

13. The Kenoticists

in nineteenth century Germany a number of theologians espoused a view of Christ's person which was built upon ideas which they derived from Phil 2:7 and II Cor. 8:9. They felt that the available Christological formulas did not do justice to the reality and integrity of Christ's humanity, or to the overwhelming greatness of Christ's humiliation in becomIng poor for our sakes. Accordingly, they translated KENOO (κενόω) in Phil 2:7 to mean emptied, and took this to imply that the divine Logos at the incarnation emptied or divested himself of all or some of His divine attributes, and thus became man by reducing himself (either wholly or partly) to the dimensions of a man.

G. Thomasius, J. H. A. Ebrard, W. F. Gess, and H. L. Martensen in Europe, and Henry Ward Beecher in the United States, were the chief spokesmen for this view. Thomasius held that the divine Logos, while retaining His divine self-consciousness, yet laid aside His relative attributes (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience) to take to himself a true human nature. Martensen held that the divine Logos assumed two centers of existence, one eternal, the other temporal; that these two centers were separate; that the human Logos knew nothing of the divine Logos; and that the human Logos took into union with himself a true human nature. Gess held that the divine Logos emptied himself of all of his attributes, and became the human soul in Christ. Ebrard held that the divine Logos kept His attributes, but only in a form appropriate to human existence, and that this Logos became the human soul in Christ.

All of these men held that the Logos who had been reduced or emptied at the incarnation increased in wisdom and power until He once again became fully God, either at His resurrection or His ascension.

