

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 39.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #39. *Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be man?*

A. It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature,¹ perform obedience to the law,² suffer and make intercession for us in our nature,³ have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities;⁴ that we might receive the adoption of sons,⁵ and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.⁶

Question 1—*In what sense was it requisite that the Mediator should be man?*

Answer—The necessity of the Mediator being man ought not to be understood in any absolute sense, as if God must do by a necessity of his nature, Luke 1:37. Instead, it should be understood as a conditional necessity as a means to accomplish God's purpose in redemption, Isa. 53:10; Luke 24:46. As Christ was ordained to be a Mediator between God and man, it was requisite that he become man, 1 Tim. 2:5. This is only an absolute necessity with respect to man, whose nature was required to render an obedience to the law in order to make satisfaction for sin, Lev. 17:11. The necessary obedience could not be performed by him in his divine nature because that nature is not under any obligation to perform what pertains only to the creature as a subject, Rom. 5:19.

Furthermore, according to the great ends designed by the incarnation, it was required that no other created nature (such as angelic) be taken into union with the divine because the same obedience was to be yielded to the law which had been violated, necessitating he be made of a woman, Gal. 4:4. He who was to be our Redeemer was required to run the same race with us, which required sufferings of the body as well as the soul, as the consequence of our rebellion, Heb. 2:10.

Question 2—*What are some of the other necessities requiring the humanity of the Mediator?*

Answer—These necessities demonstrate that the Mediator must also be man:

First, the union of the humanity with the divinity, in the Person of the Mediator, accrues to our nature a very great honor by which it is advanced, Heb. 2:16. Though it had no intrinsic dignity or glory, above what other intelligent, finite, sinless beings are capable of, 2 Sam. 14:20; yet it had a greater relative glory than any creature had, or can have, simply considered, 1 Pet. 1:12. This elevation of this union is like that of the body which, apart from the soul, is a thing of itself composed of dust and consigned to the grave, Gen. 3:19; the soul adds an excellence and dignity to the body which did not previously possess, Gen. 2:7; 1:27. The human nature of Christ, being united to the divine, is an advancement of the human creature over that of any other, conferring a greater degree of honor so that man

¹ Heb. 2:16.

² Gal. 4:4.

³ Heb. 2:14; 7:24, 25.

⁴ Heb. 4:15.

⁵ Gal. 4:5.

⁶ Heb. 4:16.

can now be friends, John 15:15; and not remain, as the angels, mere servants of God, Heb. 1:14. Thus, though created a little lower than the angels, Ps. 8:5; now, by reason of this advancement, man shall exercise greater authority over them, 1 Cor. 6:3.

Second, the humanity of Christ is the basis upon which Christ suffered, Heb. 2:14; and that suffering makes him a sympathetic priest for man, Heb. 2:18. It should be considered that the divine nature, properly speaking, cannot be said to make intercession, since intercession includes worship, which belongs only to a dependent and needy person, which Christ could not be apart from his assumed humanity, Heb. 5:7. So, the human nature, being exposed to the infirmities of man, is the foundation for the exercise of his priesthood and intercession for the saints, Heb. 7:24, 25.

Third, the humanity, as mentioned, is the reason that Christ has a fellow feeling of our infirmities, Heb. 4:15. As to his true Godhead, Christ had a perfect, or divine, knowledge of our infirmities, Ps. 139:1-6; yet, there could be no experimental knowledge of them, had he not been man, *cf.* Ex. 23:9; Heb. 5:2; therefore, he would not be able to sympathize with us in them, as he clearly did, Isa. 53:4, 5. From his incarnation, Christ learned the difficulties of obedience with respect to the passions of the human nature, Heb. 5:8; and, from what he once experienced, he is moved to help our infirmities, as being such as he himself condescended to bear, Rom. 8:34.

Fourth, the humanity of Christ has made possible our adoption as sons, Gal. 4:5. The descent of the Son of God into our nature has brought to realization the predestinating purpose to bring men into the adoption of children of God, Eph. 1:5. Christ, being constituted the heir of all things, Heb. 1:2; believers, who are the sons of God in a lower sense, are also constituted heirs by reason of his incarnation, Rom. 8:17. After all, faith in Christ is that which constitutes this relation, Gal. 3:27; whereby, by faith we take hold of the Mediator who has in his humanity accomplished our redemption, Gal. 4:7. Thus, those who believe receive him and to them he gives the power to be sons, John 1:12.

As sons, they are the objects of God's fatherly sympathy and pity, Ps. 103:13; therefore, when it is necessary to correct them, he has for them the compassion of a father, and chastens them out of that love, Heb. 12:5, 6. By reason of this sonship, believers are made heirs of the grace of life, 1 Pet. 3:7; and heirs of the kingdom of grace, Jas. 2:5.

Fifth, the adoption of sons makes possible our comfortable approach to God, Rom. 8:15. Christ' sonship, as Mediator, is the ground and reason of the erection of the throne of grace, Luke 2:10, 11. We first come by faith to him who, as Elihu notes, was formed of clay, so that we are not made afraid of the terror of God, Job 33:6, 7; then, through him, we come to God, as to a reconciled Father, Col. 1:20. Our adoption is the ground for access with boldness to this throne of grace, Heb. 4:16. God allows his children to draw near to him with freedom, to pour out their hearts before him, to make all their requests known to him, with the confidence that if they ask anything according to his will, he hears them, 1 John 5:14.