

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

standing also. But, by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, may *another* translation be effected, lest our praiseless lives cause our common prayers to revert to a dead tongue, and we in our error mistake a dumb heart for a deaf God.



## The Person of our Lord and the Kenotic Theory.

BY THE REV. F. S. GUY WARMAN, M.A.

THE kenotic theory: the ugliness of the phrase is characteristic. Out of a single word theories have been evolved the very statement of which jars on our ears as followers of Him whom we hold to be our infallible Lord and Saviour. We have the one word *ἐκένωσεν* and a scant phrase here and there, and upon this foundation there have been built, oftentimes in the interests of, and in order to add weight to, purely human speculations, theories which are subversive of our Lord's authority as Teacher, and practically of His personality as Son of God. Unitarianism is clamant amongst us, sometimes in the guise of some other sect or of *soi-disant* undenominationalism. It is well for us to face such a question as the extent of our Lord's self-humiliation, but it is necessary to demand at the outset that the so-called results of extreme criticism, purely speculative and often based on meagre foundations, shall not be allowed more than their proper weight, and that is small indeed, in determining the nature of our Lord's *κένωσις*.

In approaching the subject, let us do so from exactly the same point of view as St. Paul. The standpoint from which great doctrines are considered materially influences the conclusion which is reached. Arius argued from the logical aspect of a son's relationship, and his point of view led him to the ignominious position of an arch-heretic. Let us beware, then, of a similar fate, and our caution will force us to St. Paul's aspect of the kenosis—viz., as viewed from an ethical standpoint. For St. Paul introduces this, the most important of his doctrinal

passages in the matter of Christology, to teach a lesson in morals. So we must not argue *a priori*, or from a hard-and-fast materialism, or with the logic of metaphysical dogmatism. No; the argument must be laid on ethical lines, and it is impossible for us to determine exactly the limit of self-sacrifice to which a God, whose very name is love, could humble Himself. We must not argue *a priori* from the nature of God, but from the nature of love. If human love has scarcely a limit, it ill becomes us to form our conclusions on the *κένωσις*, not from what we think the love of God capable of doing, but from what we in our ignorance imagine it is right or seemly that the majesty of God should suffer.

Viewing matters in this light, it will be well, first of all, to examine difficulties of a verbal and incidental nature in the passage from which the theory takes its name before considering the question of the *κένωσις* proper. The first question which presents itself is that of the mutual relation and meaning of the words *μορφῇ*, *ὁμοιώματι*, and *σχήματι*. *Σχῆμα* denotes originally the shape or outward appearance of a thing, and thus soon got the meaning of an external and adventitious accretion. Thus it might mean the clothes, the display attending anything—then even a semblance or pretence. On the other hand, *μορφή* never has the meaning of anything adventitious. Not exactly equivalent to *οὐσία*, the absolute essence of anything, nor to *φύσις*, the nature intrinsic and extrinsic, yet neither *οὐσία* nor *φύσις* could be said to exist without *μορφή*, and vice versa. Thus, then, the distinction is, and it always holds good in practice, that *σχῆμα* may only imply the external accidents, while *μορφή* must necessitate the presence of the essential attributes. *Μορφή* comprises all those qualities which convince us of the presence of a thing. Thus, then, the phrase *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων* implies Christ's pre-existence as God, possessed of all the essential attributes of God *ab origine*. *Μορφὴν δούλου λαβών* implies the taking of the essential nature of man, the two phrases combining in the words very God and very man. We must note, too, the contrast between the eternal state of God and the assumed nature of man. *ὑπάρχων*,

*εἶναι* are used of the former, words denoting continued being ; *λαβών γενόμενος εὐρεθείς* of the latter, words denoting change.

The *μορφήν δούλου* implies the essential attributes of a servant—the life of creaturely dependence and service as contrasted with the glory of the Divine Son. *Ὁμοίωμα*, again, is a word whose meaning is somewhat difficult of adjustment to *μορφή* and *σχῆμα* ; it lies between them, perhaps shading off the rather towards *μορφή* than to *σχῆμα*. The phrase brings out Christ's representative humanity in relation to other men. He is one of themselves. It certainly does not imply any docetic view of Christ's manhood—in fact, it rather excludes it. *Σχήματι εὐρεθείς ὡς ἄνθρωπος* tells us that Jesus passed through the ordinary stages of human development. His life externally was that of a man. His life was such that his fellow-men could not fail to observe that He was a man. And yet, this *σχῆμα* was only a transitory state, only one stage in His human development. Thus, to quote Bishop Lightfoot, the three clauses imply respectively the true Divine nature of our Lord, the true human nature, and the externals of human nature.

Then arises the question—How are we to translate the phrase *οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο* ? We have two distinct interpretations : one, that which Bishop Lightfoot holds, followed by the Revised Version—viz., “did not regard it as a prize, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards” ; the other, that of the Authorized Version, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Which are we to choose ? If the former, we must consider it of the preincarnate Christ ; if the latter, of the incarnate Son of God. The Bishop supports his view very ably, but with scarcely that convincing power which usually accompanies his argument. He adduces many instances (of *ἄρπαγμα ἡγεῖσθαι*) with the sense of his interpretation, but *ἄρπαγμα* is not *ἄρπαγμός*, and we must seek a cause for St. Paul's grammatical error, if error it is. The Bishop does not think this necessary ; but if any man was accurate in expression, St. Paul was. His very distinction between *μορφή* and *σχῆμα* in the present passage shows us of how subtle an intellect in such matters he was.

Again, the substitution of the meaning of *ἄρπαγμα* for that of *ἀρπαγμός* seems to involve us in a theological misstatement. If he did not deem it an *ἄρπαγμα*, surely we are led to suppose he relinquished it. What? *τὸ ἴσα εἶναι θεῶν*. But this is surely equivalent to the *μορφὴ θεῶν*. Were the essential attributes of God surrendered? Surely not. The supporters of the view get out of the difficulty by explaining, He remained equal in nature and essence with God, but ceased for a season to be equal in state. Thirdly, we have the difficulty that this consideration must have been that of the preincarnate Son. But we are bidden to follow the example of the human Christ. Christ Jesus is the earthly name, and it is Christ Jesus *ὃς ἠγήσατο*. Therefore, it seems most natural to refer the phrase to the period of His manhood, and, if referred to this period, the expression thus interpreted is not strictly applicable. Let us examine the exact meaning of the word and see if that applies more naturally; for if it apply only equally so, surely it should carry the day. The termination *μος* implies an act of, conveys an active sense. Thus *ἀρπαγμός*, an act of grasping—or, more loosely, “robbery.” True, words ending in *μος* sometimes have a passive sense (*e.g.*, *χρησμός*, *θεσμός*), yet the usual meaning is the active one. Applying this to the present passage, we paraphrase—He thought not the being equal to God—the equality which He so often asserted and claimed in, *e.g.*, His acceptance of worship and the authority of His teaching—an act of grasping. He showed by word and deed that He thought it no presumption, not seizing what was not His by right, to act as God, but at the same time He laid aside his rightful position (*ἐκένωσεν εἰς αὐτὸν*). The naturalness of this interpretation, coupled with the doubts as to the other, makes us wonder on what grounds our Revisers ventured to make the change.

So far, in a manner, the discussion has been of a preliminary nature, but not entirely so, for it has brought us to the position that St. Paul claims for our Lord in this passage the title “very God and very man.” But now comes the question of the correlation of these two natures, and that is the true question of the

*κένωσις*. What are the limitations which God imposes upon Himself in the Incarnation? The question is practically a modern one, for the older theologians thought, and rightly enough, that the self-limitation of the Divine being must necessarily be a mystery of which no true conception could be formed from any first principles of human reasoning. They avoided the question altogether, or dilated so vaguely upon it that it is difficult to understand their view. The controversy is of so recent date that Lightfoot, writing in 1868, gives us but a single line of comment on it—"stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty." Such a comment implies an external act; but *κενῶω* an internal one—emptying, not stripping. The Authorized Version also, in translating the word, gives it, entirely without warrant, an external meaning—"made Himself of no reputation," an absolute mistranslation of the word. The reason of all this was the feeling that any real *κένωσις* was impossible, as contrary to the nature of God. But it is forgotten that God is love, and self-limitation, if viewed morally, does not contradict the essence of absolute love, and is akin to that which is best in man—self-determining will and self-sacrificing love. Moreover, the Incarnation is not the first nor only self-limitation. In creation God voluntarily limited Himself and forewent part of His absolute prerogative when He admitted created beings to a state of relative independence. In the Incarnation He extends that first limitation, purposing to aid mankind by sympathy from within rather than by power from without. In the Incarnation the Son of God deliberately foregoes the natural mode of Divine existence in order to undergo a really human development. How is this state of self-emptying or, to use the technical word, exinanition to be understood? A Divine being really assumes manhood, lives through its every stage, experiences its different states as His own, exercises a human will and human mental powers, suffers human trials, exalts without extinguishing real human faculties. In brief, God acts in the Incarnation<sup>1</sup> under

<sup>1</sup> I am practically quoting Professor Ottley, to whose helpful words, both here and elsewhere in this paper, I owe very much.

the conditions of humanity, just as, since the Ascension, man acts under the conditions of Godhead. Of His Divine state our Lord emptied Himself by a voluntary act, *non*—and here St. Augustine lays down an axiom in kenotic discussion which can never be too strongly emphasized—*non amittens quod erat, sed accipiens quod non erat*. This *κένωσις*, then, is real: He emptied Himself, He became poor. The tendency of theologians, from the third to the eighteenth century, has been to depreciate its reality; they have taken a docetic view—*i.e.*, they have made it a *κένωσις* of appearance, not of reality. Thus, arguing *a priori* from Godhead, Cyril ventures to use the word “pretend” of our Lord’s growth in knowledge, a point which we must discuss ere long. But if it be real—and we claim that it is—there must needs be some quiescence of the Divine nature. St. Irenæus explains this, “the Logos lying at rest”; St. Hilary, “the λόγος tempers himself”; St. Ambrose, “He withdrew His Divine power from His working.” The Lutherans taught that to Christ as man belonged the possession, but not the use, of Divine attributes. But this exinanition is not merely a physical and external one. It is true that Jesus lays aside the Divine state for a season, but this is a natural effect, and concomitant of the *κένωσις* proper, not the exinanition itself; for that—and no apology need be made for the reiteration of this fact, for it is of vital importance, and can never be too strongly insisted upon—that must be viewed ethically. The outward and physical *κένωσις* is maintained by a continuous act of will, a voluntary perseverance in not asserting that equality with God which our Lord clearly recognized was His. Every factor in His human nature, every weakness which in the eyes of some has appeared to be degrading to the Divinity of Christ, every limitation which the assumption of human nature entailed, was no mere matter of physical necessity, but rather the triumph of an invincible will, the will of a God of infinite love, of infinite condescension. Such is the view—fragmentary and inadequate, it is true, but still, I hope, fairly and justly stated—which St. Paul appears to take in this passage of this great fact of Divine

revelation to man. St. Paul refers all the outward and physical manifestations of *κένωσις* to the mental attitude of our Lord. "Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus." We have striven to do likewise, and now it only remains, from the same standpoint, to examine two great questions which are pertinent to the correlation of the two natures of Jesus Christ—namely, the question of His relation to evil and that of His moral and mental development.

*(To be continued.)*



### The Church and Recreation.

BY THE REV. A. B. G. LILLINGSTON, M.A.

THIS is a very significant title, and will not meet with universal approval. In some minds the words will clash and produce a hopeless discord. Nevertheless, I am persuaded that it is a wise connection, and that the consideration of "recreation" is the right and the duty of the Church. The work of the Church is the salvation of man—of the whole man; and anything which can make our Church members good workmen, and can minister to the success of our task, is not only worthy of our interest, but ought to have it.

Let me treat the subject from two standpoints :

1. I would say that it behoves Christians for their own sake to give due attention to the question of "recreation," and there are two main reasons for such a contention: That the body, with its appetites and evil passions, may be kept in subjection, and may in no wise gain the mastery over us. I have the greatest possible sympathy with those who, in hours and efforts of devotion, are ever seeking the recreation of the soul, and are making strenuous exertions to become more and more Spirit-filled. But it is fatal to this for us to forget what a potent factor the body is, and what a heavy penalty we pay if we ill-treat it or ignore it. The awakened Christian is one who