

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

H. Graham Wilson, Jr.

Have you ever wondered whether God could separate Himself from Himself? *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”* Does this Aramaic statement by Jesus mean that God the Father separated Himself from God the Son? What of the Trinity? One God, three Persons!

Does this reflect desertion that Jesus felt as He was bearing the sin of the world (II Cor. 5:21)? How can God forsake God? To attempt to answer is to tread “where angels fear to go”, but let’s examine the Person of Christ (one body, two wills), His two natures (divine and human), and His humiliation.

The question of Christ’s humanity has seldom been questioned. Yes, there were heresies like Gnosticism (denied the reality of His body) and Eutychianism (which made the body of Christ divine), but for the most part the early church held to the humanity as well as the deity of Jesus.

We know that Christ had a human birth, from a virgin Jewish woman (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 1:18-2:11; Luke 1:30-38; 2:1-20). One question that arises is that since Jesus was born of a virgin, did He inherit a sin nature from His mother? The Scriptures make it clear that Christ did not sin and had no sin nature (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; I John 3:5; John 14:30). It was through the miraculous overshadowing of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was born sinless and possessed no sin nature (Luke 1:35).

In the study of the doctrine of the Trinity one, if orthodox, comes to accept that Christ is God and that He has two natures (human and deity), one body and but one Person. This union is inseparably bound together; there are two natures in one Person in bodily form. The second Person of the Trinity assumed humanity with all its attributes except Adam’s nature. In this Person are two consciousnesses and two wills, yet one Person. Christ’s personality resides in His

divine nature because the son did not unite with a **human person**, but with **human nature** (John 1:14). Christ's human nature was impersonal apart from the Incarnation; however, this is not true of His divine nature.

Jesus must have been aware of His deity at all times in His divine self-consciousness for it was fully operative at all times, even in infancy. There is evidence, however, that the human nature developed and with it a human self-consciousness came into play. Sometimes He would exercise His human self-consciousness, and at other times His divine, but never were the two in conflict. In His Person He was *Theanthropic*, but not His nature. The union of the divine nature and the human nature is known as the *hypostatic union*. As has been stated the seat of the personality of Christ is in the divine nature. He always did His Father's will.

In early Church History (4th century) Arius of Alexander denied that Christ was true-God and in no way equal with God in essence or eternity. The council of Nicea (325 A.D.) rejected this view and declared Jesus Christ *was begotten*, not made (created), and was of one substance with the Father. Unfortunately this council did not clarify the relationship of the two natures of Christ. Apollinaris took the position that Jesus had a true body and animal soul, but not a spirit or mind. The *Logos* filled the place of human intelligence. This view honored Christ's deity, but destroyed His full humanity.

The First Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) condemned this heresy. Later the view of Nestorius was thrust forward. Nestorius denied the **real union** of the two natures of Christ into one Person and implied a twofold **personality**. The *Logos* dwelt in Jesus, so that the two natures were united in similar fashion as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Church-age believers. This

view threatened the true **deity** of Christ. This was condemned at the Synod of Ephesus in 431 A.D. as heresy.

Another heresy appears and it held that there were not two natures but only one nature in Christ (Monophysites). This was condemned in 451 A.D. at the council of Chalcedon. The Monophysite controversy took an abrupt turn and a new view arose. Christ was said to have only one will (Monothelites). This was overthrown at the Third Council of Constantinople (681 A.D.). There it was declared that Christ has two distinct natures, a human one and a divine one, and that therefore there are two intelligences and two wills, yet in one Person. The orthodox view, established at the Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D, is that there is one Jesus Christ, but He has two natures, the human one and the divine one. The distinction between these natures is not diminished by their union in one Person the Son of God.

When John states, “In the beginning was the word (*Logos*)...” he means by *Logos* a **Person**. A word is a medium of manifestation, a means of communication, a method of revelation. John writes, “*theos en ho logos*” which means that the *Logos* is **God**, but it does not mean that He is all of God. If John had written, “*ho theos en ho logos*,” he could have made the terms of God and *Logos* convertible terms and so would have taught **Sabellianism**. John conceives of the *Logos* as personal and this is evidenced by the structure of his sentence (John 1:1).

In the Incarnation the humiliation began in Christ’s attitude of mind (Phil. 2:6). Christ did not view that His being equal with God was a thing to be grasped or to be forcibly retained. His becoming a man was no personal threat to Him. There are two primary points involved in the Incarnation: 1). He emptied Himself and 2). He was made in the likeness of man.

We are told that Christ “emptied Himself” (Phil 2:7). The Greek word is *kenoo*, and from it comes the word *kenosis*. Many have interpreted this act and described it wrongly. Some say Christ emptied Himself of His relative attributes, His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, while retaining His immanent attributes, His holiness, love, and truth. This is not true, and it is heresy to teach this.

Jesus Christ never ceased being the God-man, having a divine nature and a human nature. During His humiliation in some manner His divine glory was **veiled**, but never surrendered (John 1:14, 2:11, 17:5). Though He existed in the form of God, He came to be in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7). The One who was and is by nature God became man. John declared, “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). In Christ, “all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col. 2:9).

Paul asserts that God sent, “His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). That Christ took on flesh does not mean He took on a sin nature. He took on unglorified human flesh which was subject to weakness, pain, temptation, and limitation. He voluntarily chose not to use His prerogative of deity. He willingly submitted to not exercising certain attributes of deity so that He could identify with men.

Thus He gave up the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5) and took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:6). He “**emptied**” Himself by taking something to Himself, namely the nature or form of a servant or slave. At that moment on the Cross He veiled His deity, His humanity, wearied, limited, felt the burden of sin, the sting of death, “he was crushed for our iniquities” and “the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.”

While being in the form of man, with His deity veiled, Christ cried, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?” The anguish experienced in the flesh, the human nature, was faced with death’s reality. Yet quickly the divine nature boldly proclaimed, “It is finished”!

One man, the Christ, with a divine nature and a human nature, and a **veiled divine nature**, expressed His last words before His burial This is the reason God exalted Him, “for He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.” “Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Christ, the man, felt the affect of the veiled God-nature on the cross and uttered His cry, but the God-nature quickly being unveiled proclaimed the triumph, *tetelestai!*