

CHRISTOLOGY (20)

Pope Pious IX invented a new theological concept in A.D. 1854 which taught that the virgin Mary was sinless from the moment she conceived Jesus Christ until the moment she went to heaven. He named his theological idea the Immaculate Conception. Primarily, this is a Roman Catholic belief that attempts to place the emphasis for Christ's perfect person on Mary's sinlessness. Xavier Leon-Dufour, a theologian of Catholic belief, writes: "The mystery of virginity implies a total purity... This is what gives meaning to the immaculate conception of Mary.

To be sure, giving birth to the Son of God was indeed a special privilege for Mary, as clearly stated to her by Gabriel (Lk. 1:28) and also by Elisabeth (Lk. 1:42). But any attempt to equate Mary's virginity with Christ's sinlessness is pure heresy. Mary's virginity enables God to be Jesus' Father, not a human. But it is not Mary's virginity that produced Christ's purity. There are several reasons why the concept of the "immaculate conception" is false:

1. Mary is not responsible for giving birth to a Holy Child, the Spirit of God is responsible for it. (Lk. 1:35)
2. There is none righteous and all fall far short of God's glory. Rom. 3:10-12, 23
Mary is a sinner like every other human.
3. Christ, Himself, taught that every person must be born again. Jn. 3:3
4. Mary, herself, admitted that she needed a Savior. Lk. 1:46-47
5. No human work, not even virginity or special pregnancy makes a person righteous before God. Eph. 2:8-9

QUESTION #11 – What is meant by the "perpetuity of the incarnation?"

The simple meaning of this phrase—perpetuity of the incarnation—is that Jesus Christ became a man forever. In other words, when Christ chose to become a human through the incarnation process, He took to Himself a human body forever. Some have suggested that Jesus became a man for a certain period of time and then ceased to be a man. But the testimony of Scripture makes it very clear that even though He will be seen in all of His glory and majesty, He is in human form and will be in that form throughout all eternity. Now this matter is not just interesting theology, there are several important reasons why we must adhere to this teaching.

Reason #1 - Because it is essential to the integrity of Christ's manhood.

Mr. John Miles explains this point in excellent fashion: "If he is not a man forever the question is raised as to whether He was ever really a man. At the incarnation Christ did not become two Persons. He was one Person with two natures. To say that He ceased to be a man is to do violence to His whole Person" (Doctrine, Second Semester, p. 6).

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If Christ somehow changes from being a man into being something else, then the question as to whether or not He was ever really a man becomes a possible question and that will lead to heretical theology such as Christian Science, which denies the humanity of Christ and denies the reality of matter, saying that Christ could not have a real physical body.

If Jesus Christ were to ever stop being a man, the integrity of whether or not He was ever a man comes into serious question.

Reason #2 - Because of His post -resurrection appearances.

There are many appearances of Jesus Christ after His resurrection that clearly reveal that even though He was God, He was still a man.

- 1) Matt. 28:9-10 - The disciples recognized Christ and worshipped Him and took hold of His feet. By virtue of His feet, we know He had a human body.
- 2) Luke 24 - Several verses in this chapter indicate Christ was truly a man, functioning as a real man: v. 3, 15, 30, 31, 40, 42, 50.
- 3) John 20:17, 22-29 - It is clear from these verses that Christ was still a man after His crucifixion comprised of human parts.
- 4) John 21:7-15 - The post-resurrection scene with Peter certainly indicates Jesus Christ was truly a man.

Reason #3 - Because of His ascension . Acts 1:9

Christ's ascension indicates absolutely no change whatsoever in His humanity.

Reason #4 - Because of glimpses people had after His ascension.

When He was seen after He ascended, He was still recognized, indicating He was in human form: 1) He was recognized by Stephen –Acts 7:56; 2) He was recognized by John – Rev. 1:9-18.

Even in all of the symbolism, John still recognizes Jesus Christ and describes Him in language that is related to a normal body.

Reason #5 - Because of His High Priestly Intercession. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 7:23-28; 9:24; 12:2

In order for Christ to exercise the office of High Priest, and to be able to be one touched with the feeling of our infirmities to the extent that He can present our needs to the Father in requesting grace in our times of need, He must still be a man, even though He is God.

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Reason #6 - Because of His Future Return.

Any prediction that we have concerning the coming of Jesus Christ is a prediction that demands the return of an individual who can physically reign as the God/man (II Sam. 7:12-16; Zech. 12:10; Acts 1:11; I John 3:2).

When we take all of this evidence into consideration, we must conclude that Jesus Christ became a man forever. It is a humbling, theological reality in view of the fact that He could have remained in eternity as the glorious God forever to realize that Jesus Christ was “made in the likeness of men.”

QUESTION #12 – What is meant by the hypostatic union?

The Greek word “hupostasis” refers to a firm, steady substance or foundation. The English word “hypostasis” refers to a substance that is given an independent and distinct individuality.

Mr. John Miles gives an excellent theological statement concerning the “hypostatic union”—“By this theological term is meant the truth that the human nature of Christ and the Divine nature are organically and indissolubly united in the one person, Jesus Christ” (Doctrine, Second Semester).

To state it another way, **the hypostatic union means that Jesus Christ’s human nature and Jesus Christ’s divine nature are united and inseparable.**

Jesus Christ has two natures—human and deity. There are times Christ seems to be operating from His humanity and there are times when He seems to be operating from His Deity. However, we must always remember He is still one unique person comprised, at all times, of both humanity and deity. Dr. Walvoord says: “Though Christ sometimes operated in the sphere of His humanity and in other cases in the sphere of His deity, in all cases what He did and what He was could be attributed to His one person. Even though it is evident that there were two natures in Christ, He is never considered a dual personality” (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, p. 112).

There are reasons why the hypostatic union is difficult to grasp:

- 1) We have never seen perfect deity—only through Scripture.
- 2) We have never seen perfect humanity—we cannot fully comprehend it.
- 3) We have never seen Jesus Christ—hypostatic union is only applicable to Him.

Dr. Chafer writes: “History records no instance of any other being like Christ in this respect, nor will any other ever appear. He is the incomparable theanthropic Person, the God-man, the Mediator and Daysman... This unique Person with two natures, being at once the revelation of God to man and the manifestation of ideal and perfect humanity, properly holds the central place in all reverent human thinking, as His complex glorious Person has engaged the disputation of past centuries. ... The reality in which undiminished Deity and Unfallen humanity united in one theanthropic Person has no parallel in the Universe!” (Vol. 1, pp. 383, 384).

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There are several passages of Scripture that clearly speak of the union between Christ's Divine and human nature:

- 1) John 1:1-14 ; 2) Rom. 1:2-5 ; 3) Rom. 9:5 ; 4) Philippians 2:6-7 ;
5) I Tim. 3:16 ; 6) Heb. 2:14 ; 7) I John 1:1-3 .

Dr. Walvoord, in speaking of these critical texts said: "The hypostatic or personal union of the human and divine natures in Christ is given explicit divine revelation..." (Walvoord, p. 112).

QUESTION #13 – What is the history of the hypostatic union?

Theologians have always been faced with the problem of defining the word "nature." As it pertains to Jesus Christ, the issue really comes down to this—"What is meant by His human nature and His Divine nature?"

Most agree that "nature" refers to all the attributes that comprise the entire substance. When referring to Christ's Divine nature, we are referring to all of the attributes of Deity, which comprise Divine nature. When referring to Christ's human nature, we are referring to all of the attributes of humanity, which comprise human nature.

In the days of the early church, a problem arose as to how two such seemingly incompatible natures—divine and human—could be joined together without one or the other losing some of its essential characteristics and qualities. To say that Christ is one person comprised of a human and divine nature, is something that goes far against the norm of human thinking:

1. It is somewhat logical to assume that the divine nature of Christ would far surpass the human nature. But the problem here is that the human nature is just as important as the divine nature, for His redemptive work largely rests upon His humanity.
2. It is also logical to assume that if a human nature were joined to a divine nature, the divine nature would be somewhat tarnished. It is difficult for us to conceive of both a perfect Deity joined together with a perfect humanity.
3. It is also logical to assume that since there are two natures, it must be that Christ has two distinct personalities. But Christ was one person, not two.

When we consider these things, we begin to see the problem that developed from the hypostatic union. As a result, at the early stages of church history, several false views began to surface concerning the Person of Jesus Christ.

1) Ebionism - This seems to be one of the first Christological heresies that surfaced near the end of the first century until the year A.D. 107. Ebionism denies the Divine nature of Jesus Christ. In other words, **Ebionism denied Christ's Deity**. It taught that Christ was merely a man, although it did admit that Christ had a peculiar relationship with God from the time of His baptism. Ebionism was really Judaism within the context of the Christian Church.