

**The Humility of Christ in Agreeing to Add to His Person the Essence of True Humanity, Phil 2:6b; the Hypostatic Union Defined; Nonuse of Divine Attributes in the Prototype Spiritual Life Imperative for Our Salvation, v. 7a**

**Philippians 2:6a -** Who, because He eternally existed in the essence of God ...

The first half of Philippians 2:6 stresses divine essence of Christ as attributes He has always possessed. The second half takes into consideration that this essence is something that Christ has always possessed and therefore cannot lose:

**Philippians 2:6b -** ... He did not think equalities with God a gain to be seized and held,

This second sentence can best be approached by taking it in the English word order rather than that of the original Greek. We have first the aorist active indicative of the verb **ἡγέομαι (hēgeomai)**: the thinking of an expert.

There are several English words which could work here:

**Esteem: consider, think, believe; to set a high value on: regard highly and prize accordingly.<sup>1</sup>**

aorist:	Constativ: takes the action of the Lord's consideration in its entirety and gathers it into a single whole.
active:	The Lord produces the action of giving thought to His status quo divine essence.
indicative:	Declarative: a statement of fact.

This is preceded by the negative conjunction **οὐχ (ouch)** translated "not." The Lord did not consider the circumstance of his equality with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit "to be a thing to be seized and held."

This introduces a difficulty of translation; the word "seized" is **ἄρπαγμός (harpagmos)**. It is a hapax legomenon which is translated "robbery" in the KJV and "grasped" in the NASB, NIV, and NET Bibles. We can best understand this by observing some principles:

1. Paul has already established that Jesus Christ possesses the same divine essence as does the other two Members of the Trinity: *en morphēi Theou*: "in the sphere of the essence of God."
2. This circumstance has been true from eternity past.
3. When Adam fell, the Trinity convened a summit conference at which a plan of salvation was presented by God the Father.
4. During discussion, God the Son agreed to carry out the requirements of taking on the essence of true humanity, maintaining status quo perfection in the prototype divine dynasphere, becoming a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world, and being resurrected from the dead.

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.: "esteem."

5. The Holy Spirit agreed to sustain the incarnate Christ in the prototype divine dynasphere, to resurrect Him from the dead, to provide common grace to those who hear the gospel, and efficacious grace to those who believe, to indwell believers, and, as Mentor, to fill those believers current on Rebound for the purpose of spiritual growth.
6. With all details agreed upon the plan was ratified and put into action in Eden in Genesis 3:8-21.
7. In order for Jesus to assume the obligation of taking on true humanity, He had to agree that, at the point of the Incarnation, His divine essence would no longer exclusively define His personality.
8. The word *harpagmos* means that our Lord did not consider the exclusive status of undiminished deity as an unalterable condition.
9. Put another way, our Lord is said not to consider His equalities with the other members of the Trinity to be an unalterable status quo. We must be careful here for we have already established that the essence of God cannot be changed, therefore, its status quo is unalterable.
10. However, when one Member of the Trinity takes on a separate and entirely different essence in addition to the original unalterable essence, then the status quo of that Member of the Trinity is altered.
11. That alteration is called the hypostatic union:  

**In the Person of the incarnate Christ are two natures, divine and human, inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. Jesus is different from God and the Holy Spirit in that He is Man. He is different from true humanity in that He is God. As Man He is superior to man because He is perfect and impeccable.**
12. The phrase “inseparably united” means that the two natures are unaltered individually yet coexist in a union that lasts for all eternity.
13. Thus, the Lord did not decide to seize and hold on to His exclusive status of undiminished deity but instead decided to fulfill the agreement to take on true humanity.

**Philippians 2:6** - Who, because He eternally existed in the essence of God, He did not think equalities with God a gain to be seized and held,

The ability of the Lord to maintain his divine essence without compromising His duty to function inside the prototype divine dynasphere without the assistance of any of His divine attributes is defined in the next verse:

**Philippians 2:7** - but He deprived Himself of the proper function of deity when He had received the form of a bonds slave although He had been born in the outward likeness of men.

This verse introduces the circumstance that occurred when God’s plan for salvation became operational at the First Advent. To accomplish the mission of being the perfect sacrifice for the human race, Jesus Christ had to function in a system that, with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, would make it possible for His true humanity to maintain perfection.

This precludes Him from utilizing the attributes of His divine essence in any way that would give Him an advantage over the rest of humanity which has no access to divine attributes.