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UNIQUENESS OF THE GOD-MAN

#172

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THAT HOLY THING

Alexander Whyte

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”—Luke 1:35

The very grammar of this great text arrests us; **that holy thing**. If it were not for our so deadening familiarity with the surface sound of this great text, we could not fail to be arrested, and indeed startled, with this so singular and so unexpected expression; that holy thing. For that expression, when we take time to think of it, is never applied to any other child in all the world but Mary’s Child. And it is a very startling, and indeed staggering expression to be found applied to her Child, to hear Him called that thing, even when it is added, that holy thing. But the evangelist’s so startling expression has the seal of the Holy Ghost set upon it. For God hath revealed these things to us by His Spirit; because the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

Human nature in all its stages and in all its conditions is a very wonderful thing. Human nature is by far the most wonderful thing in our whole universe of things. At the same time, human nature is but a thing, till a far more wonderful thing than itself is incorporated and identified with it. But as soon as the thing we call human nature is taken up into himself by a person, that human nature is no longer a mere thing; it has now become part and parcel of a man; it has now become a human being, and is henceforth to be reckoned up as one of the children of men. **And, in like manner, when**

‘that holy thing,’ which was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was taken up into Himself by the Son of God, that holy thing henceforward and for ever becomes and abides part and parcel of the Son of God. For, Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect? The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the Eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever. But, how did Christ, being the Son of God, become man? Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to Himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin. Now, it was that true body and that reasonable soul, taken together, which constituted that holy thing of which the angel here speaks in such salutation and in such congratulation to the mother of our Lord.

That also was all to be fulfilled which Simeon pronounced over Mary and her Child in the Temple—Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also. But that was long afterwards. That was more than thirty years afterwards. Whereas, what the angel promised began to be fulfilled immediately. For never, before nor since, had any mother but Mary such a holy thing laid in her lap. Never had any other mother such a holy child running around her knee. And a holy child is always a happy child. And wherever a holy child is found happiness always dwells there. Always, on earth and in heaven, the more holiness the more happiness, till there was one humble home in Nazareth where heaven came down to earth; at any rate as long as that holy child was the only child in that house. For Mary’s firstborn Son never caused His happy mother neither a single sigh nor a single tear. He caused her nothing but an ever-increasing wonder and worship and praise. Mary never needed to teach her firstborn Son to sing this sad psalm of our sons,

*When deep within our swelling hearts
The thoughts of pride and anger rise;
When bitter words are on our tongues,
And tears of passion in our eyes.*

Joseph and Mary had often to teach all that to James, and to Joses, and to Simon, and to Judas, and to all their sisters, but never to their eldest brother. Mary, with her firstborn Son, was such a mother as God had intended every mother to be from Eve to the end of the world. But after Cain and Abel, and all such unholy things began to be born of women, every mother’s best happiness fled back to heaven, where it awaits every mother like Mary, and every child like Jesus. Blessed, said all Mary’s neighbours and kinsfolk as often as they again visited her house and laid their hands on her Child’s head - Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!

‘Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, A body hast Thou prepared for me.’ A body, He means, perfectly prepared, perfectly adapted, and in every possible way exactly fitted, for the work that was given Him to do. And accordingly the deep old divines were wont to call our Lord’s human nature the *instrumentum Deitatis*; that is to say, the engine and the instrument of His Godhead. And entering imaginatively and realistically into their own deep doctrine, they said also that it was not every true body and reasonable soul that could have been made a fit instrument for the great work the Son of God came to earth to do as our Redeemer. Some of the bolder school-men went so far as to say that no other woman in all Israel, but Mary, could have supplied our Lord with the proper substance that He needed; no other mind and heart but Mary’s could have been the source and the mould of His human mind and His human heart. ‘Hers,’ they sang, ‘was the face that unto Christ had most resemblance.’ Be all that as it may; given the substance of which the evangelist writes with such chaste reserve, the Holy Ghost then took that part of Mary’s substance and made it into that holy thing of which the angel here speaks with such comfort and such encouragement. It will help you to see how well fitted our Lord was with His body and with His mind and with His heart, if you will but listen to Paul’s absolute agony over the body and the mind and the heart that his mother had prepared for him. Had Paul’s mother brought forth another such holy thing as Mary brought forth; had the Holy Ghost prepared another such body and soul for Paul as He prepared for Paul’s Master; had an instrument been placed in Paul’s hands at all like the *instrumentum Deltatis* that was placed in our Lord’s hands—what a holy life and what a happy life Paul would have lived! What a finish and what a perfection he would have given to his apostolic work! And what radiant Epistles, and without a cloud on them, he would have written and bequeathed to us! But as it was Paul was hampered, and hindered, and humiliated, and driven desperate, by that unholy thing he had inherited from his mother; by that body of death from the burden and the pollution of which he never found a single day’s deliverance in his whole life. And indeed the whole situation of things with Paul and with us all was such; so impossible was it for God to get His work done by such an instrument as that was which Paul was compelled to work, that God had to take another way with His servants and with their work altogether. A new and better way, which is best described in Paul’s own words, as thus—To him that worketh not; to him that cannot be expected to work with such an instrument; but that believeth on Him that both could work and did work; to him his faith in Jesus Christ and in His work is counted for righteousness.

But happy as we are to see our surety and substitute, Jesus Christ, finishing His work for us with the holy and strong instrument which the Holy Ghost had prepared for Him; and saddening as it is to see the utter wretchedness of Paul as he

battles on with his body of death; all that will not impress us either with the happiness of Jesus Christ, or with the wretchedness of Paul, like a share within ourselves of Paul's agonizing experience with his vile body, and his still viler soul so sold under sin. For we have all been born of our mothers into Paul's very same estate of sin and misery. As to that there is no difference. 'Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.' As Calvin has it—'After the heavenly image in man was effaced, not only did he lose his original wisdom, virtue, truth, justice and holiness, but he became involved in those dire pests of blindness, impotence, vanity, impurity, and unrighteousness; and worst of all, he involved his posterity also in his ruin; he plunged them into the same estate of wretchedness.' And as Newman has it—'Adam, before his fall, felt, we may suppose, love, fear, hope, joy, dislike, just as we now do; but, then, he only felt these things when he ought and as he ought. But at the fall this beautiful order and peace was broken up; the same passions remained, but their use and their action were changed. They rushed into extremes, sometimes excessive, sometimes the reverse. Indignation was corrupted into wrath, self-love into selfishness, self-respect became pride, and emulation jealousy and envy. Thus man's soul became a chaos, and needed a new creation.' And again, 'There is a knowledge and a love of human nature, which saints possess, which follows on an intimate experience of what human nature actually is in its irritability and sensitiveness, its despondency and changeableness, its sickliness, its blindness, and its impotence. Saints have this gift, and it is from above; though it be gained, humanly speaking, either of what they themselves were before their conversion, or from a keen apprehension and appreciation of their own natural feelings and tendencies.'

This so arresting text rewards us with a thousand thoughts of the deepest and the most profitable import. **For instance this thought, this truth,—that in the matter of holiness, in the matter of His body and His soul, our Lord began where we shall end. He entered at once on a birth-holiness that we shall not enter on till the day of our death.** The noble-minded Stoics called the day of their death their true birthday, and so it is. We are born again, long indeed before the day of our death, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. We shall not enter on our full holiness till we shall see Him as He is. 'Salute Adronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, who also were in Christ before me,' says the apostle. And we salute Jesus Christ Himself, because He was in the fulness of His holiness so long before us; even from the day of His birth. He entered into His full liberty on the same day on which we entered into our great bondage. For He began by being fully sanctified. But we by His grace shall at last end where He began. And this is the true key to the whole mystery of our present life; this is the proper and complete explanation of that awful mystery. That, like Paul, we are bearing about, meantime, a body of sin and death, and are in that body waiting for the adoption. For I reckon that the sufferings of our sanctification are not worthy to be compared with the holiness which shall be revealed in us. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Old Andrew Gray of Glasgow, an old time divine but a young man, in his masterly Spiritual Warfare, after the rich manner of his day draws out no fewer than seven advantages to his people out of their estate of a too late, and a too partial, holiness. Their holiness is begun indeed, he tells them, in this life, but at best, only begun. Since sin is what it is, he says, a true holiness begun, but dwelling in the same man's heart with such an inward world of indwelling sin, that brings home to such a man, as nothing else can, what sin really is. And anything that teaches us what sin really is, is half our salvation. And even half our salvation is surely a great advantage. It is expedient and advantageous for us not to taste only, but to drink deep into, the unspeakable wretchedness and misery of sin. And that could not have been taught us in any other way than by a partial, an ever-lingering, and a never-finished sanctification. And then a sanctification like that compels us to give Jesus Christ and His whole salvation, imputed righteousness and all, His proper place in our minds and in our hearts. And that is an advantage to Him and to us, beyond all blessing, and beyond all praise.

The angel described Mary's child to her as 'that holy thing.' Now, I will not pain you and offend you by calling your child the opposite of that. For, does not the apostle himself say that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband, and that, therefore, their children are holy? But I will say this, that if you would have your child not ceremonially and conventionally holy only, but personally and really and everlastingly holy, and if you yourself know what holiness is, you must set before yourself for your child no less a holiness than that of the Holy Child Himself. And as often as you see the heart-breaking proofs that your child has not been born as Mary's Child was born: when you cannot but see and feel in your innermost heart your child's fretfulness, and quarrelsomeness, and rudeness, and sulkiness, and impudence, and pride, and anger, and an unbroken will, take him apart and, like Thomas Halyburton's mother, pray both with him and for him. Pray importunately that your child also may be made of God, both to Him and to you, a twin-brother of the Holy Child Jesus. Pray without ceasing that your child may

be sanctified with the self-same sanctification as Mary's Child. And if that may not be perfected all at once, as His sanctification was, pray that at least it may be begun as long as you are here to see it and to have a hand in it. Take your child apart, as long as he is docile and will go with you, and ask on your knees, and in his hearing, something like this— 'O God, the God and Father of the Holy Child Jesus, make this, my dear child, a child of God with Him. And after I am gone make him and keep him a man of God like Him.' Take no rest yourself, and give God no rest, till you see a seed of God not only sown in your child's heart, but till you see him, as Mary saw her first-born Son, subject to her in everything in her house at home, and growing up every day in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man.

Taken from Alexander Whyte's book *Jesus Christ our Lord*.

THE NATURE OF THE REDEEMER'S HUMANITY

J.C. Philpot

To glorify his dear Son has from all eternity been the purpose of the Father; and both in the plan and in the execution has he manifested the depths of his infinite wisdom, power and love. That the eternal Son of God should take into intimate and indissoluble union with his divine Person the flesh and the blood of the children, that in that nature he might manifest the riches of the sovereign grace, the heights and depths of the everlasting love, and the fulness of the uncreated glory of a Triune Jehovah, has been from all eternity the determinate counsel and purpose of the great and glorious self-existent I AM; and all creation, all providence, and all events and circumstances of time and space were originally and definitely arranged to carry into execution this original plan. Creation, with all its wonders of power and wisdom, was not necessary either for the happiness or the glory of the self-existent Jehovah. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had, from all eternity, that holy, intimate union and intercommunion with each other, that mutual love and ineffable fellowship of three distinct Persons and yet but one God, which creation could neither augment nor impair. Time, with all its incidents, is but a moment; space, with all its dimensions, is but a speck, compared with the existence of a God who inhabiteth eternity, and therefore filleth all time and all space. That a self-existent God should be amply sufficient for his own happiness and his own glory is a truth as self-evident to a believing heart as the very existence of God himself. But it pleased the sacred Triune Jehovah that there should be an external manifestation of his heavenly glory; and this was to be accomplished by the incarnation of the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity. The Father, therefore, prepared him a body, which in due time he should assume. Thus addressing his heavenly Father, he says, "A body hast thou prepared me" (Heb 10:5). **That he should take this prepared body into union with his divine Person was the eternal will of God; so that when the appointed time arrived for the decree to be accomplished, the eternal Son could and did come forth from the bosom of the Father with these words upon his lips, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me (the volume of God's eternal decrees), to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7).**

Now, the word of truth declares that "God manifest in the flesh" is "the great mystery of godliness" (1 Tim 3:16). Therefore, without an experimental knowledge of this great mystery there can be no godliness in heart, lip, or life; and if no godliness no salvation, unless we mean to open the gates of bliss to the ungodly, who "shall not stand in the judgment" (Psa 1:5); and to count for nothing that "ungodliness" against which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (Rom 1:18). It is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone "maketh free;" and it is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone sanctifies as well as liberates: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). How important, then, how all essential to know the truth for ourselves, in our own hearts and consciences, by divine teaching and divine testimony, that, set free from bondage, darkness, ignorance, and error, liberated into the blessed enjoyment of the love and mercy of God, and sanctified by his Spirit and grace, we may walk before him in the light of his countenance. And as in the Person of the incarnate Son of God "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," how blessed is it to look up by faith to him at the right hand of the Father, and to receive out of his fulness those communications of wisdom and grace which not only enlighten us with the light of the living, but cause us to be partakers of his holiness, and thus make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

As thus taught and blessed, we desire to approach this solemn subject, and to look with the eyes of an enlightened understanding and of a believing heart at the mystery of an incarnate God. And if Moses at God's command put off his

shoes from off his feet, when he looked at the burning bush, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground (Exo 3:5), much more should we, when we look on the mystery of God made manifest in the flesh, of which the burning bush was but a type, put off the shoes of carnal reason from off our feet.

The sacred humanity of the blessed Lord consists of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, taken at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operation and influence of the Holy Ghost. This is very evident from the language of the angel to the Virgin: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

1. *The first thing to be borne in mind is, that it was a real and substantial human nature, consisting of a real human body and a real human soul, both of which were assumed at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin.* It was necessary that the same nature should be taken which had sinned, or there could have been no redemption or reconciliation of that nature, or of those that wore that nature. Thus the apostle argues, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16); implying, that if fallen angels had to be redeemed and reconciled, the Son of God must have taken angelic nature; but as man had to be redeemed, he assumed human nature. It was not, then, a shadowy form which the Son of God assumed in the womb of the Virgin, as he had appeared in human shape before his incarnation to Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, but a real human nature, as real, as substantial as our own.

Thus the Son of God “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7); “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14); “God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3); “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb 2:14). These Scripture testimonies abundantly show that the Son of God assumed a real human nature, but not a fallen, peccable, mortal nature. He was “made flesh,” therefore real flesh; “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” therefore not in the reality of sinful flesh. He took flesh of the Virgin, or he could not have been the promised “seed of the woman,” which was to bruise the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15); or of “the seed of Abraham,” to which the promise was especially made (Gal 3:16), and from whom the Virgin Mary was lineally descended. And this nature he so assumed, or to use a scriptural expression, so “took hold of” (Heb 2:16, marg.), that it became his own nature as much as his divine nature is his own. It was not assumed, as a garment, to be laid aside after redemption’s work was done, but was taken into indissoluble union with his divine Person. Nor did his death on the cross dissolve this union, for though body and soul were parted, and his immortal, incorruptible body lay in the grave, his soul was in paradise, in indissoluble union with his Deity. Thus, as each of us is really and truly man, by human nature being so personally and individually appropriated by us as our own subsistence, that it is as much ours as if there were no other partaker of it on earth but ourselves; so the Son of God, by assuming that nature which is common to all men, (therefore called “the flesh and blood of the children,”) made it his own as much as ours is our own nature. He is, therefore, really and truly “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).

2. *The next thing to be believed in and held fast is, that this humanity was not a person, but a nature.* This point may not seem at the first glance of deep and signal importance; but as all God’s ways and works are stamped with infinite wisdom, it will be seen, on deeper reflection, that it involves matters of the greatest magnitude—of the richest grace and the highest glory. For look at the consequences which would necessarily follow, were the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord a person and not a nature. Were it a person, the Lord Jesus Christ would be two Persons, one Person as God, and another Person as man, and thus would be two distinct individuals. But being a nature, which had of itself no distinct individuality, but was assumed at the very instant of its conception into union with his divine Person, the Lord Jesus is still but one Person, though he possesses two distinct natures. The angel, therefore called it “that holy thing” i.e., that holy nature, that holy flesh, that holy substance—a “thing,” because it had a real substance, “holy,” because not begotten by natural generation, but sanctified in the moment of conception by the Holy Ghost, so as to be intrinsically holy, impeccable, immortal—capable of dying, but not tainted with the seeds of sickness or death. It was not a body like ours, “shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin” (Psa 51:5); but was begotten by a divine and supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, and was therefore “holy,” not relatively, and partially, as we, but really, thoroughly, and intrinsically holy; “harmless,” or as the word might be rendered, “free from all ill;” “undefiled” with any taint of corruption in body or soul, original or actual, in any seed, inclination, desire, feeling, or movement of or toward it; “separate from sinners” in its conception and formation, in every thought, word, or deed, so that it was as separate from sin, and sin as separate from it, when on earth as it is now in the presence of God; “and made higher than the heavens,” by the exaltation of that human nature to the throne of glory; higher than the visible heavens, for what is the glory of sun, moon, or stars to the glory of the sacred humanity of Christ in the courts of heaven? and higher too than the invisible heavens, for in his human nature

as the God-man, he is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Heb 7:26; Eph 1:20-22).

Among the heresies and errors which pestered the early church, was the Nestorian heresy, which asserted that Christ's human nature was a Person, and thus made two persons in the Lord, and the Eutychian, which declared that there was but one nature, the humanity of Christ being absorbed into his divinity. Against both these errors the Athanasian Creed, that sound and admirable compendium and bulwark of divine truth, draws its two-edged sword: "Who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the Manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." The Nestorian heresy is cut to pieces by the declaration that "he is not two," (i.e. persons,) but one Christ; and the Eutychian by the words, "one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person."

But consider the blessings that are connected with and flow out of this heavenly truth. The glory and beauty of this mystery, it is true, can only be seen and known by faith; for faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," alone gives to these divine realities a substantial existence in the believer's heart. But looking by faith into this heavenly mystery, we may see in the two points we have thus far touched upon signal beauty and blessedness. The human nature which the blessed Lord assumed into union with his divine Person hungered, thirsted, was weary, wept, sighed, groaned, sweat drops of blood, agonised in the garden and on the cross, was tried, deserted, tempted, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and, by a voluntary act, died. Had it not been a real human nature, the sufferings and sorrows of the holy soul, the pains and agonies of the sacred body, the obedience rendered, the blood shed, the sacrifice offered, the life laid down would not have been real, at least not really endured and offered in that very nature which was to be redeemed and reconciled. This is beautifully unfolded by the apostle: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb 2:17, 18).

But again, were the human nature of our blessed Lord a Person, its acts would have been personally distinct, and the virtue and validity of Deity would not have been stamped upon them. We may thus illustrate the distinction between a nature and a person. Man and wife are mystically by marriage one flesh, but they still remain two distinct persons. Their acts, therefore, as persons, are individually distinct, and each is morally and really responsible for his or her individual actions. But were they so incorporated, like a grafted tree, as to become two natures and only one person, then the acts of the weaker nature, assuming for the moment that the female is the weaker, being the acts of one and the same person, would be stamped with all the strength and power of the stronger. Thus it is with the two natures of our blessed Lord. The human nature, though essentially and intrinsically holy, impeccable, incorruptible, and immortal, being the weaker and inferior nature, yet becomes stamped with all the worth, virtue and validity of the divine nature, because though there are two natures there is but one Person. Thus the grand, vital truth of the two natures yet but one Person of the glorious Immanuel is no mere dry or abstract doctrine, no speculative theory spun out of the brains of ancient fathers and learned theologians, but a blessed revelation of the wisdom and grace of God.

3. *But much beauty and heavenly glory are wrapped up in the way in which that humanity was assumed.* In the forming of this holy humanity we see the three Persons of the blessed Trinity engaged. The Father prepared the body, the Son assumed it, the Holy Ghost formed it. By the preparation of the body, as the act of the Father, we understand not its actual forming or framing in the womb of the Virgin, but its eternal designation, its preparation in the council, wisdom, and love of the Father. "A body hast thou prepared me" (Heb 10:5); margin, "thou hast fitted me," literally, "put together joint by joint." To design, to contrive, to put together in his own eternal mind, not merely the framework of the Lord's body and the constitution of his soul, but so to prepare it that, conceived in the womb of the sinful Virgin, it should not partake of her sin, of her fall, of her sickness, of her corruptibility—this was a greater wonder to appear in heaven than what holy John saw in vision (Rev 12:1).

This body, thus prepared, the eternal Son of God assumed. By its assumption by the Son we understand not a creating act, as if the Son of God himself created the body to be assumed, but that ineffable act of condescension and grace whereby he took at one and the same instant of its formation, that sacred humanity, consisting of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, into union with his divine Person. We say "at one and the same instant," for we reject with abhorrence that vain figment, that idle tale, that pestilential and dangerous error of the pre-existence of the human soul of the Lord Jesus. He was made in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted (Heb 2:17; 4:15); and unless it can be proved that our soul was created before our body, and pre-existed ages before it, it cannot be shown that the human soul of the Lord Jesus had any such pre-existence.

This human nature, prepared by God the Father, and assumed by God the Son, God the Holy Ghost formed. By the forming of that sacred humanity by the Holy Ghost we understand that act of miraculous power whereby he overshadowed the Virgin by his operations and influence, and created, of her flesh, a holy human nature, which he sanctified and filled with grace in the very instant of its conception.

4. *But this leads us onward to a fourth point, not less full of truth and blessedness.* And we may put it in the form of a solemn question. How was it possible that in a nature so prepared, so assumed, and created, there could be any taint of sin, corruption, disease, or mortality? The Father contemplated that human nature which he had prepared for his dear Son from all eternity with ineffable complacency and delight. Could he who made man in his original creation so pure and innocent, creating him in his own image, after his own likeness, have prepared for his own Son, his only begotten, eternal Son, a body fallen, tainted, and corruptible, or even capable of corruption and decay? *Could the Son, who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," assume into union with his eternal Godhead any other but a pure, holy, immortal, and incorruptible nature?* It was not a body to decay with sickness and die of disease, and then be thrust away out of sight as the food of corruption, but taken into intimate union with Deity itself, as its immortal and incorruptible companion. Could the Holy Ghost form anything but a holy nature for the Son of God to assume into a union so close, intimate, and indissoluble?

But it may not be unprofitable to examine these points of divine truth a little more closely.

I. *And first, as to the intrinsic holiness and purity of the Lord's human nature. It was essentially a nature impeccable, that is, not only not tainted with sin, but absolutely incapable of being so tainted.* As we read of its being "impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18), so we may say of the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, it was impossible it could sin. The testimonies in the word of truth are most full and clear to the impeccability of the human nature of the blessed Lord. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21). He knew no sin; that is, in his own Person, in its taint or defilement or in any approach thereunto. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). Satan, the prince of this world, came to tempt and to assail him; but he had nothing in him, as he has in us; that is, no internal material on which to work. If we may use such a figure, he had no ground within the walls on which to plant his infernal artillery. He might assault the blessed Lord from without, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," which had neither birth nor being, root nor stem, nor the possibility of any, in the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer.

The late Dr. Cole, in a work published many years ago, has exposed, in the most clear and forcible manner, the awful blasphemies of the once popular Edward Irving on this point. Well may we call them "awful blasphemies," for Dr. Cole declares that he heard with his own ears this poor, miserable, ranting orator, for he called his own sermons "Orations," term the holy humanity of the blessed Lord, "that sinful substance." The sacred beauty, the ineffable blessedness of that holy humanity mainly consisted in the Lord's being "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19), as was typified by the paschal lamb (Exo 12:5), and indeed by every other ceremonial sacrifice (Lev 22:19-24; Deu 15:21). We must never lose sight of the peculiar nature of the blessed Lord's humanity. The nature of Adam was peccable, that is, capable of sinning, because, though created pure, it was not generated by any supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. It was a pure created nature, but not a holy begotten nature. The two things are essentially distinct. Besides which, the humanity of Adam was a person, and therefore could fall; but the humanity of Jesus is a nature taken into union with his divine Person, and therefore could no more sin or fall away from Godhead than his Godhead could sin or fall off from his manhood.

II. *It was therefore incorruptible.* The body of the blessed Redeemer lay three days and nights, according to the Jewish mode of calculation, in the sepulchre, but it knew no corruption. As the apostle expressly declares, "He whom God raised again saw no corruption" (Acts 13:37). The sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus had no seeds in it of decay. Though a real body, like our own, though it ate and drank and slept as we do, not being under the original curse, nor involved in the Adam fall, it was not subject to sickness or corruption, as our body is. The voluntary death of the blessed Lord severed for a while body and soul; but the body was no more tainted with corruption in the sepulchre than the soul was tainted with sin in paradise.

III. *This sacred humanity of the adorable Lord was therefore essentially immortal.* **The body of the Lord was capable of death;** indeed, as dying was the main part of every sacrifice, it was taken that it might die. It did not die from inherent necessity, as our bodies die, which are essentially mortal, because involved in Adam's transgression; **but it died by a voluntary act.** This is most plain from the Lord's own words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17, 18). It was not the pain of the

cross, the nails driven through the hands and feet, the exhaustion of nature, or the agony of soul that killed, so to speak, the Lord Jesus. When he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do, so that he could say, “it is finished,” “he bowed his head”—the head did not decline of itself, weighed down by death, but he himself, full of life and immortality, bowed it; and then, by a voluntary act, “gave up the ghost,” or breathed out his life.

We conclude with an extract from Dr. Cole’s book:

“The awful and inevitable consequences of applying this term ‘mortal’ to the body of Christ.

“If the body of Christ was ‘mortal’ in the unalterable meaning of that term, his death, as we have already hinted. was not voluntary but of necessity. He did not die of his own free will, but died, because, being a personal sinner, (tremble my soul at the thought!) he could not save himself from death! He had no power to ‘lay down’ his life, but was compelled to yield it up, because he had forfeited it by his own sins! He did not ‘give his life a ransom for many; but the just judgments of God took it from him for his own transgressions; ‘The soul that sinneth it shall die’ (Eze 18:4).

“But is this the truth as it is in Jesus Christ” Is this the doctrine concerning the adorable Person of the Son of God that is revealed in the Word “Is this the instruction which the Holy and Blessed Spirit seals upon the heart of the redeemed” No. no! The scriptures declare, and those that have been brought to experience the benefits of the death of Christ know and believe that his death was not of necessity, but a free and voluntary gift. How plainly does he declare, and how expressively describe this himself: ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again’ (John 10:11, 18). His sacrifice is everywhere called ‘a sacrifice of himself, a voluntary gift.’ ‘He offered up himself (Heb 7:27); ‘By the sacrifice of himself’ (Heb 9:26); ‘Who gave himself a ransom’ (1 Tim 2:6). And so universally. But all these scriptures are flatly contradicted, all this cloud of testimonies is utterly nullified, if the body of Christ was ‘mortal.’

Taken from J.C. Philpot’s book *Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer*.

THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD

W. E. Best

The subject of Christ’s Eternal Sonship yields in importance to none. If our thoughts on this subject are not God’s thoughts, we will not only dishonor the Lord but will bring damnation to our own souls. The thoughts of God expressed in the Scriptures must be understood in their obvious significance.

Matthew records the first reference in the New Testament of the title “Son of God” (Matt. 16:16). Was Peter’s confession due to the fact that Christ’s mother was a virgin? This confession could be attested by “flesh and blood” on the recognized principles of evidence, but the Lord declared that His Eternal Sonship was a revelation from heaven “...for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt 16:17). “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15).

We recognize that, in some sense, God may be described by the recognized principles of evidence (Ps. 19:1-11; Rom. 1:19,20), but the elect will not rest in descriptions of God. They demand a revelation of Him which must be given by Himself. This is sufficient proof that the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, is a divine person. The revelation is not that He is a Son, or the Son born of a virgin, or the Son raised from the dead, though all these are truths concerning Him; it is a revelation of divine Sonship. God is not known as the Father if the Son in the glory of the Godhead is not acknowledged. “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also”(1 John 2:22,23).

Eternal Fatherhood demands Eternal Sonship. Those who deny the Deity of Christ argue, “If the Father begat the Son, He who was begotten had a beginning of existence. So there was a time when the Son did not exist, therefore, the begotten

is inferior to the begetter.” There is priority in the Godhead but not superiority. If by inferiority is meant inferiority of relation, we admit the position that the begotten is inferior to the begetter. This is what Christ meant when He said, “...my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). The Sender is greater than the Sent; therefore, the word greater has reference to the authority and not character. As Mediator in His state of humiliation, Christ was the Father’s subordinate and servant. If by inferiority is meant inferiority of character, such a notion should be opposed as the greatest heresy ever devised by the depraved heart of man.

Filiation implies not only equality but identity of nature. The begotten must share the nature of his begetter. Where there is no communication of nature, there is no real generation. Our Savior said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). This is in the neuter which refers to one substance not in the masculine which would refer to one person. Thus, the relation of Christ to the Father is an unanswerable argument for Christ’s Deity. Among men the action of the future father is necessary to the production of his off-spring, but this is a consequence of human nature. Among Spiritual Beings, however, paternity and filiation are independent of all human necessity. The Father cannot in any sense exist before the Son in eternal generation. The relation of Father and Son is correlative and simultaneous. It is foolish to think of the eternal generation of the Son of God in terms of the human. The terms Father and Son, as used in the Godhead, imply co-equality in nature and eternity. Christ, therefore, never refers to the Father as His Lord, He says “my Father” (His by eternal generation) and “your Father” (ours by regeneration) in order to make the proper distinction between Deity and humanity.

The original Greek uses two words for son—one refers to dignity of position and the other to relationship by birth. The second is never used with reference to our Lord Jesus in His relationship to the Father. The Greek word translated Son in the expressions “Son of God” and “Son of Man” is not always used to designate the thought of being born of God or born of man, as many false teachers assume. The word often carries the thought of being identified with. The same word is used in the following passages: “sons of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:38); “sons of the bridechamber” (Mark 2:19); “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17); “sons of this world” (Luke 16:8); “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2); “sons of day, of light” (1 Thess. 5:5).

The Son of God is the only Begotten of the Father (John 1:18). This “only begotten Son” is the same person who is designated the “Word” (John 1:1); and of whom it is said, “He was made flesh and dwelt among us”(John 1:14). Those who object to the Deity of Christ say, “If you have been “begotten” then you are not “eternal.” He cannot at the same time be the “eternal Son” and the “begotten Son.” Person begets person and like begets like in human generation, but the Father beget the Son in eternal generation.

There is similarity between begetting and speaking. It can be said that they both bring forth. When we speak, we do so either within ourselves or without to others. Hebrews 1:1-6 portrays the glory of the Son of God in eternity and in time. “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person...” declares His pre-existent and eternal being. “Being made so much better than the angels,...when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world...” affirms His manhood in time. He always had Sonship as God, but by inheritance He obtained it as Man. Thus, He who was eternally with the Father was brought forth in time (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

Only begotten is a term which denotes endearment (John 1:18; 3:16). Isaac was not Abraham’s only begotten (Heb. 11:17), for Ishmael was begotten by him too. Isaac was his darling. Why was Isaac his darling? The reason was he was the only begotten of Abraham by his wife Sarah. His other children were called “sons of concubines” (Gen. 25:6). As Isaac was Abraham’s darling, so Christ is God’s darling. “Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling (Hebrew—my only one) from the lions” (Ps. 35:17). Thus Christ, as the Only Begotten of the Father, was the sole representative of the being and character of the One who sent Him. He is of the same essence with the Father, yet He is a distinct person from the Father. As the inherent splendor of the son cannot exist without the inherent splendor from which it proceeds, so the Inherent Essence of God cannot live without its Manifested Essence, nor the Manifested Essence without the Inherent Essence from whom He came.

The Son of God is the Firstborn Son. Firstborn is used to express the sovereignty, dignity, and prerogative of heirship of Christ’s position among many brethren (Heb. 2:11-17). This term is used twice in the New Testament without referring to Christ (Heb. 11:28; 12:23), and seven times as His title. An examination of these references will reveal a three-fold use in the New Testament: (1) Before all creation (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15)—eternal; (2) Firstborn of Mary (Matt. 1:25; Luke 2:7; Heb. 1:6)—His pre-incarnate and incarnate Person; (3) Firstborn of resurrection (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5)—first to be raised from the dead in resurrection life.

The Son of God is both the Word and Son. These two metaphors supplement and protect each other. To think of Christ merely as the Word might suggest an impersonal faculty in God. On the other hand, to think of Him only as the Son might

limit us to the conception of a created being. When the two terms are combined, there is no room for either an impersonal faculty or a created being. The substance of John 1:1-18 is that He who is the logos was with God and was God. Three great facts are presented in John 1:1; they are: (1) When the Word was—"in the beginning"; (2) Where the Word was—"with God"; and (3) Who the Word was—"God." First, the "Word was in the beginning." The sun, moon, and stars "were made" in the beginning, but the Word "was" in the beginning.

Christ's existence and theirs differ radically. Had John said "before" the beginning, he would have presented eternity under the laws of time. This would have been as serious as to describe the infinite under the laws of the finite—as difficult as trying to measure the waters of the ocean by one drop in the kitchen sink. But John ascends, in spirit, far above time and space to the peaceful calm where God dwells. Second, "The Word was with God." This expression implies that He had an existence distinct from the Father. He was with Him. For example, He that is with me is not me. The Word was at home in the bosom of the Father; therefore, He never felt as an inferior with a superior but as a loving Son with a loving Father (Prov. 8:22-31). God took unspeakable delight in His Word, for in Him He beheld His own express image (Heb. 1:3). Third, "The Word was God." Sonship is, in truth, the great bulwark of the Deity of Christ. From eternity the Son of God sustained to the Father a relationship involving identity of nature. If in the Godhead there is no filiation, neither is there paternity; if there is not a Divine and Eternal Son, neither is there a Divine and Eternal Father. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father..."(1 John 2:23). "...He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23).

The eternity of our election depends on Eternal Sonship (Eph.1:4; 2 Tim 1:9). If He is not eternal, our election is not eternal, for we are elected in Him.

The integrity of our redemption depends on Eternal Sonship, for He is the Lamb that was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

Our eternal preservation depends on Eternal Sonship. He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). Nothing can survive to eternity but that which came from eternity.

Our choice is between inferiority of nature and inferiority of relation. Christians believe that there is subordination in the Trinity, but strongly deny inferiority of nature in the Godhead. To the Christian, there is no alternative but the good confession (1 Tim. 6:13) of an eternal and divine relation between the subsistences of the Trinity. The Father, as God, begets; the Son, as God, is begotten; the Holy Spirit, as God, proceeds. To call God Father and deny that He begets is as absurd as to call Him a sun and deny that He enlightens. Those who believe in peccability choose inferiority of nature rather than inferiority of relation; thus, they become religionists who are without an impeccable Savior.

Taken from W.E. Best's book *The Impeccable Christ*.

THE SON DECLARES THE FATHER

W.E. Best

Jesus Christ claims the incommunicable name—I Am (Ex. 3:14; John 8:58). The name signifies unchangeable essence and everlasting duration. Change is written on everything earthly; Christ is unchangeable (Heb. 13:8), for He is God. The statement, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), has no reference to Christ's coming into existence before Abraham. He never came into being. The Jews understood this to be a claim to Deity, and they took up stones to stone the Chief Corner Stone (Eph. 2:20; John 8:59) for blasphemy. They knew that the title I Am referred to Deity, but they were blinded by their religious traditions to the fact of Christ's Deity. Paul said, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3,4). The unsaved do not know Christ as God, but the saved do. Our Savior claims pre-existence; He unveils the fact of Eternal Being, for there is no mention of His beginning

or ending. Theos, the Greek word for God, is used in reference to Father (John 6:27), Son (Heb. 1:8), and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:4).

The gospel of John has been called the bosom of Christ because it reveals the heart of Christ. Christ came from the heart of God to the heart of man. He said, "I came from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28). As God said to Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Ex. 19:4), so John portrays Christ bearing the elect of God upon the wings of sovereign grace into the presence of the Father Himself. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory..." (John 17:24). John 16:28 gives a perfect outline to the entire gospel of John. The apostle pictures Jesus Christ: (1) Coming from the Father for His incarnation (1:1-18); (2) Coming into the world for our salvation (1:19-11:57); (3) Leaving the world for our sanctification (12-17); and (4) Going to the Father for our glorification (18-21). The first three gospels are a presentation of Jesus Christ; the gospel of John is an interpretation—it proves that Christ is the Eternal Son of God.

The aim of the incarnation was to reveal the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." God had spoken by the prophets in a piece-meal manner. He had a Word to spell; the Word was His own name. Christ coming from the Father, spelled the name out in such absolute perfection as to need no one else to speak. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." (Heb. 1:1,2). He has spoken once and twice (Ps. 62:11); a third time He will not speak. We must not look for any additional revelation since there is nothing more to seek in the perfect revelation of truth. Christ is the substance of the types and shadows of the Old Testament. He leaves nothing before the heart of the worshiper but His own glorious person, truth incarnate.

Jesus Christ is the Eternal Logos. He was not from the beginning; He already was in the beginning. He was not only with God; He was God. No exegetical jugglery can hide the force of the truth contained in John 1:1. As a word may be distinguished from the thought it expresses (for the two are not identical), so can the second person of the Godhead be distinguished from the first. There cannot be a word apart from the thought behind it; neither an apprehension of the existence of "God" and the "Word" without one another. They are distinguishable but inseparable.

The Son of God has the same substance as the Father—"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Christ did not hesitate to place Himself first. He was not speaking as a subordinate, but an equal. The word one is not a reference to a single unit in the exact mathematical sense, but one in the sense of a compound unit—a unity which involves plurality. See (Gen. 2:24; 11:6; 41:1,5,25; 1 Kings 22:13; Neh. 8:1; John 17:22; Acts 4:32; 1 Cor. 3:8; Eph. 2:14; and 1 John 5:7). Two people (husband and wife) constitute one flesh; Paul the planter and Apollos the waterer are one; Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ; believers are described as being of one heart and one soul. When Christ said, "My Father," He spoke from the standpoint of His absolute Deity. Thus, "...my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28) contemplates Christ as Mediator—the position of subjection to the will of the Father. There is priority of position but never inferiority of nature. The statement, "I and my Father," affirms the unity of nature of essence—one in every divine perfection. There is not one perfection to be found in the first person of the Godhead that does not exist in the second. This annihilates the concept of peccability. "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:15).

Jesus Christ is as eternal as the Father. He is the brightness of God's glory (Heb. 1:3). The brightness issuing from the sun is of the same nature as the sun. Brightness cannot be separated from the sun, nor can Christ be separated from the Father. The brightness, though from the sun, is not the sun itself; Jesus Christ; though from the Father, is not the Father. "Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42). As the glory of the sun is the brightness, so the glory of the Father is Christ. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). As the light which the sun gives the world is by this brightness, so the light which the Father gives the world is by Christ. Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father..." (John 14:9). Jesus Christ, therefore, is the brightness of God's glory; He is greater than all the sparks and flickering candles (the prophets) that preceded His incarnation. The Saviour is such brightness that He is incapable of eclipsing the Father's glory.

The Son of God is equal with the Father. Christ is the very impress of God's substance. "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). The Greek word for express image means exact expression. All that God

is, in His nature and character, is expressed absolutely and perfectly by the incarnate Son. As to the Son's firm impressions of the Father's character, He is greater than all the vanishing shadows under the law.

Was not Adam made in the image of God? If Adam, who was a peccable person, was made in the image of God; then, what about Christ being the image of God? How can an image of something be the thing of which it is the figure? The answer is not difficult to the Christian. Adam was a type of Christ, as incarnate, who only is the express image of His Father's person and the likeness of His excellent glory. The things in Adam were of a created substance, but those in Christ were uncreated.

The Son of God is the image of the Father's glory as the incarnate Son. His Godhead was not an image. His works were infinitely perfect by virtue of His Godhead, and this divine perfection was revealed in the flesh. When an image is looked upon, another is seen. Thus, the person and work of Christ manifest the perfection and glory of the Father. Philip asked Christ to manifest the Father, and the Lord Jesus replied, "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father" (John 14:9). The Father, therefore, must be seen by us through the Son in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells (Col. 2:9).

How can Christ be the image of the invisible Godhead? The Deity of Christ is as invisible as the Father; but being clothed with flesh, God's works can be seen. Christ presents the excellency of the Father in figure.

Indwelling is not identity. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). A demon may dwell within a man (Luke 11:26), but that does not make the demon the man nor the man the demon. Jesus Christ is in the believer (John 15:4; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; Rev. 3:20), but that does not make Christ the believer. We are in Christ (Eph. 1:6); however, that does not make believers christ. As the Father must be distinct from the Son who is in Him, so the Son must be distinct from the Father in whom He is. The Father and the Son, though of one and the same nature, cannot be one and the same person. The doctrine Christ preached was not of Himself as a man, but of the Father who dwelt in Him.

Man could never know the Father apart from Jesus Christ. Abel, Noah, Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints knew God, but they did not know Him as Father. Here is where we need to distinguish names and titles: (1) The name of Patriarch is Almighty; (2) The covenant name is Jehovah; and (3) The relationship name is Father. The relationship name of Father is a revelation by Jesus Christ. Observe the number of times the word Father is found in John 14.

Jesus Christ came into the world not only to reveal the Father but to redeem the sinner. He came not, as the president of our country would go into a disaster area, to look upon the poor helpless victims; but to redeem the victims of depravity whom the Father gave Him in the covenant of redemption. Christ came not to redeem by appointed methods, but by Himself. He came not to stand by and prescribe, but to minister and provide the means of salvation. The Savior came not only to provide salvation, but to be that salvation (1 Pet. 1:18,19; Rev. 1:5).

After the Savior finished the work of redemption, He ascended to the Father to represent the saints in their sanctification. Believers, having been positionally set apart by regeneration, stand in need of experimental sanctification. Sanctification is not something Jesus Christ gives believers, it is Himself in Christians. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). God's method is for His men to "...go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). When "all the words of this life" are preached, they will include salvation, holiness, and all the other truths related to life. This is the reason Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

The Savior returned to the Father for the believer's glorification. Christ said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Christians have been called unto eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Thess. 2:12); they are prepared for eternal glory (Rom. 9:23; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:16,17); and they shall be brought unto eternal glory (Heb. 2:10). Our destiny therefore is glory. Glory is generally understood to be fame, fortune, and pleasure—things extraordinary and rare. All this, however, is but a dim shadow of what God means by glory; yet, out of the shadow, we may obtain a little inkling of what the substance must be. "When he (Christ) shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thess. 1:10). Christians have an incomprehensible fortune; they are of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Only Christians know true pleasure; their pleasure is God's pleasure, for God works in them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The Psalmist said, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

THE IMPECCABILITY OF CHRIST

A.W. Pink

We are living in a world of sin, and the fearful havoc it has wrought is evident on every side. How refreshing, then, to fix our gaze upon One who is immaculately holy, and who passed through this scene unspoiled by its evil. Such was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate. For thirty-three years He was in immediate contact with sin, yet He was never, to the slightest degree, contaminated. He touched the leper, yet was not defiled, even ceremonially. Just as the rays of the sun shine upon a stagnant pool without being sullied thereby, so Christ was unaffected by the iniquity which surrounded Him. He **“did no sin”** (1 Pet. 2:22), **“in Him is no sin”** (1 John 3:5 and contrast 1:8), He **“knew no sin”** (2 Cor. 5:21), He was **“without sin”** (Heb. 4:15). He was **“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”** (Heb. 7:26).

But not only was Christ sinless, He was impeccable, that is, incapable of sinning. No attempt to set forth the doctrine of His wondrous and peerless person would be complete, without considering this blessed perfection. Sad indeed is it to behold the widespread ignorance thereon today, and sadder still to hear and read this precious truth denied. The last Adam differed from the first Adam in His impeccability. Christ was not only able to overcome temptation, but He was unable to be overcome by it. Necessarily so, for He was “the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8). True, Christ was man, but He was the God-man, and as such, absolute Master and Lord of all things. Being Master of all things—as His dominion over the winds and waves, diseases and death, clearly demonstrated—it was impossible that anything should master Him.

The immutability of Christ proves His impeccability, or incapability of sinning: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). Because He was not susceptible to any change, it was impossible for the incarnate Son of God to sin. Herein we behold again His uniqueness. Sinless angels fell, sinless Adam fell: they were but creatures, and creaturehood and mutability are, really, correlative terms. But was not the manhood of Christ created? Yes, but it was never placed on probation, it never had a separate existence. From the very first moment of its conception in the Virgin’s womb, the humanity of Christ was taken into union with His Deity; and therefore could not sin.

The omnipotence of Christ proves His impeccability. That the Lord Jesus, even during the days of His humiliation, was possessed of omnipotence, is clear from many passages of Scripture. “What things so ever He (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise... For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will” (John 5:19, 21). When we say that Christ possessed omnipotence during His earthly sojourn, we do not mean that He was so endowed by the Holy Spirit, but that He was essentially, inherently, personally, omnipotent. Now to speak of an omnipotent person yielding to sin, is a contradiction in terms. All temptation to sin must proceed from a created being, and hence it is a finite power; but impossible is it for a finite power to overcome omnipotency.

The constitution of Christ’s person proves His impeccability. In Him were united (in a manner altogether incomprehensible to created intelligence) the Divine and the human natures. Now “God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13); “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). And Christ was “God manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16); “Immanuel”—God with us (Matt. 1:23). Personality centered not in His humanity. Christ was a Divine person, who had been “made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). Utterly impossible was it, then, for the God-man to sin. To affirm the contrary, is to be guilty of the most awful blasphemy. It is irreverent speculation to discuss what the human nature of Christ might have done if it had been alone. It never was alone; it never had a separate existence; from the first moment of its being it was united to a Divine person.

It is objected to the truth of Christ’s impeccability that it is inconsistent with His temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is argued, cannot be tempted to sin. As well might one reason that because an army cannot be defeated, it cannot be attacked. “Temptability depends upon the constitutional susceptibility, while impeccability depends upon the will. So far as His natural susceptibility, both physical and mental, was concerned, Jesus Christ was open to all forms of human

temptation, excepting those that spring out of lust, or corruption of nature. But His peccability, or the possibility of being overcome by these temptations, would depend upon the amount of voluntary resistance which He was able to bring to bear against them. Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of His holy will was stronger than they, then they could not induce Him to sin, and He would be impeccable. And yet plainly He would be temptable” (W.G. Shedd, 1889).

Probably there were many reasons why God ordained that His incarnate Son should be tempted by men, by the Devil, by circumstances. One of these was to demonstrate His impeccability. Throw a lighted match into a barrel of gunpowder, and there will be an explosion; throw it into a barrel of water, and the match will be quenched. This, in a very crude way, may be taken to illustrate the difference between Satan’s tempting us and his tempting of the God-man. In us, there is that which is susceptible to his “fiery darts”; but the Holy One could say, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me” (John 14:30). The Lord Jesus was exposed to a far more severe testing and trying than the first Adam was, in order to make manifest His mighty power of resistance.

“We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin” (Heb. 4:15). “This text teaches that the temptations of Christ were ‘without sin’ in their source and nature, and not merely, as the passage is sometimes explained, that they were ‘without sin’ in their result. The meaning is not, that our Lord was tempted in every respect exactly as fallen man is—by inward lust, as well as by other temptations—only He did not outwardly yield to any temptation; but that He was tempted in every way that man is, excepting by that class of temptations that are sinful, because originating in evil and forbidden desire.

“The fact that Christ was almighty and victorious in His resistance does not unfit Him to be an example for imitation to a weak and sorely-tempted believer. Because our Lord overcame His temptations, it does not follow that His conflict and success was an easy one for Him. His victory cost Him tears and blood. ‘His visage was so marred more than any man’ (Isa. 52:14). There was the ‘travail of His soul’ (Isa. 52:14). In the struggle He cried, ‘O My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me’ (Matt. 26:39). Because an army is victorious, it by no means follows that the victory was a cheap one” (W.G. Shedd).

One other objection may, perhaps, be noted, though we hesitate to defile these pages by even transcribing the filthy exhalations of the carnal mind. If the humanity of Christ was, because of its union to His Divine person, incapable of sinning, then in view of its being Divinely sustained how could it hunger and thirst, suffer and die? and seeing it did, then why was it incapable of yielding to temptation? It is sufficient answer to this impious question to point out that, while the Mediator was commissioned to die (John 10:18), He was not commissioned to sin. The human nature of Christ was permitted to function freely and normally: hence it wearied and wept; but to sin is not a normal act of human nature.

To be the Redeemer of His people, Christ must be “mighty to save, travelling in the greatness of His strength” (Isa. 63:1). He must have power to overcome all temptation when it assails His person, in order that He may be able to “succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18). Here then is one of the solid planks in that platform on which the faith of the Christian rests: because the Lord Jesus is Almighty, having absolute power over sin, the feeble and sorely-tried saint may turn to Him in implicit confidence, seeking His efficacious aid. Only He who triumphed over sin, both in life and in death, can save me from my sins.

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OUR LORD AS A BELIEVING MAN

Alexander Whyte

The workings of our Lord’s human mind, the affections and the emotions of our Lord’s human heart, and all the spiritual experiences of our Lord’s human life—take Jesus Christ in all these things, and He is the most absorbing, the most satisfying, and the most sanctifying study in all the universe. **There is no other doctrine in heaven or on earth for**

one moment to compare with the doctrine of God in Christ and Christ in God: the Word made flesh, and the flesh made God. And, then, to as many of us as by His grace to us are true believers on Him and in His blood, our Lord's own faith in His Father and in His Father's word to Him is a subject of the intensest interest, the most edifying meditation, and the most transporting reflection. To as many of us as believe there is no subject in heaven or on earth like our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the true learning. This is the true knowledge. This is the true science and philosophy; and not falsely so called. This is the wisdom that cometh from above. This is the wisdom of God in a mystery. This, O Father, is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.

Even in the Old Testament, and in some respects and for some reasons, even more in the Old Testament than in the New, the coming Messiah is already set before Israel as the Prince of believers, and as the perfect pattern to all believers, both Old Testament and New. Take the Messiah, for instance, in two well-known Psalms that were specially prepared for Him. In the sixteenth Psalm David is inspired to speak in the name of the promised Messiah in these splendidly believing words: "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." **There spake the incomparably believing Man Jesus Christ, long before He was born. And, again, just listen to the Man of sorrows, and at the same time the Prince of believers, as He speaks concerning Himself in the twenty-second Psalm:** "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver him; let Him deliver him, seeing he trusted in Him. But Thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be Thou not far from me, O Lord; O my strength, make haste to help me." The four evangelists themselves have nothing to surpass that, first for an unparalleled sorrow, and then for the unparalleled victory of Messiah's faith. And then, in the greatest of the Messianic prophets: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away back. I give my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that pulled off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; and who shall contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is mine adversary? Let him come near unto me." When Paul's faith for himself and for all believers is at its most rapturous and its most defiant, he borrows these bold words out of the mouth of the absolutely assured Messiah, and applies them to the most advanced and assured and victorious of evangelical believers. And no wonder. For, what a faith is here, even in the thickest darkness! What a full assurance of a divine faith is here, even on the cross!

And, then, when the Messiah actually came in the flesh He sought out all those Scriptures concerning Himself, and took them home to Himself, and believed them, and made every jot and tittle of them His very own. Sabbath by Sabbath, day by day, and hour by hour, Jesus of Nazareth read in the Psalms and in the Prophets the things that were written there concerning Himself, till His Father's word was more to Him than His necessary food. He may not indeed from a very child have made much of the Messianic Scriptures. It was impossible that as long as He spake as a child, and understood as a child, and thought as a child, He could enter into the full appropriation to Himself of all these so deep and, some of them, so dreadful Scriptures. But when He became a man, He read day and night, and nothing else but the deepest Messianic Scriptures; and at every fresh reading He made them more and more His own, and made Himself more and more their own, till at last He came to the full assurance of His Messiahship, by more and more performing the duties of the Messiahship, and by more and more clothing Himself with the whole walk and conversation of the Messiahship. And our Lord's faith in all these things so worked by an equal love that He was always found both ready and willing to fulfil, and to have fulfilled in Himself, all the Messianic Scriptures concerning Himself. "Lo, I come!" was never out of His mouth, from the beginning down to the end. Even on the cross He still delighted to do His Father's will. Yea, the law of our redemption was to the end, deeper in His heart than anything else. **As in Messianic prophecy, so in the days of His actual flesh, our Lord was by far the greatest and the best of believers. He was the very author and finisher of faith.** If He was not actually the first of all believers in point of time, no sooner did He begin to believe than He sprang at once to the forefront of faith, till He was the most perfect, and complete and completely God-pleasing believer in all Israel. Abraham himself, the father of the faithful, would have resigned his supreme place in the life of faith in favour of Jesus Christ, but for the best of reasons to Abraham himself and to us. But, even after the coming of Christ, and even after Christ's life of incomparable faith, Abraham still holds his God-given place. For, at his very best, and to the very end, Abraham was but a believing sinner, and thus an ever more and more justified man. But Jesus Christ was, to begin with, and much more was He at His end, a believing saint and a justified surety. He had this prerogative over Abraham, and over all Abraham's believing seed, that He knew no sin. And thus it was that He did not need, like Abraham and all his

seed, to believe on God for the forgiveness of sin, and for justification of life. And therefore it is that Abraham keeps his place, and will keep it to the end, as the father of all those who submit to be justified by faith. But the life of faith in all its aspects is so large and so rich that there is plenty of room in it both for Abraham and for Jesus Christ and for you and for me.

First in His believing study and believing appropriation of the Messianic Scriptures, and then in His life of unceasing and believing prayer, our Lord stands at our head as the author and finisher of faith. And not more in His believing reading of the word than in His believing prayer and intercession continually. “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.” Day and night, early and late, our Lord lived and moved and had His being in believing prayer. He could never have entered on His great work, far less could He ever have finished it, but for His faith in His father as the Hearer of prayer. At every successive step in the process of our redemption, He took that step after a season of prayer, till He had fulfilled in His own experience what He preaches with such point to us concerning believing prayer. Preaching clearly and undeniably from His own experience in prayer, He says to us in one great place—in the greatest, indeed, of all Scripture places — concerning prayer: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” There is a window opened into our Lord’s secret life of prayer in these wonderful words— words much too wonderful for the best believer among us, but true to the letter of Him and of His faith in His Father. “I know,” He said to His Father, at the grave of Lazarus, “I know that Thou hearest me always. But because of the people that stand by I said it, that they might believe that Thou hast heard Me.” Such close communion of faith, and such strong assurance of faith, was there between the Father and the Son in the Son’s life of believing reading and believing praying.

But, after all, it was in Gethsemane and on Calvary that the faith of our Substitute came to its absolute perfection. Loaded down to death and hell with the sin of the world, our Saviour’s faith in His Father’s sure word of promise was such that his burdened heart rose victorious above all the tremendous load that was laid upon Him. Our Saviour had the fullest assurance of faith; the fullest assurance that His Father who had begun such a good work in Him and by Him would not leave it till He had perfected it in the day of Christ. And thus it was that, as Bengel says, “the most fragrant part of Christ’s sin-atoning sacrifice was His unshaken trust in His Father’s faithfulness and love.” Not only did our Lord’s faith not give way even under the tremendous strain of His sin-atoning death: His faith was so strong that it actually blossomed up into absolute joy even in His hottest agony. For we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the fact, that it was for the joy set before His faith that enabled our Lord to endure the Cross, and to despise the shame. And then, when His darkness was at its very darkest, His last words out of the thick darkness were these: “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” If the centurion had known all that we know, with how much more wonder would he have said, “Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this man was the Son of God!” Our Redeemer died, having been made a curse for sin; but all the time He died without a shadow of doubt in His soul that both He Himself, and all for whom He so died, would be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment. Truly the centurion would have said, had he known all, “This is the author and finisher of faith!”

Now, my brethren, after all that is said—and the half has not been said of our Lord’s life and death of faith—at the same time, in some ways you and I have the privilege and the opportunity of being even greater believers than our Lord ever was. It may well have been of your faith and mine that He was speaking and foreseeing when He said that some of His disciples would do greater works than He had ever done. It is true, He believed and rested His soul on His Father’s word of grace and truth to Him, even when He was laden with sin to a bloody sweat and to the darkness of death and hell. But, then, He had this comfort at His very worst, that the sin under which He was dying was not actually His own sin. Our worst sins, and all our sins, were imputed to Him and were actually laid upon Him, and He took them up to make atonement for them as if they had been His own. But all the time they were not His own; they were yours and mine. His suretyship guilt was not a real, and an actual, and a genuine, and a never-to-be-forgotten guilt like yours and mine. And thus it comes about that, in some ways, we can magnify the grace of God, and can attain to victories of faith and trust that were not open to our Lord, who knew no sin as we know it. And, indeed, it is just here that the characteristic and essential genius of justifying faith comes out, and makes itself to appear in all its trials and triumphs. The worse our case is, under the Gospel the more able are we to adorn the doctrines of grace and to magnify its saving power, if only we aright and enough believe in the God of grace and in His word of promise. His Son, no doubt, magnified His Father’s grace and His word of promise to the very utmost possible to Him by His life and death of the most perfect faith and trust. But you and I can magnify the grace and the promises of God in a way altogether personal and peculiar to ourselves. The darker, the more accumulated, the more aggravated our guilt is, the more will mercy rejoice over judgment in our forgiveness and salvation. Where sin abounds there grace much more abounds, when we exercise faith according to our sin and according to God’s grace. “It is of faith,” says the Apostle Paul, “that it might be by grace.” Only believe that you have to do with a God who delighteth in mercy, and you will, by your faith, bring a tribute of glory to God that only a sinner, and a great

sinner, can ever bring. A tribute of glory—shall I take boldness to say?—that His sinless Son could not possibly bring, or could only bring through you. Only believe in the infinite grace of God the Father, and in the infinitely precious blood of His Son, and you will thus glorify God far more than you have ever dishonoured Him. And how great will that glory be!

Walter Marshall, one of our deepest divines, says in his “Twelfth Direction” that “*Christ walked in a constant persuasion of His excellent state, and it was that constant persuasion that carried Him through.*” And Marshall presses it upon all his believing readers that they are to walk in the same “constant persuasion.” And he bases his great counsel on this great evangelical ground, that we are all complete in Christ; complete as Christ was complete. ***In fact, that we stand, if we will only believe it, in the very same “excellent state” as that was in which Christ stood. Yes; we stand now in His state, just as He at one time stood in our state.*** And it is by believing that, and by realising that, and by continually acting upon that, that we shall best please God with us, and best adorn the doctrine of His Son. In fact, without this faith in Christ, and in our “excellent state” in Christ, it is impossible for any sinner to please God. We are to act, continues Marshall, “as those who are raised in Christ altogether above and beyond the sphere and range of nature, and are advanced to union and communion with the Son of God.” Believe that, believers. Practice believing that. Read and hear about that, and about little else but that: say to your own dark and doubting hearts that it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all your fulness dwell. Say it, and believe it, and take your stand upon it. Not Paul and Luther and Marshall only, but you, their constant readers, are with them complete in Christ. And if you feel that you need more out of Christ’s completeness than they or the like of them could ever need, then that will only enable you to magnify the grace of God more than they all. Believe that, believers. Bring the whole of the scriptures of promise, and the whole of your life of believing reading and believing praying to bear upon that. And if your great and singular sinfulness threatens sometimes to shipwreck your faith altogether, at such seasons cast your anchor into deeper seas of salvation than you have ever yet sounded. And the grace of God, and the blood and righteousness of Christ, and a corresponding faith in your soul, all these things will be seen to work in you a miracle of salvation hitherto unheard of. You also will be saved everlastingly from all your sin as sure as God has promised, and Christ has died and has risen again, if you will only believe. And you should have no difficulty in believing anything and everything of that kind, since all such faith is the gift of God.

I often entertain myself and regale my great taste for words, and especially for the words that the Holy Ghost teacheth, by repeating to myself the two last times in which we shall be spoken of under this great designation of “believers.” “The souls of believers,” I say to myself fifty times every day, “are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.” And then, following that up: “At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.”

If that is to be so, who would not live and die, like Jesus Christ, a believer?

Taken from Alexander Whyte’s book *Jesus Christ our Lord*.

THE HOLY CHILD, JESUS

C.H. Spurgeon

The opposition of the world is often a very great blessing to the Church. If it be met by holy boldness, it is sure to yield a glorious triumph to the servants of God. Sanctified by the Holy Ghost, out of the eater cometh forth honey, for it becomes an incentive to greater zeal. Now that the foeman is determined to conquer, the Church will be resolved to hold its own. Pressure from without drives the members of the Church together, and so promotes holy love, and when love and zeal come together, then there is such a blessed unity of action, and such a power in every effort that great success must follow. Woe unto the world when it persecutes the Church, for it kicks with its naked foot against the pricks; it stirs up a nest of hornets about its own ears; yea, it provokes the Lion of the tribe of Judah to spring upon his enemies.

Our text is a portion of an apostolic song, which celebrated the release of Peter and John and the confusion of the priests and scribes. Every persecution shall yield psalms of victory to the people of God. There is one sweet result which

always flows from the opposition of the world, namely, that it draws true disciples nearer to their Master. You will perceive that they sing concerning the birth, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the Lord is the theme of their grateful song. The title by which they salute him, “Thy holy child, Jesus,” is most appropriate to their case. The history of the Church is Christ’s life written out in length. Our Lord enters upon the world a holy child: when the Church begins her history, she is as a holy child too, and therefore rejoices in the childhood of her gracious Lord. How precious is it to see Jesus as made in all points like unto his people, and how rapturous for his people to see their Redeemer’s features drawn by the pencil of fellowship in themselves. Trial is often sanctified to this noble end. Let the world oppress the Church; let the members of that Church be thoroughly weaned from any other ground of comfort; let the Lord Jesus be their only rock and refuge, and they will soon perceive analogies in the history of Christ beautifully explaining their own — analogies which they never would have discovered except in the glare of the furnace. In the chapter before us, the apostles are thrown back upon the person of Jesus for comfort, and they revel in the thought of his being a child, because they discover in this his likeness to the Church, which, in its infancy, the enemy sought to destroy, even as Herod sought to slay the new-born King of the Jews.

Brethren, whenever we endure adversities, or tribulations, or distresses, be it ours to turn to Christ, and consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; for we may rest assured that the black finger of our distresses will often point out beauties in the person of Immanuel hitherto unseen. There is a certain spot from which alone each glorious trait in the Savior’s character can be seen, and many of our most painful positions are ordained for us in order that we may from their vantage ground behold the Lamb of God.

Our subject, this morning, may perhaps be suitable to the experience of some; the Lord make it useful to all. Taking the text as we find it, we shall, first of all, meditate upon *the humanity of Christ as here declared*; secondly, we *shall view it as here described* — “A holy child;” and thirdly, we shall then *behold it in the glory which surrounds it* — signs and wonders are wrought by the name of the holy child, Jesus.

I. First, then, dear friends, may our hearts be enlightened to see, as the apostles did, the beauty and excellence of THE REAL HUMANITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

While we always contend that Christ is God, very God of very God, let us never lose the firm conviction he is most certainly and truly a man. He is not a God humanized, nor yet a human being deified; but, as to his Godhead, pure Godhead, equal and co-eternal with the Father; as to his manhood, perfect manhood; made in all respects like unto the rest of mankind, sin alone excepted. His humanity was real, for *he was born*. He lay hidden in the virgin’s womb, and in due time was born into a world of suffering. The gate by which we enter upon the first life, he passed through also; he was not created, nor transformed, but his humanity was begotten and born. As he was born, so *in the circumstances of his birth*, he is completely human; he is as weak and feeble as any other babe. He is not even royal, but human. Those who were born in marble halls of old were wrapped in purple garments, and were thought by the vulgar to be a superior race; but this babe is wrapped in swaddling clothes and hath a manger for his cradle, that the true humanness of his being may come out. More a man than he is a Prince of the House of David, he knows the woes of a peasant’s child. As he grows up, the very *growth* shows how completely human he is. He does not spring into full manhood at once, but he grows in stature, and in favor both with God and man. When he reaches man’s estate, he gets the common stamp of manhood upon his brow. “In the *sweat* of thy brow shalt thou eat bread “is the common heritage of us all, and he receives no better. The carpenter’s shop must witness to the toils of a Savior and when he becomes the preacher and the prophet, still we read such significant words as these — “Jesus, being weary, sat thus on the well.” We find him needing to betake himself to rest in *sleep*, he slumbers at the stern of the vessel when it is tossed in the midst of the tempest. Brethren, if *sorrow* be the mark of real manhood, and “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” certainly Jesus Christ has the truest evidence of being a man. If to hunger and to thirst be signs that he was no shadow, and his manhood no fiction you have these. If to associate with his fellow men, and eat and drink as they did, will be proof to your mind that he was none other than a man, you see him sitting at a feast one day, at another time he graces a marriage supper, and on another occasion he is hungry, and “hath not where to lay his head.” Since the day when the prince of the power of the air obtained dominion in this world, men are *tempted*, and he, though he is born pure and holy, must not be delivered from temptation.

“The desert his temptation knew His conflict and his victory too.”

The garden marked the bloody sweat, as it started from every pore while he endured the agony of conflict with the prince of this world. If, since we have fallen and must endure temptation, we have need *to pray*, so had he—

“Cold mountains and the midnight air Witnessed the fervor of his prayer.”

Strong crying and tears go up to heaven mingled with his pleas and entreaties, and what clearer proof could we have of his being man of the substance of his mother, and man like ourselves, than this, that he was heard in that he feared. There appeared unto him an angel strengthening him; to whom but men are angels ministering spirits? Brethren, we have never discovered the weakness of our manhood more than when God has deserted us. When the spiritual consolations which comforted us have been withdrawn, and the light of God's face has been hidden from us, then we have said, "I am a worm and no man," and out of the dust and ashes of human weakness have we cried unto the most high God. Let "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani" assure you that Christ has felt the same. Follow man wherever you will and you find the footprint of the Son of Mary. Go after man where you will, into scenes of sorrow of every hue, and you shall find traces of Jesus' pilgrimage there. You shall find in whatever struggle and conflict of which man is capable, the Captain of our salvation has had a share. Leave out sin, and Christ is the perfect picture of humanity. Simple as the truth is, and lying as it does at the very basis of our Christianity, yet let us not despise it, but try to get a personal grip of it if we can. Jesus, my mediator, is a man, "Immanuel, God with us." He is a child born, he is better than that, for "unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given." He is to us a brother; he is bone of our bone to-day. As a man leaves his father and mother and cleaveth unto his wife, and they twain become one flesh, so hath he left the glory of his Father's house and become one flesh with his people. Flesh, and bone, and blood, and heart, that may ache and suffer, and be broken and be bruised, yea, and may die, such is Jesus; for herein he completes the picture. As the whole human race must yield its neck to the great iron-crowned monarch, so must Christ himself say, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit, Father," and he, too, must yield up the ghost. Oh, Christian, see your nearness to him and be glad this morning! Oh, sinner, see his nearness to you! Come to him with confidence, for in body and soul he is completely human.

Having thus insisted upon the humanity of Christ, let us gather a few reflections from it. There are a thousand things which it indicates, but as the garden is too full of flowers for us to bring them all, we have gathered but a handful.

As the first meditation, let us marvel at his *condescension*. It is the greatest miracle that was ever heard or read of, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Cyprian well said, "I do not wonder at any miracle, but I do marvel at this, which is a miracle among miracles, that God should become man." That God should make a creature out of nothing is certainly a marvellous manifestation of power, but that God should enter into that creature, and should take it into intimate union with his own nature — this is the strangest of all acts of condescending love. Indeed, so marvellous is it, that in all the heathen mythologies — strange freaks though imagination has there played, theology we do find instances of the gods appearing in the likeness of men — yet never do we find anything like the hypostatical union of the two natures in the person of Christ. Human wisdom in its most happy moments has never risen to anything like the thought of deity espousing manhood, that man might be redeemed. To you and to me the marvel lieth in the motive which prompted the incarnation. What could it have been that brought Immanuel to such a stoop as this? What unrivalled, indescribable, unutterable love was this that made him leave his Father's glory, the adoration of angels and all the hallowed joy of heaven, that he might be made a man like ourselves, to suffer, to bleed, to die? "He was seen of angels," saith the apostle, and this was a great wonder, for the angels had worshipped at his throne, but their created eyes could not bear to look upon the brightness of his person. They veiled their faces with their wings when they cried "Holy! Holy! Holy!" But angels saw the Son of God lying in a manger! The Lord of all wrestling with a fallen spirit in the wilderness! The Prince of Peace hanging upon the tree on Calvary! "Seen of angels" was one of the wonders concerning the incarnation of Christ; but that he should be seen of men — nay that he should be the associate of the worst of men, that he should be called the friend of publicans and sinners, so perfectly incarnating himself, and condescending so low that he comes to the very lowest state of humanity — all this, my brethren, is condescension concerning which words fail me to speak. A prince who puts aside his crown, and clothes himself with beggar's rags to investigate the miseries of his country, is but a worm condescending to his fellow worm. An angel that should lay aside his beauty, and become decrepit and lame, and walk the streets in pain and poverty to bless the race of man, were nothing, for this were but a creature humbling himself to creatures a little lower than himself; but here is the Creator taking the creature into union with himself, the Immortal becoming mortal, the Infinite an infant, the Omnipotent taking weakness, even human weakness into union with his own person. We may truly say of Jesus, that he was weak as the dust, and yet as mighty as the Eternal God; liable to suffer, and yet God over all blessed for ever. O the depth of the love of Jesus!

Let us reflect upon another theme. *See the fitness of Christ for his work!* He is a perfect man — he could not be a priest if he were not. But now, "He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing he was tempted in all points like as we are." Being not ashamed to call us brethren, he can compassionate the ignorant and those who are out of the way. O brethren, if he were no man, he could not have been our substitute; man sinned, and man must pay the penalty: he must be perfect man to make atonement. If he were not man, his righteousness would not have availed us, for while we want a righteousness divine to cover the infiniteness of God's demands, we want a righteousness which is human, for it is that

which the law requires. O soul, if thou art in sadness and sickness to-day, let thine arms embrace the man Christ Jesus. Feel in the fact that he is thy brother, how suitable is such a Savior to thy poverty, thy weakness, and thy sin.

Let us think, too, of another thought. Behold, inasmuch as Christ is man, *his near relationship and union to his people*. He is no stranger of whom we speak — he is our Brother, nay, more than that, he has become our Head. Not a head of gold, and feet of clay, or limbs of baser metal; but as we are, so was he, that as he is so might we be. It is manhood which is at the head of the Church, as it is manhood which constitutes the members. Union to Jesus is, methinks, the sweetest doctrine in revelation. There are other doctrines which possess a more transcendent grandeur, but the doctrine of union is the quintessence of all delights. What is heaven but union to Christ realized; and what shall be the foretaste of heaven but union to Christ believed? As thou seest him then completely, such as thou art, know, Christian, how near, how dear, how intimately one with him thou art, and be thou glad this day.

Let me give thee another flower. *See the glory of manhood now, restored!* Man was but a little lower than the angels, and had dominion over the fowl of the air, and over the fish of the sea. That royalty he lost; the crown was taken from his head by the hand of sin, and the beauty of the image of God was dashed by his rebellion. But all this is given back to us. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; and at this day all things are put under him, waiting, as he does, and expecting the time when all his enemies shall be beneath his feet, and the last enemy, Death, shall be destroyed by man — by the very man whom he boasted that he had destroyed. It is our nature, brethren, Jesus in our manhood, who is now Lord of providence; it is our nature which has hanging at its girdle the sovereign keys of heaven, and earth, and hell; it is our nature which sits upon the throne of God at this very day. No angel ever sat upon God's throne, but a man has done it, and is doing it now. Of no angel was it ever said, "Thou shalt be King of kings and Lord of lords, they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before thee, and thine enemies shall lick the dust—"but this is said of a *man*. It is a *man* who shall judge the world in righteousness; a man who shall distribute crowns of reward—a man who shall denounce, "Depart, ye cursed;" a man, the thunder of whose words shall make hell shrink with affright. Oh, how glorious is renovated manhood! What an honor is it, my brethren, to be man, not of the fallen first Adam, but man made in the image in the second Adam? Let us with all our weakness, and infirmity, and imperfection, yet bless and praise God, who made us what we are by his grace, for man, in the person of Christ, is second only to God — nay, is in such union with God, that he cannot be nearer to him.

When we think of the true and proper manhood of Christ, ought we not to rejoice that *a blessed channel is opened by which God's mercy can come to us?* "How can God reach man? "was once the question; but now, brethren, there is another question. "How can God refuse to bless those men who are in Christ? "The everlasting Father must bless his only-begotten Son, and in blessing him he has blessed a man, and that man having all the elect in his loins, they are necessarily all blessed in him. Look upon the person of Christ as that of a representative individual. Whatever Christ is, all his elect are, just as whatever Adam was all men who were in him became. If Adam fell, all manhood fell; if Christ stands and is honored and glorified, then all who are in Christ, that is the goodly fellowship of his elect, are all blessed in him. Now, it is utterly impossible but that God should bless Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is for ever one with God, and his manhood is also one with Godhead. As an old writer observes, "The nearest union that we know of is the union between the humanity and the divinity in the person of Christ. That of the three persons in the Trinity may rather be called a unity than a union — but this is the closest union we know of — the union between humanity and deity in Christ." So complete is it, that you cannot think of Christ aright as a man apart from God, nor as God apart from man. The very idea of Christ hath in it the two natures, and it is a clear impossibility that the Godhead should not impart of its blessedness to the manhood, and that manhood being thus blessed, every elect soul is necessarily blessed also. O see what a channel is thus opened; a channel through which the stream cannot but flow; a golden pipe through which grace cannot but come. The laws of nature might be reversed, but not the laws of God's nature, and it is a law of God's nature that in the person of Christ the deity must bless the manhood, and that manhood being blessed, it is another law that elect manhood must be blessed, since that elect manhood is for ever indissolubly bound up with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. See what a river deep and broad is here opened for us, and what a fullness there is in that river, for all the fullness of the deity dwells in Christ, and the fullness of that deity thus flows to man.

See again, beloved, *what a door of access is thus opened between us and God!* I am a man; Christ is a man. I come to the man Christ Jesus — no I have not even to do that — I am in the man Christ. If I am a believer, I am a portion of him. Well, being a portion of the man Christ, and God being united with him, I am very near unto God. I have such nearness of access then to God, that whatever may be my desires and my prayers, I have no need to climb to heaven nor to descend into the depth in order to obtain my desire, for God's ear must be near to me inasmuch as God is in Christ, and my soul being in Christ I am very, very near to God. Christ's body is the veil that hangs before the majesty of God, that veil was rent; and whoever by a living faith knows how to come through the rent body of the man, Christ, comes at once into the

presence of God. Such communion, such sacred commerce, such blessed interchanges between mankind and God could never have taken place on any other plan. That ladder which Jacob saw was but a faint and dreamy picture of this. This is no ladder, but the access is such as though God, who was at the top of Jacob's ladder, had come down to Jacob as he lay sleeping there. There is no ladder wanted now, the person of Christ brings God to man, brings man to God in closer contact than the ladder can ever picture. Brethren, let us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace, to obtain grace to help in every time of need.

Another thing I cannot leave out, is this — beloved, do see it, do see it — *how safe we are!* Our soul's estate was once put in the hands of Adam: he was a fallible man; how unsafe our salvation was then! The salvation of every believer now is in the hand of a man; it is the man Christ Jesus! But what a man! Can he fail? Can he sin? Can he fall? O no, beloved, for the deity is in intimate union with the manhood, and the man Christ Jesus, since he can never sin, can never fall, and is therefore a sure foundation for the perpetual salvation of all the elect. When the angels were all in heaven, before the fall of Satan, methinks they could never be perfectly happy, because they knew that if they sinned they would perish, and this surely would mar their bliss, because there was a fear of their losing all their glory; but, beloved, our salvation does not rest with ourselves, we may have all the joy of perfect security, because it rests in the hand of one who cannot by any possibility sin, who cannot err, cannot fail, but who standeth fast for ever, from everlasting to everlasting, God. See then, the comfort and security of God's people, but indeed there are so many sheaves in this field of incarnation that I cannot possibly unbind them all for you. You must come and pluck an ear or two for yourselves, and rub them in your hands on this Sabbath day, that your hunger may be relieved.

Beloved, do you not see that *here is your adoption?* You become sons of God, because Christ becomes a son of man. Do you not perceive that *here is your acceptance?* The man, Christ, is accepted, and you, since he stands for you, are accepted in him. Nay, there is not a mercy in the covenant, there is not a single stream of blessing which flows to the believer, that does not spring from the fact that Christ is to be called the "holy child Jesus," being most certainly and properly a man. Thus much, then, upon the first point.

II. Now let us VIEW THE HUMANITY AS IT IS HERE DESCRIBED. The words teach it to us — *holy child.*

Christ's humanity was *perfectly holy*. Upon this doctrine you are well established—but you may well wonder that Jesus was always holy. He is *conceived* of a woman, and yet no sort of sin cometh from his birth. "That holy thing which is born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He is *educated* in the midst of sinful persons. It could not be otherwise, for there were none on earth that could be called good — all having become unprofitable, and yet, though tabernacling in the midst of sinners, in him is no taint or trace of sin. He *goes into the world*, and as a physician must mingle with the sick, so he is found in the very worst of society. The harlot may speak to him, and from the publican he turns not away, yet from none of these did he receive any corrupt influence. He is *tempted*, and it is usually supposed that a man can scarcely be tempted, even should he overcome the temptation, without receiving some injury to his innocency; but the prince of this world came and had nothing in Christ; his fiery darts fell upon the nature of Christ as upon water, and were quenched at once. Satan was but as one who should whip the sea; he left no mark upon the perfect holiness of Christ. *Imputation of sin* would be the nearest approach to making our Lord a sinner; but let it ever be remembered that though Jehovah made him to be sin for us, yet he knew no sin. The world's sin was put upon the shoulders of Christ, and yet he had no sin for all that; the imputation was accomplished in such a manner that it did not in any sense or in any degree derogate from his title to perfect holiness. I have read sermons upon the imputation of sin to Christ, which have left painful impressions upon my mind, because I remember to have met with the expression that Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because he stood in the room of millions of sinners. Now it is true that Jesus took the sinner's place, but yet he never was a sinner, nor ever can in any sense be thought of as unholy. Perfect, pure, spotless, the great Redeemer stood; and even in the conflict, when all the powers of hell were let loose against him, and when *God himself had withdrawn* — that withdrawal of God from us would have hardened our hearts, but it did not harden his heart. The taking away of God's grace from us is the ruin of our graces; but he had a well-spring of grace within himself, and his purity lived on when God had withdrawn from him. From the first dawn of his humanity in the womb to the time when he is laid in the new tomb, he is "holy."

The next word is one that requires most attention. Why is Christ called a "*holy child?*" We can understand his being called a child while he was so, but why a "*holy child?*" now that he is ascended up on high? Why, dear friends, because the character of Christ is more aptly pictured by that of a child than that of a man. If you conceive of a perfectly holy child, you have then before you a representation of Christ. There is that in childhood, in holy childhood, which you cannot find even in holy manhood. You note in childhood its *simplicity*, the absence of all cunning. We dare not in manhood usually wear our heart upon our sleeve as children do; we have lost the trustfulness of our youth and are upon our guard in society. We have learned by very painful experience to suspect others, and we walk among our fellow men often with our

heart locked up with many locks, thinking that when thieves are abroad, good housekeepers must not leave the door on the latch. We have to practice the wisdom of serpents, as well as the harmlessness of doves.

But a child is perfectly guileless; it prattles out its little heart; it has no caution or reserve; it cannot scheme, for it cannot go round about with the skillful words of the politician; it knows not how to spin the web of sophistry; it is plain, transparent, and you see through it. Now, such was Christ. Not foolish, for there is much difference between simplicity and folly. He was never foolish; they who mistook him for such, and sought to entrap him, soon discovered that the child was a wise child. Still he is ever a child — he tells his heart out everywhere. He eats, he drinks like other men. They call him a drunken man and a wine-bibber; does he, then, from prudential motives, therefore, cease to eat and drink as other men? O no! He is quite a child. In every thing that he does there is an artless simplicity. You see through him and you can trust him, because there is a trustfulness about his whole nature; he knows what is in man, yet he does not act with suspicion towards men, but ever with simplicity.

In a child we expect to see much *humbleness*. There is a humbleness of association. There is a little child yonder — it is a king's daughter, and here is another little child belonging to a gipsy woman. Leave the two in a room and see if they will not be at play together in five minutes. If it had been the queen and the gipsy woman they would have sat as far apart as possible. O no! They do not associate together at all! Distinctions of rank and all that kind of thing they studiously maintain, and, therefore, remain isolated; but the two children will be down on the floor together, and if there happen to be some little heap of dust or a few pieces of broken crock, the princess will find in them almost as much mirth as the beggar-woman's child. Here is humbleness of mind. So with Christ; he is King of kings and Prince of the house of David, yet he is always with the poor and needy, and sympathizes with them just as heartily as though he were altogether such as they were. You do not find little children sitting down and planning how they shall win crowns — in what way they shall obtain popularity or applause. O no! They are quite satisfied to do their father's will, and live on his smile. It is so with Christ. What a childlike act that was — when they would have made him a king, he went and hid himself, and how childlike does he seem when he rides upon the colt, the foal of an ass, through the streets of Jerusalem, and must have the mother ass there too, lest either of the two creatures should be distressed. He is the friend of the brute creation as well as of man in general; so thoughtful and so kind, so simple, so humble in all that he does.

We picture a holy child as being all *obedient*. You have but to say to it "Do this," and it doeth it. It asketh no questions. Was it not so with Jesus his whole life long? "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

So, again, we look in holy children for a *forgiving temper*. We know that sometimes the blood comes up in the little face, and a little angry quarrel ensues, but it is soon over, and with their arms about each other's neck, and many a loving kiss, it is soon made up again by the little ones. Well, with Jesus this characteristic of childhood is carried out to the fullest extent, for his latest words are, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Ah! holy child! no fire from heaven dost thou call, like John; no denunciations come from thy lips against sinners. "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more," saith he to the woman taken in adultery. He is the child all through. Scripture calls him the man-child, and what if we call him the great child-man! He was a child when he had become a man. He never had childish things to put away in the sense in which the apostle speaks of it, for as to all the folly, and the littleness, and giddiness of youth, Christ knew not these, but everything that is beautiful, and lovely, and just, in the virgin innocence of a pure and holy child — such as children would have been, if their parents had not fallen — all this you see in the person of Christ Jesus.

Beloved, I think there is something very sweet in this picture of Christ's humanity, because we are none of us afraid to approach a child. Men that are childlike men — we are never afraid of. You know certain people in the world — you could not tell your trouble to them; they have a haughty manner, they look down upon you, you feel that you can never reach their hearts. There are certain others with an open and honest face, and you instinctively feel, "There, I can tell that man anything, I know I can. If I were in any kind of distress, or trouble, I would go to him — I know he would help me if he could." Well, that is because such a man has a degree of childlikeness about him. Now in the person of Christ there is all this carried out to the fullest degree. Come then, and tell Jesus everything. Whatever your trouble or difficulty may be, stand not back through shame or fear. Wilt thou fear Immanuel, or dread the Lamb of God? Wilt thou be afraid of a holy child? Nay, rather come, and like Simeon take him in thine arms and own him as thy consolation and thy trust. I would I could get a hold this morning on those timid ones who always say, "I am afraid of Jesus." Why, dear friends, how can you talk so? You do him wrong. You know him not, or you would not thus speak. This is the unkindest cut of all, to think that he is unwilling to forgive. Dying for you, living as a holy child for you, O can it be, can it be possible that he should be hard to forgive and receive you?

Thinking of a holy child while I looked through this verse, I turned to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's story of Eva and little Topsy. She gives a graphic picture there of a holy child indeed. There is the law in the person of Miss Ophelia: she whips the child, but the more she whips her, the worse she is, she gets no further than, "I's so wicked, I can't help it; I's so wicked." That is all the law can do; it can only make a man feel he is "so wicked," that he cannot help it, and he goes on sinning still. But what a picture is that when St. Clair draws the curtain and sees the two little children sitting with their cheeks together. Eva says, "What does make you so bad, Topsy? Why won't you try and be good? Don't you love *anybody*, Topsy?" "Donno nothing 'bout love; I loves candy and sich; that's all," said Topsy. "But you love your father and mother?" "Never had none, ye know; I telled ye that, Miss Eva." "Oh, I know," said Eva sadly; "but hadn't you any brother, or sister, or aunt, or —" "No, none on 'em — never had nothing nor nobody." "But, Topsy, if you'd only try to be good, you might —" "Couldn't never be nothin', if I was ever so good," said Topsy. "O Topsy, poor child, I love you!" said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy's shoulder, "I love you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends — because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good. I am very unwell, Topsy, and I think I shan't live a great while; and it really grieves me to have you be so naughty. I wish you would try to be good, for my sake; it's only a little while I shall be with you." The round, keen eyes of the child were overcast with tears; large, bright drops rolled heavily down, one by one, and fell on the little white hand. Yes, in that moment, a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love had penetrated the darkness of her heathen soul! She laid her head down between her knees, and wept, and sobbed—while the beautiful child, bending over her, looked like the picture of some bright angel stooping to reclaim a sinner. Now something like this, only in a far nobler style, Jesus Christ has behaved towards us. He sees us lost and ruined, wicked, hopelessly wicked, and he comes as a holy child and sits down by our ruined humanity, and he says, "I love you — I love you because you are so lost, so ruined, so hopelessly ruined; because I know the dreadful doom into which you will fall. There is nothing in you that makes me love you, but I do love you; I cannot bear to see you die like this. I would sooner die than you should remain a sinner. I would sooner die and bear my Father's wrath for you, than that you should be a sinner, and disobedient to him." The holy child sits down by you this morning and weeps for you. Will you grieve Immanuel? Will you break the heart of Jesus, your soul's lover? Oh, will you open his wounds afresh and crucify him again? If ye would not, then trust him now; fly to him, give yourselves up to him. He waiteth to be gracious to you; his loving arms are wide open to receive you. "Whosoever will," saith he, "let him come, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Such is the coming of the "holy child Jesus."

III. To conclude: it seems that the name of this holy child is to work great wonders. Only for one second let us turn aside and behold THE GLORY OF HIS HUMANITY.

Although Christ was a man, all the powers of nature knew their Master and crouched at his feet. He could command the sea or the boisterous wind; diseases, the myrmidons of death, and death their prince, all owned allegiance to him who is immortality and life. After his resurrection he endowed his disciples with his own power, and more than his own power — "For greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father." The name of Jesus was uttered, uttered by feeble men, and devils fled apace; dumb mouths began to sing, lame men leaped like a hart, and the blind began to see; nay in several instances the grave itself yielded up its prey when the name of Jesus sounded through its hollow vaults. The age of miracles passed off, it was well it should. Miracles are but the cradle in which the man-child, the Church, must be rocked. When the Church becomes strong enough to stand alone, she leaves her swaddling bands behind her; but the name of Jesus hath not less power today because no risen dead, no opened eyes follow in our train. At this hour, dead *souls* hear the voice of God and live. At this moment, spiritual eyesight is restored; hearts that were stone are turned to flesh, and tongues that were ready enough at cursing begin to sing. The miracles of the spirit world are infinitely greater than those of the natural. It is little to turn a stone into bread; but it is much to turn a stony heart into flesh. It is comparatively little to open a blind eye, but it is divine indeed to enlighten the understanding and illuminate the dark heart. The name of Jesus is just as mighty in this Tabernacle to-day, as it was in the lips of Paul upon Mars Hill, or when he stood in his own hired house in Rome. Do not say that you entertain a doubt concerning it. Look around, and see the proofs.

O men and brethren, you and I have been the willing trophies of the power of that great name. In this house, or in the Surrey Music Hall, and elsewhere, where that name was proclaimed, we received a broken heart — we who once had hearts hard as adamant. There the tears of repentance began to flow; there the griefs, the heavy glooms of our spirit, were scattered by the Sun of Righteousness. If we have been made to walk in holiness, this is one of the signs and wonders of his name. If drunkenness and lust have been shaken off, this, too, is to his praise. If the demoniac, the man who was full of devilry, has been clothed and made to sit in his right mind at the feet of Jesus, this is another of the signs and wonders. In this place — not only in this great chamber, but below-stairs in our classes, and in our Sabbath-schools too, signs and wonders are wrought by the name of the holy child, Jesus. And in other places of worship in London, wherever Christ is lifted up — wherever his sacrifice is made the prominent theme, the dry bones in the valley come together, the Spirit

breathes upon them, and they live as an exceeding great army. We defy the whole world to show anything comparable to the power of Jesus' name. There is more magic in it than ever was in Moses' rod; it is more mighty even than his voice, though he divided the Red Sea and brought water out of the rock. Brethren, let us spread his name; let it be always on our tongues. Let us each in our proper sphere, declare his glory, and we shall see his kingdom come, and his will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven. I wonder whether there is anyone here who will be a sign and wonder of the love of Christ! Do you wish to be? Ah! then, I hope you are. Do you wish to be? Then, the door is open. "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." One look at Jesus, and you are saved — a trustful casting of yourself on him, and you are delivered. God enable you to do this now, and you shall see in the change which is wrought within you, an internal evidence of the majesty of Christ's person, which shall never fail you. You shall be established by that which you feel within, in so sure and certain a manner, that the arguments of infidelity or deism shall never be able to shake you off the rock. May God grant this for his holy name's sake. Amen.

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HE EMPTIED HIMSELF

Thomas Goodwin

It is adorably true indeed that the Eternal Son made Himself of **no reputation**. Yes; but He did far more than that. He did infinitely far more than that. For our salvation, HE EMPTIED HIMSELF. That is to say, the Eternal Son despoiled and depleted Himself of all His divine power and heavenly glory, and was made flesh, and was made sin, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

*His greatness He for us abas'd, For us His glory vail'd;
In human likeness dwelt on earth, His majesty conceal'd.*

What all that divine power and heavenly glory was which the Eternal Son possessed before He emptied Himself neither the tongue nor the pen even of an inspired apostle can ever attain to tell. But there were some things that the Eternal Son performed in the service of His Father before He emptied Himself: some things that come perhaps somewhat more within the range of revelation and within the scope of the human mind. As thus

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was not anything made that was made...For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth: visible and invisible, all things were created by Him, and for Him, and by Him all things consist."

But wonderful and glorious as all that is, at the same time it had been better that the Son of God had never created this world of ours at all unless He was prepared to do far more for our world than merely to create it and to sustain it in its created existence. For, whatever any of His Father's other worlds might need and might receive at the Son's almighty hands over and above their first creation and their continual preservation, it was divinely foreseen from eternity—nay, the apostle is bold enough to say that it was divinely foreordained from eternity—that sin should enter this world of ours, and with sin, and as its wages, both death and hell. And thus it was that before the foundations of this world of ours were ever laid, the Eternal Father had already committed it to His Eternal Son that, for our salvation from sin and death and hell, He must, in the fulness of time, empty Himself and take upon Himself the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

And thus it was that when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And thus it came about that He who had created this world of ours descended into it, and made Himself one of His own earthly creatures, and lived all His appointed time on earth in all the emptiness and limitation and dependence and subjection that was involved in His great work which he had undertaken to perform for His Father. For it is wholly true and it is wholly due to Him that it

should be told us concerning our Saviour that He made Himself of no reputation. The whole heavens and the whole earth had all resounded with His great reputation as soon as He had finished the formation of the heavens and the earth and all the host of them. On the seventh day of creation the Son of God ended His great work which He had created and made, and He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. And on that first Sabbath day all the morning stars sang together before Him, and all the sons of God shouted for joy in His presence.

But when the predestinated time for the Son's humiliation and for our salvation came He arose and descended down from His Father's house and left all His heavenly renown and reputation behind Him. And then, as the great prologue has it, He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. How His own received Him, and what entertainment He had at their hands, we read with unspeakable shame and pain on every page of the four Gospels. At the same time all that was no surprise to Him; neither did the reception that He received on this earth take Him at all unawares. From the beginning he had foreseen it all, and had prepared Himself for it all. "Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is all written of Me." He means that such things as these were written of Him: such awful things as these: "I am a worm, and no man. I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out the lip, they shake the head." The Son of God foresaw Himself as in a glass in that awful twenty-second Psalm. Again, this was written, and He had often read it: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." And again, He foresaw that all this also would be written concerning Him, and He had often in anticipation read it.

"Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head. And they put on Him a purple robe, and bowed the knee, and said, Hail! King of the Jews. And they smote Him in His face with their hands." Yes, indeed: the Eternal Son, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, made Himself of no reputation! And that one word, of no reputation, makes us sinful men to stop and think. For, how we all live and labour for a reputation! How we are all puffed up with our reputation when it comes to us! And how we are all cast down when our reputation departs from us.

But how different from all that was our Divine Lord. O reputation—loving men! in all your ambitions remember your Divine Redeemer. And determine to follow Him henceforth in all His footsteps of self-humiliation. And, like Him, always seek the praise and the reputation that come from God and from a good conscience alone.

But to proceed. *Such was His self-depletion that, Divine Sovereign and Divine Lawgiver as He was, He took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient to all men in all things.* And to begin with, He became obedient to Joseph and Mary in all things and at all times. At twelve years old He went down from His first Passover and was subject to them. And that was so because He humbled Himself to come under the law of a true and proper human childhood. Year after year, he lived under the fifth commandment of the Decalogue like any other dutiful son in the house of Israel. So much was this the case, that if you go back and enter Mary's humble home you will see her first-born son making Himself subject to her, and to His brothers and sisters, in everything. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered every day at all their hands. And if you go back and enter Joseph's toilsome workshop you will see Him who had made all things in heaven and on earth now making Himself obedient in cutting and planing wood, and in all joining and mortising work, like any other obedient apprentice in the workshops of Nazareth. "St Joseph was dead, and Jesus had succeeded to His foster-father's modest business." As Dr. Newman has it: "Our Divine Lord was found of no reputation in this world, whether on the score of rank or of education. It seems almost irreverent to speak of His temporal employment; but it is profitable to remind ourselves that the Son of God Himself was a sort of smith, and made ploughs and cattle yokes." Yes, and all the time He never once hinted at what He might have spoken out but for His absolute and ever-silent humility. He never once said to his fellow-workmen what He had found written concerning Himself in the prophet Isaiah: He so hid all these amazing things in His wholly self-emptied and utterly humble heart. "He hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. His own hands hath made all these things." Not that His human hands, born of Mary, had made all these things. No. But without His Divine Hands, begotten of God, not one of all these things had ever been made. Such and so great was His self-emptiness and His submissiveness and His obedience toward all His earthly tutors and governors. And much more was He submissive and obedient in all things toward His Father in heaven. For, never once, as a child, or as a growing youth, or as a grown-up man, never once was He disobedient to the letter or to the spirit of any part of His Father's holy law; never once in thought or word or deed. Never once did His conscience make Him a coward. Never once, for a moment, night nor day, did He lose the light of His Father's countenance. No, never once, from Nazareth to Gethsemane. "This is My well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."

"Wherefore God hath also highly exalted Him." His God and Father had seen all that from His Son's first undertaking of all that down to His finishing of all that. His God and Father had kept in His bottle every tear that His Son the Man of

Sorrows had shed during the whole of His sojourn in this world of sorrows. Not one sigh of His, not one sob, not one heavenward breath of secret self-surrendering prayer had escaped His Father's ever-open ear. "And He shall be mine," said His Father, "in that day when I make up My jewels." And it was so, and it now is so, and it shall for ever be so. For all the Divine Son's self-emptiness is for ever at an end now. "Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee. Glorify Thou Me with the glory I had with Thee before the world was, and before I emptied Myself and was made flesh." And it was so. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and hath set Him again at His own right hand, far above all principality and power and every name that is named. As it was in the beginning, as it is now, and as it shall for ever be, world without end." And all that to the glory of God the Father. All that to His glory who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to death, even the death of the cross.

Yes, my believing brethren, yes. God's great love accounts for it all. God's everlasting love explains it all. God is love, and that is the true explanation and the sufficient key to it all. Given that God is love, and that God's Eternal Son is God with His Father, and is ever in His Father's bosom given all that, and all the rest follows as by a Divine necessity. Yes, my loving brethren, you have the true secret and the full explanation of the self-emptying and the humiliation of the cross in your own loving hearts. All you who are born of God, all you who truly love God and one another, all you who greatly love and are greatly loved—in all that you possess in your own bosoms the true explanation and the true key to the whole mystery of redemption, the explanation and the key to that love which passes all explanation and every key. And, after the glory of God, it is to kindle ever afresh the life of a true brotherly love in our hearts that this apostle so carries our hearts captive to the astounding love of Christ toward us. It is to banish for ever from among us all envy of one another, all jealousy of one another, all suspicion of one another, and all strife as to who shall be counted the greatest. It is to make all self-seeking and all vain-glory to be for ever impossible among all Christian men. It is to make us to look not at our own things alone, but every man to look on the honour, and the prosperity, and the whole happiness of other men also. It is on the ground of the amazing and all-conquering love of Christ that the apostle reasons with us, and says to us: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ: if any comfort of love: if any fellowship of the Spirit: if any bowels and mercies: be ye like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife and vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless: the sons of God without rebuke." In one word, and in a word beyond which even an inspired apostle cannot go: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who emptied Himself and humbled Himself even to the death of the cross."

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