

## THE SYNTACTICAL FUNCTION OF ἀλλὰ καί IN PHIL. 2.4

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The purpose of this article is to correct the majority understanding of ἀλλὰ καί in Phil. 2.4. As we will show, most interpreters depart from Paul's syntactical choice in 2.4 and produce a reading that mentally supplies μόνον earlier in the verse or drops καί from later in the verse.<sup>1</sup> After introducing the issue more fully and considering the text-critical evidence, we turn to examine constructions of ἀλλὰ καί in Greek literature. We argue that in Phil. 2.4 ἀλλὰ καί is used to emphasize the contrast with the preceding clause. The implications of this reading are considered with regard to the remainder of Philippians 2, including the Christ-hymn of Phil. 2.6-11.

### *Current Views on Phil. 2.4*

To begin, a representative translation is provided, here the RSV, followed by a more detailed evaluation of the issue.

μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ [καί] τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

The text-critical issue can be set out clearly by framing the interpretive issue. For many interpreters, both ancient and modern, the use of καί in Phil. 2.4b is difficult to understand. If the contrast is

1. E.g. M. Silva, *Philippians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2nd edn, 2005), p. 91, writes, '[m]y translation of this verse with the added words "not only" reflects the implications of the καί in the second part of the verse'; cf. G.D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 175; W. Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1984), p. 183.

between ‘each not looking to your own interests’ and ‘each [looking] to the interests of others’, it is awkward to link these two clauses with ‘but also’ (ἀλλὰ καί), understanding καί adjunctively.<sup>2</sup> This awkwardness is generally resolved in two ways: (1) by omitting καί from the text (and, as a result, the translation);<sup>3</sup> or (2) by translating the preceding clause as if it included μόνον.<sup>4</sup> Both options are found in the scholarly literature on Phil. 2.4. However, we will argue that neither option gives proper deference to Paul’s word choices. After considering the text-critical issue, we will examine three different constructions of ἀλλὰ καί and consider their import for understanding Phil. 2.4.

### *The Text Critical Issue: ἀλλὰ [καί] in Phil. 2.4*

Despite strong MS attestation, the text of Phil. 2.4 continues to be printed with καί enclosed in brackets in the Nestle–Aland (28th ed.) and United Bible Society (5th ed.) editions of the Greek New Testament. This indicates the editorial judgment that the word may not belong to the earliest recoverable text. Despite this judgment, evidence for the omission is limited to three Greek–Latin diglots (D F G), one Greek MS (K), and some Latin witnesses (it vg<sup>cl</sup>). As Zuntz points out, MSS D F G share a genealogical ancestor and, therefore, represent only one piece of evidence for this variation unit.<sup>5</sup> The earliest of these, Codex

2. On the adjunctive use of καί, see A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), pp. 1179–82; S.L. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew: καί, δέ, τότε, γάρ, οὖν and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse* (JSNTSup, 206; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 111.

3. See S.E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (BLG, 2; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2nd edn, 1994), pp. 282–83; W. Varner, *Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), p. 40; G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin, *Philippians* (WBC, 43; Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 2nd edn, 2004), p. 80. Further support is offered below.

4. See Silva, *Philippians*, p. 91; G. Barth, *Der Brief an die Philipper* (ZBNT, 9; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979), p. 39; J. Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief* (HTKNT, 10.3; Freiburg: Herder, 1987), pp. 102, 106–107; Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe*, p. 183; N. Walter, E. Reinmuth and P. Lampe, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon* (DTD, 8.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), pp. 51, 55; P. Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens* (CNT, 10; Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950), pp. 37, 40.

5. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 84–150.

Claromontanus (D<sup>P</sup> or 06), dates to the sixth century, representing a significant gap between our earliest evidence of the text of Phil. 2.4 and the minority reading. Some interpreters argue that the omission of καί is accidental, negating the need for any brackets in the standard critical editions.<sup>6</sup> This would accord with general copyist tendencies, where the omission of a conjunction is one of the more common mistakes.<sup>7</sup> Others suggest that the copyist(s) of D<sup>P</sup> evince(s) a pattern of changes to the text, including the omission of καί in Phil. 2.4 (cf. the variation unit with ἡγούμενοι in Phil. 2.3).<sup>8</sup> Combined with the Pauline precedent of a shorter construction (cf. ἀλλά in 1 Cor. 10.24),<sup>9</sup> we believe that the rarity of the construction ἀλλὰ καί without a preceding μόνον may have led some copyists to remove καί. Holmes's *SBLGNT* has removed the brackets from the presentation of the text, perhaps forecasting a judgment that will also be reflected in the future editions of the Nestle–Aland text. In any event, the reading inclusive of καί is certainly a more difficult reading based on internal grounds and has extensive external support. An overview of the possible constructions of ἀλλὰ καί will clarify how it should be understood in Phil. 2.4.

### *Constructions of ἀλλὰ καί*

As we have observed above, most interpreters have attempted to read Phil. 2.4 by supplying μόνον (without supporting MS evidence) or by omitting καί (following some MS evidence). The exceptions to this would be Bockmuehl's treatment in his *Philippians* commentary and Engberg-Pedersen's treatment in an article on altruism in Philippians.<sup>10</sup> However, most scholars have not followed their suggestions, perhaps

6. Silva, *Philippians*, p. 91.

7. J. Royse, 'The Early Text of Paul (and Hebrews)', in C. Hill and M. Kruger (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 175-203 (183).

8. See esp. H.J. Vogels, 'Der Codex Claromontanus der Paulinischen Briefe', in H.G. Wood, *Amicitiae Corolla* (London: London University Press, 1933), pp. 274-99; J. Reumann, *Philippians* (AB, 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 316-17; T. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Radical Altruism in Philippians 2:4', in J. Fitzgerald, T. O'Brien and L.M. White (eds.), *Early Christianity and Classical Culture* (NovTSup, 110; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 197-214 (200).

9. So M. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1998), p. 113.

10. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*; Engberg-Pedersen, 'Radical Altruism'.

because neither included detailed discussion of ἀλλὰ καί constructions. Bockmuehl lists only a few parallels in the LXX versions, and Engberg-Pedersen adduces no examples other than three constructions (incorrectly) categorized in Denniston's *Greek Particles*. Moreover, neither Bockmuehl nor Engberg-Pedersen has paid sufficient attention to the role that καί plays in the syntax of Phil. 2.4. We hope to solidify the minority reading by considering ἀλλὰ καί constructions more closely and providing more examples from literature contemporary with the New Testament. Our research has revealed three possible constructions:

(1) οὐ μόνον ... ἀλλὰ καί ('not only ... but also') is used to *contrast and expand upon a preceding idea*. This is the most common ἀλλὰ καί construction in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 1.32; 2 Cor. 7.7; Phil. 1.29), and it is well attested in wider literature.<sup>11</sup> *P.Mich.* 3.209 illustrates the sense well: 'For you know, brother, that I regard you *not only* [οὐ μόνον] as a brother *but also* [ἀλλὰ καί] as a father and lord and god' (cf. *P.Mich.* 3.175; 6.423; 11.617). As seen here, it is not unusual for ellipsis to be used in this construction.<sup>12</sup> The use of καί as a particle for emphasis is discussed at some length by Denniston, including some examples where it is part of a contrasting construction like ἀλλὰ καί.<sup>13</sup> According to Thrall, and contradicting Denniston, this usage is to be distinguished from examples where μόνον is absent from the construction: 'ἀλλά followed by καί and meaning "but also" is possible only when preceded by an οὐ μόνον clause'.<sup>14</sup> Denniston's suggestion that μόνον can be absent in this construction appears to be the basis for many recent scholars understanding Phil. 2.4 in the 'not *only* ... but also' construction.

(2) ἀλλὰ καί ('in addition' or 'further') is less common by itself, but there are examples in a progressive sense where ἀλλά + καί *adds new*

11. H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), §2764; Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 1166.

12. BDF §479.1.

13. J.D. Denniston, *Greek Particles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), esp. pp. 321-33.

14. M. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 15, cf. p. 13 n. 5; *pace* Denniston, *Greek Particles*, p. 3.

information to continue the narrative or discourse.<sup>15</sup> Robertson observes that the basic use of ἀλλὰ has the force of introducing an accessory idea.<sup>16</sup> This sense is related to the etymology of the particle itself, which is derived from the neuter plural accusative form of ἄλλος.<sup>17</sup> This progressive use of ἀλλὰ has no adversative connection with an antecedent clause (cf. Lk. 7.23; 16.20-21; 24.21-22; Rom. 6.5; Phil. 1.18). Thus, Thrall observes that the construction ἀλλὰ καί is formed by the addition of an emphasizing καί to the progressive ἀλλὰ.<sup>18</sup> A clear example is found in Phil. 1.18, where Paul writes, ‘and in this I rejoice. Moreover, I will continue to rejoice [καί ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω. Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι].’ Here ἀλλὰ καί is used to introduce the new point or idea. By switching from the present (χαίρω) to the future tense (χαρήσομαι), Paul underscores the ‘continuation of his joyful attitude’, and he will go on to note the rationale for that joy in v. 19.<sup>19</sup> Uses from non-literary papyri illustrate this sense as well: ‘... Moreover [ἀλλὰ καί] the person who bought the other slave from you ... has played us false’ (*P.Giess* 20). Here ἀλλὰ καί precedes a new point in a series of issues raised by the author of this letter. As Thrall notes, in such examples there is no adversative connection with the preceding clause. The use of ἀλλὰ + καί introduces a new element.<sup>20</sup>

(3) οὐ ... ἀλλὰ καί (‘not ... but rather’) is used to *emphasize a new idea by contrasting it with the preceding idea*. Grammarians have noted that when ἀλλὰ is preceded by a negative clause there is a sharp antithesis (cf. Mk 9.7; Lk. 1.60; Jn 6.32).<sup>21</sup> Like the previous construction (number 2 above), this one is formed by adding καί, which serves to emphasize the clause in which it occurs. Smyth notes that ‘καί

15. See esp. L. Brucale, ‘Conjunctions (Non-Subordinating)’, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics (EAGLL)* 1.363-64; A. Revuelta, ‘Particles (Syntactic Features)’, *EAGLL* 3.31-41; BDF §448.6. Cf. BDAG, 45 §3.

16. Robertson, *Grammar*, pp. 1185-86; cf. F. Blass, *Grammar of New Testament Greek* (trans. H.S.J. Thackeray; London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 269.

17. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §2775.

18. Thrall, *Greek Particles*, p. 13; cf. Denniston, *Greek Particles*, p. 21; Porter, *Idioms*, p. 211; J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: United Bible Society, 1988), §91.12.

19. J. Hellerman, *Philippians* (EGGNT; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), p. 57.

20. Thrall, *Greek Particles*, p. 14.

21. Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 1188; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §2764.

of balanced contrast' appears in a subordinate clause in order to emphasize the antithesis.<sup>22</sup> Examples from the New Testament are limited, but there are several clear occurrences in wider literature. A clear example is found in Josephus, *Ant.* 14.287: 'But Herod and his friends thought it best *not to unmask* [μὴ ἀπελέγχειν] his pretense; *on the contrary* [ἀλλὰ καί], they, in turn, treated Malichus with friendliness in order to avoid suspicion' (cf. *Ant.* 2.195; 14.341; 15.31, 313). A similar construction is found in the Greek version of Ezek. 18.11: 'in the way of his righteous father *he did not walk, but rather* [οὐκ ἐπορεύθη ἀλλὰ καί] upon the mountains he ate and defiled his neighbor's wife' (cf. Wis. 14.22). More widely, an example is found in Lysias 6.13: '*he will not speak* [οὐχ ἀπολογήσεται] in his own defense, *but rather* [ἀλλὰ καί] will accuse the rest' (cf. Sophocles, *Ajax* 1313). Examples from non-literary papyri also demonstrate that the construction was used in everyday writing: 'not wishing to pay me *but rather* to cheat me [μὴ βουλόμενος ἀποδοῦναι ἀλλὰ καὶ διαπλανῶναι (*sic*)]' (*P.Mich.* 5.228; cf. *P.Col.* 10.266; 10.280; *P.Mich.* 3.174; 5.355; *SB* 24.16257). In each of the preceding examples, the negated antecedent clause is followed by ἀλλὰ καί, presenting a contrasting idea between two statements where the clause with καί is emphasized.

Given these three options for understanding ἀλλὰ καί constructions, several points follow.

### *Evaluation*

First, the majority of commentators and translations construe Paul's text incorrectly, translating Phil. 2.4a with 'not only' or 'not merely' as if μόνον (number 1 above) were written as part of the construction.<sup>23</sup> This is true not only in various English translations (cf. NKJV, RSV, ESV, HCSB, NET, NLT, NASB), but also in German and French scholarship.<sup>24</sup> To be sure, Paul frequently uses the οὐ μόνον construction (e.g. Rom. 1.32; 4.12, 16; 5.3), but Phil. 2.4 is not such a case. Since μόνον is absent from the MSS of Phil. 2.4, construction number 1 cannot be correct. We can also rule out number 2 because we must consider the

22. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §2886.

23. See discussion in Varner, *Philippians*, p. 40; cf. Hellerman, *Philippians*, p. 103.

24. See the sources listed in note 3 above. Hellerman, *Philippians*, p. 103, notes that the NRSV and NIV have likely omitted καί in their translation.

fuller construction *μή ... ἀλλὰ καί*, which creates a contrast between the clauses on either side of *ἀλλά*.

Secondly, Bonifazi, Drummen and de Kreij note that ‘scholarship does acknowledge peculiar functions of *καί* ... but it usually presents them as peripheral uses, reserving center stage for *καί* in the senses of either “and” or “also/even”.’<sup>25</sup> Invoking more ‘normal’ uses of *καί*, some scholars argue that in Phil. 2.4 ‘*καί* was added to soften the injunction.’<sup>26</sup> But as we have observed above, within an *οὐ ... ἀλλὰ καί* construction, *καί* does not soften the contrast but emphasizes the thing contrasted. The implications of this are explored further in point four below.

Thirdly, the widely accepted reading of Phil. 2.4 that we are contesting is followed immediately by the presentation of the example of Christ. Reading Phil. 2.4 in the ‘not only ... but also’ construction influences how one reads the Christ-hymn in Phil 2.6-11. Succinctly put, is Christ an example of ‘*looking not only* to one’s own interests *but also* the interests of others’ or is Christ an example of someone who ‘*did not look* to his own interests *but rather* to the interests of others’? The neuter singular *τοῦτο* of 2.5 is anaphoric, pointing back to the concept introduced in 2.4 and forming the basis for the following comments about Christ’s self-emptying.<sup>27</sup> Thus, a correct (or incorrect) understanding of 2.4 frames how 2.6-11 will be understood.

Fourthly, several commentators who translate *ἀλλὰ καί* as ‘but also’ do so apparently because ‘Paul would not have it understood that one is to pay no attention to his own affairs.’<sup>28</sup> But this is precisely what Paul

25. A. Bonifazi, A. Drummen and M. de Kreij, ‘Particles in Ancient Greek Discourse: Five Volumes Exploring Particle Use across Genres’, §93 (Hellenic Studies, 74; Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University: <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/6391>).

26. Hellerman, *Philippians*, p. 103; Reumann, *Philippians*, p. 316.

27. This understanding of *τοῦτο* is supported by the presence of *καί* in the second clause of 2.5. See Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, p. 107; *pace* L.A. Losie, ‘A Note on the Interpretation of Phil. 2.5’, *ExpTim* 90 (1978), pp. 52-54.

28. M.R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), p. 56; see, more recently, G.W. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 116-17; J.J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), pp. 75-77; B. Witherington III, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter to the*

says later in Philippians 2 (cf. 1 Cor. 10.24). In 2.20 Paul commends Timothy as one who is ‘genuinely concerned for your well-being’ (γνησίως τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν μεριμνήσει). Then Paul contrasts him with ‘all those who seek their own interests, not the interests of Jesus Christ’ (οἱ πάντες ... τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 2.21). As in Phil. 2.4, this sets up a contrast between *avoiding* self-serving interests and serving the interests of others. The logic of Philippians 2 is built around an argument for self-denial and orientation toward others. Christ is presented as the chief example of this (Phil. 2.6-11) and Timothy’s self-denial is contrasted with those who seek their own interests (Phil. 2.20-21). We contend that this logic begins in Phil. 2.4, which should be translated ‘each one looking not to their own interests, but rather each to the interests of others’.

### *Conclusion*

In this article we have attempted to correct the majority understanding of ἀλλὰ καί in Phil. 2.4, offering a translation that contrasts ‘each one looking not to their own interests’ with ‘each to the interests of others’. While most interpreters have attempted to read this construction by supplying μόνον earlier in the verse (without MS evidence) or omitting καί (following some MS evidence), neither of these options is substantiated by the textual evidence. Based on evidence from Greek literature, the best solution understands the ἀλλὰ καί construction in contrast with the preceding clause. Moreover, the καί functions to emphasize or draw attention to the second clause. Not only does this rendering give proper deference to the linguistic choices of the author, but it also makes Phil. 2.4 an unequivocal call to self-denial in service to others and serves as the frame for the description of the self-emptying Christ in the verses that follow.