

Christ the Mediator

We have established 1) that history is designed for the glory of God; 2) that the brightest shining ornament of that glory is the cross of Christ; 3) that God has covenanted (promised) to extend His grace to humanity by establishing a church which would have his protection, comprised of people throughout the entire earth who have been granted justifying (saving) faith in Christ (Genesis 12:1-3).

Here we have the Christian worldview in its most fundamental sense—God glorifying Himself by redeeming the world by the Cross of Christ. It is a simple, tightly weaved pattern that properly and cohesively explains all we know and see. Yet since it is the nature of man to do what he prefers rather than what he ought, it requires the overwhelming power of a God-given faith to bring man to his senses that he might embrace that which he has hitherto purposefully suppressed (Romans 1:18).

What's a Pastor to Say?

This morning we will further examine this glorious covenant of grace by endeavoring to better acquaint ourselves with its mediator. But before we seek to enhance our perceptions of Christ the Mediator, let us address those glittering deterrents and roadblocks in the church which tend to hinder this type of pursuit. In the same way a boyfriend can inflict guilt upon his girlfriend for her desire to remain chaste, pastors can feel guilty emphasizing such theological quests and ignoring, as it were, the felt needs of the congregation.

So what is a pastor to say or do in his forty-some minutes per week of sermonizing? I find myself tempted at times to launch into some Christian version of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. Or maybe I should speak of politics or parenting, or ways to be successful or positive, or how to have a proper attitude in business. Certainly these are all important issues in the lives of Christians.

Perhaps the pastor should preach on the disciplines—such as prayer, fasting, solitude or Bible reading. Are these not biblical mandates which bring forth fruit? Or evangelism—is not the Reformed Church plagued with an evangelistic paralysis? Have you gone weeks and months without inviting your neighbor to church? Are you a good neighbor?

These, and other similar duties, are assuredly Christian and should be an integral part of a Christian's life. And if you are not, at some level, performing these duties, consider yourself duly chastised. Yet at the same time, one is hard-pressed to find the aforementioned subjects appearing as accentuated features in any creed, confession, or systematic theology. I would argue that there are two reasons for this.

First, there is nothing difficult or controversial about these subjects. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Jews, and Protestants would find little disagreement regarding the outward practice of such things. Second, we do not find the Scriptures, though they address these issues, placing heavy emphasis on them. Paul didn't write a book on disciplines or a book on marriage. The disciplines were often an assumed addendum to his books, and things like marriage were often brought up to illustrate a greater issue.

Producing Godliness

What should alarm us is that even though these subjects were not the featured articles of creeds and confessions, those who wrote creeds and confessions excelled as

husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, business-men, politicians, and so on. Their lives were also marked by great and prolonged ventures in prayer, good deeds, evangelism, and often, martyrdom.

So what produces genuine godliness in Christians? I will argue that the catalyst for the genuine production of godly attributes is a lifelong pursuit, meditation on, and apprehension of the deeper things of God. This is the Apostle Paul's repetitive theme.

...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words (Colossians 2:2-4).

...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Books on being a godly wife are well and good, but they will never yield that depth of godly wife-ness bred in her by an accurate knowledge of the sacrificial and selfless nature of her husband. All the aforementioned duties and disciplines may be good and profitable. But efforts at duty and discipline become cold and laborious when extracted from the vitality of knowing and enjoying the rich grace of God. Wives, would you rather have a husband go to a seminar on being a loving spouse or a husband who has entered into the holy of holies and witnessed the shed blood of Christ poured upon the mercy seat of God?

There is, therefore, no greater subject for the pastor, if he truly desires to yield *bona fide* godliness in his church, than presenting the true and deep nature of God's sacrificial covenant of grace—a subject to which we will turn presently.

Relevant Religion

God made a covenant to redeem the world and to rescue men from the consequences of their own behavior. This covenant, which is akin to a contract, required a mediator—that Mediator (the Promised Seed—as we learned previously) was Jesus. One might be tempted to view the study of the covenant as religious mumbo jumbo. But what is more universal to the human race than the awareness of our own sin followed by an awareness of our own mortality? Therefore what could possibly be more relevant than addressing the means by which these foes are overcome?

For the remainder of our time we will seek to answer two questions: 1) what is a mediator? And 2) what kind of mediator does the covenant of grace and deliverance require in terms of His nature? In other words, could any prophet or holy man have done what Jesus did?

A Mediator

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,⁷ for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (1 Timothy 2:5-7).

Here we read of Paul being directly commanded to preach on Christ the Mediator. So what is a mediator? This isn't too difficult a question. A mediator is a go-between, someone who intervenes between parties. Sometimes we call them arbiters, liaisons, representatives, or negotiators. A mediator might merely be used for communication, as when Moses spoke to the people on behalf of God (Deuteronomy 5:5).

Mediators are often used because they are a bit better at negotiating the deal. People use brokers and realtors to buy and sell houses, cars, loans, insurance, etc., trusting that their expertise will save them from spending too much or buying damaged or unnecessary goods.

Sometimes the mediators are given power of attorney so they can close deals for the party they represent. Generally, before a mediator is given this type of authority, they must be very proven and trusted.

In times of conflict, mediators come together for the purpose of reconciliation. Nations will send these mediators to negotiate peace. But it is never a peace at all costs. The terms of the peace must be agreed upon by both sides—often with compromises of land or finance.

The Ultimate Conflict

Anyone who understands anything about the nature of God and the nature of man will perceive what appears to be an insurmountable conflict. God is good and holy (Matthew 19:17) and is the Author and Owner of all creation (Genesis 1; Psalm 50:10). Man is sinful, unholy, and a usurper of those things, material and immaterial, which rightly belong to God (Romans 3:10-18).

The depth of man's violation is inestimable. The very lips and mind he uses to curse God belong to God Himself. It is as if an enemy had moved into your house and in the grossest act of arrogance claimed all of your possessions as his own. And when you send your prophets to reveal to him his trespass he questions your very existence and kills your prophets (Matthew 21:33-41). The squatter has given himself legal title to that which belongs to another.

Who could possibly mediate reconciliation between a party who is infinitely good, holy, and just with a party who is wicked, vile and damnable? What could the mediator possibly have to offer the offending party, save a death sentence?

Christ the Mediator

Perhaps now we are skimming the surface of the mediatorial office of Christ. A.A. Hodge taught,

The Scriptures apply the term (mediator), in a higher sense than any of these (the aforementioned types of mediators), to Christ. They teach that he intervenes between God and man, not merely to sue for peace and to persuade to it, but, armed with plenipotentiary (full authority to act) power, efficiently to make peace and to do all that is necessary to that end (parenthesis mine).¹

In other words when Christ as mediator enters into negotiations for peace it is not as if He will walk away from the negotiating table stifled. Both parties that He represents will be fully satisfied and reconciliation will be had. The apostle Paul explains,

¹ Hodge, A. 1996. *The confession of faith : With questions for theological students and Bible classes*. With an appendix on Presbyterianism by Charles Hodge. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed. based on the 1992 Banner of Truth reprint). Christian Classics Foundation: Simpsonville SC

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19).

In other words, the curse that fell upon the human race by Adam's violation of the covenant of works will be remedied by the successful mediation of Christ. So what kind of person must this mediator be? In whom will you put your trust to negotiate peace between you and your Creator?

The Nature of Christ the Mediator

The Larger Westminster Catechism teaches,

The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fullness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person, for ever.²

It is not my purpose here to launch into the numerous proof texts undeniably proclaiming both the deity (Godhood) and humanity of Christ. It is my purpose to show that both natures are required for true and successful mediation and reconciliation between man and God to take place.

The Humanity of Christ

You will generally find little dispute regarding the humanity of Christ. Almost all will agree that there was a man named Jesus. But why would the Mediator of the covenant of grace have to be a human? Again, the catechism teaches,

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

Heb. 2:16. Gal. 4:4. Heb. 2:14; 7:24-25. Heb. 4:15. Gal. 4:5. Heb. 4:16.

In short we (humanity) needed a human to represent us at the table of negotiations. We are the ones in trouble. We need representation. But unfortunately, as we have established earlier, we have nothing to offer but guilt. We need a champion. Like David slaying the Philistine, thus granting victory to the armies of Israel, we stand in need of a conqueror.

When Jesus intercedes or pleads the case on behalf of humanity, He doesn't argue our innocence or any mitigating circumstances of our guilt. His argument is His own obedience.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (Christ) likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to

² Smith, M. H. 1990; Published in electronic form by Christian Classics Foundation, 1996. *Larger catechism of the Westminster Confession Standards*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.). Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press: Greenville SC

³ Smith, M. H. 1990; Published in electronic form by Christian Classics Foundation, 1996. *Larger catechism of the Westminster Confession Standards*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.). Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press: Greenville SC

bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:14-16—parenthesis mine).

Jesus did not die for angels. The offending party was mankind and it would be a Man who would pay the price. Hence Paul's words to the churches at Galatia:

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4, 5).

The Deity of Christ

Again, it is not my purpose to bring in the tome of biblical passages which has produced the uniform testimony of the orthodox church throughout history that Jesus is God. I merely wish to demonstrate the necessity of the case. Again the catechism teaches,

It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice, procure his favor, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.⁴

Acts 2:24-25; Rom. 1:4; 4:25; 9:14. Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:14; 7:25-28. Rom 3:24-26. Eph. 1:6; Matt. 3:17. Tit. 2:13-14. Gal. 4:6. Luke 1:68-69, 71, 74. Heb. 5:8-9; 9:11-15.

Who will sit at the negotiating table with God Almighty on your behalf and what will he plead? Will you take rank with the deplorably insane masses whose colossal egos have deluded them into thinking they can mount their own case? Will you trust in a guru or a prophet who himself will be consumed by the fire at the very doorstep of eternity? Or is your mediator One who, as a Man lived in perfect obedience always pleasing the Father (Matthew 3:17) yet as God would not sink under His infinite wrath. Peter preached of Him,

...whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning Him: "I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope" (Acts 2:24-26).

As the Human Mediator of the covenant of grace Jesus sympathizes with our weakness (Hebrews 4:15) and justly represents His brethren (Hebrews 2:11). As the Divine Mediator of the covenant of grace Jesus has the infinite power to bear what no man could bear—the infinite wrath of God—and to grant what no man could grant—a sure victory and everlasting salvation.

The mediator of the covenant of grace has the power over death.

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.

⁴ Smith, M. H. 1990; Published in electronic form by Christian Classics Foundation, 1996. *Larger catechism of the Westminster Confession Standards*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.). Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Press: Greenville SC

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father (John 10:17, 18).

The mediator of the covenant mediates by virtue of His own sacrifice.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9, 10).

Notice in the passage below what Jesus brings into the perfect heavenly tabernacle as he mediates as our High Priest.

But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:11-16).

It is this conscience cleansing blood that Christ beckons us to remember in our regular participation at the Lord's Table. It is His mediation, by the merit of His own death that we receive the promise of redemption first made in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15), elaborated upon to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), and then unfolded throughout all of Scripture—the promise of the eternal inheritance.

If I may expound upon this covenant by unpacking perhaps the most commonly quoted passage in the Bible:

For God so loved the world that He covenanted to save the world by sending His own Son to fulfill the righteous demands of His covenant.

In doing so God has maintained His own just character while extending His infinite mercy. We call this good news the gospel.

Questions for Study

1. Explain the design of history and Christianity in its most fundamental sense (page 1).
2. What do you suppose a pastor should preach (pages 1)?
3. What produces true godliness (page 2)?
4. Why is a discussion on God's covenant relevant (pages 2, 3)?
5. What is a mediator (page 3)?
6. What is the nature of the conflict between man and God (pages 3, 4)?
7. What kind of mediator is necessary to resolve this conflict (page 4)?
8. Why was it necessary that Christ be a man (page 4)?
9. Why was it necessary that Christ be God (pages 4, 5)?
10. How is it we can be confident of Christ's successful mediation (pages 6, 7)?