

OUR LORD'S STATE OF HUMILIATION.

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III.

(Concluding Article.)

THE following are among the principal expositions of *ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν* :—

(a) "Instead of taking to Himself He put away and put off from Himself."—*Dean Vaughan*.

(b) "Emptied Himself of the *μορφή θεοῦ*—the glory which He had with the Father (St. John xvii. 5)—by taking the form of a servant."—*Dean Alford*.

(c) "*Emptied, stripped Himself*, of the insignia of majesty. . . . He divested Himself of the glories, the *prerogatives*, of Deity. This He did by taking upon Him the form of a servant."—*Bp. Lightfoot*.

(d) "Emptied Himself from the state of being equal with God."—*Concil. Antioch* (3rd cent.), i. p. 848, Labb. quoted by *Bp. Christopher Wordsworth*.

(e) "He emptied Himself of His own Divine glory, and willingly took the form of a servant."

(f) *Dean Payne Smith* commenting on Is. liii. 2, says :—"As regards His *Divine* nature Christ 'emptied Himself,' *laying it entirely aside* (Phil. ii. 7 in the Greek); and as regards His human nature He descended into the lower ranks of society, and bore man's name and lot in *all its humility*. 'He took the form of a slave.'"

(*Commentary*. Prophetical Books, Isaiah to Malachi. S.P.C.K., 1880.)

We cannot, however, see how the words "He *emptied* Himself of His Divine glory" can be made to mean merely "He *veiled* it." And certainly St. Augustine's words, "Taking what He took, He kept what He was," appear to fall short of Lightfoot's exposition, and of the words of the Council of Antioch (quoted above), which together express, perhaps, as nearly as possible the inner reality of our Lord's *κένωσις*.

In view of His Mission, and in actual preparation to undertake it, He *counted not* that a prize *to be retained*, which *per se* was such (ver. 6), and so "He emptied Himself," refusing no stage of His

profound Humiliation, not even "the likeness of *sinful flesh*" (Rom. viii. 3), and "the Death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 8). He stooped below the angels that He might in Himself raise *man*—who was naturally lower than they—above their nature (Ps. viii. 4, 5; Heb. ii. 9; Eph. i. 19–21; iv. 10). Hence our blessed Lord's experience, however mysterious, is represented in Scripture as nothing less than a great reality, which is involved in the force of the Greek *ἐκένωσεν* and the Vulgate "exinanivit."

A word or two on His "being found in fashion as a man" (Phil. ii. 8). Apart from their general or primary sense, how much is involved in these few words, read in the light of the events of His sacred life, and as they are unfolded in the Gospel record. It is not said that He was "found" *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ* (ver. 6), in that state He was only known to the Eternal Father, and to the Holy Spirit, and to angels. But by man—the object of His Redeeming Love—He was "*found in fashion as a man.*" What infinite condescension is here portrayed! He, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, was "found," in time, by man, and for man's salvation. And yet never as a *mere* man, however pure and however holy. He was "found"—during His earthly sojourn, and notwithstanding the reality of His "state of Humiliation," Exinanition, *κένωσις*—the *God-Man*. The revelation of these deeply mysterious truths, in their mutual relationship, sets forth the Infinite Love which constituted the one basis of Atonement in "the counsels" of the ever Blessed Trinity (Eph. i. 11; Ps. xl. 7, 8; Heb. ix. 14; St. John iii. 16, 17; 1 John iii. 1). The depth of our Lord's condescension was the measure of the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for a lost and ruined race.

Our blessed Lord was "found in fashion as a man." He was "found" as such by men in general. All who had any dealings with Him or who crossed His earthly path, recognised in Him One, who not only appeared in "the *form* of a servant," and graciously condescended to do the work of one (cf. St. Matt. xx. 28; and *μορφῇ*, Phil. ii. 7), who was not only "made in the *similitude* (*ὁμοίωμα*) of men" in general, but was "found," in all the circumstances and tender relationships of life, in outward guise, in manner of speech, and in look, "*as a Man.*" He not only took upon Himself our nature but humbled Himself still further in that nature (Rom. xv. 3). He, pre-eminently, was *the One* who "sought not His own," but

“humbled Himself” (1 Cor. xiii. 5 ; Phil. ii. 8), “regarding not His equality with God as giving Him an unbounded power of self-aggrandisement, but on the contrary emptying Himself of all by a voluntary self-incorporation with the creature . . . in its uttermost abasement of shame and suffering.”

In His Childhood, Youth, and Manhood, as well as during the active exercise of His Ministry, whether casually met with, or in His daily intercourse with His Mother and brethren, or “found” in the precise meaning of the Greek word so translated (*εὑρεθεῖς*), after “previous search or enquiry,” He was seen and known “as man.” Yet, we repeat, He was never “found” as a mere man. His enemies testified of Him : “Never man spake like this man” (St. John viii. 46). “He taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes” (St. Matt. vii. 29). And if we read the latter part of that wonderful first chapter of St. John’s Gospel, beginning at the 35th verse, are we not struck by this two-fold aspect of our blessed Lord—the tender, winning humanness, combined with a dignity, a majesty, and a consciousness of future glory, which ever characterized the God-Man? “What seek ye?” “Come and see”; “Thou shalt be called Cephas”; “Follow Me”; “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile”; “*Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee*”; “*Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*”; these are His utterances to Andrew and Peter, to Philip and Nathanael. The key-note of these verses (35-51), too, is “found,” so far as the first communications of these disciples with one another, about our Lord, are concerned.

Not only by Jews was He “found as a man,” but also by Gentile proselytes, by the Greeks, for instance, who came up to the feast of the Passover at the end of His Ministry, and who, addressing Philip, said, “Sir, we would see *Jesus*” (St. John xii. 20-22). To them He unfolds the main results of the Redemption which He was about to effect, and that not only was “the middle wall of partition” between them and the commonwealth of Israel about to be “broken down” (Eph. ii. 12-15), but that His “lifting up from the earth” should be the means of “drawing *all* men unto Him” (St. John xii. 32). As Stier well remarks, by the way: “These men from the *West* represent, at the end of

Christ's life, what the wise men from the *East* represented at its beginning ; but those come to the cross of the King, even as these to His manger."

Again, not only by men, but also in a sense by *angels*, was He "found in fashion as a *man*," when they announced His birth to the shepherds (St. Luke ii.), directed His flight into Egypt (St. Matt. ii. 13-15), ministered unto Him at the end of His Wilderness Temptation (St. Matt. iv. 11 ; St. Mark i. 13), "strengthened Him" in the Garden of Agony (St. Luke xxii. 43).

How striking is the union of the perfectly Human and the essentially Divine in our blessed Lord, as it is portrayed in the pages of the New Testament! How graciously adapted to the needs of man, who never could have gazed on Uncreated Light (1 Tim. vi. 16), was the Divine provision of the Incarnation (St. John i. 7-10 ; xii. 35, 36 ; 2 Cor. iv. 6). What has been said of the natural vision is applicable also here. "In order to secure the greatest power of vision the light must be accommodated to the eye. The brightest light will not necessarily enable every man to see the best. Adaptation to the organ is a greater requisite in the medium of vision than intrinsic brightness." As Keble beautifully writes :—

"The Son of God in radiance beam'd
Too bright for us to scan,
But we may face the rays that stream'd
From the mild Son of Man."
—*The Christian Year*. Quinquagesima Sunday.

(vii.) *Heb.* ii. 18. Alford speaks of "the power of sympathy which He has acquired by personal experience of our sufferings." He says, "As GOD, He knows what is in us : but as Mān, He feels it also. And by this, wonderful as it may seem, He has acquired a *fresh* power, that of sympathy with us, and *in consequence, of helping us.*" And Wordsworth similarly writes : "He has gained *new* powers by *suffering*. By His Passion He has acquired *Compassion*. We are sure that *He, who suffered so much, feels with us, and for us, in our sufferings.*" Cf. *Is.* lxiii. 9 ; xlvi. 10.

Surely the view of these eminent commentators is far more in agreement with the teaching of the Inspired Word than that is which ascribes our Lord's capacity to sympathise with, and help His people, to His Divinity alone. With reference to our Lord having

acquired "fresh" or "new power by suffering," see also *Owen*, on Heb. iv. 15.

(viii.) *Heb.* iv. 15. Here Alford rightly refuses to "confine" *πειρασμένον* to "sufferings on account of sin," and says of such a view that it "would altogether deprive it of the meaning *tempted*, 'solicited towards, but short of sin.'" And, again, he says, "very many Commentators take the words (of this verse) to imply, that He was tempted in all other points, but not in sin: 'sin only excepted' . . . But the words certainly do not lead to any such interpretation. They would rather in this case be, *εἰ μὴ καθ' ἁμαρτίαν*, or *χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας* would stand *before καθ' ὁμοίωσιν*."

The first view is opposed to the true nature of our Lord's Temptation, the last, to its essential likeness to the temptations of His people. And if either view were the true one, the loss to us would be infinite. Cf. *Rom.* viii. 3. On this the above writer remarks: "He had a nature *like sinful human nature*, so that He was subject to our sensuous incitements, but in Him they broke not out into sin."

(ix.) *Heb.* v. 8. On this passage Alford says: "Although He was a Son, He learned His obedience, *not from this relation*, but from His *sufferings*. . . . His special obedience, that course of submission by which He became perfected as our High Priest, was gone through in *Time*, and matter of *acquisition* for Him, and *practice*, by suffering."

And this experience may be said to have been closed at the Resurrection, not before. See *Rom.* vi. 4, viii. 11.

Wordsworth observes: "He *learnt obedience by experience* of what He Himself suffered *as Man* . . . by this learning He was *perfected and glorified* and became the Author of everlasting salvation. . . . *We must not weaken this saying*, but rather we may thankfully accept it, in *all its mysterious fulness*, etc."

We have now seen that the profound reality of our blessed Lord's Humiliation is a truth revealed in many parts of Holy Scripture, and that it is revealed concurrently with other truths which have exclusive reference to His true and proper Divinity. So that in His unique Personality the words of the Prophet might have been uttered by His, as by no other lips: "To whom will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal?" (*Isa.* xi. 25).

But it is not pretended that any acquaintance with the *letter* of Holy Scripture can ever afford one who is desirous of attaining a

deeper knowledge of the glory of our Lord's Person the same advantages as are available in the study of the *inner* meaning of God's Word, and *heart-converse with the Lord Himself*. And in this study and converse loyalty to Truth does not require that we should be "in bondage to the fear of transgressing the legitimate boundaries of freedom and of reverence." The Divinity of our blessed Lord is clearly revealed in Holy Scripture, and as one of the great foundation truths of Christianity it is enshrined in the Creeds of the Catholic Faith. The acceptance of His equally true and proper Humanity is necessary to a right faith in the perfection of the Incarnation and the reality of the Atonement. He is presented to us in the outward surroundings of His earthly life from Bethlehem to Calvary as perfectly Human. And even in closest connection with His own declaration of His future glory, and in reply to one who addressed Him as "the Son of GOD, the King of Israel," the title which He chose for Himself was none other than "*the Son of Man*" (St. John i. 49-51). Shall we not then exclaim:—

"For ever be Thy name adored
For this true humanness—our Brother, Saviour, Lord!"

But it is earnestly hoped that no statement, however brief, may be found in the present article which is calculated to cause unnecessary pain to any true-hearted follower of our common Lord. It is a comfort to know that "it is the same Spirit which has embodied truth in the Bible that infuses the love of truth into the Christian, and no magnetism gives more assurance of its reality in material things than such sympathy gives in spiritual, that the sincere seeker shall ultimately find all such truth in the Bible as there is a moral fitness, or necessity, that he should possess."

"And as Thou, to make us Thine,
Stoop'd a mortal man to be,
Fill us with Thy life divine,
Lift our life in love to Thee."

On the reality of our Lord's *κένωσις*, see Dr. Mill's Sermons No. V., especially pp. 113, 122, where he speaks of it as "that voluntary emptying Himself of the Divinity," and as His "exinani- tion of the Divinity."

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