Latin text, Swete relied primarily on two manuscripts from the ninth or tenth centuries, Harley MS 3063 in the British Museum and Amiens MS 88. See the account in Swete, *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni*, 1:xvi–xxxiv.

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 possessive altogether (*comparticipes gratiae omnes vos esse*). The Vulgate has *gaudii mei*, possibly reflecting a mistaken *χαρᾶς* for *χάριτος*.

¹⁶ Bart D. Ehrman has observed and aptly described this kind of phenomenon in the early church: "Scribes altered their sacred texts to make them 'say' what they were already known to 'mean'" (*The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 276).

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 δοθείσης 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 τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθείσαν 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* (Sinaitic-

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 ἔπαινόν 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*).¹⁸ 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*.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ If the

cus, Vaticanus, and most other manuscripts add τοῦ θεοῦ after τὴν χάριν). All of these references to Paul’s χάρις are best understood as the authority granted to him as apostle to the Gentiles (see the chart of Paul’s various uses of χάρις in Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 143).

¹⁸ See the edition of Heinrich Joseph Vogels, *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur Commentarius in epistulas Paulinas, Pars tertia* (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1969). For a fuller breakdown of the Greek variants for this verse, see Kurt Aland, *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments II: Die paulinischen Briefe, Band 3, Galaterbrief bis Philipperbrief* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 571–74.

¹⁹ There is little doubt that p⁴⁶ ranks among our oldest extant papyrus manuscripts of any part of the NT, but recent attempts to date it in the first century are totally unconvincing. Frederic G. Kenyon’s dating of the hand to the “first half of the third century” is as specific and as early as the paleographic evidence warrants (*The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri: Descriptions and Texts of the Twelve Manuscripts on Papyrus of the Greek Bible*, fasc. III suppl. [London: Emery Walker Limited, 1936], xiv–xv). In fact, Henry A. Sanders’s statement of caution in this matter is quite appropriate: “I agree the manuscript belongs to the third century, but I would hesitate to put emphasis on the first half of the century” (*A Third-Century Papyrus Codex of the Epistles of Paul* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1935], 13).

²⁰ Gerald F. Hawthorne muses, “Could one of these ill-supported readings be original? It is hard to imagine how they came into existence if the original reading was ‘(for the glory) and praise of God’” (*Philippians* [WBC 43; Waco: Word Books, 1983], 14). Jean-François Collange writes, “In spite of weak attestation, the [reading of p⁴⁶ in v. 11] seems so strange that we can only ask whether or not it was the original reading” (*The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians* [trans. A. W. Heathcote; London: Epworth, 1979], 48). And most recently, Moisés Silva has commented, “In short, the reading of p⁴⁶ accounts most easily for the history of the text, but one hesitates to adopt such a jarring variant when it is found in this lone witness” (*Philippians* [Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 58). The single, confident champion of the Boernerianus/Agiensis reading is John MacDonald Ross, who writes,

reading of p^{46} is in fact a conflation of two older readings: $\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\acute{o}\xi\varsigma\alpha\eta\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \check{\epsilon}\pi\alpha\iota\nu\eta\varnothing$ θεοῦ and $\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\acute{o}\xi\varsigma\alpha\eta\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \check{\epsilon}\pi\alpha\iota\nu\eta\varnothing\ \mu\o\iota$,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.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.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.

“The UBS editors say it is not easy to explain how such a wide variety of readings developed, but on the contrary it is quite easy if we have the courage to accept [$\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\acute{o}\xi\varsigma\alpha\eta\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \check{\epsilon}\pi\alpha\iota\nu\eta\varnothing\ \mu\o\iota$] as original” (“Some Unnoticed Points in the Text of the New Testament,” *NovT* 25 [1983]: 59–72, quotation from p. 70).

²¹ That the reading in p^{46} is a conflation seems clear. Bruce Metzger describes the reading of p^{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 p^{46} as one of eight readings in p^{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).

²² That is, discomfort with the idea of Paul praising himself in such lofty terms led to the replacement of Paul’s “me” ($\mu\o\iota$) 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 p^{46} reflects a decision to resolve the conflicting readings by dividing the accolades between Paul and his God: $\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\acute{o}\xi\varsigma\alpha\eta\ \theta\acute{e}\o\iota\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \check{\epsilon}\pi\alpha\iota\nu\eta\varnothing\ \check{\epsilon}\mu\o\iota$.

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 (ἴνα γένησθε ἀμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι . . . εἰς καυχηματα ἐμοὶ 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 ἐλπίς ἡ χαρὰ ἡ στέφανος καυχήσεως—ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς—ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἡγοῦν ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ;), but note that Codex Alexandrinus has ἀγαλλιάσεως (“joy, gladness”) in place of καυχήσεως.