

Lesson 13: 2LCF Chapter 8: Of Christ the Mediator (Part 2)

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

1 Timothy 2:5-6

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

John 10:17-18

As we noted in the previous lesson, chapter 8 of the confession is best divided into two parts. Last time we considered part one (paragraphs 1-3); this week we will consider part two (paragraphs 4-10).

In paragraphs 1-3, we considered the person of Christ, including His deity, humanity, personality, and qualification. Paragraphs 4-10 we will study the execution of Christ’s office as the only mediator between God and man.

Chapter Outline

I. The Person of Christ

- i. His Ordination to the Office (paragraph 1)
- ii. His Incarnation for the Office (paragraph 2)
- iii. His Qualifications for the Office (paragraph 3)

II. The Work of Christ

- iv. His Execution of the Office (paragraph 4-10)
 - a. Its historical description (paragraph 4)
 - b. Its central operation (paragraph 5)
 - c. Its ancient communications (paragraph 6)
 - d. Its mysterious communion (paragraph 7)
 - e. Its effectual application (paragraph 8)
 - f. Its inalienable possession (paragraph 9)
 - g. Its necessary functions (paragraph 10)¹²²

As we take up paragraphs 4-10, we find the necessary answers to one of the most important questions that could ever be posed. The eleventh century theologian Anselm posed this question in his book “Cur Deus Homo?”—titling his work with this question, “Why Did God Become Man?”¹²³

While we would disagree with many of Anselm’s conclusions, at the most fundamental level, we would agree that Jesus Christ came into this sin-sick world to make atonement for the sins of His people by satisfying the divine justice of God on their behalf.

¹²² Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 150-51.

¹²³ Ibid., 155.

Jesus Christ came in human flesh, dwelt among his people, lived, suffered, died, and was raised to accomplish what no other man, angel, or creature could do—to be the Saviour of the world.

On this point, Waldron offers the following commentary:

The atonement is a consequent absolute necessity. The term ‘consequent’ means that the atonement is necessary only on the condition that God freely chooses to save. The term ‘absolute’ means that once God has chosen to save, atonement becomes absolutely necessary in order to achieve this freely chosen end. The atonement is necessary, not merely because God chose to save in this way, but because God's character will not allow men to be saved in any other way. It may seem presumptuous and speculative to argue about what God can or cannot do. The Bible teaches, however, there are some things that God cannot do (1 Timothy 1:17; Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:13), and that, therefore, the atonement was necessary (Hebrews 2:10, 17; John 3:14-16; Hebrews 9:23; Galatians 3:21; Romans 3:26).¹²⁴

What this means is that Jesus Christ had to come into the world to make atonement because man is sinful, God is good and just, and the justice of God demanded satisfaction. Apart from a substitute, sinful man could never be reconciled to a holy God. The Puritans had a phrase that they recited from time-to-time that went something like this, ‘God cannot lie, die, or deny Himself.’ For this reason, it was a ‘consequent absolute necessity’ that a mediator should come to stand in the gap between God and man. Paragraphs 4-10 outline the execution of this mediatorial work of Christ, where we see that “God will love even at the cost of His Son, but he will not love at the cost of His justice.”¹²⁵

Paragraph 4.

This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake, which that He might discharge He was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfill it, and underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have born and suffered, being made sin and a curse for us; enduring most grievous sorrows in His soul, and most painful sufferings in His body; was crucified, and died, and remained in the state of the dead, yet saw no corruption: on the third day He arose from the dead with the same body in which He suffered, with which He also ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of His Father making intercession, and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world. Ps. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:5-10; John 10:18; Gal 4:4; Matt. 3:15; Gal. 3:13; Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 26:37,38; Luke 22:44; Matt. 27:46; Acts 13:37; 1 Cor. 15:3,4; John 20:25,27; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24; Acts 10:42; Rom. 14:9,10; Acts 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:4

Paragraph 5.

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up to God, has fully satisfied the justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father has given unto Him. Heb. 9:14, 10:14; Rom. 3:25,26; John 17:2; Heb. 9:15

¹²⁴ Ibid., 155-56.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Exposition

Here paragraph 4 deals with the ‘historical description’ or ‘identity’ of Christ’s mediatorial work, while paragraph 5 deals with the ‘central operation’ of this work. Several important details should be noted here: Christ executed his office as Mediator willingly, obediently, and substitutionally.

This ought to give us great cause for rejoicing! Christ was not a reluctant Saviour, but delighted to do the will of God with the law within His heart (Psalm 40:8). In accord with the Covenant of Redemption that the Triune God initiated before the foundation of the world, Christ said, *“Behold, I have come to do your will, O God”* (Psalm 40:7; Hebrews 10:5-10). Our Lord said of His substitutionary death in John 10:17-18: *“I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”* What a comfort this ought to be to saints who often reflect upon their unworthiness for such a sacrifice. It was the eternal will of God that Christ should suffer on the cross for wretched sinners, that He might reconcile us to the Father.

Moreover, we see that Christ came, born under the law, obedient to the law, that He might redeem us from our lawlessness. In perfect obedience to the law, Christ was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), the requisite offerings were made at his birth (Luke 2:24), He was baptized to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15), and He was tempted in all things, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). This moral perfection of Christ during his incarnation is sometimes referred to as Christ’s active obedience. Jesus Christ truly was the righteous mediator that man required!

Lastly, paragraphs 4 and 5 articulate a scriptural view of the atonement that identifies Jesus Christ as man’s penal substitute on the cross. Paragraph 4 states: *“[Christ] underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have born and suffered, being made sin and a curse for us; enduring most grievous sorrows in His soul, and most painful sufferings in His body; was crucified, and died...”* Furthermore, paragraph 5 adds: *“He through the eternal Spirit once offered up to God, has fully satisfied the justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance...”*

Here we find unmistakable language that clearly teaches that Jesus Christ offered Himself on the cross as a substitute in man’s place, to pay the penalty that God’s justice required in his passive obedience, and to impute His righteousness to those who believe on Him.

Here we find that the Confession aligns squarely with the Bible and with many of the creeds and confessions that have gone it. In a very helpful article by Michael Vlach in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, Vlach demonstrates that this doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement is not a novel view of the atonement, but is categorically taught in Scripture and is constantly repeated by the early church fathers.¹²⁶

Vlach also points to Martin Luther, whose comments on this doctrine are relevant to both parts of this chapter:

Therefore Christ was not only crucified and died, but by divine love sin was laid upon him.

He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood.

¹²⁶ The value of this article cannot be overstated. I encourage readers to carefully review this article and keep a copy readily available for situations when skeptics of PSA claim that this theory of atonement is a novel product of the Reformation of Nominalist thinking. Michael Vlach, “Penal Substitution in Church History”, in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*. Retrieved June 19, 2025: <https://tyndale.tms.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/tmsj20i.pdf>.

For you do not yet have Christ even though you know that He is God and man. You truly have Him only when you believe that this altogether pure and innocent Person has been granted to you by the Father as your High Priest and Redeemer... Putting off His innocence and holiness and putting on your sinful person, He bore your sin, death, and curse; He became a sacrifice and a curse for you, in order thus to set you free from the curse of the Law.¹²⁷

Scriptural Basis for Penal Substitutionary Atonement

Genesis 3:15, 21

Leviticus 16

Isaiah 53:4-6

John 10:10

Romans 3:25-26

2 Corinthians 5:21

Hebrews 9:29

1 Peter 2:24

In paragraph 4, we also find an echo of the Apostles Creed, written in the second century AD:

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead.*

*He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.*

¹²⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut Lehmann, et al. 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia; and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986) 26:277, 79, 88.

When one compares the *descensus clause* found in the Apostle's Creed with parts of paragraph 4, the similarities are undeniable:

The Apostle's Creed	The Second London Confession
was crucified,	was crucified,
died,	and died,
and was buried.	and remained in the state of the dead, yet saw no corruption:
He descended into hell.	
The third day He arose again from the dead.	on the third day He arose from the dead with the same body in which He suffered, with which He also ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,	and there sits at the right hand of His Father

The role of the Apostle's Creed in the Confession is further confirmed when we study the drafting of the grandparent document, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Shorter Catechism. An early document offering advice on the Shorter Catechism indicates: "The substance of that doctrine comprised in... the Apostles' Creed [is] fully set forth in each of the Catechisms... it is annexed... because it is a brief summe of the Christian faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ."¹²⁸

Paragraph 6.

Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein He was revealed, and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, being the same yesterday, and today and for ever.

1 Cor. 4:10; Heb. 4:2; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11; Rev. 13:8; Heb. 13:8

Paragraph 7.

Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture, attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.

John 3:13; Acts 20:28

¹²⁸ *The Humble Advice of the Assembly of the Divine... Concerning a Shorter Catechism* (London: A.M., 1647), 20.

Exposition

Paragraphs 6 and 7 deal with the 'ancient communications' and 'mysterious communion' of Christ's mediatorial work.

Here paragraph 6 speaks to the manner in which Christ's salvific works were applied to the saints of the Old Testament.

Scripture References

Hebrews 4:2

Galatians 3:8

1 Peter 1:10-11

John Reuther notes how this mediatorial work was anticipated in the Old Testament:

This paragraph states that believers under the Old Covenant were saved in the same way as believers under the New Covenant. The difference is that the mediator had not yet come and accomplished the work that has been described thus far...

The mediator does not appear unannounced or without preparation. The significance of the kind of death that Christ had to die needed to be systematically established before it took place, and God prepared the Israelites (and the world) for this in the everyday life and worship of God's chosen people.

The principle of sacrifice needed to be established. The people had to understand that bloody offerings were required. Identification with the substitute is the only way to find acceptance with God. Pictures of the work of the mediator... had to be developed in the nation's life and worship. They were to understand the functional and essential roles of the prophets, priests, and kings in order to relate to the mediator who would take all three offices into one person. This is true of all the pictures of the Messiah that are found in Old Covenant life and worship: atonement, forgiveness, cleansing, washing, temple, altar, animals, etc.

God's purpose does not change. The father laid plans for the sacrifice of his Son and the redemption of a people for himself before the foundation of the world.¹²⁹

Furthermore, paragraph 7 addresses how both of Christ's natures (divine and human) were active in His redemptive work. Archibald A Hodge offers some helpful commentary on this point:

That all Christ's mediatorial actions involve the concurrent activities of both natures, each nature contributing that which is proper to itself.

Thus the divine nature of Christ is that fountain from which his revelation as prophet is derived. Other prophets reflect his light, or transmit what they receive from him. He is the original source of all divine knowledge. At the same time his humanity is the form through which his Godhead is revealed, his flesh the veil through which its glory is transmitted. His person as incarnate God is the focus of all revelations— the subject as well as the organ of all prophetic teaching.

Thus, also, the human nature of Christ was necessary in order that his person should be "made under the law"; and it is the subject of his vicarious sufferings, and the organ of his

¹²⁹ John Reuther, "Chapter Eight: Of Christ the Mediator," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 167.

vicarious obedience and intercession as our representative Priest and Intercessor. At the same time, it is only the supreme dignity of his divine person which renders his obedience supererogatory (performing actions that go above and beyond what is morally or legally required) and therefore vicarious, and the temporary and finite sufferings of his humanity a full equivalent in justice-satisfying efficacy for the eternal sufferings of all the elect. Thus, also, the activities of his divinity and humanity are constantly and beautifully blended in all his administrative acts as King. The last Adam, the second man, the Head of a redeemed and glorified race, the Firstborn among many brethren, he has dominion over all creatures; and, with a human heart acting out through the energies of divine wisdom and power, he makes all things work together for the accomplishment of his purposes of love. of the Theanthropos- All mediatorial acts are therefore to be attributed to the entire person -God-man. And in the whole of his glorious Person is he to be obeyed and worshipped by angels and men.¹³⁰

Paragraph 8.

To all those for whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption, He does certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, making intercession for them; uniting them to Himself by His Spirit, revealing to them, in and by His Word, the mystery of salvation, persuading them to believe and obey, governing their hearts by His Word and Spirit, and overcoming all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to His wonderful and unsearchable dispensation; and all of free and absolute grace, without any condition foreseen in them to procure it.

John 6:37, 10:15,16, 17:9; Rom. 5:10; John 17:6; Eph. 1:9; 1 John 5:20; Rom. 8:9,14; Ps. 110:1; 1 Cor. 15:25,26; John 3:8; Eph. 1:8

Paragraph 9.

This office of mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God; and may not be either in whole, or any part thereof, transferred from Him to any other.

1 Tim. 2:5

Paragraph 10.

This number and order of offices is necessary; for in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of His prophetic office; and in respect of our alienation from God, and imperfection of the best of our services, we need His priestly office to reconcile us and present us acceptable unto God; and in respect to our averseness and utter inability to return to God, and for our rescue and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need His kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us to His heavenly kingdom.

John 1:18; Col. 1:21; Gal. 5:17; John 16:8; Ps. 110:3; Luke 1:74,75

Exposition

The final three paragraphs of the Confession deal with the effectual application, inalienable possession, and necessary functions of Christ's mediatorial work.

Reuther points out that paragraph 8 describes the manner in which Christ saves his people. In his exposition he notes that there are six aspects present here:

¹³⁰ Archibald A. Hodge, *Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Logos Bible software), 209-210.

1. Christ as mediator by making intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).
2. Christ acts as mediator by uniting us to Himself by giving us His Spirit.
3. Christ acts as mediator by revealing the mystery of his salvation to us.
4. Christ acts as mediator by persuading us to believe and obey.
5. Christ acts as mediator by governing our hearts by His Word and Spirit.
6. Christ acts as our mediator by overcoming all our enemies by His almighty power and wisdom.¹³¹

Speaking on our union with Christ as our mediator, John Owen writes:

Christ is present with a people in and by his spirit, dwelling in their hearts by his spirit and faith, uniting them to himself: ... Profession may be without union, but union will bring forth profession. There may be a form of Godliness without power: but where the power is, there will be the appearance also. Now when Christ is thus present with a people, that is, they are united to him by his spirit, they are members of his mystical body, that is, their glory.¹³²

Speaking on the exclusivity of Christ as mediator in paragraph 9, Reuther makes this point:

Christ is appointed as the only Mediator between man and God. No other person can perform this work for us. Parents intercede for their children in prayer but cannot save them. Pastors preach the Word and shepherd in the household of God but cannot make a sinner right with God. Christ has His exclusive place as the sole object of faith, trust, and hope. We are "as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). This is a great privilege, but the only Mediator between God and man is Jesus Christ the Lord.¹³³

Application

John Reuther offers a fitting response to Christ's mediatorial work:

Here is reason for the deepest gratitude. If Jesus suffered the deepest anguish for us in His death, should we not offer the highest praise and thanks for our new life in Him? Serve Him with the same willingness and devotion with which He served us by giving His life for us. Think daily through this simple pattern: He died for us. He died to sin. We died with Him. We died to sin. He loved us with a great Love. We love him by uniting ourselves to Him and fulfilling the purpose of His death on our behalf. If Christ died this agonizing and shameful death to take our eternal punishment, then why would we not willingly die daily to ourselves and our sin?¹³⁴

¹³¹ John Reuther, "Chapter Eight: Of Christ the Mediator," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 169.

¹³² John Owen, *The Glory and Interest of Nations professing the Gospel* (London: Philemon Stephens, 1659), 9-10.

¹³³ John Reuther, "Chapter Eight: Of Christ the Mediator," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 170.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.