

Kenosis (Exinanition) vs. Hypostatic Union

Collated by paulquek

According to WIKIPEDIA, **Kenosis** is a Greek word for emptiness, which is used as a theological term.

The ancient Greek word **κένωσις** (*kénosis*) means an "emptying", from **κενός** (*kenós*) "empty".

The word is mainly used, however, in a Christian theological context, viz.:

Philippians 2:7

"Jesus made himself nothing (κένωσε *kénose*) ..." (NIV) or

"...he emptied himself..." (NRSV), using the verb form κενόω (*kenóō*) "to empty".

Here are the relevant verses from various versions of the Bible:

Philippians 2:5-8 (KJV)

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV)

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:5-8 (AMP)

⁵ Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]

⁶ Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained,

⁷ But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being.

⁸ And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!

Philippians 2:5-8 (MSG)

⁵⁻⁸ Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of Himself. He had equal status with God but

didn't think so much of Himself that He had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, He stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death - and the worst kind of death at that - a crucifixion.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NASB)

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT)

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

⁸ When He appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Philippians 2:5-8 (GNB)

⁵ The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶ He always had the nature of God, but He did not think that by force He should try to remain equal with God.

⁷ Instead of this, of His own free will He gave up all He had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness.

⁸ He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death --- His death on the cross.

Here is a combined commentary (by **John W. Ritenbaugh**) that appears to be based on the KJV and NASB:

Philippians 2:5-8 -- Forerunner Commentary

These verses provide the background for Christ's incarnation. The first word we need to consider is **form** in verse 6. It is the Greek **morphe**, for which English has no exact equivalent. Unlike "form" in English, **morphe** does not mean "shape." It is a philosophical term that means "the outward expression of an inner essence." We can derive an illustration of this definition from figure skating. One might say, "I went to the Winter Olympics, and the figure skater's form was outstanding." What is meant is that skater's swift, rhythmic grace, and coordinated movements were an outward expression of his inward ability to skate expertly.

Jesus was in the form (**morphe**) of God. The word **being** indicates a condition that began in the past and continues into the present. Therefore, while on earth, the outward expression of His inmost being was the expression of the divine essence, **deity**. Paul means that when the One who became Jesus, the Word, came to earth to assume the form of a man, He did not cease being God.

Also in verse 6 is the word **consider**, meaning "to make a judgment based on facts." Paul desires us to weigh the difference between Christ's original state with what He became as a man. He implies that the difference - and thus His humility in making such a sacrifice - is awesome.

The word **robbery** has two applications: "to seize unlawfully" or "a treasure to be

clutched and retained at all hazards." Since the subject of this section is Christ's humility, the second meaning must be the proper application. Christ humbly did not assert His right to consider the expression of His divine essence such a treasure that He should hold on to it at all hazards. He waived that right. This is the very essence of humility.

Finally, **God** in verse 6 does not refer to a Personage, or it would say "the God" in the Greek. Since it does not, it must refer to deity in general, that is, the expression of the divine essence.

Verse 6, then, declares that, before His incarnation, the Word outwardly expressed His essential nature - Deity - and He judged that being equal with Deity in the expression of the divine essence was not a treasure to be clung to and held at all hazards. Thus, He gave it up to take on another outward expression.

Can anything that has some part removed from it still be as much as it was before? In the Word's case, He surrendered a level of existence never experienced by any human being, since only God lives at such a level in terms of both quality and length. We should not forget that what He gave up included *immortality*. If this is the case, was He as fully God as a human as He was before?

Of course, the other side of this picture is His humanity. In Philippians 2:5-7, Paul is saying that God exchanged one form of expression for another. Therefore, He never ceased being what He originally was, just the expression of what He was changed. Therefore, He was not a man in the strictest sense of what a man is-as we are. He was the Word of God manifest in the flesh and nature of a man. Can we then say He was fully man?

John W. Ritenbaugh **Fully Man and Fully God?**

In the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the topic of **Kenosis** is discussed as follows:

A term derived from the discussion as to the real meaning of Phil. 2:6 sqq.: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied [*ekenosen*] himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as man."

Protestant opinions

The early *Reformers*, not satisfied with the teaching of *Catholic theology* on this point, professed to a deeper meaning in **St. Paul's** words, but **Luther** and a **Melanchton** failed in their speculations. **John Brenz** (d. 10 September, 1570), of Tübingen, maintained that as the **Word** assumed **Christ's** human nature, so His human nature not only possessed the **Divinity**, but also had the power to make use of the **Divinity**, though it freely abstained from such a use. **Chemnitz** differed from this view. He denied that **Jesus Christ** possessed the **Divinity** in such a way as to have a right to its use. The **kenosis**, or the **exinanition**, of His *Divine attributes* was, therefore, a free act of **Christ**, according to **Brenz**; it was the connatural consequence of the **Incarnation**, according to **Chemnitz**.

Among *modern Protestants* the following opinions have been the most prevalent:

Thomasius, **Delitzsch**, and **Kahnis** regard the **Incarnation** as a self-emptying of the *Divine manner of existence*, as a self-limitation of the **Word's**

omniscience, omnipresence, etc.

Gess, Reuss, and Godet contend that the *Incarnation* implies a real depotentiation of the **Word**; the **Word** became, rather than assumed, the human soul of **Christ**.

Ebrard holds that the *Divine properties* in **Christ** appeared under the **Kantian** time-form appropriate to man; his **kenosis** consists in an exchange of the eternal for a time-form of existence.

Martensen and perhaps **Hutton** distinguish a double life of the **Word**: In the **Man-Christ** they see a **kenosis** and a real depotentiation of the **Word**; in the world the purely *Divine Word* carries the work of mediator and revealer. According to **Godet**, and probably also **Gore**, the **Word** in His **kenosis** strips Himself even of His *immutable holiness*, His *infinite love*, and His *personal consciousness*, so as to enter into a human development similar to ours.

Catholic teaching

According to *Catholic theology*, the abasement of the **Word** consists in the assumption of humanity and the simultaneous occultation of the **Divinity**. **Christ's** abasement is seen first in His subjecting Himself to the *laws of human birth and growth* and to the *lowliness of fallen human nature*. His likeness, in His *abasement*, to the fallen nature does not compromise the actual loss of justice and sanctity, but only the pains and penalties attached to the loss. These fall partly on the body, partly on the soul, and consist in liability to suffering from internal and external causes.

As to the body, **Christ's** dignity excludes some bodily pains and states. God's all-preserving power inhabiting the body of **Jesus** did not allow any corruption; it also prevented disease or the beginning of corruption. **Christ's** holiness was not compatible with decomposition after death, which is the image of the destroying power of sin. In fact, **Christ** had the right to be free from all bodily pain, and His human will had the power to remove or suspend the action of the causes of pain. But He freely subjected Himself to most of the pains resulting from bodily exertion and adverse external influences, e.g. fatigue, hunger, wounds, etc. As these pains had their sufficient reason in the nature of **Christ's** body, they were natural to Him.

Christ retained in Him also the weaknesses of the soul, the passions of His rational and sensitive appetites, but with the following restrictions:

(a) Inordinate and sinful motions are incompatible with **Christ's** holiness. Only morally blameless passions and affections, e.g. fear, sadness, the share of the soul in the sufferings of the body, were compatible with His **Divinity** and His spiritual perfection.

(b) The origin, intensity, and duration of even these emotions were subject to **Christ's** free choice. Besides, He could prevent their disturbing the actions of His soul and His peace of mind.

To complete His abasement, **Christ** was subject to His Mother and St. Joseph, to the laws of the State and the positive laws of God; He shared the hardships and privations of the poor and the lowly.

Continuing with the **WIKIPEDIA**, **Kenosis**, in Christian theology, is the concept of the 'self-emptying' of one's own will and becoming entirely receptive to God and His perfect will.

It is used both as an explanation of the *incarnation*, and an indication of the nature

of God's activity and condescension.

Mystical theologian **John of the Cross**' work "*Dark Night of the Soul*" is a particularly lucid explanation of God's process of transforming the believer into the icon or "*likeness of Christ*".

An apparent dilemma arises when Christian theology posits a God outside of time and space, who enters into time and space to become *human (incarnate)*.

The doctrine of **Kenosis** attempts to explain what the **Son of God [Jesus Christ]** chose to give up in terms of His divine attributes, or divinity, in order to assume human nature.

Since the *incarnate Jesus* is simultaneously fully human and fully divine, **Kenosis** holds that these changes were temporarily assumed by God in His *incarnation*, and that when Jesus *ascended* back into heaven following the *resurrection*, He fully reassumed all of His original *attributes and divinity*.

Specifically **Kenosis** refers to *attributes of God* that are thought to be incompatible with becoming fully human.

For example, God's *omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience* as well as His *aseity, eternity, infinity, impassibility* and *immutability*.

Theologians who support this doctrine often appeal to a reading of **Philippians 2:5-8** (see above).

Critics of **Kenosis** theology argue that the context of **Philippians 2:5-8** is referring to **Jesus** voluntarily taking the form of a servant to conceal His divine glory (revealed temporarily in the **Transfiguration**), or to forsaking His *place and position in heaven* to dwell among men, as opposed to forsaking His divine attributes or nature (see **syncatabasis**).

Kenotic Christology focuses on certain passages in the Gospels where **Jesus** questions His being called *good* (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, Matthew 19:17), and

evidence that He was not *omniscient* concerning the date of the *Second Advent* (Mark 13:32, Matthew 24:36). It became a central issue in the *Protestant* debates of the sixteenth century, and was revived in the nineteenth century to reinterpret classical doctrines of the *incarnation*.

The website of the **CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS & RESEARCH MINISTRY (or CARM)** dealing with heresy has this to say about "Kenosis" (<http://www.carm.org/heresy/kenosis.htm>):

"**Kenosis**" is derived from the Greek word "kenoo" which means "to empty." It is used in Phil. 2:7. The text of Phil. 2:5-8 is worth recording here.

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross," (Phil. 2:5-8).

The **Kenosis theory** states that Jesus gave up some of His divine attributes while He was a man here on earth. These attributes were **omniscience**, **omnipresence**, and **omnipotence**. Christ did this voluntarily so that He could function as a man in order to fulfill the work of redemption. *This view was first introduced in the late 1800s in Germany with **Gottfried Thomasius** (1802-75), a Lutheran theologian.*

Phil. 2:5-8 does not teach that Jesus gave up any of His divine attributes since it says nothing of those attributes. Instead, it is speaking of His humility that moved him, according to the will of the Father, to leave His majestic state in heaven and enter into the humble position of human nature.

There is, however, a problem the orthodox must deal with that the **Kenosis theory** seems to more adequately address. Take Mark 13:32 for example. In it, Jesus said, *"**But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.**"* If Jesus knew all things, as is implied in His divine nature, then why did He not know the day or hour of His own return. The answer is that Jesus cooperated with the limitations of humanity and voluntarily did not exercise His attribute of **omniscience**. He still was divine but was moving and living completely as a man.

The **Kenosis theory** is a dangerous doctrine because if it were true then it would mean that Jesus was not fully divine. If Jesus was not fully divine, then His atoning work would not be sufficient to atone for the sins of the world.

The correct doctrine is the **Hypostatic Union**, that Jesus is both fully God and fully man (Col. 2:9) and did not give up any divine attributes while as a man on earth.

Hypostatic Union

CARM's web page <http://www.carm.org/doctrine/2natures.htm> expounds on the dual nature that Jesus possessed:

Jesus' Two Natures

Jesus is God in human flesh. He is not half God and half man. He is fully divine and fully man. That is, Jesus has two distinct natures: divine and human. Jesus is the Word who was God and was with God and was made flesh, (John 1:1,14). This means that in the single person of Jesus is both a human and divine nature. The divine nature was not changed. It was not altered. He is not merely a man who "had God within Him" nor is he a man who "manifested the God principle." He is God, second person of the Trinity. "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word," (Heb. 1:3, NIV). Jesus' two natures are not "mixed together," nor are they combined into a new God-man nature. They are separate yet act as a unit in the one person of Jesus. This is called the Hypostatic Union.

The following chart should help you see the two natures of Jesus "in action":

GOD	MAN
He is worshiped (Matt. 2:2,11; 14:33).	He worshiped the Father (John 17).
He was called God (John 20:28; Heb. 1:8)	He was called man (Mark 15:39; John 19:5).
He was called Son of God (Mark 1:1)	He was called Son of Man (John 9:35-37)
He is prayed to (Acts 7:59).	He prayed to the Father (John 17).
He is sinless (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15).	He was tempted (Matt. 4:1).
He knows all things (John 21:17).	He grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52).
He gives eternal life (John 10:28).	He died (Rom. 5:8).
All the fullness of deity dwells in Him (Col. 2:9).	He has a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

The Communicatio Idiomatum

A doctrine that is related to the Hypostatic Union is the *communicatio idiomatum* (Latin for "communication of properties"). It is the teaching that the attributes of both the divine and human natures are ascribed to the one person of Jesus. This means that the man Jesus could lay claim to the glory He had with the Father before the world was made (John 17:5), claim that He descended from heaven, (John 3:13), and also claim omnipresence, (Matt. 28:20). All of these are divine qualities that are laid claim to by Jesus; therefore, the attributes of the divine properties were claimed by the person of Jesus.

Click here on the Catholic Encyclopedia's take on Communicatio Idiomatum
(*"Communication of Idioms"*): <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04169a.htm>

Mistakes Cultists make

One of the most common errors that non-Christian cults make is not understanding the two natures of Christ. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses focus on Jesus' humanity and ignore His divinity. They repeatedly quote verses dealing with Jesus as a man and try and set them against scripture showing that Jesus is also divine. On the other hand, the Christian Scientists do the reverse. They focus on the scriptures showing Jesus' divinity to the extent of denying His true humanity.

For a proper understanding of Jesus and, therefore, all other doctrines that relate to Him, His two natures must be properly understood and defined. Jesus is one person with two natures. This is why He would grow in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52) yet know all things (John 21:17). He is the Divine Word that became flesh (John 1:1,14).

The Bible is about Jesus (John 5:39). The prophets prophesied about Him (Acts 10:43). The Father bore witness of Him (John 5:37; 8:18). The Holy Spirit bore witness of Him (John 15:26). The works Jesus did bore witness of Him (John 5:36; 10:25). The multitudes bore witness of Him (John 12:17). And, Jesus bore witness of Himself (John 14:6; 18:6).

Other verses to consider when examining His deity are John 10:30-33; 20:28; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:6-8; and 2 Pet. 1:1.

1 Tim. 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Right now, there is a man in heaven on the throne of God. He is our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). He is our Savior (Titus 2:13). He is our Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). He is Jesus.

Here is an online result on Strong's Concordance of the greek word "kenoo" (G2758):

Strong's Concordance, # G2758:


<http://blueletterbible.org/cgi-bin/strongs.pl?strongs=2758>

Lexicon Results for <i>kenoō</i> (Strong's G2758)	
Greek for G2758	
ΚΕΝΩΩ	
Transliteration	Pronunciation
kenoō	ke-no'-ō (Key)
Part of Speech	Root Word (Etymology)
verb	from G2756
TDNT Reference	Vines
3:661,426	View Entry
Outline of Biblical Usage	
<p>1) to empty, make empty</p> <p>a) of Christ, he laid aside equality with or the form of God</p> <p>2) to make void</p> <p>a) deprive of force, render vain, useless, of no effect</p> <p>3) to make void</p> <p>b) cause a thing to be seen to be empty, hollow, false</p>	
Authorized Version (KJV) Translation Count – Total: 5	
AV – make void 2, make of none effect 1, make of no reputation 1, be in vain 1	
Thayer's Lexicon (Help)	
<p>κενώω, -ῶ: [fut. <i>κενώσω</i>, 1 Co. ix. 15 L txt. T Tr WH]; 1 aor. <i>ἐκένωσα</i>; Pass., pf. <i>κεκένωμαι</i>; 1 aor. <i>ἐκένωθην</i>; (<i>κενός</i>); 1. <i>to empty, make empty</i>: <i>ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε</i>, sc. <i>τοῦ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἢ τῆς μορφῆς τοῦ θεοῦ</i>, i. e. he laid aside equality with or the form of God (said of Christ), Phil. ii. 7 (see a fuller exposition of this passage in <i>μορφῆ</i>). 2. <i>to make void i. e. deprive of force, render vain, useless, of no effect</i>: pass., Ro. iv. 14; 1 Co. i. 17. 3. <i>to make void i. e. cause a thing to be seen to be empty, hollow, false</i>: <i>τὸ καύχημα</i>, 1 Co. ix. 15; pass. 2 Co. ix. 3. (Twice in Sept. viz. Jer. xiv. 2; xv. 9; often in Attic writ.)*</p>	

Concordance for kenoō (KJV Strong's G2758)
Displayed in KJV Text

Learn More About Our Word Search Tools

Strong's Number G2758 matches the Greek κενόω (*kenoō*). For the *unrelated* Hebrew word for H2758 צַרִישׁ (*charyish*) [click here](#). [To get a Hebrew Strong's number, please enter the number with a leading H, ie H1234 for Hebrew, G1234 for Greek.] ([More Info](#))

SHOW STRONG'S 

Rom 4:14 For ¹⁰⁶³ if ¹⁴⁸⁷ they which are of ¹⁵³⁷ the law ³⁵⁵¹ [be] heirs ²⁸¹⁸, faith ⁴¹⁰² is made void ²⁷⁵⁸, and ²⁵³² the promise ¹⁸⁶⁰ made of none effect ²⁶⁷³ ;

1Cr 1:17 For ¹⁰⁶³ Christ ⁵⁵⁴⁷ sent ⁶⁴⁹ me ³¹⁶⁵ not ³⁷⁵⁶ to baptize ⁹⁰⁷, but ²³⁵ to preach the gospel ²⁰⁹⁷ ; not ³⁷⁵⁶ with ¹⁷²² wisdom ⁴⁶⁷⁸ of words ³⁰⁵⁶, lest ³³⁶³ the cross ⁴⁷¹⁶ of Christ ⁵⁵⁴⁷ should be made of none effect ²⁷⁵⁸ .

1Cr 9:15 But ¹¹⁶¹ I ¹⁴⁷³ have used ⁵⁵³⁰ none ³⁷⁶² of these things ⁵¹³⁰; ¹¹⁶¹ neither ³⁷⁵⁶ have I written ¹¹²⁵ these things ⁵⁰²³, that ²⁴⁴³ it should be ¹⁰⁹⁶ so ³⁷⁷⁹ done ¹⁰⁹⁶ unto ¹⁷²² me ¹⁶⁹⁸; for ¹⁰⁶³ [it were] better ³¹²³ for me ³⁴²⁷ to die ⁵⁹⁹ ²⁵⁷⁰, than ²²²⁸ that ²⁴⁴³ any man ⁵¹⁰⁰ should make ²⁷⁵⁸ my ³⁴⁵⁰ glorying ²⁷⁴⁵ void ²⁷⁵⁸ .

2Cr 9:3 Yet ¹¹⁶¹ have I sent ³⁹⁹² the brethren ⁸⁰, lest ³³⁶³ our ²²⁵⁷ boasting ²⁷⁴⁵ of ⁵²²⁸ you ⁵²¹⁶ should be in vain ²⁷⁵⁸ in ¹⁷²² this ⁵¹²⁹ behalf ³³¹³; that ²⁴⁴³, as ²⁵³¹ I said ³⁰⁰⁴, ye may be ⁵⁶⁰⁰ ready ³⁹⁰³ :

Phl 2:7 But ²³⁵ made ²⁷⁵⁸ himself ¹⁴³⁸ of no reputation ²⁷⁵⁸, and took upon him ²⁹⁸³ the form ³⁴⁴⁴ of a servant ¹⁴⁰¹, and was made ¹⁰⁹⁶ in ¹⁷²² the likeness ³⁶⁶⁷ of men ⁴⁴⁴;