

The Mediation of Christ

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I. Getting Our Bearings: What is a Mediator and Mediation?

Scripture sums up the saving—that is, the atoning or “at-one-ing”—activity of our Lord Jesus like this: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

What is a mediator? A mediator is a go-between, who brings together parties who were not in communion, and in this case, two parties whose relationship had been profoundly ruptured and disrupted—two parties alienated/estranged from and at enmity with one another.

What does mediation require? Mediation requires that the mediator has communion with both parties, so as to identify with, maintain the interests of, and represent each party to the other.

- Christ is a mediator, not an intermediary (legal counselor, labor arbitrator).
- Christ is not a kindly, gentle Son who placates his harsh, exacting, aloof Father.
- Christ is not an incarnate substitute who renders us mere spectators of our salvation.

What does a robustly biblical confession of our one and only mediator call us to affirm?

- Christ’s essential Godness/deity (contra Arians).
- Christ’s essential humanness/creatureliness (contra Gnostics).
- Christ’s irreducible Jewishness (contra Marcionites).
- Our essential humanness and true participation in life of God (*theosis* NOT divinization).

The goal of Christ’s mediation between God and men is peace, or *shalom*. Negatively, this means the absence of hostility, guilt, servile fear, and exposure to retributive punishment in the form of condemnation. Positively, this means the presence of forgiveness, fellowship, freedom, and assurance of permanent personal acceptance by God. In other words, the goal



of Christ's mediation is the fullness of life, a full-orbed mode of human flourishing by the redeemed!

II. Our Mediator is God With Us...and Humanity With God

Scripture assures us that there is one God and one mediator, and that the One who mediates not simply from God to humanity, but between God and humanity is none other than the man, the fully human One, Christ Jesus.

- Jesus's mediation is bi-directional. Just as surely as Jesus mediates God to man in and as God, he mediates man to God in and as man. Jesus is God with men on behalf of God, and man with God on behalf of men.
- Jesus's mediation is vicarious. Of Latin origin (*vicis*), the adjective *vicarious* describes the mediator who ever lives and acts for others, in their name as their agent, emissary, and representative.
- Jesus comes to us in the name of the Father, conceived by and endowed with the Spirit, to be God with us, for us, and in us—the fullness of God embodied.
- Jesus comes to live and act in solidarity with us, to do all things for us as one of us, so that all he renders to the Father in our name and stead is thereby rendered ours.
- God and humanity, long alienated, are brought together in Jesus. In the very person of our incarnate substitute, God and humanity meet. God is with man, and man is with God, in the body and blood of the Word made flesh.
- Jesus is sent from the Father as the fount of all God's blessings, and everything our mediator shares with us results from the humanity we share with him.

III. Revelation and Reconciliation, Before the Cross and Forever After

Christians routinely—and rightly!—recognize that Christ's crucifixion was vicarious in nature, that on the first Good Friday our Savior stood in our place as our incarnate substitute, taking upon himself our sin and suffering its consequences.

What's not so routinely recognized is that God the Son becoming flesh was itself vicarious in nature, such that his participation in our humanity renders him the Savior who ever lives and acts in our name and in our stead, doing **all things** for us and our salvation—from his conception thereafter...even right at this very moment!



In other words, Christ's *sin-defeating death* did not commence his vicarious ministry; it was no isolated event that came from nowhere and stands alone, and thus cannot be pared or parceled from the whole of his *sin-defeating life*.

Jesus Christ, the God-man, at once enacts both movements of this bi-directional mediation. For he is the *complete* form of God's saving action to us, and the *perfect* form of human response to God. From the side of God, Jesus acts as light and life to men; and from the side of man, he acts in unswerving faith, adoration, and obedience to the Father in the Spirit.

The earthly humiliation and heavenly exaltation of our mediator constitutes one multi-faceted, progressively enacted work of vicarious redemption in which he offered and **continues to offer** the perfect human response to God, the perfect human-Godward movement of mediation.

IV. Substitution and Participation

The salvation wrought by our Lord Jesus must not be seen as a transaction completed by a third party external to the being and life of either God or humanity; that would rip our salvation from its moorings in the humanity of the Savior, stripping his humanness of any real salvific, mediatorial significance.

Jesus ever lives and acts *for us*, but NOT to render him remote or absent *from us*. Our mediator did not assume our humanity to exist in isolation from us, but to include us in his humanity, recreated and reoriented to God.

All that Christ did for the salvation of the world as our incarnate substitute is of no benefit to us until we participate in him by the Spirit-wrought faith that binds us to Christ, so that Christ and all his saving benefits become our own—Giver and gifts alike!

From Bethlehem to Golgotha he perfectly heard, heralded, trusted, and obeyed the Father for us; he perfectly thanked, praised, and adored the Father for us; he perfectly repented of our sins for us, and as our ascended mediator he ever lives to perfectly present us in himself to the Father, such that our Spirit-wrought response to the Father, **though very imperfect**, is gathered up, grounded on, enlivened by, and sanctified in that of Christ.

Note Well: the only effectual human response to the Father is Christ's, and therefore our response to the Father is pleasing and effectual only as shaped and sustained in Christ, only as our response is a participation in in that of Christ through the eternal Spirit.



"This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself, he has clothed us with his righteousness."
~John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

V. Healing and Holding Together All Things in Himself

"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19-20; cf. Eph. 1:9-10).

The breaking of the world entails the rupture and disruption of creation's relational ecosystem: God/humanity, humans/humans, humans/self, humans/creation. Therefore, the healing of the world in Christ entails a mediation that brings the blessings of God as far as the curse is found.

~God and humanity...

~Humans and humans...

~Humans and the self...

With respect to mediating God to us and us to God, Jesus mediates us to us by redressing the sin-riddled relationship that we have with ourselves, marked by the self turned in upon the self in self-involved alienation and estrangement. True knowledge of the self, then, is not the fruit of mere self-analysis. Rather, true knowledge of the self is the fruit of God's self-disclosure in Christ by the Spirit, and thus the result of knowing the mediator.

~Humans and creation...