

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST IN ITS MEDICAL ASPECT.

THAT compendium of sound doctrine, the Shorter Catechism, in answer to the question, "How did Christ the Son of God become Man?" states, "Christ the Son of God became Man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and in being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary and in being born of her, yet without sin."

In our approach to the doctrine as thus expressed (i) we shall deal with the anatomical evidence, that is, the evidence afforded by a consideration of the framework or structure of the body; (ii) we shall regard it from the physiological standpoint, that is, the evidence afforded by a study of the functions or processes of the body; and (iii) we shall endeavour to study it from the psychological aspect, from the evidence afforded by Holy Scripture concerning Christ's humanity.

I Natural conception is a mysterious process comprising many elements far beyond the reach of the profoundest intellect.

The adverbs applied to it in Psalm 139 are aptly descriptive, "fearfully," "curiously," "wonderfully and marvellously." And this being true of natural conception, in a much greater sense is it true of our Lord, and to these adverbs we might add two more, "miraculously and mysteriously" - they are beyond the conception of man.

From the moment of this miraculous and mysterious conception to that of His birth, we may confidently assert that the Infant Jesus developed embryonically in Mary's womb, as any other human embryo would develop. The Angel was explicit and particular in his announcement, "Thou shalt conceive in *thy womb*" (Luke 1:31). "Thy womb" is at once indicative of the commencement of his humiliation and his humanity.

Let us consider his birth. "When the days were accomplished," the beloved physician Luke tells us, "she brought forth" (Luke 2:6). Doubtless, these "days" allude to the days of normal gestation. Like any other newborn babe, at His birth He was wrapped in clothing to protect Him from the elements; like any other babe He was helpless, so He was protected by laying him in a manger away from the animals which occupied the stable.

Consider the flesh. We read, "He partook of our flesh and blood, as it is written, Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14). This flesh is at a later date pierced and lacerated by the nails. We read of the prints of the nails. This could mean the laceration or indentation of the nails in his limbs or it might also indicate the scarring due to the blood clotting in these particular wounds. In connection with His flesh again we read that he was circumcised the eighth day in his flesh (Luke 2:21).

All these are evidences that he took "flesh of our flesh." Let us now consider the blood. In the Garden of Eden you will remember that God addressing the serpent said, "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Theologians take the view that the heel here, being the most dependent part of the human body, signifies Christ's humanity. Can we not legitimately take the symbolism a step further? Where there is bruising there must be blood or, to employ a term used in medical jurisprudence, extravasation of blood, and does this not signify His pouring out His soul unto death? "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). And again, "It pleased the Father to bruise him" (Isaiah 53:10). His sweat was "as great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44), and in connection with this there are references in literature to individuals who under great mental anguish actually sweated blood.

Let us now deal with His bones. We have reference to the bony framework of the Lord's body when it is stated, "a bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36), and we are told that "the soldiers break not his legs" (John 19:33), and again, "A spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Thus anatomically considered we have clear testimony to His humanity, developmentally from his conception through the days of accomplishment to his birth, and thereafter of the various elements, flesh, bones and blood, which constitute the human body. This is indeed a true body, and must be distinguished from a fantastic body, which some would give Him, and having taken to himself a body, we would expect the natural processes of growth to be in operation and so we read, "He grew in wisdom and in stature" (Luke 2:52).

II Let us now examine Christ's humanity from the physiological standpoint.

It is well to assert from the outset that there is no reason to believe that man in his pre-fallen state differed from man in his post-fallen state. The change was not in the actions, processes or functions *per se* but, objectively, the change was in the end in view. As a result of the debasing of this aim or object, it came under the curse, with its penal consequences. Thus, in pre-fallen man, the functions were directed to the glorification and enjoyment of the Creator, whereas in post-fallen man they were directed to the glorification and enjoyment of the creature. Pre-fallen man would eat and drink to the glory of God, post-fallen man eats and drinks to the end that he may consume it on his lusts.

Consider the act of weeping, in post-fallen man weeping can be indicative of anger, wrath, sorrow, pain or joy. We believe that in pre-fallen man, tears were indicative only of joy, the intense joy of holy communion with God. Weeping in a babe differs from that in an adult, inasmuch as in its earliest phase it constitutes the infant's language, the only means of acquainting the parents of its needs.

Fallen nature early asserts itself however and this cry of want degenerates into a cry of wrath and rebellion. We believe by inference that Jesus as a babe wept; it was part of His humanity and His humiliation, but His were tears which were never those of rebellion or wrath, for we must always remember that He was without sin. He may have wept to acquaint His earthly parents of wants, in order that He could do the Will of God, who sent Him. He wept over Jerusalem; He wept at the grave of Lazarus.

We also read that He fasted, and we are told that He was an hungered. We are told that on the cross, He cried "I thirst" (John 19:28). After a day with the multitude, in the evening He sought relief from the crowd on the Sea of Galilee and, being weary, he naturally fell asleep (Mark 4:38). Fatigued with a journey, he naturally rested at a well (John 4:6). Sweating is normally a healthy process, but under the curse it can be indicative of great mental and physical strain. Christ sweated great drops of blood, and there have been, as I have already indicated, certain instances in history where actual blood was sweated as a result of intense anguish and strain.

II Although in the anatomical and physiological evidences furnished in the Word we have ample proof of the Incarnation, they would not be complete without the psychological evidence, which reveals the intense humanity of our Lord.

The brute creation has structure and function, it has anatomy and physiology, but man alone has soul. Psalm 8, which theologians consider Messianic, states, "What is . . . the Son of Man, that thou visitest him? for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thine hands" (verses 4-6). Christ took unto himself a reasonable soul. It is written, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," (Matthew 26:38), and in another place, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The Trichotomists, who hold that man is comprised of body, soul and spirit, doubtless would cite these last texts in support of their contention, but here soul and spirit are interchangeable terms.

In considering the psychological evidence of Christ's humanity, observe His filial subjection. Luke says, "he was subject to his parents," (Luke 2:51), and in passing it may be noted that these references are mainly taken from Luke whom the Holy Spirit specifically chose and endowed as the most qualified to give this evidence of the humanity of our Lord and to substantiate it. This submission was a human submission, it was human obedience inasmuch as he obeyed His parents. In this connection it should be remembered that under the Mosaic Law disobedience to parents could be punished by death. Again, His humanity was revealed not only in His obedience to earthly parents, but in His obedience to human law. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21). Finally, in the highest and deepest sense His humanity was revealed in his obedience to the divine law. "He became obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:8).

Observe too that Jesus prayed. Prayer is a peculiarly human act, and although our Lord's life was one continuous act of prayer, where the vital atmosphere was a continuous communion with God, yet as man He was deeply conscious of the spiritual necessities of man, and he had periods of retirement when He prayed and poured out his soul to God. "He was made like unto his brethren" and it was necessary in order to His having perfect sympathy with them that He should in all points be tempted like as they, yet "without sin" (Hebrews 2:17).

The vast theme of His human sympathy is another important psychological aspect of Christ's human nature. How often was He touched with compassion. Little children, a vast multitude, a sorrowing widow, a raving maniac, an untouchable leper - all evoked His compassion and the sympathy of His humanity harmonised with the power of His divinity to work the miraculous. Even when He is passing through death's dark vale on the cross this sympathy shone as the noonday sun, "Woman, behold thy son," and addressing John, "Son, behold thy mother" (John 19:26,27).

His tears were indicative of human love, sorrow and sympathy. Such were His tears at the grave of Lazarus. A depth of pathos is manifest in this poignant scene where as the Son of Man He sorrowed with the bereaved and as the Son of God wrought the miraculous. Finally, consider His agony in the garden. He prays, "Save me from this hour." This is an expression of feeling in our Lord's life which can only be accounted for on the grounds of perfect humanity. It indicates His apparent shrinking from suffering and death, "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" (Hebrews 5:7). His suffering on the cross and His death are further evidences of his humanity not yet mentioned.

These evidences are by no means exhaustive and as already stated, they do but touch the fringe of a fathomless sea, and it is vital to add that in all the three directions in which we have endeavoured to consider Christ's humanity, He was sinless. He went about continually doing good, doing the will of His Father, being obedient unto death. He was in truth very Man and very God.