

Lesson 12: 2LCF Chapter 8: Of Christ the Mediator (Part 1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:1-4

For the first eight centuries of the church, one of the most widely contested domains of doctrine was that of the person of Jesus Christ.¹¹³ When one begins to survey all of the councils and creeds that arose in those early centuries of the church, many of them seek to address this most-important doctrine: The Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Council of Constantinople, the Council of Ephesus, the Council/Creed of Chalcedon, etc.

When one begins to survey the false teaching that has frequently sought to attack Christ and our understanding of His identity, we can begin to appreciate why it is so important to have a biblical perspective on Christ.

In a previous lesson (Lesson 5), we learned many of the heresies that arose during this time period that sought in some way, shape, or form to disfigure the doctrine of the person of Christ as He is described in the pages of Scripture.

Modalism (i.e. Sabellianism, Noetianism and Patripassianism)

Modalism teaches that the three persons of the Trinity are not distinct persons, but are revealed in different “modes.” Adherents believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not distinct personalities, but different modes of God’s self-revelation.

Tritheism

Tritheism confesses the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three independent divine beings; three separate gods who share the ‘same substance’. This is a common mistake because of misunderstandings of the use of the term ‘persons’ in defining the Trinity.

Arianism

Arianism teaches that the preexistent Christ was the first and greatest of God’s creatures but denied his fully divine status.

Docetism

Docetism teaches that Jesus Christ is a purely divine being who only had the “appearance” of being human.

Ebionitism

Ebionitism teaches that Jesus was endowed with particular charismatic gifts which distinguished him from other humans. Nevertheless, he is a purely human figure.

Adoptionism

Adoptionism teaches that Jesus was born totally human and only later was “adopted”—either at his baptism or at his resurrection—by God in a special (i.e. divine) way.

¹¹³ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 151.

Partialism

This heresy teaches that that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are components of the one God. This led them to believe that each of the persons of the Trinity is only part God, only becoming fully God when they come together.

Adding to the List

In this lesson, we will add to this growing list as we look at a few additional heresies that sought to attack the doctrine of Christ:

Nestorianism

This heresy hold that Christ is two distinct persons, one divine and one human, and that these two persons exist apart from each other. This was Nestorius, the fifth century bishop of Constantinople. It was condemned as a heresy by the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

Eutichianism

This is the view that Jesus Christ possessed only one nature, which was a blend of both divine and human. In A.D. 451, the Council of Chalcedon condemned this view as a heresy and produced the Creed of Chalcedon, which reads: *“one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; **the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union**, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ;”*

Monotheletism

This is a heretical teaching that asserts that Christ possessed only one will—a divine will (“thelema” - θέλημα). This view arose in the seventh century and sought to maximize Christ’s deity, while minimizing his humanity; this was done by denying that Christ possessed a human will. The Third Council of Constantinople refuted this teaching and advanced a view known as Dyothelitism, which teaches that the Christ possesses a human will as well as a divine will.

In this lesson we will be surveying the first section of chapter of eight, dealing with the with person of Christ, specifically his ordination, incarnation, and qualifications. This chapter of the of the Confession has been divided as follows:¹¹⁴

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)

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 150.

Paragraph 1.

It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; head and savior of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 1:19,20; Acts 3:22; Heb. 5:5,6; Ps. 2:6; Luke 1:33; Eph. 1:22,23; Heb. 1:2; Acts 17:31; Isa. 53:10; John 17:6; Rom. 8:30

Exposition

Paragraph one of the Confession addresses the ordination of Christ to serve as the mediator between God and man. Here language is borrowed directly from 1 Timothy 2:5. In context, it reads: “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 Tim. 2:5–6).

Additionally, references can be found to doctrines taught in other chapters of the Confession:

“His only begotten Son” — Eternal Generation (Chapter 2)

“According to the covenant made between them” — Covenant of Redemption (Chapter 7)

“He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed” — Providence, Salvation (Chapters 5, 10-17)

Here Christ is recognized as the Prophet, Priest, and King to which all of Scripture points. Renihan comments:

Following familiar reformed scholastic paths, He (Christ) is immediately said to be the Prophet, Priest, and King. This single office of mediator becomes threefold. Muller demonstrates that the threefold office was understood to be the specific work of the mediator. The point is repeated and enlarged and 8.9 and executed and 8.10.¹¹⁵

Paragraph 2.

The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, of one substance and equal with Him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things He has made, did, when the fullness of time was complete, take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities of it, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her; and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14,16,17, 4:15; Matt. 1:22, 23; Luke 1:27,31,35; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 2:5

¹¹⁵ James M. Renihan, *To the Judicious and Impartial Reader: A Contextual-Historical Exposition of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*, Baptist Symbolics 2 (Cape Coral: Founders Press, 2022), 216.

Exposition

After a brief introduction to Christ's ordination, paragraph two deals with some of the most consequential doctrines in all of Scripture. We will explore this paragraph under three headings: The Deity of Christ, the Humanity of Christ, and the Single Personality of Christ.

The Deity of Christ

The Confession reads: *"The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with Him who made the world, who upholds and governs all things He has made..."*

Scripture Reference:

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

John 5:18 the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He...was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 10:33 The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

John 20:28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Rom. 9:5 ... from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Col. 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter ... To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 1:8 But of the Son He says, "Your throne O God..."

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

On this point, Edward Leigh writes:

He is God, not by office, nor by favour, nor by similitude, nor in a figure, as sometimes Angels and Magistrates are called Gods; but by nature, he is equal and co-essential with his Father, there is one God-head common to all the three persons, the Father, the Son and the Spirit;

and therefore it is said, Phil. 2. 6. that He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Lo an equality to God the Father ascribed to him, he is not God in any secondary or inferior manner, but is in the very form of God equal to him, the God-head of all the three Persons being one and the same.¹¹⁶

The Humanity of Christ

“without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her”

Speaking on this Sam Waldron once commented that Christ’s true humanity is demonstrated by these proofs:

- The Promise of a Man (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 9:6)
- The Designation of a Man (Acts 17:31; 1 Timothy 2:5)
- The Consciousness of a Man (John 8:40; Matthew 12:8; Luke 19:10)
- The Appearance of a Man (John 4:29; John 19:5)
- The Body of a Man (Hebrews 10:5; 1 Peter 3:18)
- The Soul of a Man (Matthew 26:39; Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 9:36; John 11:35)
- The Limitations of a Man (Matthew 4:2; Mark 11:12; John 4:6, 7; Matthew 8:24; Mark 13:32)¹¹⁷

Archibald Hodge comments on the humanity of Christ:

Although but one Person, the divine and human natures in Christ are not mixed or confused in one, but remain two pure and distinct natures, divine and human, constituting one person for ever.

It is impossible for us to explain philosophically how two self-conscious intelligences, how two self-determined free agents, can constitute one person. Yet this is the precise character of the phenomenon revealed in the history of Jesus. In order to simplify the matter, some errorists have supposed that in the person of Christ there was no human soul, but that his divine Spirit took the place of the human soul in his human body. Others have so far separated the two natures as to make him two persons—a God and a man intimately united. Others have so pressed the natures together that neither pure divinity nor pure humanity is left, but a new nature resulting from the mixing of both. In opposition to this, we have proved above (a) that Christ had a true human soul as well as a human body, and (b) that he, although both a God and a Man, is only one single Person. The third point, viz., that Christ’s two natures remain separate and unconfused, is self-evident. The very point proved in Scripture is that Christ always continued a true God and a true Man—not something else between the two. Now, the essential properties of divinity cannot be communicated to humanity; that is, humanity cannot be made to be infinite, self-existent, eternal and absolutely perfect. Because, if it possessed these, it would cease to be human and because even God himself cannot create divinity, and therefore cannot make humanity divine. The same is true with respect to Christ’s divinity. If that should take on the limitations of humanity, it would cease to be divine, and even God is not able to destroy divinity. Hence, since Christ is both God and man, it follows that he cannot be a mixture of both, which is neither. Hence, while the Scriptures constantly affirm (as we have seen) of the one Person

¹¹⁶ Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 211.

¹¹⁷ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 152-53.

whatsoever is true, without exception, of either nature, they never affirm of either nature that which belongs to the other.¹¹⁸

John Owen elaborates further:

We may behold his Glory in his infinite condescension to take this office on him, and our nature to be his own unto that end. It did not befall him by lot or chance; it was not imposed on him against his will; it belonged not unto him by any necessity of nature or condition, he stood not in need of it; it was no addition unto him; but of his own mind and accord he graciously condescended unto the susception (reception, assumption) and discharge of it.¹¹⁹

The Single Personality of Christ.

“so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.”

Speaking on the humanity and personality of Christ, John Owen adds:

Each nature thus united in Christ, is entire, and preserves unto it self its own natural properties. For he is no less perfect God, for being made Man, nor no less a true perfect Man, consisting of soul and body with all their essential parts by that natures being taken into subsistence with the Son of God, His Divine nature still continues Immense, Omniscient, Omnipotent, infinite in Holiness, etc. his humane nature, finite, limited, and before its Glorification, subject to all infirmities of life and death, that the same nature in others absolutely considered, is obnoxious unto. In each of these natures, he acts suitably unto the essential properties and principles of that nature. As God, he made all things, upholds all things, by the word of his Power, fills Heaven and Earth, etc. As man, he lived, hungered, suffered, dyed, rose, ascended into Heaven.¹²⁰

Paragraph 3.

The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of mediator and surety; which office He took not upon himself, but was thereunto called by His Father; who also put all power and judgement in His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same.

Ps. 45:7; Acts 10:38; John 3:34; Col. 2:3; Col. 1:19; Heb. 7:26; John 1:14; Heb. 7:22; Heb. 5:5; John 5:22,27; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36

¹¹⁸ 53. Archibald A. Hodge, *Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Logos Bible Software), 196.

¹¹⁹ John Owen, *Meditations and Discourses concerning the Glory of Christ* (London: William Marshall, 1691), 60.

¹²⁰ Owen, *A brief declaration and vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity*, 146-47.

Exposition

In a single sentence, the confession describes the qualifications of Christ as the sinless Saviour of the world who meets all of the necessary qualifications in his divinity, humanity, and holiness.

Scripture References

Isaiah 53:9
Luke 1:35
John 8:46
John 14:30
Romans 8:3
2 Corinthians 5:21
Hebrews 4:15
Hebrews 7:26
Hebrews 9:14
1 Peter 1:19
1 Peter 2:22
1 John 3:5

Robert A. Peterson vividly illustrates the meaning of paragraph three:

Imagine that in the first-century Jerusalem Gazette a listing appears in its "Help Wanted" section for the job of Redeemer of the world. There are three requirements for the job. First, the applicant must be God; no others need apply. That would narrow the job pool to three. Second, the applicant must also have become man. That would exclude all but one.

The point of the passages in Hebrews that teach that the incarnate Son was made perfect is found in the third qualification in the job description for Redeemer. Not only must the applicant be God incarnate; he must also have on-the-job experience. Although Jesus's humanity was never sinful, in God's plan it must be tried and found true. God did not send his Son to earth as a thirty-three-year-old to die and be raised. He sent him as an infant in order for him to experience human life, with all of its trials and temptations, triumphantly. It is critical to note the purpose for the Sons being made perfect, that is, experientially qualified to be Savior by learning obedience through suffering.¹²¹

¹²¹ Robert A Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 49.