

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 37 & 22.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #37. *How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?*

A. Christ the Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul,¹ being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her,² yet without sin.³

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #22. *How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?*

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body,⁴ and a reasonable soul,⁵ being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her,⁶ yet without sin.⁷

Question 1—*What are we to understand here by Christ's becoming man?*

Answer—The assertion that Christ became a man implies several things:

First, it implies that Christ is the eternal Son of God who, before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, has a real and distinct being and existence from eternity, John 6:62. He was with the Father from all eternity, before any creatures came out of the womb of nothing, Prov. 8:29, 30. Therein the Spirit of God describes the blessed state of Christ, from the eternal delights he had with his Father before his assumption of our nature, when he was in the very bosom of the Father, John 1:18. Christ is from eternity the Son of God, the Word of God, with the Father, John 1:1. Thus, he describes himself as the bread of life come down from heaven, John 6:33. In this, he differs from the manna wherewith God fed Israel in the wilderness, which was never really in heaven, nor had its origin from thence, John 6:32. Therefore, Christ is the eternal Son of God come forth of the Father, come into the world, John 16:28. For this reason, he is rightly called Alpha and Omega, Rev. 1:8.

Second, it implies that he actually took upon himself our nature, assuming into the unity of his divine person the entire nature of man, with all of its integral parts and essential properties, John 1:14. This union is such that the divine nature is manifested in the assumed humanity, 1 Tim. 3:16; yet, without destroying, changing or denying the true humanity also manifested, 1 Pet. 3:18.

Third, it implies the voluntariness of this act of his in assuming the human nature, Ps. 40:6-8. Even when he was solacing himself in the bosom of the Father with the sweetest pleasures heaven could afford, the very prospect of his incarnation was the source of unspeakable delight, Prov. 8:31. And when in the world, and enduring the many abuses

¹ John 1:14; Matt. 26:38.

² Luke 1:27, 31, 35, 42; Gal. 4:4.

³ Heb. 4:15; 7:26.

⁴ Heb. 2:14, 16; 10:5.

⁵ Matt. 26:38.

⁶ Luke 1:27, 31, 35, 42; Gal. 4:4.

⁷ Heb. 4:15; 7:26.

and injuries from sinners, and their contradictions, and was come to the most difficult part of his work, he still is pained to bring all to fulfillment, Luke 12:50.

Fourth, this implies that Christ as God had no mother and as man had no father, though Mary is the mother of his human nature, Gal. 4:4. Mary was of the seed of Abraham, so that Christ was of that seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed, Gal. 3:16. She was of the tribe of Judah, Luke 3:33; of which tribe Christ by her did spring, Heb. 7:14. Nonetheless, though she is not the mother of his divinity, the person she bare was the eternal Son of God incarnate, Luke 1:31-35.

Question 2—*Was he really a true man?*

Answer—Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man, by taking to himself the same human nature that is common to all men, Heb. 2:14-16. This appropriation consisted of taking a true body, Heb. 10:5; together with a reasonable soul, Matt. 26:38. The assumption of these, constituting a true humanity, is what is connoted by his being said to dwell, or reside, in the flesh, John 1:14. The reality of this assumption is confirmed to the disciples after his resurrection, when he invites scrutiny of his true body, Luke 24:39. This true humanity was subject to all of that is common to man, including growth in his humanity, Luke 2:52. As the life of Christ, as a man, consisted in the vital union and conjunction of soul and body, his death was nothing else but the separation of these components, Luke 23:46. Finally, confession of the reality of his humanity is a necessary part of a true confession of faith in Christ, 1 John 4:2, 3. This humanity consisted of everything common to all men sin only excepted, Heb. 4:15; 7:26.

Question 3—*What does it mean that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary?*

Answer—Christ, being the character, or office, of the one who made this assumption, this identity was revealed through the framing of his human nature in the womb of the Virgin, Luke 1:27, 31, 35, 42. The Holy Ghost conceiving, or begetting, of her that which is truly man, Matt. 1:20; Luke 2:11. The flesh being taken of the very substance (*homoousian*) of Mary, Gal. 4:4; the spirit, or soul, being formed within that true humanity, Zech. 12:1.

The flesh, by reason of the overshadowing of the Spirit, was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use, by the eternal Son, Luke 1:35; Heb. 10:5, 10. For the end of this incarnation is the redemption and salvation of sinners, whereby he was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, the nature that had sinned, Rom. 8:3. Yet, this nature that had sinned could not have been condemned by Christ had he assumed that nature tainted with sin, for he who purchased our redemption would himself stand in need of redemption, 2 Cor. 5:21.

In this conception, there is achieved the union of the manhood with the Godhead, Phil. 2:6-8. This union is not consubstantial, as the union of the three Persons of the Trinity, John 10:30. These three have the same nature and will, Matt. 28:19; whereas Christ has two natures and two wills, Matt. 26:39. It is not physical, as that of soul and body, which at death, when the soul departs, this union is dissolved, Eccl. 12:7. In Christ, the soul and body remained united to his person even in death, Acts 2:27.

This union is a personal union, whereby the eternal Son of God took to himself the human nature and subsisted in it, making himself now and forever one person, Immanuel, God with us, Matt. 1:23; Isa. 7:14.