

The Westminster Confession of Faith

Lesson 25: Of Christ the Mediator (§ 8.2)

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.

Paragraph 2 describes Christ in his incarnation. This week we will consider what’s called the “hypostatic union” along with a number of heresies that crop up with regard to Christ taking on human flesh. As well, we will deal with some additional Roman Catholic errors regarding the Virgin Mary, the birth of Jesus, and the younger siblings of Jesus.

Opener

- What are the “modern” explanations of the person and work of Jesus? *Who* was he? *Where* did he come from? *What* did he do?
- Why would it be impossible for Jesus to redeem mankind if he were merely a good teacher and/or a moral example?

WLC Q/A #37-42

Q37: How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A37: Christ the Son of God became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul,[1] being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance, and born of her,[2] yet without sin.[3]

1. **John 1:14** - 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. **Matt. 26:38** - Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

2. **Luke 1:27, 31, 35, 42** - To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. . . . “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.” . . . 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.” . . . And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! **Gal. 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

3. **Heb. 4:15** - For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin. **Heb. 7:26** - For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.

Q38: Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God?

A38: It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death;[1] give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession;[2] and to satisfy God's justice,[3] procure his favor,[4] purchase a peculiar people,[5] give his Spirit to them,[6] conquer all their enemies,[7] and bring them to everlasting salvation.[8]

1. **Acts. 2:24-25** - But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD CONTINUALLY BEFORE ME; BECAUSE HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.' **Rom. 1:4** - Who was designated as the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Rom. 4:25** - He who was delivered over on account of our transgressions, and was raised on account of our justification. **Heb. 9:14** - How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

2. **Acts 20:28** - Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **Heb. 7:25-28** - 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. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 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. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, who has been made perfect forever. **Heb. 9:14** - How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

3. **Rom. 3:24-26** - Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, for a demonstration of His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

4. **Eph. 1:6** - to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved. **Matt. 3:17** - And behold, there was a voice out of the heavens saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

5. **Titus. 2:13-14** - Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.

6. **Gal. 4:6** - And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

7. **Luke 1:68-69, 71, 74** - "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He visited and accomplished redemption for His people, And raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant. . . . Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US. . . . To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear."

8. **Heb. 5:8-9** - Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation. **Heb. 9:11-15** - But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy places once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the trespasses that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Q39: Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be man?

A39: It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature,[1] perform obedience to the law,[2] suffer and make intercession for us in our nature,[3] have a fellow feeling of our infirmities;[4] that we might receive the adoption of sons,[5] and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.[6]

1. **Heb. 2:16** - For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the seed of Abraham.
2. **Gal. 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.
3. **Heb. 2:14** - Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. **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.
4. **Heb. 4:15** - For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin.
5. **Gal. 4:5** - So that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
6. **Heb. 4:16** - Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Q40: Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God and man in one person?

A40: It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should himself be both God and man, and this in one person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us,[1] as the works of the whole person.[2]

1. **Matt. 1:21, 23** - "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." . . . "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." **Matt. 3:17** - And behold, there was a voice out of the heavens saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." **Heb. 9:14** - How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
2. **1 Peter 2:6** - For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES UPON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."

Q41: Why was our Mediator called Jesus?

A41: Our Mediator was called Jesus, because he saveth his people from their sins.[1]

1. **Matt. 1:21** - "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Q42: Why was our Mediator called Christ?

A42: Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure;[1] and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability,[2] to execute the offices of prophet,[3] priest,[4] and king of his church,[5] in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.

1. **John 3:34** - For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. **Psa. 45:7** - You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your companions.

2. **John 6:27** - "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, set His seal." **Matt. 28:18-20** - And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

3. **Acts 3:21-22** - Whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 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.' **Luke 4:18, 21** - "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED." . . . And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

4. **Heb. 4:14-15** - Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us take hold of our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin. **Heb. 5:5-7** - 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." He, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence.

5. **Psa. 2:6** - "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." **Matt. 21:5** - "SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, LOWLY, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, AND ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A PACK ANIMAL.'" **Isa. 9:6-7** - For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this. **Phil. 2:8-11** - Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

WCF 8.2

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature,^a with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin:^b being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance.^c So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.^d Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.^e

a. **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. **Gal 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. **Phil 2:6** - Who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. **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.

b. **Heb 2:14, 16-17** - Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. . . . For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **Heb 4:15** - For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin.

c. **Luke 1:27, 31, 35** - To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. . . . "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus." . . . 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." **Gal 4:4** - But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

d. **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. **1 Tim 3:16** - And by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory. **1 Pet 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 spirit

e. **Rom 1:3-4** - Concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated as the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. **1 Tim 2:5** - For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

- We are confronting another profound mystery—the doctrine of Christ taking on human flesh and becoming man.
- We can only “explain” such things to the extent that scripture and reason allow.

“Since Christ is both God and man, it follows that he cannot be a mixture of both, which is neither.”¹

- As we saw when looking at the doctrine of the Trinity (Chapter 2), there are a number of ways to get the Incarnation wrong. But it is also instructive to consider such errors as a point of contrast.
- Though Christ received his *human* nature from Mary, he did not receive her *sin* nature.

“The human nature of Christ never for an instant had a separate personal existence of its own, but, from the instant of its conception, grew into the eternal personality of the Son of God.”²

- From this we see that the “nature” of human existence begins at conception and grows afterward.
- The doctrine of the incarnation also has huge implications regarding the doctrine we call *imago Dei*: that man is so unlike anything else in creation, and so near to the personal nature of God, that the second person of the Trinity could be united with the nature of a man for eternity.

¹ Hodge, p. 142.

² Hodge, p. 141.

- Hence, man's original nature was in spiritual union with God. Man is still individually distinct even when spiritually united to Christ through the indwelling of the Spirit.
- Christ is able to take on flesh to become the God-man, but man does not take on the divine nature when united to Christ. (cf. WCF 26.3: This communion which the saints have with Christ, *doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of his Godhead, or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous.*)
- The “incarnation” began with the conception of Jesus but continues forever—Jesus is never now separated from the human nature.
- The corporeal (physical) nature of Christ in his glorified state was demonstrated repeatedly after the resurrection. (Luke 24:39, 42-43: “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” . . . They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and He took it and ate it before them.)

“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.”³

A Few Historic Christological Heresies

- ❖ *Adoptionism*—Jesus was born as an ordinary man and was only later “adopted” as the Son of God.
- ❖ *Arianism*—Christ and the Holy Spirit are creatures.
- ❖ *Apollinarianism*—Jesus has a human body and a human soul, but a divine mind not a human mind.
- ❖ *Docetism*—Jesus is divine and only appears to be human.
- ❖ *Ebionitism*—Jesus possesses divine gifts but is only human.
- ❖ *Eutychianism*—The divine and human natures of Christ are so united that they form one nature.
- ❖ *Modalism*—God is one person who appears in three identities (Father, Son, Spirit).
- ❖ *Monarchianism (Subordinationism)*—Christ and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to God in their essence.
- ❖ *Nestorianism*—Jesus was only a man “inhabited” by the second person of the Trinity; the divine and human natures in Christ constitute two persons.
- The combination of human and divine natures into one person is called the “hypostatic union.” It was addressed specifically by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.
- The Athanasian Creed expresses the incarnation as follows: *Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that*

³ Hodge, p. 141.

we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God. One altogether; not by confusion of Substance [Essence]; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ.

- Why are images of Christ so problematical?

“The modern practice of making pictures of Christ as if his human nature could properly be portrayed by itself is not only a fearful error; it is *impossible*.”⁴

- While the Reformation predates many subsequent Roman heresies, prayers to Mary (and other dead saints) dates from around A.D. 600.
- The sale of indulgences began around A.D. 1200.

Roman Heresies Regarding Mary

- It’s not an exaggeration to say that without Mary, you wouldn’t have a Roman Catholic Church.

In the Roman system, “[Mary] is the object of all religious affections, and the source whence all the blessings of salvation are sought and expected.”⁵

- It is correct to say that Mary is “the mother of God” (Gk. *Theotokos*) *according to his manhood*—Christ is “of her substance” and is fully divine. But in the Roman tradition this statement is taken to mean something entirely different.
- It cannot be the case that Mary contributed any more than her human nature to Christ.

Where does Rome depart from scripture regarding the doctrines of Mary?

- ❖ sinless (this is what is meant by *Immaculate Conception*—referring to Mary, not Christ)
- ❖ perpetual virginity (Jesus was not “born” by passing through Mary’s birth canal; she never had marital relations with Joseph; Jesus never had any younger siblings—Rome claims he had “cousins”; “Rome thinks of marriage as unholy and unclean”⁶)
- ❖ assumption (three days after her death she was resurrected, translated into heaven, and crowned Queen of Heaven)⁷

⁴ Williamson, p. 75.

⁵ Boettner, p. 134.

⁶ Boettner, p. 158.

⁷ This papal decree in 1950—which was attended by Francis Schaeffer—was a likely reason why Schaeffer could state that the Roman church was following after the same kind of Barthian neo-orthodox theology that was overtaking Protestantism—a mystical theology divorced from any kind of proof.

- ❖ supererogation (her works were more than she needed for her own salvation)
- ❖ hears prayers and intercedes for man (the “Hail Mary” was approved by the end of the 16th century—“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death”)
- ❖ she continues to make visible manifestations to man and to speak with new revelation; her image has appeared in everything from cumulus clouds to burned toast; her statues have been said to weep
- ❖ Mary is elevated to the status of co-redemptrix—titles applied to her include: Mother of God; Mother of Grace; Mother of Mercy; Queen of Heaven; Queen of the Apostles; Queen of the Angels; The Door of Paradise; The Gate of Heaven; Our Life (and others)
- ❖ as a quasi-divine person, she is worshipped (and she holds a central place in the life of the Roman churches); at this point Rome tries to make the distinction between worship given to God (*latria*), adoration given to saints and angels (*dulia*), and veneration given to Mary (*hyperdulia*)

“In the Roman church the people prefer a living Mary to a dead Christ [whose body is always hanging in the cross]. And the result is that the center of worship has shifted from Christ to Mary. . . . [she] is unquestionably the chief object of prayer.”⁸

- Rome relies on the *insufficiency* of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and his *insufficiency* as Mediator to perpetuate a religion tangled with works and idolatry.

“The apostles never prayed to Mary, nor, so far as the record goes, did they show her any special honor.”⁹

- How is such heresy propagated? In part by making Jesus the unapproachable Judge. Mary is the tender-hearted mother.
- By contrast, see Hebrews 7:25 (Q/A #38, footnote 2).

“God has given us all the record we need concerning Mary, and that record does not indicate that worship or veneration in any form is to be given to her.”¹⁰

“We have no need for the intercession of Mary, or departed saints, or angels, for we ourselves have direct access to God through Christ.”¹¹

Concluding Thoughts

- Christ is the one sufficient Mediator between God and man
- There are good reasons why we call ourselves “Reformed”—the contrast with the Roman religion could hardly be more stark.

⁸ Boettner, p. 146.

⁹ Boettner, pp. 132-133.

¹⁰ Boettner, p. 133.

¹¹ Boettner, p. 145.

Upcoming Lessons

- March 26: Chapter 8, Paragraph 3
- April 2: Chapter 8, Paragraph 4
- April 9: [Easter Brunch]
- April 16: Chapter 8, Paragraph 5
- April 23: Chapter 8, Paragraph 6
- April 30: Chapter 8, Paragraph 7

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.
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