

Robert H. Gundry, "The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.203-222.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16*

Robert H. Gundry

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#### I

By common consent 1 Timothy 3:16 contains a quotation from an early Christian hymn:

Line 1: ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί  
Line 2: ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι,  
Line 3: ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις,  
Line 4: ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν  
Line 5: ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ  
Line 6: ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ<sup>1</sup>

The hymnic quotation is notorious for the different schematizations and consequently varying interpretations laid upon it by modern commentators. Some see a more or less chronological progression throughout the six lines. Each line then receives somewhat independent treatment without emphasis on the parallelism of couplets or triplets. Others discern two strophes of three lines each (or two lines with a refrain). The currently prevalent viewpoint divides the hymnic quotation into a triplet of couplets. An examination of some representative treatments will lead into a re-examination of the form, content, and background of the passage.

Typical of those who treat the six lines somewhat separately but in chronological progression are H. Alford and C. K. Barrett.<sup>2</sup> For Alford, line 1 refers to the birth of Jesus. Line 2 refers to his baptism, when he received the Holy Spirit, and to his temptation, when the Spirit led and empowered him (Mark 1:12; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1). Thus the righteousness of Jesus was both approved at his baptism and proved by his resistance of temptation. Line 3 refers to the ministry of angels to Jesus after his temptation (Mark 1:13; Matt. 4:11). Line 4 refers to the apostolic preaching *which began during Jesus' ministry*. Alford must add the italicized qualification in order to keep peace between his insistence on chronological

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<sup>1</sup> Whether the hymn was a baptismal hymn "to Christ as to a god" (Pliny the Younger, *Epp.* X. 96, 97), a "song of the redeemer" of the type G. Schille thinks he has isolated (*Frühchristliche Hymnen* [Berlin, 1962], p. 38), or another kind remains uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> H. Alford, *The Greek Testament* (London, 1865) III, p. 334; C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 65 f.

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progression and his understanding of line 6 as a reference to the ascension. This forces him to maintain an initial, if not primary, reference to the Jews in ἔθνεσιν; for the pre-ascension ministry of the apostles was restricted to the Jews (Matt. 10:5 f.). Line 5 refers to the faith of the *first* disciples — again to avoid a post-ascension reference. And line 6 refers to the ascension.

To Alford it is clear that lines 1 and 6 refer to Jesus’ birth and ascension respectively and that everything in between must therefore be chronological in order to form a résumé of Jesus’ earthly ministry from beginning to end. This view has obvious faults. It forces very unnatural meanings upon the proclaiming of Christ to the nations and the believing on him throughout the world — surely references to the extensive and successful Christian mission beyond Palestine and Jewry, and therefore after the ascension. Also, Jesus’ baptism and temptation and especially the angelic ministry to Jesus after his temptation appear to be unlikely points of emphasis for a hymnic précis of Jesus’ ministry. Besides, angels appeared to Jesus throughout his earthly ministry, not he to them.

Instead of squeezing the contents of the hymnic quotation into the period from Jesus’ birth to ascension, C. K. Barrett postpones line 6 to the final victory of Christ at his Parousia (cf. 1 Cor. 15:25; Phil. 2:10 f.). Thus, “who was manifested in flesh” refers to the incarnation, “vindicated in spirit” to the resurrection, “seen by angels” to the ascension, “proclaimed among nations” to the mission of the church, “believed on in [the] world” to the success of that mission, and “taken up in glory” to Jesus’ final exaltation. The chief flaw here is that “taken up in glory” most naturally refers to the ascension rather than the consummation. Indeed, ἀναλαμβάνω describes the ascension in Acts 1:2, 11, 22 [and Mark 16:19],<sup>3</sup> and in view of these parallels the noun ἀνάληψις almost certainly refers to the ascension in Luke 9:51 (cf. 24:51).<sup>4</sup>

Those who see in the hymnic quotation two strophes of three lines each tend also to follow a chronological approach, but with somewhat less emphasis than those who treat the lines singly. For W. Lock, the first strophe describes the life of the incarnate Lord as seen on earth (“who was manifested in flesh, vindicated by the Spirit”) and as watched in

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heaven (“seen by angels”). The second strophe describes the life of the ascended Lord as preached on earth (“proclaimed among nations, believed on in [the] world”) and as lived in heaven (“taken up in glory”).<sup>5</sup> It would have been much better for Lock’s view had line 6, “taken up in glory”, introduced the second strophe and thereby marked the shift from incarnate

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<sup>3</sup> In 4 Kg. 2:11 LXX of Elijah’s translation and in Sir. 49:14 of Enoch’s translation.

<sup>4</sup> Without the parallels in Acts, ἀνάληψις in Luke might well be taken as a reference to Jesus’ decease. To document the difficulty of line 6 for the chronological interpretation, W. B. Wallis argues that “taken up in glory” is not limited to the ascension but includes all subsequent exhibition of glory (“1 Timothy”, *The Wycliffè Bible Commentary*, ed. C. F. Pfeiffer and E. F. Harrison [Chicago, 1962], p. 1376). But since “taken up” must at least include the ascension, the chronological difficulty remains. R. A. Knox admits the chronological inconsistency, but only as a deliberate accentuation of the paradox that the ascended Christ is more influential in the world than he was in the days of his flesh (*A New Testament Commentary for English Readers* [London, 1958], vol. III, p. 11). The paradox is doubtful, however, for one half of it — viz., lack of influence during the earthly ministry — receives no mention in the passage.

<sup>5</sup> W. Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh, 1924), p. 45.

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to ascended life. As it is, the supposed second strophe lacks a leading statement to balance the leading statement, “who was manifested in flesh”, in the first strophe. Nor is it certain, or even probable, that “seen by angels” refers to angelic observation of our Lord’s earthly ministry.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the second of the three antitheses “flesh/spirit”, “angels/nations”, and “world/glory” breaks down any strict division into two strophes by bridging the supposed boundary between them.<sup>7</sup>

This last consideration likewise militates against H. von Soden’s view that lines 1-3 depict the developing stages in Jesus’ personal career and lines 4-6, the results on earth through the church. To maintain an earthly locale for line 6, von Soden interprets the taking up of Christ to mean a taking up *by men*, presumably through the appropriation of faith.<sup>8</sup> But that idea has already been stated in line 5. Δοξη appears to *contrast* with κόσμῳ. Ἀνελήμφθη is technical for the ascension. And in the parallels adduced by von Soden, ἀναλαμβάνω has the sense of metaphorical appropriation only with impersonal objects (Acts 7:43; Eph. 6:13, 16) and carries a purely physical sense (inappropriate to von Soden’s view of line 6) when a personal object is in view (Acts 20:13 f.; 23:31).

E. F. Scott also identifies two strophes, but limits them to two lines each (lines 1-2 and 4-5) and adds a refrain to each strophe. The first strophe — ‘who was manifested in flesh, vindicated in spirit’ — describes the life of Christ on earth (cf. Lock’s interpretation). The refrain “seen by angels” celebrates the triumph of his ascension. The second strophe — “proclaimed among nations, believed on in [the] world” — describes the larger life of Christ in the church. The refrain “taken up in glory” again celebrates his triumph, but this time the *final* glory after the Parousia and last judgment.<sup>9</sup> But the antithesis “angels/nations” still ties lines 3 and 4 together and thus leaves no room for the interruption necessary to the beginning of a new strophe in line 4. Furthermore, the antithesis “world! glory” ties lines 5 and 6 together and rules out separation of line 6 as a

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refrain. And again, ἀνελήμφθη in line 6 must refer to the ascension, not to final glory.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See below, pp. 214 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. B. Weiss’ admission of chronological inconsistency in line 6 and explanation that lines 5 and 6 were reversed so that line 5 (“believed on in [the] world”) might naturally follow line 4 (“proclaimed among nations”) — even though lines 4 and 5 belong to different couplets in Weiss’ view (*Die Briefe Pauli an Timotheus und Titus*<sup>5</sup> [Göttingen, 1902], p. 559).

<sup>8</sup> H. von Soden, *Kolosser, Epheser, Philernon, Pastoralbriefe*<sup>2</sup> (Tübingen, 1893), p. 237. Cf. the somewhat similar view of M. Albertz, *Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments* (Zollikon-Zürich, 1952), vol. 1/2, p. 532, who correlates lines 1 and 4, 2 and 5, 3 and 6 with reference to Christ and the church respectively in each pair.

<sup>9</sup> E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles* (New York, n.d.), pp. 41 ff.; followed by B. S. Easton, *The Pastoral Epistles* (New York, 1947), p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> The view of W. J. Dalton is essentially that of Scott except that for Dalton the refrain of line 6 *repeats* the reference to ascension in the refrain of line 3 rather than progresses to and beyond the Parousia (W. J. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits* [Rome, 1965], p. 90, n. 59). Overlooking the sets of antitheses which combine lines 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6, Dalton simply asserts incompatibility between lines 3 and 4 and between lines 5 and 6 and therefore opts for two strophes. J. N. D. Kelly similarly makes the suggestion, only to reject it, that lines 1-3 delineate the successive phases in Christ’s exaltation — incarnation, resurrection, and ascension through the sphere of angelic powers — and that lines 4-6 celebrate the universality of Christ’s reign — among the Gentiles (or all men), in the whole world (or the entire universe), and in heaven itself (J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* [New York, 1963], p. 92).

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Sir Robert Falconer draws parallels between the respective lines of each of two strophes. The first lines of each strophe (1 and 4) present Christ as manifested and proclaimed. The second lines (2 and 5) present him as vindicated and acknowledged. The third lines (5 and 6) present him as receiving homage from and in the heavenly world.<sup>11</sup> Once again, however, the pairs of antitheses at the ends of the lines do not receive enough attention. Indeed, Falconer's scheme would link "(Christ's) flesh" and "nations", "spirit" and "world", and "angels" and "glory". All except the last are unlikely combinations, especially when the antitheses "flesh/spirit", "angels/nations", and "world/glory" are ready to hand.

The majority of current commentators favour division of our hymnic quotation into three couplets.<sup>12</sup> J. N. D. Kelly puts this interpretation in its simplest form. He notes three couplets with the antitheses flesh/spirit, angels/Gentiles, and world/glory. The first couplet indicates Christ's incarnation at birth and vindication at resurrection. The second couplet indicates the appearance of Christ to angels and the proclamation of him to mankind. The third couplet indicates the acceptance of Christ both in the world and in heaven.<sup>13</sup>

M. Dibelius, H. Conzelmann, J. Jeremias, C. Spicq, and especially E. Schweizer have considerably expanded the interpretation in which three couplets are identified. Each of the couplets contrasts the heavenly and earthly spheres of existence. Furthermore, these contrasts exhibit the threefold chiasmic pattern *a/b, b/a, a/b*:

*a* earthly — "flesh" (line 1)  
*b* heavenly — "spirit" (line 2)  
*b* heavenly — "angels" (line 3)

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*a* earthly — "nations" (line 4)  
*a* earthly — "world" (line 5)  
*b* heavenly — "glory" (line 6)

The movement of thought is spatial rather than chronological because the one important point is that the Saviour has reunited heaven and earth. Lines 1 and 2 summarize his work of salvation as a whole. By incarnation he was "manifested in flesh", the sphere of divine epiphany, and by resurrection "justified in spirit", that is, made to enter into the divine sphere of exaltation. Lines 3 and 4 lead on to the thought that the accomplishment of salvation must be, and has been, proclaimed to both angels and men. And in lines 5 and 6 the singing church praises the victory of Christ. The theme of vindicative exaltation also receives prominence.

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<sup>11</sup> R. Falconer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford, 1937), p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> The view itself, however, is not new. For example. A. R. Fausset identified three couplets with antitheses between earth and heaven and also noted the *a-b-b-a-a-b-arrangement* (in R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, first published in 1877, re-edited and reprinted several times since). See also B. Weiss, *loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Kelly, *loc. cit.* A. Descamps argues that abandonment of chronological consistency for poetic lyricism indicates a hymn rather than a confession (*Les Justes et bajustice dans les évangiles et le christianisme primitif hormis la doctrine proprement paulinienne* [Gembloux, 1950], p. 84). Thus, R. Deichgräber even rejects the designation "credal hymn" (*Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit* [Göttingen, 1967], p. 133, n. 3).

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Jesus rises from the dead (line 2) and triumphantly ascends through the celestial regions as the angelic powers worship him (line 3). He becomes the subject of proclamation throughout the nations (line 4) and the object of faith among men (line 5). Climactically, he arrives in the immediate presence of God (line 6).<sup>14</sup>

Jeremias and Spicq add a history-of-religions dimension by suggesting that in form the hymnic quotation is patterned, perhaps unknowingly, after the enthronement ceremony in ancient Egypt. The first stage is exaltation: the new king receives divine attributes (lines 1 and 2). The second stage is presentation: the deified king is presented to the gods (lines 3 and 4, here to angels and men). The third stage is enthronement: the king receives his rulership (lines 5 and 6).<sup>15</sup> Kelly thinks the resemblance is superficial and coincidental.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, there are difficulties in working out the parallels. Manifestation in *flesh*, with the connotation of human weakness and limitation, does not tally with exaltation unless it be claimed that line 1 merely sets the stage for the exaltation in line 2. Even then, "taken up in glory" at the *end* (line 6) sounds closer to the elevation which comes *first* in the Egyptian ceremony as reconstructed by Spicq and Jeremias.<sup>17</sup> Also, although "seen by angels" may be comparable to presentation to the

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gods, proclamation to the nations on earth is doubtfully similar. And although the enthronement of Christ in the hearts of believers is a fine devotional thought, it is again doubtful that "believed on in [the] world" parallels the final stage in the Egyptian ceremony, viz., enthronement. Furthermore, E. Schweizer has pointed out that in the Egyptian ceremony the order and content were somewhat different from the reconstruction of Spicq and Jeremias. First came a hymn of the heavenly beings (missing here), then guidance (lines 3-5?), then surrender to the judgment (line 2), and finally deification and access to God (line 6).<sup>18</sup>

With due appreciation for these recent opinions, we may proceed further. It must first of all be acknowledged that the datival nouns at the ends of the lines fall into three *antithetically*

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<sup>14</sup> M. Dibelius — H. Conzelmann, *Die Pastoraibriefe*<sup>3</sup> (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 50 ff.; J. Jeremias, "Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus", *NTD*<sup>5</sup>, Teilband 9 (Göttingen, 1949), pp. 21 f.; C. Spicq, *Les Epîtres pastorales* (Paris, 1947), p. 108; E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (London, 1960), pp. 64 ff; *idem*, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared", *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. W. Kiassen and G. F. Snyder (New York, 1962), pp. 168 ff.; *idem*, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern* (Zürich, 1955), pp. 62 ff.; cf. H. Flender, *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 37-39. Noting that line 6 would have followed line 2 or 3 in a chronological scheme, Spicq sees a pastoral concern in the last position of line 6: Christ is left in heaven whence Christians look for his return (*op. cit.*, p.110).

<sup>15</sup> See Jeremias, *loc. cit.*, who claims that the three stages became a stylistic convention which outlived the ceremony itself; Spicq, *op. cit.*, pp. 108 f. R. Deichgräber has recently reiterated the hypothesis (*op. cit.*, pp. 133-7). Spicq also suggests that the hymnic quotation is a Christian answer to "Great is Diana [or Artemis] of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28, 34, and inscriptional evidence cited by Spicq concerning hymns to Diana; *ibid.*, pp. 107 f.).

<sup>16</sup> Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 92f.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (New York, 1962), p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship*, pp. 65 f., and *idem*, *Erniedrigung*, p.65, with citation of the material in A.J. Festugiere, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1953) III, pp. 149-52. Kelly, *loc. cit.*, also objects that the Egyptian parallel destroys the point of the antitheses flesh/spirit, angels/nations, and world/glory. But I do not see why, for the exaltation, presentation, and enthronement could take place in the two halves of the cosmos in parallel fashion.

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parallel pairs along the *a/b, b/a, a/b* pattern. On the other hand, the meanings within each pair of lines considered as wholes denote roughly *synonymous* ideas. Manifestation by incarnation (line 1) and vindication by the *Descensus ad Inferos* or the resurrection (line 2) both emphasize revelatory action. Similarly, the being seen by angels (line 3) and preached among nations (line 4) both denote publication or announcement of the news concerning Christ. In the same fashion again, the being believed on (line 5) and taken up (line 6) indicate the welcome reception on earth and in heaven of the proclaimed Christ. Thus, the three roughly synonymous couplets successively indicate the revelation, proclamation, and reception of Christ; the pairs of antithetic nouns indicate contrasting spheres in which each of the three basic actions takes place.

But there is a danger that the clear antitheses at the ends of the lines and the rough similarities of the whole lines as pairs blind us to yet further relationships between lines which do not belong to the same couplet when paired 1/2, 3/4, and 5/6. It should be quite apparent, for example, that lines 4 and 5 form a couplet characterized by *synthetic* parallelism: the proclamation among the nations results in belief throughout the world.<sup>19</sup> Both take place in the realm visible to men. Likewise, lines 2 and 3 form a couplet with synthetic parallelism: the vindication in spirit leads on to the appearance of Christ to angels. Both take place in the realm invisible to men. Lines 1 and 6 will then form a couplet which appropriately frames the whole verse<sup>20</sup> — again with synthetic parallelism: the appearance in flesh culminates in the ascension to heaven. This couplet begins in the visible realm and passes into the invisible. In other words, the recognition of the

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parallelism between lines 1 and 6, 2 and 3, and 4 and 5 takes advantage of the synthetic pairs of datival nouns *flesh/glory, spirit/angels, and nations/world* — and the synthetic pairs of verbs — *manifested/taken up, vindicated/seen, and proclaimed/believed on* — which receive no attention when our gaze fixes exclusively on the antithetic pairs of datival nouns.

## II

Before an assessment of the theological background of the hymnic quotation, it is necessary to examine the meanings of each line. “Manifested in flesh” has traditionally been taken as a reference to the incarnation. Support derives from the similar phraseology, “Who was descended from David according to the flesh”, in the credal quotation of Romans 1:3, 4, where reference to the incarnation is indubitable. Further support comes from the use of *φανερώω* elsewhere for the incarnate ministry of Jesus (Jn. 1:31; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Jn. 1:2; 3:5, 8) and from the use of *σάρξ* elsewhere for the humanity of Jesus (Jn. 1:14; 6:51 ff.; Rom. 8:3; 10:5; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:22; Heb. 5:7; 10:20; 1 Pet. 3:18; 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:2; 2 Jn. 7; cf. Lk. 24:39), not to delineate the very common uses of “flesh” for humanity in general and for human life on this earth. In view of several considerations, “manifested in flesh” probably refers to the entire earthly career of Jesus right up to the ascension, not to his birth alone: (1) the use of

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Rom. 10:14.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ps. 15:2-5b, bracketed by 1 and 5c; 6:8b-9, bracketed by 8a and 10; 11:5b-7a, bracketed by 5a and 7b, etc., especially in the strophic arrangement of the Jerusalem Bible; and see M. Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100* (Garden City, 5968), p. XXII.

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σάρξ for human lifetime (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:22, 24; and especially Heb. 5:7, "in the days of his flesh"); (2) the generality of the verb "manifested", as opposed to a more specific verb (say, "born"); and (3) the synthetic relationship to "taken up in glory" (line 6). Ἐφανερώθη then becomes a constative aorist.

The considerations in the preceding paragraph undercut D. M. Stanley's argument that because σάρξ in contrast to πνεῦμα means human nature in its weakness, creatureliness, and sinfulness, line 1 refers not to the incarnation, but to the crucifixion. It is true that Paul connects the σάρξ and death of Christ in Colossians 1:22 and 2:14 (but not Rom. 8:3, where God's sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh is more general).<sup>21</sup> However, the references cited by Stanley show that the connexion between Christ's σάρξ and death is incidental to the incarnation as a whole. And Stanley's argument from the sinfulness of σάρξ would work equally against his own view that line 1 refers to Jesus' death (see 2 Cor. 5:21: "who knew no

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sin"). That view would seem to require "suffered", "crucified", or "put to death", as in 1 Peter 3:18. Anyway, σάρξ does not always or even usually carry the connotation of sinfulness. Consequently, Descamps, J. Dupont, and B. Schneider take the opposite tack by seeing line 1 as a summary of Christ's post-resurrection appearances in corporeal form (ἐν σαρκί), with support from Luke 24:39; Titus 2:11; 3:4; and especially 2 Timothy 1:10 where it is claimed that the first of Christ's two great appearances consists in the post-resurrection appearances (as a group), not the incarnation.<sup>22</sup> But the appearance of God's grace and kindness in Titus 2:11 and 3:4 is not tied specifically or exclusively to the resurrection of Jesus. And in 2 Timothy 1:9, 10 the clause "who abolished death" simply modifies "our Saviour Christ Jesus" without restricting to the resurrection his "appearing" by which God's "purpose and grace" have been revealed. Only in Luke 24:39 is the resurrection mentioned in connexion with Christ's flesh (and bones), but there neither φανερώω nor the similar ἐπιφάνω occurs so that the parallel is doubtful. It remains preferable, therefore, to see in line 1 a reference to the earthly career of the incarnate Christ.

The meaning of "vindicated in spirit" (line 2) lies in doubt. For ἐδικαιώθη Dibelius suggested the Hellenistic meaning "divinized". But that sense is absent in the rest of the New Testament, and the extra-Biblical evidence for it post-dates the first century. Even the earliest example,

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<sup>21</sup> D. M. Stanley, *Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology* (Rome, 1961), p. 237; *idem*, "The Divinity of Christ in New Testament Hymns", *Studies in Salvation History*, ed. C. L. Salm (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), p. 593. R. P. Martin's argument against Stanley that the hymnic quotation presents the baptizand with his liberation from the hostile cosmic powers through Christ's victory rather than with Christ's death and resurrection takes for granted the very point at issue. After all, Jesus' death and resurrection have some relationship to baptism and the defeat of hostile powers (see, e.g., Rom. 6. 1 ff.; Col. 2:10-15; R. P. Martin, "Aspects of Worship in the New Testament Church", *Vox Evangelica*, II [London, 1963], p. 26). Like Stanley, A. R. C. Leaney interprets line 1 in terms of the crucifixion, but his parallels are even further afield (Lk. 24:26, 46; Jn. 3:14 8:28; 12:32, 34; Rom. 6:7; Phil. 2:8-11; Col. 2:15; A. R. C. Leaney, *The Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* [London, 1960], p. 61).

<sup>22</sup> Descamps, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-87; J. Dupont, ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ. *L'Union avec be Christ suivant Saint Paul* (Paris, 1952), pp. 108-10; B. Schneider, "Κατὰ Πνεῦμα Ἁγιωσύνης (Rom. 1, 4)" *Biblica* 48 (1967), pp. 367, 384 f. Thus, to Dupont, 1 Tim. 3:16 is a paschal hymn which celebrates exclusively the risen, glorified Christ, not including the earthly Christ. Dupont classifies the johannine uses of φανερώω for Jesus' earthly ministry as unique and overlooks the others, which are cited above.

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Ignatius’ Epistle to the Philadelphians 8:2, could be disputed.<sup>23</sup> Recognizing the problem, Schweizer thinks that the more Hebraic “declared righteous, vindicated, validated” comes to about the same meaning as the Hellenistic “divinized”, for both refer to entry into the divine sphere. But Schweizer’s parallel references from the New Testament period and before — Romans 3:4 (=Ps. 51:6); Psalms of Solomon 2:16; 3:5; 4:9; 8:7 — carry only the meaning of vindication, not entry into the divine sphere.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, it is commonly thought, even by those who fail to see anything approaching a Hellenistic meaning in ἐδικαιώθη, that ἐν πνεύματι carries the somewhat abstract meaning, “in the spiritual or

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heavenly sphere”, so that by contrast ἐν σαρκί means “in the fleshly, corporeal, or earthly sphere”. Thus the two ἐν’s are both locative as they must be, it is argued, because of parallelism.<sup>25</sup> But although ἐν πνεύματι and ἐν σαρκί may denote contrasting realms of being, it is doubtful that they do so apart from very particular and individualistic references in context. For confirmation, one need only check a concordance for the phrases ἐν (τῇ) σαρκί and ἐν (τῷ) πνεύματι. In 1 Timothy 3:16, just as ἐν σαρκί surely denotes the individual physical manifestation of Christ as well as the general sphere in which his manifestation took place, so also ἐν πνεύματι denotes the individual human spirit of Christ as well as the general sphere in which his vindication took place.<sup>26</sup> So also in 1 Peter 3:18, the phrase θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί contains a dative of reference (or locative) concerning the physical death of Christ, so that the parallel ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι must likewise contain a dative of reference (or locative) concerning his human spirit rather than an instrumental dative concerning the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 4:1, 6).<sup>27</sup> In neither 1 Peter nor 1 Timothy does the anarthrousness of the

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<sup>23</sup> That is, it is questionable that Ignatius thought of attaining full discipleship, justification, and Jesus Christ at martyrdom in terms of divinization. See M. Dibelius, *Die Pastoralbriefe*<sup>2</sup> (Tübingen, 1931), p. 39, and Schweizer, *Erniedrigung*, p. 64, for references in later literature.

<sup>24</sup> Schweizer, *Lordship*, p. 65; *idem*, *Erniedrigung*, p. 64. On the basis of the connexion between justice and glory in the Old Testament, Descamps thinks that “justified” = “glorified”, a view similar to Schweizer’s and subject to the same criticism (*op. cit.*, pp. 87-89). For δικαιώω as vindication, see Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:29, 35; 10:29; Rom. 3:4 (=Ps. 51:6); cf. Ps. 19:10; *TDNT*, II, 214 f. Knox, *loc. cit.*, notes that in Ram. 3:26 justness and justifyingness are closely related.

<sup>25</sup> See Schweizer *et al.*, *Spirit of God* (London, 1960), p. 57; *idem*, “Two New Testament Creeds Compared”, p. 169; *idem*, *Lordship*, pp. 59f.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. LSJ, ἐν s.v., “I. Of Place, ... 10... in the form of...”; E. DeWitt Burton, *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh* (Chicago, 1918), p. 198. Only an exaggerated view of the unitary nature of man will rule out a dual reference here to Christ’s flesh and spirit. Within the Biblical understanding of man there is a subdued dualism, or rather, duality.

<sup>27</sup> See E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1958), pp. 325, 277. Selwyn suggests that 1 Pet. 3:18-22 rests on the hymn quoted in 1 Tim. 3:16. Cf. the same suggestion made earlier by N.J. D. White, *EGT*, vol. IV, p. 118, and carried out also by M.-E. Boismard, *Quatre hymnes baptismales dans la première épître de Pierre* (Paris, 1961), pp. 60 f., 65 f. Selwyn supports the hypothesis by drawing parallels between manifestation in flesh and death as to flesh, vindication in spirit and being made alive in spirit, appearance to angels and preaching to the spirits in prison with subjugation of cosmic powers, proclamation among nations/belief throughout the world and baptism as the pledge of a good conscience towards God, and translation in glory and ascension into heaven to a position at God’s right hand. The parallels are sometimes impressive, but one demurs because of the phraseological differences (even though there may be relationships) between manifestation and death, vindication and being made alive, and proclamation/belief and baptism. Following Spicq, Stanley, “The Divinity of Christ”, p. 191; *idem*, *Christ’s Resurrection*, pp. 236 f., thinks that 1 Tim. 3:16 continues the hymn quoted in Eph. 5:14. Lock, *loc. cit.*, had made the same suggestion. The ὅς with which the quotation in 1 Tim.



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nouns limit them to general or abstract meanings. It stems simply from the condensed nature of these formulaic expressions.

Some would treat ἐν πνεύματι in 1 Timothy 3:16 as an instrumental dative with reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 1:4; 8:11). However, in the absence of a qualifier such as ἀγίῳ with πνεύματι (contrast Rom. 1:4; 8:1-11) the conjunction with the flesh of Christ favours a reference to his human spirit. Also against the interpretation, "Vindicated by the [Holy] Spirit", the parallel ἐν σαρκί can be taken instrumentally only with

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awkwardness ("manifested by means of flesh") and all the other ἐν's are locative.<sup>28</sup> Alone, these arguments are admittedly indecisive, for Romans 1:4 contains a contrast between Jesus' flesh and the Holy Spirit. Again, in 1 Timothy 3:16 the simple dative ἀγγέλοις in line 3 interrupts the parallel ἐν's so that the parallelism is neither perfect nor complete. The string of ἐν's may come from the desire for similar sound without the requirement of identical sense. It has even been questioned whether early Christians distinguished Christ's human spirit from the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> (But see Mark 2:8; 8:12; 15:37; Matthew 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 11:33; 13:21; 19:30.) Taken together, nevertheless, the unlikelihood of an instrumental ἐν in the hymnic quotation and the greater naturalness in the pairing of Jesus' own flesh and spirit tip the scales against a reference to the Holy Spirit.

But what constituted the vindication of Christ in spirit? All those views which see references to his anointing with the Spirit at baptism and to his miracles, exorcisms, preaching, and spotless life through the Holy Spirit<sup>30</sup> stumble against the foregoing arguments ἐν πνεύματι is not instrumental but locative and does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the human spirit of Christ. So also does the common view which sees a reference to Jesus' resurrection (perhaps with inclusion of the ascension) by the (Holy) Spirit. Other passages do, of course, associate the resurrection with the Holy Spirit (notably the parallel credal quotation Rom. 1:4; cf. 8:9, 11; Jn. 6:63). But here a reference to the Holy Spirit as the agent of the resurrection would require an awkward instrumental ἐν (resurrection "in the Spirit" hardly makes sense) against the locative ἐν's in parallel lines. It would also require a reference to the Holy Spirit against the more natural pairing with Jesus' human spirit (so also in the parallel 1 Peter 3:18, closer than Romans 1:4 where πνεῦμα is modified by ἀγιωσύνης). These same objections to treating ἐν πνεύματι instrumentally concerning the Holy Spirit militate also against interpreting line 2 as a reference to the vindication of Christ by the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.<sup>31</sup>

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3:16 begins would then pick up the last word of the quotation in Eph. 5:14, viz., Χριστός. Spicq adds some unimpressive parallels to Mk. 16:9-19 (*op. cit.*, p. cxlv). H. A. Blair, *A Creed Before the Creeds* (London, 1955), sees the hymn in 1 Tim. 3:16 behind many passages in the New Testament; but his views seem fanciful, as also his theory that the hymn expands the primitive homologia, Jesus (lines 1 and 2) Christ (lines 2 and 3) is Lord (lines 4 and 5).

<sup>28</sup> Pace Deichgrüber, *op. cit.*, p. 136, n. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 f.

<sup>30</sup> Matt. 12:18, 28; Lk. 4:18f.; Acts 10:38. Falconer, *loc. cit.*, cites Lk. 3:22; 9:35; 10:21-24; Jn. 16:14.

<sup>31</sup> The view of A. Schlatter, *Die Briefe an die Thessalonicher, Philipper, Timotheus und Titus* (Stuttgart, 1950), p. 160; somewhat differently in *Die Kirche der Griechen im Urteil des Paulus*<sup>2</sup> (Stuttgart, 1958), p. 114.

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A reference to the resurrection of Jesus may still be seen in line 2, not by the operation of the Holy Spirit, but in the realm of spirit with reference to the spiritual nature of Christ's glorified body. If the ascension be included as a concomitant, there is an added reference to the vindication of Christ as he passed through the spiritual realm (intermediate heaven) of the cosmic powers on his way from earth to God's right hand (cf. line 3, "seen

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by angels"). Thus, the phrase "in spirit" does not deny the corporeality of the risen, ascending Christ; it rather affirms the spiritual nature of his body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35 ff., esp. 44 f.).<sup>32</sup> If line 2 does refer to vindication by resurrection/ascension, this understanding of "in spirit" is probably correct. One hesitates, however, because the locative ἐν πνεύματι is surely an awkward way to express the spiritual nature of a body. Place, rather than quality, seems to be in view. And "the spiritual realm" appears to be somewhat too abstract and impersonal a meaning, particularly when standing in contrast to Christ's appearance in flesh, the flesh of his human body.

We need then to consider the view that line 2 refers to the vindication of Christ during and by the *Descensus ad Inferos* in spirit-form between death and resurrection (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18 ff.). This presupposes, of course, that Dalton is wrong in maintaining that 1 Peter 3:18 ff. refers to Christ's preaching to the cosmic powers imprisoned in the lower heavens during an ascension right after his resurrection.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the strongest argument for Dalton's view and against the traditional understanding is that ζῳοποιηθεὶς which *precedes* the preaching, must refer to the resurrection as the word usually does elsewhere (Jn. 5:21; Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:22, 36, 45). But the argument loses some of its cogency because of the spiritual sense (συν)ζῳοποιέω bears in John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:21; Colossians 2:13; and especially Ephesians 2:5, where it stands in contrast to (συν)ἠγήγειρεν and indicates a vivification distinct from and prior to resurrection and exaltation. Other considerations favour retention of the traditional understanding: (1) the subterranean implication of ταρτρώσας in the parallel 2 Peter 3:4 (2) the apparent distinction between vivification and resurrection with placement between the two of the proclamation to the spirits, as seen in the progression "died/put to death" — "vivified" — "having gone and preached to the spirits in prison" — "resurrection of Jesus Christ" — "at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven"; (3) the repetition of παρευθεὶς so that "having gone into heaven [at God's right hand]" stands in sharp contrast to "having gone and preached... in prison", i.e., the preaching in prison contrasts with the ascension to heaven whereas Dalton wishes to identify them;<sup>34</sup> (4) the consistency (despite Dalton's pleas to the contrary) with which the prison of the fallen Watchers in 1 Enoch appears to be a bottomless abyss in the far west of the earth. 1 Peter then means that upon his expiration Jesus came alive again in spirit through renewed fellowship with the Father ("Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," Luke 23:46), went to the abyss in spirit-form to proclaim his triumph, and thus enjoyed vindication before the hostile spirits there. By the same token, line 2 in 1 Timothy

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<sup>32</sup> F. D. Gealey, *IB*, vol. XI, p. 422; W. J. Dalton, *op. cit.*, pp. 530 f.; cf. Schneider, *op. cit.*, pp.367 f.

<sup>33</sup> Dalton, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. Scharlemann's review of Dalton's book in *JBL* 84 (1965), pp. 470-72.

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3:16 most likely refers to that vindication in spirit prior to the resurrection.<sup>35</sup>

According to line 3, Christ "appeared to angels". But when and to what angels? Surely not to angels in the sense of human, apostolic messengers who had witnessed the risen Christ. For although ὡφθη occurs prominently in connexion with the post-resurrection appearances (Lk. 24:34; Acts 9:17; 13:31; 1 Cor. 15:5-8; cf. Acts 26:16), the word commonly occurs in other connexions, too, and the meaning "angel" for ἄγγελος predominates throughout the New Testament (see the concordance).<sup>36</sup> Because support is lacking, we may also dismiss the passing suggestion of W. Barclay that angels may have seen Jesus before his incarnation.<sup>37</sup>

Others refer line 3 to angelic observation of the whole incarnational revelation of Christ (1 Pet. 1:12; Eph. 3:10; Lk. 2:9-15; Mk. 1:13; 16:5-8; Matt. 4:11; 28:2-7; Lk. 24:4-7 [?]; John 20:12 f.; Acts 1:10 f. [?])<sup>38</sup> or to the resurrection alone.<sup>39</sup> However, in none of the references cited does Christ appear to angels. If there is an appearance at all, *they* appear. This difficulty for the view is aggravated by the fact that ὡφθη nearly always means the self-exhibition of the subject, "appeared or showed himself (to)", so that what follows is a true dative rather than an instrumental of agent. Technically, then, "was seen by angels" is a wrong and misleading translation.<sup>40</sup> (It is used above solely to capture the feel of the passive verbal forms in parallel construction.)<sup>41</sup>

The most common view is that line 3 refers to the exaltation of Christ over all angelic powers at his ascension and installation at God's right hand (cf. 1 Pet. 3:22; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3, 4; Rev. 5:8-14; Polycarp to the Philippians 2:1).<sup>42</sup> If the angels to whom Christ appeared

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<sup>35</sup> See above, p. 211, note 2, in answer to the objection that this view is too dichotomous of human nature. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:2, 3.

<sup>36</sup> It is invalid, however, to argue against the meaning "messengers" from the anarthrousness of ἀγγέλους (as do Schweizer, *Erniedrigung*, p. 64, and B. Weiss, *loc. cit.*), for that may be due to the parallelism of lines.

<sup>37</sup> W. Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*<sup>2</sup> (Philadelphia, 1961), pp. 104 f. Barclay does not commit himself to this view.

<sup>38</sup> So especially J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge, 1899), p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 140 ff; Knox, *loc. cit.*; Walls, *op. cit.*, pp. 1375 f., includes the ascension with the resurrection (cf. 1 Pet. 3:22).

<sup>40</sup> See A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*<sup>3</sup> (Nashville, 1934), p. 534; M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York, 1900), vol. IV, p. 241; Arndt, s.v.

<sup>41</sup> The difficulty in referring "seen by angels" to angelic observation of Christ's earthly ministry upsets the view of H. Schlier (*Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Ignatiusbriefen* [Giessen, 1929], pp. 171 f.) that lines 3 and 4 carry out line 1 regarding the incarnation, and that lines 5 and 6 carry out line 2 regarding the glorification of Christ.

<sup>42</sup> See esp. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York, 1955) II, p. 153, who adds other references not entirely parallel: 1 Cor. 2:6-8, which refers to the crucifixion; 15:24-26, which refers to the future τέλος; Ignatius to the Trallians 9:1, which refers to the crucifixion; and Ignatius to the Eph. 19, which refers to the nativity. But cf. also the Ascension of Isa. 11:23 ff; and Heb. 1:6, understood in terms of already accomplished exaltation (A. Vanhoye, "L'οἰκουμένη dans l'épître aux Hébreux", *Bib* 4S [1964], pp. 248-53). L. Cerfaux stresses the parallel in the Ascension of Isaiah (*Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* [New York, 1959], pp. 372-74). Stanley draws the exaltation of Christ above angels into relationship with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as proof of that exaltation (cf. Acts 2:33) and notes that preaching to the nations in line 4 follows naturally after enduement with the Spirit (*Christ's Resurrection*, pp. 238 f.). Schlatter comments that since the ascension, Christ is no longer visible to men but is visible to angels (*Die Briefe*, p. 160; *Die Kirche*, p.114).

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are actually or potentially hostile powers in the lower heavens through which he ascended, line 3 indicates his triumph over them. But unless lines 2 and 3 are synthetically parallel (see below), that would repeat too closely the thought of vindication in line 2 and ὠφθη in line 3 does not by itself suggest triumph. If the angels to whom Christ appeared are the good angels around the divine throne, line 3 may carry more the note of adoration at the sight of his exaltation (cf. especially Rev. 5:11 f.). It might be objected that by making line 3 parallel to “taken up in glory” in line 6, this interpretation introduces an unlikely redundancy. However, line 6 refers to the ascension as such; line 3 would refer to angelic observation of it. And there is a similar and indubitable parallelism (or redundancy) between “proclaimed among [the] nations” (line 4) and “believed on in [the] world” (line 5) where the event is the same but the emphasis different.

The synthetic parallelism between lines 4 and 5, however, raises the probability that the true parallel to line 3 is not the distant line 6, but line 2 immediately preceding (see above, pp. 208 f.). If so, and if line 2 refers to vindication through descent into hades (see above, pp. 212 f.), “seen by angels” in line 3 refers to the sight of the vivified Christ in spirit-form by the “spirits in prison” (cf. the use of ἄγγελος for these imprisoned spirits in Jude 6). Then “seen by angels” does carry the note of triumph — through association with ἐδικαιώθη in the foregoing line.<sup>43</sup>

The only serious question in line 4 is whether ἔθνεσιν means “nations” or “Gentiles”. Fausset and Bernard chose “Gentiles”, those farthest from God, as a contrast to “angels”, those nearest to God.<sup>44</sup> But line 3 probably refers to fallen angels, indeed, to those specially wicked spirits now imprisoned because of their nefarious activity just before the Deluge. Knox also preferred “Gentiles” as a characteristically Pauline touch.<sup>45</sup> Chary of a Pauline origin for the hymnic quotation, Barrett prefers “Gentiles” as an allusion to the work of Paul (cf 2:7).<sup>46</sup> But the antithesis ἀγγέλως/ἔθνεσιν appears not to contrast Jews and Gentiles or angels and Gentiles,

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but superhuman and human beings. “Nations” therefore is to be preferred.<sup>47</sup>

“Believed on in [the] world” (line 5) denotes by synthetic parallelism the result of “preached among nations” (line 4) and by antithetic parallelism with “taken up in glory” (line 6) a contrast in the two spheres of Christ’s reception, the world and (by implication from “taken up”) heaven. The contrast with “taken up in glory” restricts κόσμῳ to *this* world, despite

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<sup>43</sup> W. M. L. de Wette, *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Leipzig, 1847), vol. II, p. 86, interpreted line 3 in terms of the *Descensus*. C. J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1861), p. 53, opposed any reference to evil angels on the ground that the parallel angels/nations militates against such a restrictive connotation. But if the nations to whom proclamation is made are non-Christian, why may not the angels to whom Christ appears be hostile?

<sup>44</sup> Fausset, *op. cit.*, p.412; Bernard, *loc. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Knox, *loc. cit.* But see Lock, *op. cit.*, pp. 44 f., against attributing the hymn to the author of the pastorals.

<sup>46</sup> Barrett, *loc. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Selwyn, *op. cit.*, p. 326, n. 3.

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Selwyn’s argument that κόσμῳ must mean the whole universe because in a restricted sense it would merely repeat the thought of ἔθνεσιν in line 4.<sup>48</sup>

We have already determined that “taken up in glory” refers to the ascension rather than to the final glory of Christ at his Parousia. The verb “was taken up” suggests that ἐν might be tinged with the meaning of εἰς, “into”,<sup>49</sup> as well as its own proper meaning “in” with reference to attendant circumstance. If so, the prepositional phrase would mean both “into glory”<sup>50</sup> and “in the cloud of glory” in which Jesus ascended (and in which he will return).<sup>51</sup> However, ἐν in the sense of εἰς is unusual. That sense would deviate from the usage of ἐν in the parallel lines, and the consistency with which ἐν δόξῃ elsewhere denotes accompanying circumstance<sup>52</sup> favours that meaning here — all to the exclusion of the sense “into glory

### III

From what kind of theological milieu in the early church did the hymnic quotation in 1 Timothy 3:16 come? Gnosticism will not be a convincing answer until confirmation that the myth of a descending and ascending redeemer dates from before or during the rise of Christianity.<sup>53</sup> Even then, the hymn’s universalistic emphasis would seem to go against rather than derive from gnosticism.

Schweizer thinks of the Hellenistic wing of the church.<sup>54</sup> His main argument is that the hymnic quotation prominently exhibits a spatial contrast between upper and lower spheres which would arise from and appeal to the Hellenistic mind in contrast to the temporally oriented Jewish mind.

In the first place, however, we now know from the Dead Sea Scrolls, other archaeological discoveries in Palestine, and the work of scholars

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such as S. Lieberman, W. L. Knox, J. N. Sevenster, and J. P. Mahaffy<sup>55</sup> that Hellenism had invaded Palestine of the New Testament era more pervasively than used to be thought. Semitic

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<sup>48</sup> Schweizer, *Lordship*, pp. 59 f.; *idem*, *TWNT*, VII, p. 538; cf. Martin, *loc. cit.*, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>49</sup> This is not to deny pre-Christian speculation about Adam and Primal Man.

<sup>50</sup> Mk. 8:38; 10:37; Matt. 6:29; 16:27; 25:31; Lk. 9:26, 31; 12:27; 1 Cor. 15:34; 2 Cor. 3:7, 8, 11; Col. 3:4.

<sup>51</sup> Mk. 8:38; 13:26; Matt. 16:27; 24:30; Lk. 9:26; 21:27; Acts 1:11; 1 Thes. 4:17; Rev. 5:7 (cf. 11:12); 14:14-16. Cf. Exod. 16:10 LXX: καὶ ἡ δόξα κυρίου ὄφθη ἐν νεφέλῃ.

<sup>52</sup> But “glory” appears *not* to mean heaven; it refers to a condition rather than a place and thus is not a spatial concept. See the lexica and concordances to the New Testament and LXX.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Lk. 24:26 Arndt, *ἐν s.v.*

<sup>54</sup> Cullmann’s suggestion that ἔθνεσιν may refer to the dead requires further qualification of ἔθνεσιν in the text or supportive parallel passages, so far lacking (*The Earliest Christian Confessions* [London, 1949], p. 60). By that interpretation Cullmann thinks he has put everything before the ascension (line 6), but he still has to reckon with line 5, “believed on in [the] world”. Parry (*loc. cit.*) thinks that ἔθνεσιν instead of, say, ἀνθρώποις emphasizes wide range.

<sup>55</sup> S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950); W. L. Knox, *Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity* (London, 1944); J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?* (Leiden, 1968); J. P. Mahaffy, *The Progress of Hellenism in Alexander’s Empire* (Chicago, 1905); see also R. H. Gundry, “The Language Milieu of First-Century Palestine”, *JBL* 83 (1964), pp. 404-08.

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literary features and Hellenistic concepts went together. The religious ideas and expressions of first-century Palestine were a mixed bag. Therefore, to say "Hellenistic" or even "Jewish Hellenistic" is to be ambiguous. The crucial question is: Palestinian, Jewish, and early, or extra-Palestinian, Gentile, and late?

In the second place, Schweizer himself has supplied ample evidence that the contrast between upper and lower spheres is not distinctively "Hellenistic" at all, but appears in the Old Testament, grows in the LXX and Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature, and receives expression in rabbinical literature.<sup>56</sup> For example, God comes down to view the Tower of Babel and descends upon Mount Sinai. Enoch and Elisha are taken up at their translations. The Lord's Prayer, which could hardly be more un-"Hellenistic" and Semitic, carries the contrast "as in heaven, so on earth", as also the prayer of Rabbi Eliezer (c. A. D. 90), "Do thy will in heaven above and give quietness of spirit to them who fear thee in the earth" (Tract. Berak. 3:7), and Psalms 135:6, "Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth." Whatever spatial contrast may be in 1 Timothy 3:16, then, it is no more than could have come from Palestine at the very beginning of the church.

In the third place, the spatial contrast in the hymnic quotation is not nearly so strong as Schweizer thinks. Even where it looks most apparent — viz., in lines 5 and 6, "believed on in [the] world, taken up in glory" — it is subdued; for "glory" does not refer to a place, heaven, but to a condition, the accompanying circumstance of the shekinah-cloud at the ascension (see above pp. 216). The only spatial contrast comes from the verb "was taken up" in relation to the preceding phrase, "in the world". But that is no more "Hellenistic" than the description of Elijah's translation: "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven; καὶ ἀνελήμφθη Ἡλίου ἐν συσσεισμῷ ὡς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν" (4 Kg. 2:11, LXX).

Nor does the antithesis flesh/spirit in lines 1 and 2 favour "Hellenistic" origin. The same duality appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls,<sup>57</sup> and that duality

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is not spatial, i.e., earthly versus heavenly. It is possible for a person living on earth to be either ἐν σαρκί or ἐν πνεύματι (Rom. 8); and the author of 1QH xvii. 25; xiii. 13 calls himself a "spirit of flesh". Besides, as noted above, "flesh" and "spirit" do not refer to earthly and heavenly spheres of being so much as to the specific flesh and spirit of Christ in his physical incarnation and spiritual vivification (or resurrection) respectively (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). The contrast lies not in spatial differentiation, but in bodily versus bodiless (or spiritual) modes of being. If "vindicated in spirit" has to do with the *Descensus*, the spatial implication (but only an implication, not a point of emphasis) has to do with the underworld, the prison of

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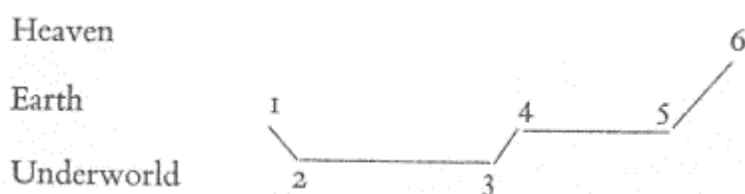
<sup>56</sup> Schweizer, "Röm. 1, 3 f. und der Gegensatz von Fleisch und Geist vor und bei Paulus", *Evangelische Theologie* 15 (1955) p. 568; *idem*, *Spirit of God*, p. 58; *idem*, *TWNT*, vol. VII, 108 ff. Sample references are Gen. 11:5, 7; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11-20; 34:5; 1 Enoch 15. Cf. the designation of God as the Most High (*Elyon*), the Mesopotamian distinction between the supernal Igigi and the infernal Anunnaki, and the Hittite "upper" and "lower" gods (*šarrazēs* and *katterēš*). I owe the last two references to T. H. Gaster, "Angels", *IDB*, vol. A-D, p. 131.

<sup>57</sup> 1QH xvii. 25; xiii. 13; iv. 20. See the summary in H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran* (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 97 ff., and the well-known literature cited there. See also a passage like Isa. 35:3. I do not imply that such passages in Jewish literature are fully dualistic in the Greek sense; but neither do lines 1 and 2 of 1 Tim. 3:16 have to be.

Robert H. Gundry, "The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.203-222.

the specially evil spirits from antediluvian times. And that concept was native to first-century Palestinian thinking as we know from its presence in I Enoch combined with the discovery of Enochian fragments (except for the Similitudes) at Qumran. Or if (doubtfully) "vindicated in spirit" refers to the resurrection of Christ in a spiritual body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35 ff., esp. 44 f.), the locale is earthly, not heavenly. The resurrection did not take place in heaven. Even though it be insisted that at first the resurrection included the exaltation and vice versa, in Christian thought the process of raising began *on earth* as the very use of the ἐγείρω, ἀνίστημι, and cognates for Christ's resurrection-exaltation imply. Only by making πνεύματι a synonym for heaven (and σαρκί for earth) and applying line 2 to an exclusively celestial event such as the installation at God's right hand could lines 1 and 2 support a spatial antithesis between earth and heaven. But the usage of πνεῦμα and σάρξ elsewhere will not bear the weight of such definitely spatial understandings here.

The contrast between angels and nations in lines 3 and 4 is equally weak to support distinction between heaven and earth as the basic backdrop behind the hymnic quotation. For the angels may well be those imprisoned below rather than those active above. Spatial progression receives clear statement only in lines 5 and 6, "...in [the] world, taken up..." so that only by reading the verse backwards could one gain the impression of strong spatial contrasts. In lines 1-4 spatial ideas occur only by silent implication, and then with probable reference to the underworld as well as to earth and heaven:



Above all, there is nothing distinctively "Hellenistic" in the sense of extra Palestinian, Gentile, and late.

It is also argued for Hellenistic origin that its message announces deliverance from the fatalism which gloomed the Hellenistic world. A Palestinian theology of the cross is entirely missing. In its place is a theology of cosmic

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triumph over the "angels", who contrast with the earthly nations and make up the astral powers to whom Christ appeared during his ascent through the lower heavens to God above.<sup>58</sup> Even so, the angelology of first-century Palestinian Judaism suffices to handle that category of

<sup>58</sup> Cf. R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 307 ff. On p. 298, Martin argues that the hymn in Phil. 2:6-11 does not come from the mother church in Jerusalem because of the absence of the following items known from Acts to be characteristic of her Christology: (1) Davidic origin of Jesus; (2) fulfilment of Messianic prophecy; (3) Jesus' mission to the Jews; (4) the public ministry of Jesus; (5) the crucifixion; (6) the resurrection; (7) the Parousia. The same argument might apply to 1 Tim. 3:16. However, it would overlook that passages in Acts exhibit Christology in relation to gospel-preaching, whereas 1 Tim. 3:16 exhibits Christology in relation to the experience of Christians under persecution (see below, p. 221). Christologies differ for situational as well as geographical and religio-ethnic reasons.

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celestial beings.<sup>59</sup> But a reference to powers in the lower heavens is not at all certain, or probable. The angels may be the adoring angels around the throne of God also well known in first-century Palestinian Judaism.<sup>60</sup> Most likely, however, "seen by angels" constitutes a second reference to the *Descensus* synthetically parallel to "vindicated in spirit" (see above, pp. 213 f.). Here again the Enochian literature found at Qumran vitiates the theory of Hellenistic origin. Concerning the failure of a reference to the death of Christ, we should keep in mind that the lack of an antecedent for ὄς may mean that we have only part of the hymn.<sup>61</sup> Argument from silence is especially weak here. Who knows whether an unquoted part may have contained a theology of the cross? What inferences might be drawn if Paul had quoted only what is contained in Philippians 2:9-11 of the hymn he begins to quote in verse 6? Although Stanley has not succeeded in delimiting manifestation in flesh to the crucifixion, his references to the use of σάρξ in connexion with Christ's death (Col. 1:22; Eph. 2:14) do show that manifestation in flesh *includes* the crucifixion.<sup>62</sup> And if lines 2 and 3 in 1 Timothy 3:16 have to do with the *Descensus*, as argued above, they at least imply the death of Christ. In any case, the emphasis on vindication implies the humiliation of his suffering and death. And the note of triumph sustained throughout the hymnic quotation is sufficiently accounted for by the desire of early Christians for vindication in the face of persecution (not necessarily including frequent martyrdom) and their expectation of that vindication after the pattern of Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-12; 3:18 - 4:6,

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13 Acts 4:23-30). This desire and expectation along the lines of the Old Testament (especially Job) obviates the need to import Hellenistic ideas of fate and meaninglessness into the background of the hymn. Besides, were such ideas behind the hymn, the proclamation of Christ among the nations and belief on him in the world (lines 4 and 5) become irrelevant. For Christians concerned with rejection by society at large, however, those are signs of divine approval and ultimate victory.

Building upon D. Georgi's thesis concerning 2 Corinthians, R. H. Fuller has pressed for a Hellenistic milieu behind 1 Timothy 3:16 by arguing that "manifested in flesh" exhibits a Christology of epiphany based on the Hellenistic concept of a θεῖος ἀνὴρ.<sup>63</sup> In particular, Fuller contrasts the emptying or hiding of divine glory in the hymn quoted in Philippians 2:6 ff. and the manifestation of divine glory in 1 Timothy 3:16. By drawing such a contrast, however, Fuller has overstated what 1 Timothy 3:16 actually says. Divine glory receives mention not until the reference to ascension in line 6. Furthermore, the reference to vindication

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<sup>59</sup> See the discussion and numerous references, especially those to the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, by T. H. Gaster, *op. cit.*, pp. 132 ff, and by C. D. Morrison, *The Powers That Be* (London, 1960), *passim*. Samples are 1 Enoch 19:1 ff.; 41:3-9; 60:11 ff; 61:10; 72:1; 74:1, 2; 75:3; 1QH 1:10, 11.

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., J. Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran - 4Q Sérek Sîrôt 'ôlat Haššabbât", *VT Suppl.* 7 (1960), pp. 358-45; 1 Enoch 40:1 ff; 61:12. Cf. the often-mentioned "angels of the presence".

<sup>61</sup> H. Duensing's suggestion (relayed by J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*<sup>2</sup> [London, 1966], p. 132) that ὄς is intentionally obscure because of esoteric Christology stumbles against the meaning of mystery as an *open secret* now to be proclaimed and against the note of public triumph throughout the verse, but esp. in line 4. It remains possible that ὄς was a conventional way in which Christians opened their hymns to Christ. Cf. Deichgräber's argument that 1 Tim. 3:16 is too well-rounded to be considered only a fragment (*op. cit.*, p. 134, n. 1).

<sup>62</sup> See above, p. 209 f.

<sup>63</sup> R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York, 1965), pp. 217 f., 227f.



Robert H. Gundry, “The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16,” W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970. Hbk. ISBN: 085364098X. pp.203-222.

right after line I may imply rejection of the manifestation just because it was inglorious. Nor is the use of φανερώω in line 1 distinctively Hellenistic, for (to take but one example) it occurs in 1 Peter 1:20 concerning Christ’s first advent in a context very Hebraic in style and content.<sup>64</sup> The verb also occurs in connexions other than with the incarnation, so that we should not regard it as a telltale catchword of Hellenistic Christology. “Manifested in flesh”, then, fails to constitute a clue to a Hellenistic milieu.

It is not only that we are not bound to see necessarily Hellenistic features in I Timothy 3:16; a number of features positively favour an early Palestinian Jewish matrix rather than a “Hellenistic” one.<sup>65</sup> E. Norden long ago noted that the only true isocolon is the contrast between flesh and spirit, but even here μὲν—δὲ is missing. Moreover, ἐν is missing in line 3; and Greeks tended not to put verbs first, whereas Jews did (as in the hymn quoted in Eph. 5:14 and in the Lord’s Prayer; also, Isa. 37:17; Sir. 36; Wis. 10:15 ff.). For word-order and contrast a Greek would probably have written,

ἐν κόσμῳ μὲν ἐπιστεύθη,  
ἐν δόξῃ δ’ ἀνελήμφθη.

Perhaps most impressive of all is the characteristically Semitic passive form of the verbs in all six lines. For this phenomenon the passives in the Lord’s Prayer are apt parallels.<sup>66</sup> Here are additional evidences for a Semitic

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matrix: (1) the similarity of the implied pre-existence of Christ in line 1<sup>67</sup> to Jewish ideas concerning the pre-existence of the Torah, the tabernacle, the Messiah, and so on, (2) the similarity of Christ’s manifestation in line 1 to Old Testament theophanies,<sup>68</sup> (3) the Semitic flavour of ἐδικαιώθη in the sense of vindication,<sup>69</sup> (4) the use of ὤφθη (line 2) in a way reminiscent of its frequent use in the LXX for *nir’ah* concerning divine appearances, (5) the correspondence of the simple dative (rather than ὑπό with the genitive) to *’el* in the same Old Testament texts,<sup>70</sup> (6) the similarity of lines 2 and 3 (if they refer to the *Descensus*) to the Enochian world of thought, and (7) the similarity of line 6 to the ascensions of Enoch and Elijah and to the concept of the *shekinah* glory.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The passage alludes to Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; Ps. 89:26; Isa. 40:6-8; 52:3; 53:7; Jer. 3:59. Τὰς ψυχὰς appears as a reflexive pronoun. We read phrases such as “fear [of the Lord]” and “children of obedience”.

<sup>65</sup> The following is also against Stanley, “The Divinity of Christ”, p. 194, who sees behind the hymn a Gentile church, perhaps the Ephesian.

<sup>66</sup> E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 254 ff.; followed by Spicq, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>67</sup> “Who was manifested” does not necessarily imply pre-existence, but within a Christian context probably does in the opinion of most commentators. Cf. 2 Tim. 1:9.

<sup>68</sup> Of course, Gentiles who heard and learned the hymn may have thought in terms of appearances of the gods (cf. Acts 14:8-18).

<sup>69</sup> See G. Schrenk on δικαιώω in *TDNT*, vol. II, pp. 212 ff.; D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 82 ff; C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London, 1935), pp. 50-59.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1966), p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> I am not inclined to posit an Aramaic or Hebrew *Vorlage*, mainly because a putative Aramaic or Hebrew form cannot match the series of Greek verbal endings in -θη, which seem to be original to the hymn. Also, κόσμῳ lacks a sufficient equivalent. Nevertheless, a Greek original does not necessarily imply Hellenistic origin. See above, p. 217, n. 1.

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One feature of the hymn relevant to establishing its origin, a feature sometimes used to argue for Hellenistic origin, has so far remained unmentioned. It is that the universalistic note, particularly the preaching among nations and belief within the world in lines 4 and 5, points to a community concerned with widespread evangelism and to a time when that had already started and gained some success.<sup>72</sup> The community in which this hymn originated, then, had to be (a) universalistic in outlook, to account for the preaching among nations throughout the world; (b) Jewish at least initially, to account for the Semitic as opposed to "Hellenistic" features of the hymn; and (c) persecuted, to account for the motif of triumphant vindication.<sup>73</sup> A group of Christians who qualify in all three respects are those early Jewish Christians who migrated from Palestine to Syrian Antioch because of the persecution starting with Stephen's martyrdom, began to evangelize the Gentiles in Antioch with great success,<sup>74</sup> and sent Paul and his companions on their missionary journeys (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1 ff.).<sup>75</sup>

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If the hymn originated in that group, the significance of a very high Christology among first-generation Christians from Palestine should not escape notice. Paul may have learned the hymn in Antioch and late in life recorded it here in 1 Timothy 3:16.<sup>76</sup> If so, Paul takes a Jewish Christian hymn which grew out of persecution and exulted in the success of Christ and the gospel and reapplies that hymn to the rising threat of incipient gnosticism, described in 4:1 ff. (cf. the Colossian heresy). The stress on incarnation, which originated in the Jewish idea of theophany,<sup>77</sup> now counteracts gnostic doceticism and asceticism. The stress on universalism, which originated in the persecuted Christians' feeling of vindication by means of divinely ordered success in evangelism, now contradicts gnostic esotericism.

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<sup>72</sup> Conceivably, one might restrict lines 4 and 5 to preaching and believing among the Diaspora. But since evangelization of Gentiles accompanied evangelization of the Diaspora, the restriction would not be valid.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. the argument of O. R. B. Wilson, "A Study of the Early Christian Credal Hymn of 1 Timothy 3:16" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., 1954), pp. 38-43, that ὁμολογουμένως in the introduction reflects persecution since confession of Jesus as Lord occasioned it.

<sup>74</sup> Regardless of the textual critical question in Acts 11:20, the contrast with "Jews alone" in verse 19 requires the sense "Gentiles" in verse 20. To be sure, those who first began preaching to Gentiles were Cyprians and Cyrenians, but like Barnabas the Cyprian (Acts 4:36) they had been living in Palestine and only recently had emigrated.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Martin's association of the hymn with a Hellenistic Jewish Christian community possibly having connexion with Stephen "Aspects of Worship", p. 26; cf. *idem*, *Carmen Christi*, pp. 304 f.).

<sup>76</sup> The suggestion holds even though Pauline authorship of the Pastorals be denied, for the Pauline disciple could have learned the hymn in Antioch or from Paul himself who had learned it there. Did Peter also learn the hymn in Antioch and reflect it in 1 Pet. 3:18 ff.? See above, p. 211, n. 3.

<sup>77</sup> But the incarnation was no casual theophany.