

—A Study of the Westminster Confession of Faith—
Christ the Mediator, WCF 8

- The absolute importance of this chapter and its doctrines lies in the fact that to be wrong about Christ is to be, *at worst*, condemned forever without His salvation, and *at best*, void of the comfort and peace of His person and work on your behalf.
 - The Christology taught in this chapter is, at root, that taught by the Early Church Fathers, who countered numerous heresies in the early Creeds and Confessions. But wedded to this Christological foundation is the soteriology of the Reformation, which highlights the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's work as Redeemer.
 - Since our entire salvation hangs on the mediatorial work of Christ, there are a large number of items to consider in this chapter. We'll need to stick close to the delineation and particulars outlined here and let the Scripture speak for itself on so important a topic.
- I. The Appointment of Christ as the Mediator of Those to be Redeemed by Grace §1
- A. There was no Mediator in the first covenant because man was acceptable to his Creator and, having a pure conscience, was not disturbed by any terror or fear which would make him recoil from the Holy One.
1. To be sure, it was an amazing condescension on the part of God to enter into a federal transaction with His own creature, to whom He owed nothing, and whose obedience He might have demanded without any reward. But having purposed to relate to man via covenant, no Mediator was needed.
 2. When sin was introduced, the necessity of a Mediator became painfully obvious.
 - a) Sin rendered man guilty and God's presence terrifying. Sin rendered God angry and man's existence abominable. In the Garden man hid himself from God in fear. At Sinai, the people trembled at God's voice and presence and said to Moses, "You speak with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die."
 - b) Something must be done. God will destroy us as we are and we run from God as He is.
 3. Jesus Christ is the answer. He comes, not merely as a prophet, like Moses, who speaks to us in the name of God, and not merely as a priest, like Aaron, who intercedes for us to God, but He comes, in the sacrifice of Himself, to actually remove the obstacles which prevented our friendly intercourse with God; and while by His death He reconciled God to the guilty, by the influence of His grace, upon our hearts, He reconciles the guilty to God.
 - a) Thus the necessity of the mediation of Christ arises from the existence of sin and the separation and enmity which it caused between God and man.
 - b) Man is obnoxious to God and has no means of appeasing His anger. There needs the interposition of another person to atone for our guilt and lay the foundation of peace. This, then, is the design of Christ's office as Mediator and it extends to all the acts by which sinners are actually brought into a state of reconciliation, are fitted for communion with God, and are raised to perfection and immutable happiness in the world to come.
 4. **Let's see what the necessary qualifications of a Mediator between God and man are let's see that they are found exclusive in Christ.
 - a) A mediator must necessarily be a different person from either of the parties whom he is to reconcile.
 - (1) He must be a third person to interpose and adjust the difference by the proposal of terms in which both will acquiesce. Christ is such a third person, neither the One offended not the offending one.
 - (a) But how is this possible since He is one with the Father and the Spirit and therefore equally offended by man's sin? Considering the unity of the Godhead, He was

indeed equally offended and angry with man; but considering the economy among the persons of the Godhead, by which different characters and offices are assigned to each and relations are sustained by them towards one another and to us in order to accomplish our redemption, He is able to stand apart from the Father and apart from us as a third person.

- (b) The law and the covenant of works therefore appears in the economy of redemption as the law of the Father. It is against Him that we have sinned and it is with Him that we need to be reconciled, Ps 51.4. He upholds His law and demands justice.
- (c) The Son, as it were, resigned this right to the Father and therefore was able to assume a different character. Rather than pursue the claims of justice against sinners, He stands forth as their Friend and Surety to rescue them from their perilous situation and to give whatever satisfaction their offended Law-Giver may demand of them. He can do this as their Surety in their nature, yet without their sin.
- b) A mediator must be independent, and master of himself.
 - (1) A death was required for reconciliation. But no man owns his own life and has the right to lay it down without God's permission. Christ, however, had the power and right to lay down His life and take it up again at will, because as God, He was Lord of His own life.
 - (2) Being divine and under no higher power, He was subject to no law or authority but His own. Thus when He took our nature, He was free to do with it whatever was necessary to accomplish His office. He was free to present it as a pure offering to the Father and He was free to give His blood as the ransom for our souls.
- c) A mediator must be a person who has great influence over both parties. He must possess the means to terminate the aversion and unite the two in peace.
 - (1) Christ had absolute influence with the Father as His beloved Son and could ask whatever He would and it would be given Him. And He has absolute influence over man, being fully able by His Word and Spirit to persuade and cause them by His irresistible grace to believe upon Him and accept and surrender to Him as Lord.
- d) A mediator between God and man must be capable of suffering.
 - (1) God cannot pardon man's sin without satisfaction to His justice. A mediator must therefore be willing to make that satisfaction—which will require suffering and dying under the penalty of a broken covenant, Gen 2.17.
 - (2) Had the redemption been merely an act of power, Christ could have accomplished it from heaven just as He accomplished Israel's deliverance from Egypt. But man's redemption was a moral work and had to be conducted in conformity to the principles of the divine government and to be terminated in a full display of God's justice and the holiness.
 - (3) But the divine nature cannot suffer and die; a human nature is needed. But a mere human nature, which is finite, cannot satisfy for the infinite nature of the transgression.
 - (4) Thus the mediator must be divine in order to bring a sufficiency to the suffering, but he must be man in order to suffer in man's place.
 - (5) Who, then, is both divine and human? Only Christ is qualified for such a work.
- e) A mediator must be free from sin.
 - (1) If he is to suffer for the sins of others, he must have none of his own. Where is there a man without sin, Ecc 7.20? Christ alone is the man free from sin, Lk 1.35; 1Pet 3.18; 2Cor 5.21; Heb 9.12-14
- f) A mediator must be a person to whom men may have free access and to whom men will not fear to draw near.
 - (1) Christ has not only taken on our nature, but He has suffered in it in order that He might sympathize with us and uphold us in our sufferings and He repeatedly calls us to come

unto Him for compassion, sympathy, and rest, Mt 11.28. His Spirit overcomes our fears and opens our eyes to Christ as the altogether lovely One.

- (2) Thus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man. He has appeased the Father's anger and procured our pardon and acceptance by His death; and by His grace He has destroyed our natural enmity against God and inspired love and confidence in the Father as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- B. It pleased God to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, Isa 42.1; Jn 3.16; 1Tim 2.5
 1. Thus our Lord did not engage in the work of mediation without a special call and commission from the Father, Heb 5.1-6
 2. He was chosen and appointed from all eternity, Pr 8.23; 1Pet 1.20
 3. When He was on earth, He often declared that He was on a commission, Jn 6.38
 4. His divine appointment affords us a striking proof of the Father's love for us, 1Jn 4.9-10, and lays a firm foundation for our trust in Christ and His work, Jn 14.6
 - a) **Shaw**, "Without the appointment of the Father, His work would not have been valid in law for our redemption; but this appointment assures us that the whole work of His mediations is most acceptable to God, and affords us the highest encouragement to rely upon His finished work for our eternal salvation."
- C. Christ's mediatorial work is outlined under several grand titles, showing us that He came to do far more than just acquire the forgiveness of sins. He came to redeem a lost people as well as to restore a fallen world. He came as the Second Adam to do what Adam failed to do: to turn the whole world into the Sanctuary of God.
 1. As the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace He is made Head and Saviour of His Church, Eph 1.22-13; 5.23, Heir of all things, Heb 1.2, and Judge of all the world, Acts 17.31.
 2. But principally His mediatorial office and work is sustained under three particular facets, the prophetic, the sacerdotal, and the regal, which give way to three offices: Prophet, Acts 3.22, Priest, Heb 5.5-6, and King, Ps 2.6; Lk 1.33.
- D. Christ's mediatorial appointment was in order to the redemption of a people whom the Father had given Him to redeem, call, justify, sanctify, and glorify.
 1. The Father, from all eternity, gave to Christ a people and commissioned Him to do all that was necessary to bring them to glory, Isa 55.4-51; Eph 1.3-6
 2. That this was a definite number of people sovereignly chosen by God is clear, Jn 17.6, 9
 3. It was not left uncertain whether Christ would have a people to serve Him; He was given a people and would redeem them, Isa 53.10-11
 4. He would not make salvation possible for them, but would secure for them a full and final salvation and would lose none of them to perdition, Jn 6.37-39; Heb 9.12
 5. Thus Christ is the Mediator of the Covenant of Redemption made between the Father and the Son in the eternal counsels of the Godhead (cf. Chapter 7).

II. The Constitution of the Person of the Mediator §2

- A. In opposition to the Socinians and Unitarians, who maintain that Christ was merely a man; and in opposition to the Arians (modern-day Jehovah's *false*-Witnesses), who maintain that Christ is a creature, though a mighty one, the Confession here teaches that: Christ not only existed from all eternity but was from all eternity the Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, and that: in the fullness of time he assumed a complete human nature into union with His divine nature, so that: He is both very God and very man, having two distinct natures, yet but one person.
 1. Jesus Christ not only existed prior to His incarnation but is the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father. Consider the scriptural testimony:
 - a) He existed before John the Baptist, Jn 1.15
 - b) He existed before Abraham, Jn 8.58

- c) He existed before the flood, 1Pet 3.19-20
 - d) He existed before the foundation of the world, Jn 17.5
 - e) He came down from heaven and went back up to heaven, Jn 3.15; 6.62
2. His eternal nature was the nature of God, Phil 2.6; Jn 1.1
 3. His Sonship is not founded upon His incarnation or commission or even resurrection, but upon an eternal generation from the Father, Jn 10.30, 33. There is no sense in trying to explain this eternal generation; but to deny it is not only preposterous, but subverts the doctrine of the Trinity and thereby empties His atoning work of any value and profit, since that which gives His work any value and efficacy is the fact that He is essentially God and the Son of God.
- B. In the fullness of time the Son of God assumed a complete human nature into union with His divine person.
1. The Docetics denied that Christ had a human body and the Arians denied that Christ had a human soul; but the Scriptures declare that the eternal Christ took on full humanity, both body and soul, Jn 1.14; Gal 4.4; Heb 2.14; 1Jn 1.1; Lk 2.52; Mk 14.34; Lk 23.46
 2. Christ was in every way subject to the infirmities of humanity, though without sin. He was subject to hunger and thirst, weariness and pain; but because He was without sin, He was said to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom 8.3. His sinless humanity was essential for His mediatorial work, Heb 7.26
 3. Christ's human nature was formed by the Holy Spirit and taken from Mary's humanity, Lk 1.27, 31, 35, 42-43; Gen 3.15. In other words, His humanity was not created out of nothing, nor did it descend from heaven (as some have argued).
 4. The assumption of humanity into union with the divinity was in such a way that Christ is one person with two distinct natures. This is affirmed against the Nestorians, who held that in Christ there were two distinct persons, and the Eutychians, who held that in Christ there was but one nature, His human nature being absorbed into the divine. In fact, the statement in this section is so precise that every conceivable Christological heresy is denied by it.
 - a) The human nature of Christ never had a separate existence or personality of its own before Christ assumed it. From its first formation, it was inseparably united to and subsisted in the person of the eternal Son of God. This is called the hypostatical or personal union, the union of two natures in one person. Notice "inseparably joined"—the Son of God permanently united a human nature to Himself. This is an expression of the astonishing character of God's commitment to His people.
 - b) Yet, this personal union of the two natures was "without conversion" (i.e., either nature altering the other), "without composition" (i.e., being merged so that they become one "other" nature), or "without confusion" (i.e. mixing together so that they lose their own essential properties). The manhood remains fully and distinctly man and the Godhood remains fully and distinctly God. Each nature retains its own essential properties though inseparably united in the one Person. Thus it's not a union *between* but *of* two natures.
 - c) Yet, in consequence of this union, the attributes of the one nature are often in Scripture assigned to the other nature—because they are both united in one person, Heb 5.8; 1Cor 2.8; 1Tim 2.5
 - d) The union of Christ's two natures in His one person is critical to the doctrine of redemption by His blood. For unless His human righteousness and sufferings have divine dignity and infinite value, they cannot save us.
 - e) **Roger Nicole**, the "union of deity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ...is not like a chemical compound, where both elements lose their individual characteristics and form a new substance, such as oxygen and hydrogen in the formation of water. It is not like an alloy where two or more metals are pressed together so completely that only melting would segregate them, such as copper and tin in bronze. It is not like a mixture where conceivably patient work could separate the distinct elements, such as a package of stamps for collectors,

or a bag of seeds to feed the birds. It is not like the union of marriage, where husband and wife are made one flesh but remain distinct persons. In the hypostatic union of deity and humanity in the God-man, the two natures remain intact but so intimately and indissolubly conjoined that together they constitute one person. This one person has access to both sets of characteristics in such a way that deity is not shrunk nor humanity enlarged.”

III. The Qualification of Christ for His mediatorial Work §3

- A. The Father furnished Christ with all He needed to fulfill His commission. He gave Him a body in which He might do all His work, Heb 10.4-7, and all the gifts and graces of the Spirit without measure, Ps 45.7; Jn 3.34; Col 1.19; 2.3; Jn 1.14.
 - 1. That a true human body was prepared for Christ and yet He remained sinless shows that sinfulness isn't attached to human nature, abstractly considered, but to the human person; i.e. the nature isn't guilty, the person is.
- B. The visible testimony to His anointing by the Father was the descent of the Spirit in bodily form at His baptism, Lk 3.21-22
- C. The office assumed by Christ was not by usurpation, but by appointment from the Father, Heb 5.4-5; Jn 5.22, 27; Mt 28.18; Acts 2.36

IV. The Manner in Which Christ Discharged the Office of Mediator and Surety §4

- A. This section (along with the previous) affirms that Christ undertook the office, not only of a Mediator, but also of a *Surety*, Heb 7.22. A surety is one who engages to pay a debt or suffer a penalty incurred by another. In the everlasting covenant, Christ undertook to be responsible to the law and justice of God for the debt which His elect were bound to pay and for the righteousness which they needed to be accepted.
 - 1. And He submitted to all this “most willingly”, Ps 40.7-8; Jn 10.18; Phil 2.8. There's never a gap between the will of the Father and the will of the Son. The will between them is perfectly one.
 - 2. And therefore as our Surety, our guilt was legally imputed to Him and the punishment of our sins was fully exacted from Him on the cross as if they were His own, Isa 53.6, 8; 2Cor 5.21; 1Pet 2.24. And, because He was our Surety, all His obedience in our nature was credited to us as if it were our own, 2Cor 5.21; Rom 10.4.
- B. What did Christ do in the discharge of His mediatorial office?
 - 1. He was made under the law and perfectly fulfilled it, Gal 4.4; Mt 3.15; 5.17
 - a) Christ fulfilled the moral law as a covenant of works. He perfectly fulfilled the covenant of works which Adam broke and under the curse of which the elect were bound. It was required of Him that He not only provide perfect obedience to it, as the condition of life, but perfect satisfaction for man's transgression. And He gave both.
 - b) When the Son of God subjected Himself to the law on His people's behalf and obeyed it perfectly as the God-man, He magnified it and honored it more than if all the men in the world would have obeyed it, Isa 42.21. Likewise, when He shed His blood under the penalty of it, He brought more honor to it than if the entire human race had bled under it forever.
 - 2. He suffered in soul and body.
 - a) He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, throughout His whole life (Isa 53.3) and was assailed by Satan's temptations, Mt 4.1-11.
 - b) But most grievous of all was the hand of God, which was justly set against Him in wrath, because He was our Surety, Isa 53.10, Mk 14.34; 15.34.
 - c) It was only in His human nature that Christ was capable of suffering and dying. Therefore these sufferings were in His human soul and human body. But they were the sufferings of the one person, who united the human nature inseparably to His person. Therefore they were real, and incomparably agonizing and dolorous. No words can ever express the sorrow, agony, pain, and grief that He underwent to redeem His people.

3. He was crucified and died.
 - a) Death was the penalty of the law and the just wages of sin. Therefore as our Surety, He could not avoid it and as our just due, our redemption could not have been accomplished without it, 1Cor 15.3.
 - b) It was the accursed death of the cross (Dt 21.23) to show that those for whom He died were cursed by God, Gal 3.10. But being made a curse for us, He was able to deliver us from the curse, Gal 3.13.
 - c) His death was at the hands of wicked men who violently mistreated and shamed Him; but it was treatment and a death to which He submitted Himself voluntarily in order to deliver us, Jn 10.18.
4. He was buried and remained under the power of death for a time.
 - a) He was dead three days—long enough to prove that He was really dead and short enough that His body saw no corruption, Ps 16.10
 - b) He was buried in the tomb to sanctify the grave as a bed of rest for His people, 1Th 4.13; 1Cor 15.54-55.
 - c) Though Christ's body lay in the tomb for 3 days while His spirit rested with the Father (Lk 23.46), yet He was never separated from His human nature. His human soul was still united with His divine person in heaven and on the third day He resumed His human body again, never again to be separated from it.
5. He rose from the dead on the third day, 1Cor 15.3-5
 - a) His resurrection was a necessary fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but it also more. It was the proof of the Father's acceptance of His work on the cross and proof of the finality and efficacy of His atonement. For if any sins were yet unpaid, He could not have gotten free of the tomb.
 - b) Christ rose with the very same body that had been crucified and buried, though glorified and immortal, Jn 20.20, 25-27
 - c) His resurrection vindicated His claim to deity and all of His teachings.
6. He ascended into heaven
 - a) He remained with His disciples for 40 days to instruct them in the kingdom of God (Acts 1.3) and afterwards ascended into heaven, Acts 1.9; Lk 24.50-51.
 - b) His ascension was in order that He might take possession of the glory which He had merited as the Mediator (Jn 17), that He might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit for His people, and subsequently pour Him out upon them (Acts 2.33), that He might govern as our King for our good, that He might prepare a place for us (Jn 14), and that He might take possession of our inheritance in our name.
7. He sits at the right hand of God
 - a) He enjoys the glory that was His before the world began, but now as the God-man and Mediator of His people, Eph 1.20-22
 - b) His sitting denotes the completion of His priestly work of offering sacrifices and the all-sufficiency of His atonement, Heb 10.11-14
8. He makes intercession for His people
 - a) His intercession is that part of His priestly work that continues until all the elect are brought safely to heaven, Heb 7.25
 - b) His intercession is not to be understood as a literal praying with the lips, but rather as His very appearance before the Father in the nature and name of His people. The Son appears before the Father as the Righteous Redeemer and Saviour, who died and lives evermore, wearing our glorified nature and bearing our names upon His palms and thereby serves as the foundation and basis upon which the eternal decree of God concerning us unfolds without fail.

- c) But we must notice that the Son's intercession is not for the world or for the mass of humanity, but only for those whose the Father had given Him before the world began, Jn 17.9
 - d) His intercession is as extensive as the promises of the Covenant and as the blessings merited by His righteousness and purchased by His death. Nothing is left to chance; nothing is missing. His intercession is perfect and always answered, Ps 21.2; Jn 11.42
9. He will return to judge men and angels at the end of the world
- a) This is affirmed by many verses, Jude 14; 1Th 4.16; 2Th 1.7-9; Acts 1.11; Mt 26.64; Rev 22.7, 12, 20.
 - b) He will come personally and visibly, with great power and glory. No one will miss it; all will be gathered to Him for judgment, Jn 5.22; Rom 14.10; 2Cor 5.10; Heb 9.28
 - c) The time of His return is fixed in the counsels of heaven but unknown to any man, Acts 1.6-7. It will happen suddenly and unexpectedly, Mt 24.37-39. We should not try to decipher its timing but rather live in its light, Mt 25.13; Js 5.8-9; 1Jn 2.28

V. The Effects Accomplished by the Obedience and Sacrifice of Christ §5

A. He fully satisfied the justice of His Father on behalf of His people.

1. Retributive justice is essential to God as the moral Governor of the universe. When sin entered the world, it was impossible but that it receive full justice from the hand of God. That justice for the sinner is eternal damnation under His wrath—unless another way be provided for the redemption of the sinner.
2. In love God was pleased to provide full satisfaction for sinners in Jesus Christ, who bore the wrath due to them and put away their sin, Heb 9.26; Dan 9.24; Gal 3.13.
3. He suffered at the hands of the God against whom we had sinned; He suffered the penalty due in the nature that had sinned; His sufferings were voluntary and obediential and therefore pleasing to the law of God; He was Lord of His own life and had the right to lay it down in another's behalf; and His sufferings were, from the dignity of His person, of infinite value for the complete expiation of our sins.
4. That His sufferings fully satisfied the wrath of God is clear, Eph 5.2; Jn 19.30; Rom 8.1; Eph 1.20

B. He purchased reconciliation with God for His people

1. This necessarily flows from the former; for if God's justice is fully satisfied, then God's judicial displeasure must be fully turned away from the sinner and reconciliation secured.
2. It was sin that separated God and sinners (Isa 59.1-2). Therefore Christ made satisfaction for sin. But this did more than just render God and the sinner reconcilable, it actually accomplished the reconciliation. The death of Christ *de facto* reconciled the sinner and God, making peace between them, Col 1.19-20; Eph 1.7; Heb 9.12
3. If God was merely rendered reconcilable, then some further actions of our own must be the proper ground of our reconciliation with God. But this is subversive of the gospel, which plainly teaches that Christ actually made reconciliation by His death, Rom 5.10; Heb 2.14-15
4. This does not mean that those for whom Christ died are actually reconciled to God from the moment of their existence. Like all men, they are born under the wrath of God until, by faith in Christ, they receive all the benefits of Christ's work and are actually reconciled, Eph 2.1-3; Rom 5.11; Lk 13.3

C. He purchased an everlasting inheritance in heaven for His people

1. Christ not only suffered the full infliction of the penalty of the law of God, to obtain for His people deliverance from condemnation, but He also perfectly fulfilled its precepts, to procure for them a title to the eternal inheritance, Jn 17.2; Rom 5.10; Eph 1.11, 14; Heb 2.10; 9.15

D. It becomes obvious, by the scriptural testimony of this section, that the work of Christ was in no way a *potential* work, but was in every way an *actual* work. What He came to do, He *actually did*.

1. He came to put away sin for those for whom He died and it was put away, never again to be taken into their account. He came to reconcile God to the sinners for whom He died and He reconciled them. He came to purchase an inheritance for those whose sins He put away and He purchased it for them; He gave them eternal life and an eternal inheritance in heaven.
2. At every single turn, the work of Christ involved actualities and accomplishments, not potentialities and attempts. Nothing has been left to chance, everything has been secured. Nothing was conditioned upon the sinner, in hopes that he would do his part; everything was done for the sinner, who was entirely incapable of doing any part. Christ is a complete Saviour who came to work a complete salvation. It is finished.

VI. The Efficacy of Christ's Death for the Salvation of Sinners in the Old Testament §6

- A. If salvation was so full and only secured by the work of Christ, are the Old Testaments saints then left without the possibility of salvation? Absolutely not.
- B. Though the actual accomplishment of Christ's redeeming work took place at the center of the world's history, it's virtue, efficacy, and benefits were communicated no less truly and really to the elect who lived before its accomplishment than it is being communicated to the elect who live after its accomplishment.
- C. Being the infinite Son of God, the virtue and efficacy of all His work must also be infinite. It cannot be exhausted even if 10,000 worlds of people appropriated it; it cannot be limited to time and space; it is of infinite value and infinite efficacy. And since it was accomplished on behalf of all the elect, then it doesn't matter where they live in relation to its actual accomplishment in history. They cannot but benefit from it since the triune God cannot but impute those benefits unto them. If Christ rendered all that was necessary for Abraham's and Moses' salvation, though thousands of years in time from when they actually lived, it would be unjust of God to not apply the benefits of that work to them; for in the mind of God, who lives outside time and space, the work is already done and already "available" to apply.
- D. God therefore did not leave Himself without witness in the OT. He prefigured and foreshadowed the work of Christ in types, shadows, and promises, providing in these elementary means all that was necessary to direct their hearts to the One who was to come and all that was necessary to justify God rendering them a full salvation in Jesus Christ. The blood of bulls and goats never took away anyone's sins; all were saved by the same Jesus, the same cross, the same resurrection, the same intercession, the same everlasting righteousness which He brought in by His holy life, Heb 13.8; Gen 3.15; Gal 4.4-5.

VII. The Communion of Christ's Two Natures in His One Person §7

- A. In Section 2 it was affirmed that Christ's two natures, though inseparable, yet remain distinct. But this raises a question. What are we to make of the language Scripture uses to attribute to one nature of Christ the attribute of the other, e.g. Acts 20.28; 1Cor 2.8? The answer is that because one person acts through both natures, there are times where the person with respect to one nature is spoken of in terms of the other nature. Not because there is a *communication between* the two natures but because there is a *communion of* the two natures in the one person.
- B. In other words, each of Christ's two natures does what is proper to itself (e.g. only the human nature suffers and dies; only the divine nature is infinite and omnipresent); but since the one person acts through both natures, the acts of the one person can be spoken of with regard to either nature, Mt 24.36; Jn 3.13.
 1. It is as God that He sends the Spirit, reigns over His church, reveals the mysteries of the gospel, and performs acts which imply sovereign authority and infinite power. And it is as man that He died, rose from the tomb, ascended to heaven, took possession of heavenly glory in our name and nature, and intercedes for us before the throne of His Father.

2. But in speaking of the respective works of the two natures, we must never lose sight of the personal union of His natures, in consequence of which they are one principle of operation in the work of redemption.
- C. This truth claims our special attention because its upon this communion of natures in Christ's person that gives inherent and infinite value to all His mediatory acts on our behalf. Unless the dignity of His person as the eternal Son of God could so commune with His human nature as to give all that He did infinite value and efficacy, then His sufferings and death would have been nothing more than the sufferings of death a single man, which would have brought salvation to nothing more than the humanity He assumed.

VIII. The Extent of Christ's Atonement §8

- A. In this section we reach the logical conclusion of all the preceding scriptural testimony, namely, that the purchase and application of Christ's work are of the same extent.
1. In Section 5, we learned that Christ purchased redemption only "for those whom the Father had given to Him"; and here it is asserted that "to all those for whom Christ purchased redemption, He certainly and effectually applies and communicates the same," Jn 6.37, 39; 10.15-16.
 2. The atonement of Christ is specific and limited—not in terms of its value and efficacy, which are infinite—but in terms of its intent and application. Thus it is neither *universal* (such that all men are saved) nor *indefinite* (such that an unknown number of men will be saved); but it is *restricted* (such that all the elect for whom it was intended will most certainly and fully be saved).
 3. By necessary consequence, then, Christ could not have come to redeem all men or else all men would necessarily be saved and hell would be nonexistent. All those for whom Christ came must assuredly be saved and cannot be lost. All those for whose sins Christ died have no sins to die for; all those for whom Christ accomplished reconciliation with God are already or soon shall be reconciled to God and cannot be separated from Him; all those for whom Christ purchased an inheritance in heaven cannot possibly go to hell and not inherit it.
 4. The biblical testimony is therefore this: in eternity past, the Father elected specific individuals to be recipients of His love and grace and entrusted these specific individuals, the elect, to Christ to redeem. Christ therefore came to earth as a man to live, die, and rise again for the Father's elect. Christ then ascended into heaven to intercede for the salvation, sanctification, and glorification of the elect. This number can neither be decreased or increased, but has been fixed in the eternal counsels of heaven. So sure is the salvation of those for whom Christ came, so sure is the salvation which we receive from Christ by faith, Jn 6.37-40; 17.1-18; Rev 13.8. This important truth can be confirmed by the following arguments:
 - a) Restrictive terms are frequently used to express the objects of Christ's death, Isa 53.12; Mt 20.28; Jn 10.14-15, 24-30. To be sure, universal terms are also used to express the objects of Christ's death, e.g., 1Jn 2.1-2. Now if these universal terms are to be taken in an absolute sense, then the restrictive terms are rendered false, but this cannot be. Therefore the restrictive terms must be taken in an absolute sense and the universal terms must be interpreted in their light. In fact, the judicious reader of the Bible will find that the universal terms used to refer to the objects of Christ's death refer, not to all people without exception, but to all people without distinction, i.e. to Jew and Gentile.
 - b) Those for whom Christ died are distinguished from others by discriminating characters, Jn 10.15, 26; Eph 5.25; Rom 8.33; Jn 11.52
 - c) Those whom Christ redeemed by His blood are said to be redeemed from among men, Rev 14.4, and out of every nation, Rev 5.9, both which imply that only some are taken out of the all.
 - d) The redemption obtained by Christ is restricted to those who were chosen in Him and whom the Father gave to Him to redeem, Eph 1.4, 7; Jn 17.2; Isa 53.8, 10

- e) Christ died as a Surety and therefore laid down His life only for those whom He represented, or for His spiritual seed, Isa 53.10
 - f) The intention of Christ in laying down His life was, not merely to obtain for those for whom He died a possibility of salvation, but to actually save them, to bring them into the real possession and enjoyment of eternal life, Eph 5.25-26; Tit 2.14; 1Pet 3.18; 1Th 5.10
 - g) The intercession of Christ proceeds upon the ground of His atoning sacrifice; they must therefore be of the same extent with regard to their objects; but He does not pray for the world, but only for those given to Him; His sacrifice must therefore be restricted to that definite number, 1Jn 2.1-2; Jn 17.9
 - h) Paul declares the impossibility of those for whom Christ died not receiving all the benefits and blessings of salvation, Rom 8.32. Therefore it is impossible that Christ died for all men since all men do not receive the benefits of His death.
 - i) Paul declares the certainty of our eternal salvation in Christ's life by virtue of our participation in Christ's death (Rom 5.10); and since not all are saved by Christ's life, we must conclude that all were not reconciled by His death.
 - j) Christ's death not only procured final salvation, but all the means leading up to it, i.e. faith and repentance. Consequently, His intention in dying must be limited to those who do in fact repent and believe and not extended to the whole human race.
 - k) The doctrine that Christ died for all men leads to many absurd and blasphemous consequences:
 - (1) That Christ shed His blood for many in vain
 - (2) That Christ died in absolute uncertainty whether any would be eventually saved
 - (3) That Christ died for many (in the OT), who were already and irrecoverably in hell
 - (4) That Christ died for many for whom He does not intercede
 - (5) That Christ died for many to whom He never sent the means of salvation
 - (6) That God unjustly inflicts everlasting punishment on men in hell for the very sins for which He has already received full satisfaction by the death of Christ.
 - (7) To affirm any of these things would be blasphemous in the highest degree; and therefore the doctrine which involves such consequences must be unscriptural.
- B. The section affirms the following applications of Christ's work to the elect by the Holy Spirit:
1. He makes intercession for them, 1Jn 2.1; Rom 8.34; Heb 7.25
 2. He reveals the mysteries of salvation to them in and by the Word, Jn 15.13, 15; 17.6; Eph 1.7-9
 3. He effectually persuades them to believe and obey Him, Ps 110.3; Phil 2.13
 4. He governs their hearts by His Word and Spirit, Jn 14.16; Heb 12.2; 2Cor 4.13; Rom 8.9, 14; 15.18-19; Jn 17.17
 5. He overcomes all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom, Ps 110.1; 1Cor 15.25-26; Mal 4.2-3; Col 2.15
- C. The wisdom displayed in the mediation of Christ is worthy of the highest admiration. Human wisdom would have been confounded by the question, Who will repair the breach between heaven and earth? A man is too low and weak, and a divine person is too high and remote. The mediation is the work of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.
- D. See the glory this mediation brings to our Redeemer! He stands between heaven and earth and conducts a negotiation on which depends the interests of both. He stands alone, bringing salvation with His own arm and there is none who stands with Him. To Him are committed the care of the divine honor and the happiness of the human race, and He accomplishes both. Human nature is raised from the ruins of the fall, paradise is regained, and the everlasting triumph of righteousness and truth over error and sin is secured. None is so glorious as the Mediator Jesus Christ.

Bibliography:

An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Robert Shaw

The Confession of Faith, A. A. Hodge
Confessing the Faith, Chad Van Dixhoorn
Lectures on Theology Vol. 2, John Dick
Westminster Standards class at WTS 2001, Sinclair Ferguson

Assignments:

*Read Chapter Eight in Hodge

*Read Chapter Eight in the WCF

*Memorize Shorter Catechism questions 20-29; Heb 8.1-7; 9.11-15, 24-28; 10.1-14, 19-31

—The next class will meet, DV, at 8AM on 12 Sept for a study of WCF 9 & 10