

The Westminster Confession of Faith

Lesson 24: Of Christ the Mediator (§ 8.1)

High Plains Fellowship PCA

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Introduction

Having addressed the covenants in Chapter 7, we are now reaching the doctrinal “mountaintop” in Chapter 8. Much of what follows in the rest of the Confession is “details”—the *outworking* of the Mediatorial office of Christ in relation to his elect.

We will see, as it regards mediation, that the Reformation view departs drastically from the Roman view at this point. The mediatorial work of Christ which was *foreshadowed* in the Old Testament ordinances has now been *fulfilled* by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus.

This chapter will be a “slow walk” as we take time to soak in the fullness of the work of Christ on behalf of sinners.

Opener

- We have previously discussed the contractual framework of a Last Will and Testament in relation to God’s covenant—with benefactors and beneficiaries. Now the question is, who *executes* the will upon the death of the Testator?
- God’s “will” presents a unique situation of the Testator *dying* to active the inheritance and then *coming back to life* to execute the terms of the will.

WLC Q/A #36

Q36: Who is the Mediator of the covenant of grace?

A36: The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ,[1] who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father,[2] in the fulness of time became man,[3] and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person, forever.[4]

1. **1 Tim. 2:5** - For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

2. **John 1:1, 14** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. **John 10:30** - “I and the Father are one.” **Phil. 2:6** - Who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.

3. **Gal. 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

4. **Luke 1:35** - The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God." **Rom. 9:5** - Whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. **Col. 2:9** - For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily. **Heb. 7:24-25** - But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

- This section of the Catechism (#36 - #57) does not correspond as neatly to the Confession and may only be used in part.
- We will consider the distinct natures of Christ as God-man when we look at Confession 8.2.

WCF 8.1

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only-begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man,^a the Prophet,^b Priest,^c and King;^d the Head and Saviour of his Church,^e the Heir of all things,^f and Judge of the world;^g unto whom he did, from all eternity, give a people to be his seed,^h and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.ⁱ

a. **Isa 42:1** - "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul is well-pleased. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." **John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." **1 Tim 2:5** - For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. **1 Pet 1:19-20** - But with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but appeared in these last times for the sake of you.

b. **Acts 3:22** - Moses said, "THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BROTHERS; TO HIM YOU SHALL LISTEN to everything He says to you."

c. **Heb 5:5-6** - In this way also Christ did not glorify Himself to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"; just as He says also in another passage, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

d. **Psa 2:6** - "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." **Luke 1:33** - "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of His kingdom."

e. **Eph 5:23** - For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

f. **Heb 1:2** - In these last days spoke to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

g. **Acts 17:31** - "Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He determined, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead."

h. **Psa 22:30** - Their seed will serve Him; It will be recounted about the Lord to the coming generation. **Isa 53:10** - But Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If You would place His soul as a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of Yahweh will succeed in His hand. **John 17:6** - "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

i. **Isa 55:4-5** - "Behold, I have given him as a witness to the peoples, A ruler and commander for the peoples. "Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, And a nation which knows you not will run to you, Because of Yahweh your God, even the Holy One of Israel; For He has adorned you with beautiful glory." **1 Cor 1:30** - But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. **1 Tim 2:6** - Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the witness for this proper time.

- This paragraph connects God's eternal decree (Chapter 3) with the outworking of his decree in time and space (Chapters 4 & 5) through the covenant of grace (Chapter 7).
- The covenant is the "contract" between God and man—now the question is who will carry it out?
- God "chooses and ordains" Christ as the *Mediator*.

"A mediator is one who intervenes between contesting parties for the sake of making reconciliation."¹

- Christ is "fully furnished" (¶ 3) to carry out the responsibilities of this office.
- How many titles do we find in this paragraph?
 - Lord
 - Son
 - Mediator
 - Prophet
 - Priest
 - King
 - Head of the Church
 - Savior of the Church
 - Heir of all things
 - Judge of the world
 - to this we must add (from WLC #36), Christ
- What other titles could be added to the list?

¹ Hodge, p. 134.

- In this paragraph we also have a portion of the “ordo salutis”—the *order of salvation*:
 - redeemed
 - called
 - justified
 - sanctified
 - glorified
- *Christ* is the NT title that corresponds to the OT title *Messiah* (“Anointed”).
- His chosen name, *Jesus*, means *savior* and corresponds to the OT name *Joshua* or *Yeshua*.
 - Christ, as “firstborn” *Son*, is the “heir of all things” and rightful successor to the King.
 - Christ, as *Mediator*, stands between God and man.
 - Christ, as *Prophet*, speaks on behalf of God to his people.
 - Christ, as *Priest*, speaks to God on behalf of his people.
 - Christ, as *Head of the Church*, rules over his people as husband.
 - Christ, as *Savior of the Church*, provides everything needful for his bride.
 - Christ, as supreme *King* over all creation, is the rightful *Judge* of the world.
- Salvation is the means of reconciliation. Who are the parties?
- God as the *offended* party, man as the *offending* party.
- Recall the bank account example. Offense places one party in *debt* to the other.
- If there is to be any possibility of reconciliation, who owes what to whom?
- What is it that makes it impossible for a rich man to enter heaven?
- Is forgiveness a one-sided or a two-sided affair? What about reconciliation?

“As it respects God, it is absolutely necessary, in order to [have] reconciliation, that the Mediator should propitiate the just displeasure of God by expiating the guilt of sin, and that he should supplicate in our behalf, and that he should actually introduce our persons and services to the acceptance of the father.”²

- When the Bible refers to “peace with God” it means *reconciliation*, not just a fuzzy feeling of security.

² Hodge, p. 134.

Rom 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, ^[m]we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- The “enmity” between God and man has been removed. The war is over.

Eph 2:16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having in Himself put to death the enmity.

“Christ . . . intervenes between God and man, not merely to sue for peace and to persuade to it, but, armed with plenipotentiary power, efficiently to make peace and do all that is necessary to that end.”³

Back to Rome

- With regard to *salvation* and *mediation*, Rome and the Reformation depart drastically.

(referring to 1 Tim 2:5) “When this verse is understood the whole system of the Roman Church falls to the ground, for it invalidates the papacy, the priesthood, and all Mary worship.”⁴

- Rome continues to observe a litany of “sacrifices”—especially the Mass—through a perpetual priesthood.
- At the top of the priesthood we find the “pope” who claims headship over the church of Christ.
- Whereas the Old Testament priesthood pointed forward to the one sufficient sacrifice of Christ, the Roman “sacrifices” render the work of Christ insufficient to obtain or secure salvation.
- Rome has a problem with the idea of one sufficient sacrifice, one Mediator between God and man, and a priesthood of *all believers*—each of which undermine the institutional authority of the Roman Church.

³ Hodge, p. 134.

⁴ Boettner, p. 148.

“Romanism teaches that there are many mediators, and the great majority of Roman Catholics, if asked, would say that our primary approach to God is through the Virgin Mary, and that only as she begs for us can we enter the presence of God.”⁵

- What does scripture say?

☐ Rom 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin **once for all**, but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

☐ Heb 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did **once for all** when He offered up Himself.

☐ Heb 9:12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy places **once for all**,^[fn] having obtained eternal redemption.

☐ Heb 10:10 By^[fn] this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**.

☐ 1Pe 3:18 For Christ also suffered for sins **once for all**, *the righteous for the unrighteous*, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the^[fn] spirit;

1Pe 2:9
But you are A CHOSEN FAMILY, A **royal PRIESTHOOD**,
A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION,
so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

- Why is the Roman doctrine absurd?

“The reason that Mary, the saints or angels cannot act as our priest or mediator is because they have no sacrifice, nothing to offer in behalf of our sins. . . . Christ alone has a true sacrifice, and He alone can act as our priest.”⁶

Jhn 19:30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, **“It is finished!”** And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

- Hint: If you find the book of Hebrews perplexing, take a refresher in the Pentateuch.

⁵ Boettner, p. 148.

⁶ Boettner, p. 149

Concluding Thoughts

- The New Testament is in the Old *concealed*; the Old is by the New *revealed*. (Augustine)

“The entire [Old Testament] order of priests and the ceremonial of sacrifice were typical of him. . . . He has made propitiation by a sacrificial bearing of the penalty due to sin. . . . He has made intercession, and he ever lives to intercede.”⁷

- It is God’s prerogative, as the author of the covenant of grace, to dictate the terms by which it must be carried out—even if that means offering “only” one way for his enemies to be reconciled to him.

“God the Father has given all things into the hands of the God-man Jesus Christ. And no one comes unto the Father except through him.”⁸

Upcoming Lessons

- March 12: Chapter 8, Paragraph 1
- March 19: Chapter 8, Paragraph 2
- March 26: Chapter 8, Paragraph 3
- April 2: Chapter 8, Paragraph 4
- April 9: [Easter Brunch]

Resources & Bibliography (new items added to the top of the list / older items removed)

- *Systematic Theology*, Louis Berkhof, 1949. (PDF version [here](#))
- *The Confession of Faith*, A. A. Hodge, 1869.
- *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*, G. I. Williamson, 1964.
- *Roman Catholicism*, Loraine Boettner, 1962. (online version [here](#); PDF version [here](#))

All scripture quotations are *Legacy Standard Bible* (LSB) unless otherwise noted.
Screenshots are taken from *BlueLetterBible.org*.

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⁷ Hodge, p. 136.

⁸ Williamson, p. 72.