

On the
HUMANITY
of **CHRIST**



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On the Humanity of Christ

DEAR —: The questions you put make me feel deeply all that there is sorrowful in the walk of one whom nevertheless I love sincerely, our friend M. G. To enter upon subtle questions as to the person of Jesus tends to wither and trouble the soul, to destroy the spirit of worship and affection, and to substitute thorny inquiries, as if the spirit of man could solve the manner in which the humanity and the divinity of Jesus were united to each other. In this sense it is said, "No one knoweth the Son but the Father." It is needless to say

that I have no such pretension. The humanity of Jesus cannot be compared. It was true and real humanity—body, soul, flesh, and blood such as mine, as far as human nature is concerned. But Jesus appeared in circumstances quite different from those in which Adam was found. He came expressly to bear our griefs and infirmities. Adam had none of them to bear; not that his nature was incapable of them in itself, but he was not in the circumstances which brought them in. God had set him in a position inaccessible to physical evil, until he fell under moral evil.

On the other hand, God was not in Adam. God was in Christ in the midst of all sorts of miseries and

afflictions, fatigues and sufferings, across which Christ passed according to the power of God, and with thoughts of which the Spirit of God was always the source, though they were really human in their sympathies. Adam before his fall had no sorrows: God was not in him, neither was the Holy Ghost the source of his thoughts; after his fall, sin was the source of his thoughts. It was never so in Jesus.

On the other side, Jesus is the Son of Man, Adam was not. But at the same time, Jesus was born by divine power, so that that Holy Thing which was born of Mary was called the Son of God; which is not true of any other. He is Christ, Son of Man, but as Man even born of God; so that the state

of humanity in Him is neither what Adam was before his fall nor what he became after his fall.

But what was changed in Adam by the fall was not humanity, but the state of humanity. Adam was as much a man before as after, and after as before. Sin entered humanity, which became estranged from God: it is without God in the world. Now Christ is not that. He was always perfectly with God, save that He suffered on the cross the forsaking of God in His soul. Also the Word was made flesh. God was manifest in flesh. Thus acting in this true humanity, His presence was incompatible with sin in the unity of the same person.

It is a mistake to suppose that Adam had immortality in himself.

No creature possesses it. They are all sustained of God, who "alone has immortality" essentially. When God was no longer pleased to sustain him in this world, man becomes mortal, and his strength is exhausted: in fact, according to the ways and will of God, he attains to the age of near one thousand years when God so wills, seventy when He finds it good. Only God would have this terminate—that one should die sooner or later when sin enters—save changing those who survive to the coming of Jesus, because He has overcome death.

Now, God was in Christ, which changed all in this respect (not as to the reality of His humanity, with all its affections, its feelings,

its natural wants of soul and body; all which were in Jesus, and were consequently affected by all that surrounded Him, only according to the Spirit and without sin). No one takes His life from Him; He gives it up, but at the moment willed of God. He is abandoned, in fact, to the effect of man's iniquity, because He came to accomplish the will of God; He suffers Himself to be crucified and slain. Only the moment in which He yields up, His spirit is in His hands.* He works no miracle to hinder the effect of the cruel means

*[That is, the time or moment of yielding up His spirit is in His own power. All being "finished" *He* delivers up His spirit to His Father—man takes it not from Him. John 10:17,18; 19:30.—Ed.]

of death which man employed, in order to guard His humanity from their effect; He leaves it to their effect. His divinity is not employed to secure Himself from it. to secure Himself from death; but it is employed to add to it all His moral value, all His perfection to His obedience. He works no miracle not to die, but He works a miracle in dying. He acts according to His divine rights in dying, but not in guarding Himself from death; for He surrenders His soul to His Father as soon as all is finished.

The difference, then, of His humanity is not in that it was not really and fully that of Mary, but in that it was so by an act of divine power, so as to be such with-

out sin; and, moreover, that in place of being separated from God in His soul, like every sinful man, God was in Him who was of God. He could say, "I thirst," "My soul is troubled," "it is melted like wax in the midst of My bowels;" but He could also say, "The Son of Man who is in heaven," and, "Before Abraham was, I am." The innocence of Adam was not God manifest in flesh; it was not man subjected, as to the circumstances in which his humanity was found, to all the consequences of sin.

On the other hand, the humanity of man fallen was under the power of sin, of a will opposed to God, of lusts which are at enmity with Him. Christ came to do God's will: in Him was no sin. It was hu-

manity, in Christ, where God was, and not humanity separate from God in itself. It was not humanity in the *circumstances* where God had set man when he was created—the circumstances where sin had set him—and in these circumstances without sin; not such as sin rendered man in their midst, but such as the divine power rendered Him in all His ways in the midst of those circumstances. It was not man where no evil was, like Adam innocent, but man in the midst of evil; it was not man bad in the midst of evil, like Adam fallen; but man perfect, perfect according to God, in the midst of evil, God manifest in flesh; real, proper humanity, but His soul always having the thoughts that God pro-

duces in man, and in absolute communion with God—save when He suffered on the cross, where He must, as to the suffering of His soul, be forsaken of God; more perfect then, as to the extent of the perfection and the degree of obedience, than any where else, because He accomplished the will of God in the face of His wrath, instead of doing it in the joy of His communion; and therefore He asked that this cup should pass, which He never did elsewhere. He could not find His meat in the wrath of God.

Our precious Saviour was quite as really man as I, as regards the simple and abstract idea of humanity, but without sin, born miraculously by divine power; and,

moreover, He was God manifest in flesh.

Now, dear——, having said thus much, I recommend you with all my heart to avoid discussing and defining the person of our blessed Saviour. You will lose the savor of Christ in your thoughts, and you will only find in their room the barrenness of man's spirit in the things of God and in the affections which pertain to them. It is a labyrinth for man, because he labors there at his own charge. It is as if one dissected the body of his friend, instead of nourishing himself with his affections and character. It is one of the worst signs of all those I have met with for the church (as they call it) to which Mr. G. belongs, that he has entered

thus, and that it presents itself after such a sort before the Church of God and before the world.

I may add that I am so profoundly convinced of man's incapacity in this respect, that it is outside the teaching of the Spirit to wish to define how the divinity and the humanity are united in Jesus, that I am quite ready to suppose that, with every desire to avoid, I may have fallen into it, and in falling into it, said something false in what I have written to you. That He is really Man, Son of Man, dependent on God as such, and without sin in this state of dependence, really God in His unspeakable perfection — to this I hold, I hope, more than to my life. To define is what I do not pretend. If I find

something which enfeebles one or other of these truths, or which dishonors what they have for object, I should oppose it, God calling me to it, with all my might. •

May God give you to believe all that the Word teaches with regard to Jesus! It is our peace and our nourishment to understand all that the Spirit gives us to understand, and not seek to define what God does not call us to define; but to worship on the one hand, to feed on the other, and to live in every way according to the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Yours affectionately,

J. N. D.

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