

THE MEDIATORSHIP OF CHRIST: A CHRISTOLOGICAL PARTING OF WAYS

By Alan Quiñones¹

Abstract: *Evangelical theology has historically held that the name Mediator transcends the incarnation of the Son of God. This means that the mediatorial actions of Christ are carried out through his divine nature as well as his human nature. This claim, however, was challenged by post-Tridentine Roman Catholic polemicists, who—following the medieval Schoolmen—countered that Christ mediates only according to his humanity. After all, mediatorial acts—such as prayer, self-offering, suffering, and death—are proper only to man, not God. Consequently, the Reformed were saddled with the burden of demonstrating not only how the divine nature of Christ concurs in his mediatorial actions, but also how this could be affirmed without undermining his deity. The answer would be found in the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*. This study, then, first outlines and assesses the post-Tridentine position (as presented by their most capable exponent, Robert Bellarmine), then it explains the Protestant view, and finally, it upholds the *pactum salutis* as the means by which Christians may confess the soteriology of the Reformation while also upholding the theology proper of orthodoxy and the Christology of Chalcedon.*

Keywords: Mediation, Theanthropic, Christology, post-Tridentine, *pactum*.

Introduction

The notion that the medieval period witnessed little in terms of new developments in Christology is hardly a matter of debate.² That is to say, Christian theology generally accepts that the Church's doctrine of Christ underwent no substantial expansion between Chalcedon and Wittenberg.³ While this may be true broadly speaking (considering that the refutation of heresies such as Monophysitism and Monothelitism consisted simply in the repetition and reapplica-

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²This study is adapted from Alan Quiñones, "In the Council Chamber of the Triune God: An Exegetical, Trinitarian, and Christological Formulation and Defense of the Reformed Doctrine of the Pact of Salvation" (M.Div. Thesis, The Master's Seminary), 2021. Thanks to Dr. Peter Sammons for overseeing that project, and to Chad Vegas for first suggesting to me the topic discussed in the present study.

³E.g., I. A. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, trans. D. W. Simon (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1891), 2:225; Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (London: Banner of Truth, 1969), 114; Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 377–8.

tion of the beliefs set down in the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, and Chalcedon), it is also true that the medieval Schoolmen laid a Christological egg in their day which, when hatched by post-Tridentine theologians, released a torrent of controversy between the post-Tridentine and the Reformed.

In their refutation of the errors of the Italian Hebraist Franciscus Stancarus,⁴ Protestant theologians agreed that Christ carries out his mediatorial work according to both his human and his divine nature.⁵ Against this teaching, however, post-Tridentine Roman Catholics⁶—following the medieval Schoolmen—stated that Christ mediates only according to his humanity. Consequently, the Reformed were saddled with the burden of demonstrating not only how the divine nature of Christ concurs in his mediatorial actions, but also how this could be affirmed without undermining his deity. The answer would be found in the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*.

This study, then, will first outline and assess the post-Tridentine position on Christ's mediation (as represented by its most capable exponent, Robert Bellarmine). Then it will explain the Protestant view. Finally, it will uphold the *pactum salutis* as the means by which Christians may confess the soteriology of the Reformation while also upholding the theology proper of orthodoxy and the Christology of Chalcedon.

Christ's Mediatorship in Post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism

⁴The debate with Stancarus was sparked by yet another controversy, namely, the Osiandrian. The Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander taught that the ontological righteousness of God was the material means of justification. Phillip Melanchthon and others rose in opposition to this view; however, the debate was further complicated by the radically opposite argument of the Italian Hebraist Franciscus Stancarus. He argued that Christ was mediator according to his human nature alone, and on those grounds concluded that our justification has its basis upon the humanly acquired righteousness of Christ. To be sure, while the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness is in fact the orthodox Protestant position of justification, it is not based on Stancarus' belief that Christ is mediator only according to his human nature. James Weis, "Calvin Versus Osiander on Justification," in *The Springfielder* 29 no. 3 (Autumn 1965), 31–47: 33, comments, "Not only Osiander, but Melanchthon, Calvin, and virtually every other contemporary Protestant theologian took issue with Stancarus. The same paragraph of the Formula of Concord which addressed itself to the issues raised in the Osiandrian controversy also addressed itself to and rejected the theological views of Stancarus on Justification."

⁵This is reflected in FC III.56; WCF 8.7; SD, 2LCF 8.7. As Richard Muller points out, the belief that Christ is mediator according to both natures is "a point followed with remarkable consistency" in Reformed theology. Richard A. Muller, "Toward the *Pactum Salutis*: Locating the Origins of a Concept," in *MJT* 18 (2007), 11–65: 48.

⁶Francis Turretin (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1993], 2:379) includes Becanus and Bellarmine in this group. Dorner (*History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 2:225) adds the name of the Spanish Jesuit Turrianus.

Protestant theologians of the past dubbed the Italian Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) “the last Goliath of the Philistines.”⁷ David Schaff argued that no other Roman Catholic writer since the Reformation has excelled him, “both in the mastery of his subject and in his permanent influence.”⁸ Nick Needham similarly calls him “the greatest theologian of the Catholic Counter-Reformation,” whose magnum opus—*Controversies of the Christian Faith*—became, in seventeenth-century Europe, “the standard against which any true Protestant theologian must test his mettle.”⁹ Bellarmine therefore towers over post-Tridentine Roman Catholic theology. His polemical prowess has repeatedly called Reformed theologians to answer his statements.

One of such statements is the notion that the Reformed understanding of the mediatorship of Christ amounts to a novel heresy.¹⁰ Following John Calvin—and those who refuted the errors of Stancarus with him—Protestants have historically affirmed that Christ mediates according to both his human and his divine nature (theanthropic mediation). Bellarmine, in contrast, rejected this view, arguing that Christ is Mediator according to his human nature alone.

He asserted that this was the historic position of the Church.¹¹ Augustine, after all, had said in *The City of God*, “For it is as man that He is the Mediator and the Way.”¹² In his celebrated *Sentences*, Peter Lombard defined a mediator as one who stands between two extremes, and—citing Augustine’s exposition on the twenty-ninth psalm—concluded, “By his infirmity, he was close to us [who are mortal and weak] , . . by righteousness, to God. And so rightly is he called mediator, because between the immortal God and mortal man there is the God man, reconciling man to God: insofar as he is man, he is mediator; insofar as he is the Word, he is not an intermediary, because he is one with God the Father.”¹³ Similarly, Thomas wrote that the Mediator is a mean (*medio*).¹⁴ His office (which

⁷Cotton Mather; cited in David S. Schaff, “Cardinal Bellarmine—Now Saint and Doctor of the Church,” in *Church History* 2 no. 1 (March 1933), 41–55: 42.

⁸Schaff, “Cardinal Bellarmine,” 41.

⁹Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, vol. 4, *The Age of Religious Conflict* (London: Christian Focus, 2016), 457, 459.

¹⁰Robert Bellarmine, *On the Office of the Mediator*, Book Five, in *Controversies of the Christian Faith* trans. Kenneth Baker (Saddle River, NJ: Keep the Faith, 2016), 575, 588.

¹¹Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 572.

¹²Augustine, *City of God*, XI, 2; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3a.26.2, cites *City of God*, IX, 15, where Augustine said, “Not because He is the Word, is Christ Mediator, since He Who is supremely immortal and supremely happy is far from us unhappy mortals; but He is Mediator, as man.” See also idem, *Confessions*, X, 40.

¹³Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto, CA: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008), III.19.7.1 (p. 83). See Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 2, on Ps. 29, n1.

¹⁴Thomas, *ST*, 3a.26.2.

is to join two extremes) requires him to be distant from each.¹⁵ This cannot be said of Christ according to his divine nature, but only according to the human; therefore, Thomas reasoned, “as man, He is distant both from God, by nature, and from man by dignity of both grace and glory.”¹⁶ Medieval tradition, then, in Bellarmine’s view, represented Christ as Mediator according to the humanity alone. He was rising in its defense.

He based his presentation on a distinction between the “principle which” (*principium quod*) and the “principle by which” (*principium quo*).¹⁷ He argued, “the mediator himself, or . . . the *principle which* produces the works of the mediator, was not God alone, or man alone, but both together.”¹⁸ In other words, Bellarmine affirmed that the Mediator is in fact the God-man—both divine and human. He is the “presupposition,” “active principle,” or *principium quod* behind the mediatorial work.¹⁹ Bellarmine’s denial, then, is not that the person of the Mediator is divine;²⁰ but rather, that the divine nature of the Mediator is involved in the carrying out of the mediatorial actions. He said, “the *principle by which* [or formal principle²¹] those [mediatorial] works were done . . . were the human nature, not the divine nature.”²² Therefore, the God-man mediates, but he does so only according to the humanity.

To say that Christ mediates according to both natures, Bellarmine reasoned, is to make his deity inferior to that of the Father.²³ Christ’s mediatorial activity, after all, consisted in prayers, self-offering, suffering, and death.²⁴ These actions are proper only to man, not God. Borrowing Augustine’s form of God/form of servant categories (drawn from Phil 2:6–7),²⁵ Bellarmine therefore concluded,

¹⁵Thomas, *ST*, 3a.26.2.

¹⁶Thomas, *ST*, 3a.26.2.

¹⁷Bellarmino, *Controversies* 571.

¹⁸Ibid. Emphasis added.

¹⁹Muller (*Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986], 246) also defines the *principium quo* as the basis for an event or a causative principle.

²⁰This is where Bellarmine felt his position avoided Stancarus’—and therefore the Nestorian—pitfall. Although there is a significant overlap between Stancarus’ and the Roman Catholic position on Christ’s mediatorship (both argue that Christ is mediator according to the human nature alone), even Rome ultimately rejected Stancarus. After citing him approvingly, Bellarmine assigns him a place in the Nestorian wasteland for attributing “the office of mediator to the man Christ alone in such a way that he does not seem to require the divine suppositum in any way, or at least to require it as the efficient cause of the work.” Bellarmine, *Controversies*, 572.

²¹Muller, *Dictionary*, 246, defines the *principium quod* as “a passive principle that is acted on.”

²²Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 571. Emphasis added.

²³Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 571.

²⁴Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 571.

²⁵Augustine, *De Trinitate*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press,

“although it was the incarnate God who prayed, suffered, obeyed, made satisfaction, he did all these things in the form of a servant, not in the form of God.”²⁶

The Jesuit polemicist found scriptural support of his view in 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”²⁷ In these words, he argued, Paul distinguishes the Mediator from God—hence the addition of the word “man” (*anthropos*). Bellarmine wrote, “Why I ask, did he add the word ‘man,’ unless it is to express the nature according to which Christ is the mediator?”²⁸ The Lord’s mediation, therefore, cannot be specifically between the Father and us (with him standing in the middle) but between the Trinity and us, with Christ—according to his humanity only—standing as Mediator. He concluded,

For, not only was the Father hostile to us because of our sins, and therefore had to be placated by a mediator, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit; therefore the whole Trinity had to be reconciled with men by a Mediator . . . the same Christ because of the two natures is both numbered among the persons of the Trinity, to which reparation must be made, and at the same time it is he who makes the satisfaction. For he himself, as man, is mediator to himself as he is God.²⁹

In other words, the divinity does not mediate between the transgressor and itself. For Bellarmine, that would be absurd. Instead, he maintains that Christ’s sacrifice appeased the Son as much as it did the Father. As man, he offered the sacrifice of himself; as God, he received it.

Assesment

In assessing Bellarmine’s view, it is important to note that the distinction be-

1991), I.3–4 (pp. 76–96). For a helpful explanation of these categories, see Keith E. Johnson, “Augustine, Eternal Generation, and Evangelical Trinitarianism,” in *Trinity Journal* ns 32.2 (2011): 141–63.

²⁶ Bellarmine, *Controversies*, 571.

²⁷ *Ehis gar theos, heis kai mesites theou kai anthropon, anthropos Christos Iesus*.

²⁸ Bellarmine, *Controversies*, 575. Contemporary commentaries that share this view include the Roman Catholic Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 184. Also, see H. D. M. Spence, *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, ed. Charles John Ellicott, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n. d.), 186; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 192, 197; Philip Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 54–6, 82–7.

²⁹ Bellarmine, *Controversies*, 576.

tween *principle which* and *principle by which* is, in fact, helpful in the quest to make sense of the actions of the incarnate Son. These actions, to be sure, fall into three categories: either purely human, purely divine, or both divine and human. The purely human include things like eating, drinking, and sleeping. In them, the *principle which* eats, drinks, and sleeps is the eternal Word; but the *principle by which* the Word eats, drinks, and sleeps is the human nature alone. On the other hand, the purely divine actions of Christ include things like upholding creation (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3) and filling every point of space (Matt 18:20). The *principle which* carries out these works is Christ; but the *principle by which* he does them is his divine nature alone.

The third category, again, consists of works that involve the divine nature as well as the human nature. For example, in Jesus' death, the divine nature had to support the human both by rendering that death—and previous life of obedience—efficacious for those who would believe, and by resurrecting it.³⁰ Otherwise, without the divine nature, the death of Christ would have been of no saving value (more below). Bellarmine's position, however, leaves no room for this kind of concurrence between the natures.

After all, he did not feel that this was necessary. To him, it was enough that the *principle which* behind these actions is the divine Son: the Son is the king who performs the same work as a private person, but his dignity makes that work differ in value; however his majesty “adds nothing physical or real to that work.”³¹ The problem with this analogy, however (which is reflective of Bellarmine's position as a whole), is that it assumes that the work being performed can be performed by either the private person or the king.³² In other words, Bellarmine does not account for the fact that mediatorial actions have to have a divine *in addition to a human* character to be efficacious. Therefore, the “private

³⁰Wilhelmus a Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout, ed. Joel Beeke, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 1:510.

³¹Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 582.

³²This is why the Reformed argued that the Roman Catholic theologian's design was “to make more plausible room for human mediators.” Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (1871; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 473. Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:379. Along those lines, the Roman Catholic commentator George T. Montague (*First and Second Timothy, Titus*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 56.) writes, “Obviously, [when he speaks of Christ as the only Mediator between God and men] Paul does not mean to exclude the mediation of the Church or of himself as an apostle or of any other ministry or channel of grace, as long as it serves the mediation of Christ, which alone is sufficient.” For a response, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill ed., Ford Lewis Battles trans. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 3.20.20, who simply pointed out that Paul's emphasis on there being but one Mediator between God and men would make no sense if there were many mediators.

person” would never be able to carry them out. This is surely not contradicted by 1 Timothy 2:5.

1 Timothy 2:5

At the outset, it is paramount to note the context in which Paul makes the important assertion found in this verse. Broadly speaking, in vv. 1–8, the apostle is addressing various issues related to congregational prayer.³³ In the interest of evangelism, in vv. 1–2 he encourages believers to intercede for their civil authorities, for this will result in societal conditions favorable for the Church’s evangelistic enterprise.³⁴ This leads to the statement, in v. 4, that God desires all kinds of people “to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”³⁵ There is a direct connection, then, between salvation and the knowledge of the truth. Furthermore, in vv. 5–6, the apostle narrows down “the truth” that is inseparably linked to salvation: “For there is one God and also one Mediator between God and men; Christ Jesus, himself man, who gave himself as a ransom for all.”³⁶

Paul’s allusion to the heart of the *Shema*—that there is but one God (Deut 6:4)—highlights the interest that every human society has in the God of Christians. If there were many gods, perhaps other men would not stand in need of him. Nevertheless, since he is both the Creator and Sustainer of all and the only God, he then must also be the salvation of all. That salvation, as Paul points out, is available through the one Mediator he has appointed.

Now, as Bellarmine himself taught, a mediator is “someone who places himself in the middle between people who are in disagreement . . . in order to bring them to harmony.”³⁷ Paul identifies this arbiter or “daysman” between God

³³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 652; Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd edition (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), 743.

³⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 65; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 88.

³⁵ For a defense of the “every person without distinction” as opposed to the “every person without exception” reading, see Thomas Schriener, “‘Problematic Texts’ for Definite Atonement in the Pastoral and General Epistles,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 375–97. Augustine himself adopted this reading in his argument that the reference here was to “the predestinated . . . because every king of man is among them.” Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* 14.44, in Peter Gorday and Thomas C. Oden, *Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ACCS (IVP Academic, 2000), 156.

³⁶ *Ehis gar theos, heis kai mesites theou kai anthronon, anthrospos Christos Iesous, ho dous heauton antilytron hyper panton.*

³⁷ Bellarmine, *Controversies*, 570. Albrecht Oepke, “μεσιτεες,” *TDNT*, 4:599, 601., similarly states

and men, of course, as “Christ Jesus, himself man” (*anthropos Christos Iesous*).

This translation of the Greek phrase *anthropos Christos Iesous* reflects the absence of the article before the noun *anthropos* (“man”), which is intended to emphasize Christ’s humanity.³⁸ Paul has strategic reasons for doing so. Job, after all, in the only OT passage (LXX) in which the term “mediator” (*mesites*) appears, had bemoaned the fact that there was “no umpire [*mesites*] between us, who may lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9:33).³⁹ Paul rather insists here that Jesus Christ is that umpire, because although being truly God, he also is true man. Therefore, the purpose of the word “man” in 1 Timothy 2:5 is to instill boldness into the praying saints.⁴⁰

Calvin rightly said, “Lest anyone be troubled about where to seek the Mediator, or by what path we must come to him, the Spirit calls him ‘man,’ thus teaching us that he is near us, indeed touches us, since he is our flesh.”⁴¹ In a similar vein, Augustine wrote, “It was in order to make the mind able to advance more confidently toward the truth that Truth itself, the divine Son of God, put on humanity without putting off his divinity and built this firm path of faith so that man, by means of the God-Man, could find his way to man’s God.”⁴² Therefore, although Paul could have said “God,” or left out “man” as he did “God,” he included “man” in order to help with our weakness—to help us pray.⁴³ This was not to exclude Christ’s deity, but rather, to emphasize his humanity.

that the term *mesites* denotes “a ‘negotiator’ in the sense of one who establishes a relation which would not otherwise exist.” See also Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, “μεσιτες,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 410.

³⁸William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 88; Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 100, on the other hand, writes, “The absence of the article with *anthropos* emphasizes the generic sense rather than the particular specimen.” cf. Ronald A. Ward, *Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974), 235; MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 71. Interestingly, both Ambrose and Augustine translated the passage in this way. Ambrose, *Letters* 27; Augustine, *The City of God* II. 2; in Gorday and Oden, *1–2 Timothy*, 158–9.

³⁹On the appeal to Job 9:33 on this passage, see A. T. Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles* (London: S.P.C.K., 1968), 57–8; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 88; Oepke, “μεσιτες, Μεσιτεῦσθαι,” *TDNT*, 601. For a monograph on this subject, see S. O. Stout, *The ‘Man Christ Jesus’: The Humanity of Jesus in the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

⁴⁰Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:382. George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 121, writes, “The humanity of the mediator is specified to emphasize his identity with those whom he represents as mediator.”

⁴¹Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.1.

⁴²Augustine, *The City of God*, II.2, cited in Gorday and Oden, *1–2 Timothy*, 159.

⁴³Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.1. Along these lines, I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 409, writes, “The insistence in 1 Timothy 2:5 that Christ Jesus was human [is] a point that there was no need to emphasize if he was not already thought of as divine.”

In fact, if the concrete name of God (or the noun “man”) were used in Scripture to designate the nature, it would be impossible to interpret texts such as Acts 3:15, “you killed the Author of life” (ESV); Acts 20:28, “. . . shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood”; or 1 Corinthians 15:47, “the second man is from heaven.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, if the name “God” invariably indicates the whole Trinity, “it follows that Christ is both his own son and the son of the Holy Spirit!”⁴⁵ It follows, moreover, that Christ sent himself into the world (John 3:16), and that in John 17 he was interceding with himself or with the Holy Spirit. It goes without saying, therefore, that the name “God” does not always refer to the person of the Son. It may in fact refer to the Father economically. This is not an inherently Arian position.⁴⁶ Instead, it is difficult to see how a denial of this truth would escape the charge of modalism (cf. Mt 27:46; John 20:17; Rev 3:12).

That said, as Turretin pointed out, even if the title “God” should be taken in this text as a reference to the Trinity, “still [Christ’s] divine nature is not excluded from the mediation. For it is one thing for Christ to be a Mediator according to his divine nature absolutely, inasmuch as it is common to the three persons; another, according to the divine nature regarded economically with respect to his voluntary humiliation.”⁴⁷ In other words, even if one were to grant that the divine nature of the Son, absolutely considered, was included in Paul’s reference to God, one would still need to say that the Son’s divine nature, *economically* considered, is involved in the work of mediation. John Davenant thus rightly said, “The same Christ, therefore, *received* the sacrifice of reconciliation, as God offended in his nature; but he *offered* it as Mediator, the God-man, in the Divine economy, or voluntary dispensation of grace.”⁴⁸ In other words, Christ is both the offended party, and the party that makes reconciliation.

Summary

⁴⁴Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:382.

⁴⁵Calvin, “The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: A Response to the Polish Nobles and to Francesco Stancarò of Mantua,” 154, cited in Joseph N. Tylenda, “The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin’s Second Reply to Stancarò,” in *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1972): 131–37.

⁴⁶This was the charge Bellarmine leveled against Calvin and his followers (*Controversies*, V.III:575). More below.

⁴⁷Turretin *Institutes*, 2:382.

⁴⁸John Davenant, *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, trans. Josiah Allport (London: Hamilton, Adams, and co., 1831), 239. This Protestant idea that subordination may be applied to the Son *with respect to His mediatorial office* broadened the exegete’s options for interpreting biblical statements concerning him: passages may refer to his divine essence, his eternal procession from the Father, his proper mode of acting from the Father, his human nature, or his mediatorial office. See Stephen J. Duby, “Trinity and Economy in Thomas Aquinas,” in *SBJT* 21 no. 2 (2017), 29–51: 46.

Consequently, Scripture demands a break from the tradition of the Schoolmen on this point—or at least Bellarmine’s interpretation of it.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Protestant theology never departed from Augustine’s position, inasmuch as it was consistent with Scripture.⁵⁰ In his *Confessions* he had remarked, “But a mediator between God and the human race ought to have something in common with humanity. If the Mediator were in both aspects like humanity, he would be far distant from God. If he were in both aspects like God, he would be far distant from humanity, and so would be no mediator.”⁵¹ In other words, our redemption calls for the person and work of a Mediator who is both true God and true man.

This is confirmed by the fact that elsewhere he had written, “Godhead without humanity doesn’t mediate, humanity without godhead doesn’t mediate. But what mediates between godhead in itself and humanity in itself is the human godhead and divine humanity of Christ.”⁵² Therefore, in the places where Augustine seemed to have excluded Christ’s deity, he was merely emphasizing the Savior’s humanity.

Bellarmino’s belief that his view on Christ’s mediatorship was the historic

⁴⁹To be sure, it falls beyond the scope of this study to demonstrate whether Bellarmine was interpreting the Schoolmen rightly. Francis Turretin (*Institutes*, 2:379), on the one hand, arguably assumed that he had, as he included Lombard and Thomas among those who agreed with Bellarmine. This may have been because in *The Sentences*, III.19.7.1, under the heading “According to which nature is He mediator,” Lombard wrote, “And so he is called mediator according to his humanity, not according to his divinity.” Moreover, Thomas, in *ST*, 3a.26.2, argued, “. . . as man, He can be Mediator, but not as God.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 3:364, however, believed that Bellarmine had misread the Schoolmen, saying, “Augustine, Lombard, and Aquinas believed nothing other than that Christ was and could be a mediator, not by his divine nature as such (in isolation from his human nature), but only as the incarnate Son of God.”

Carl Trueman, “From Calvin to Gillespie on Covenant: Mythological Excess or an Exercise in Doctrinal Development?” in *IJST* 11 no. 4 (October 2009): 378–97, helpfully notes that in approaching questions such as that of Christ’s mediatorship, the church in the Middle Ages tended to emphasize the metaphysical problems resulting from the hypostatic union rather than the historical person of the Mediator. This forced theologians into the false dilemma of choosing one nature or the other, rather than centering their answer on the person of the Mediator. In other words, medieval theologians assumed that Christ’s medial position was a matter of essence rather than a title of personal office. Thomas (*ST*, 3a.24.1), however, arguably foreshadowed Calvin’s move to make mediatorship a matter of both essences when he corrected Augustine’s statement to the effect that predestination applies to the human nature, arguing that since persons are predestined rather than natures, predestination must apply to the hypostatic union.

⁵⁰This was Calvin’s argument. “The Controversy on Christ the Mediator,” 155.

⁵¹Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), X.42 (219).

⁵²Idem., “Sermon 47,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, 2:316.

position of the Church, therefore, was incorrect. While it might have represented the thought of the medieval Schoolmen on the subject,⁵³ Augustine himself had noted that mediation could only be possible under the union and joint operation of both the divine and human natures in the person of Christ.

More importantly, a close look at 1 Timothy 2:5 finds Bellarmine's position wanting. That the Mediator himself is a man does not in any way suggest he is not also God, nor even that he mediates according to the humanity alone—as if he were two persons. Protestant theologians have good reason, then, to argue that Christ is the Mediator according to both his human and his divine nature.

Christ's Mediatorship in Protestant Orthodoxy

Evangelical theology has historically held that the name Mediator transcends the incarnation of the Son of God. This office dates back to eternity. He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8, KJV), and “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8).⁵⁴ Hence, even at the moment of creation the Son of God was operating in the world according to his future incarnation⁵⁵—the more technical term for this important distinction being *Logos incarnandus*, or the Word to be incarnate.⁵⁶

The first five verses of John's prologue justify this idea. They draw the reader back to Genesis 1.⁵⁷ According to the apostle, not only was the Logos in the beginning with God, and was himself God (v. 1), but he also communicated his life and light to creatures (v. 4): “In him life was, and the life was the light of men.”⁵⁸ In other words, even since before the fall, the Son has been the mid-point between God and creatures, diffusing both the life and the light in creation which would otherwise remain hidden in him.⁵⁹ As Franciscus Junius put it, “No account of God exists in created reality by any reason except by this theology of Christ.”⁶⁰

⁵³ See n48.

⁵⁴ *Iesus Christus echthes kai semeron ho autos kai eis tous aionas*.

⁵⁵ Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God: Instruction in the Christian Religion According to the Reformed Confession*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), 265.

⁵⁶ Muller, *Dictionary*, 152; Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics: A System of Christian Theology*, single volume edition, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 3:446.

⁵⁷ Richard Bauckham, “The Trinity and the Gospel of John,” in *The Essential Trinity: New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance*, ed. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl Trueman, 91–117 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017), 92–3; Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 55, 57.

⁵⁸ Bavinck, *RD*, 3:280. Translation of v. 4 mine (*en auto zoe en, kai he zoe en to phos ton anthropon*).

⁵⁹ Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator: A Response to the Polish Brethren to Refute Stancaró's Error,” in Joseph Tylanda, “Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaró,” in *Calvin Theological Journal* 7 (1972), 5–16: 13.

⁶⁰ Franciscus Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology*, trans. David C. Noe (Grand Rapids: Reformation

That is to say that since the finite cannot contain the infinite (*finitum non capax infiniti*), all knowledge of the divine is funneled to creation through the Son as he was to be—and is—incarnate (see Col 2:3). Therefore, we may say that even the angels have always acquired their knowledge of God through him—thus the titles “the firstborn of all creation,” and “the head over all rule and authority” (Col 1:15–7; 2:10).⁶¹

To be sure, this is not to imply that the Son mediates for angels (or man in his prelapsarian state), inasmuch as his work of revealing God to them does not also entail negotiating between disagreeing parties. Therefore, Reformed theology uses the distinct term *medius* as “a neutral term indicating the position of Christ as God-man between God and man.”⁶² So while the Son is the *medius* between God and unfallen (or glorified) creatures, he is and has always been the Mediator between God and fallen humanity.⁶³

John alludes to that when he writes that the Light shines in the darkness and enlightens every man (John 1:5, 9).⁶⁴ His point is that since both prior to and after his incarnation, Jesus Christ has divided the fallen human race into those who reject the knowledge of God (v. 10), and those who receive it (1:12–3).⁶⁵ In other words, no one has ever been saved apart from the official activity of the Messiah.⁶⁶

Geerhardus Vos argued that we must reject “every thought as if the Mediator occupied His offices only after His incarnation.”⁶⁷ After all, as William Ames put

Heritage Books, 2014), 124–5. He adds, “For because the knowledge of the divine is an unapproachable fountain and great abyss, it was definitely necessary that wisdom be supplied to that humanity which God assumed, like a most abounding stream but adjusted to created things. From this we all will drink, just as water-masters offer to those who thirst water flowing from an unapproachable fountain or drawn from a reservoir or lake.”

⁶¹ Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 12.

⁶² Muller, *Dictionary*, 189.

⁶³ Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption; Comprising an Outline of Church History* (New York: The American Tract Society), 1816, 28, writes,

As soon as man fell, Christ entered on his mediatorial work. Then it was that he began to execute the work and office of a Mediator. He had undertaken it before the world was made. He stood engaged with the Father from eternity, to appear as man's Mediator, and to take on him that office, when there should be occasion. And now the time was come. Christ the eternal Son of God clothed himself with the mediatorial character, and therein immediately presented himself before the Father as Mediator between a holy, infinite, offended Majesty, and offending mankind.

⁶⁴ Bavinck, *RD*, 3:280.

⁶⁵ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 124.

⁶⁶ Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:452.

⁶⁷ Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:452.

it, “The mediation was equally necessary in all ages.”⁶⁸ Scripture speaks of his advent as taking place in “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), thereby suggesting that the incarnation’s delay was not arbitrary nor accidental, but designed according to the wisdom of God—its groundwork having been laid in the preceding history.⁶⁹

Therefore, we should say that Christ has held his mediatorial office during two dispensations, namely, the “shadowy” and the “embodied.”⁷⁰ In the former, the Logos was in the process of coming into the world. He was first known as the “Angel” (Ex 23:20) or “Angel of the covenant” (Mal 3:1), who conducted Israel in the wilderness (cf. Ex 23:20–21 with 1 Cor 10:4, 9).⁷¹ And subsequently, he exercised his mediatorial office through the anointed prophets, priests, and kings, who “derived their official authority from the person Himself whom they as office bearers proclaimed in a shadowy fashion.”⁷² The Son was thus actively mediating between God and men in the OT; his threefold office was active.

The Use of the Divine Nature in Christ’s Prophetic Office

Peter leaves no doubt that the prophetic office of the Messiah was active in the old dispensation when he writes that the prophets prophesied by “the Spirit of Christ” (1 Pet 1:10–11; cf. Matt 23:37).⁷³ The Messiah, then, superintended the writing of the OT Scriptures, and this required the use of his divine nature. Moreover, even after the incarnation, Christ could act as the supreme and most authoritative interpreter of heavenly matters precisely because he was doing so

⁶⁸William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. John Dykstra Eusden (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 1.XVIII.9, 129.

⁶⁹Bavinck, RD, 3:280.

⁷⁰Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:452.

⁷¹Poole, *Annotations*, 1:107. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (1948 repr; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975), 76, argues that the only difference between incarnate appearance of the Son and his appearance as the Angel “is that under the Old Testament the created form was ephemeral, whereas through the incarnation it has become eternal.”

⁷²Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:452.

⁷³Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 14. Culver helpfully writes,

What did Jesus mean when He uttered the anguished appeal: ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!’ (Matt. 23:37)? The answer comes clear if we understand He was the One who inspired Jeremiah’s urgent appeals and who sent the prophet ‘Zechariah’ (Matt. 23:35) to reprove the backslidden Joash, who then allowed the bold prophet to be stoned (2 Chr. 24:20), and He was the One who sent other prophets, likewise rejected (2 Chr. 24:19).

Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Gaines House, Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2005), 444

according to the divine nature.⁷⁴ John confirms this when he notes that it is “the only-begotten God”—who is, “in the bosom of the Father”—who “explains” the Father to us (John 1:18), and the Lord Himself confirms it when he states, “No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven: the Son of Man” (John 3:13).⁷⁵ Therefore, the divine nature is as necessary for Christ’s prophetic office as the human is.

The Use of the Divine Nature in Christ’s Priestly Office

The priestly office of the Messiah likewise requires the two natures. The book of Hebrews makes this clear by its insistence on the direct connection between the Lord’s divine Sonship and his priestly function, of which connection precisely qualifies him to be our great High Priest (1:5; 5:5–10; cf. also Ps 2:7; 110).⁷⁶ No one but God, after all (as Turretin said), “could oppose infinite merit to the infinite demerit of sinners and pay a ransom . . . of infinite value to the justice of God.”⁷⁷

To be clear, Christ was our sacrifice primarily according to his humanity; therefore, Scripture attributes this offering not only to his person, but also to his body (Heb 13:12; 1 Pet 2:24; Col 1:22), his blood (Col 1:20), and his soul (Isa 53:12; Matt 20:28). Nevertheless, without his deity, his sacrifice would not have been effectual (Acts 20:28; Rom 8:3).⁷⁸ Accordingly, in Hebrews 9:14, he is represented as both the Offeror and the Offering, who accomplishes his priestly work through the eternal Spirit. This means that the execution of Christ’s priestly office required both his divine and human natures.

The Use of the Divine Nature in Christ’s Kingly Office

The same is true of his kingly office. Thomas himself argued that Christ was the head of the church in the OT, and that according to the divine nature, since his human nature did not yet exist.⁷⁹ William Ames, on the other hand, said, “If he were not God he could not be the spiritual king of our souls, dispensing eternal life and death, and if he had not been man he could not have been a head of the same nature as his body [Eph 4:15].”⁸⁰ As God, then, he has always ruled over

⁷⁴Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:380.

⁷⁵Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 1.XIX.16, 133. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 74–5, references this text in relation to the ministry of the Angel of Yahweh in the OT.

⁷⁶Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 14. See also A. W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), 239–40.

⁷⁷Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:381.

⁷⁸Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:381.

⁷⁹Thomas, *Truth*, 3 vols., trans. Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), q29.4.9, 10.

⁸⁰Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 1.XIX.16.

the Church through his Spirit, who effectually calls, gifts, and—in the present—strengthens the elect in the fulfillment of the great (kingly) commission (Matt 28:19–20).⁸¹ As man, moreover, he will rule from Zion in his millennial kingdom (Ps 2:6; 110:2; Rev 14:1).

The great Prophet, Priest, and King of Israel, then—the antitype of all other mediators—has been in the exercise of his mediatorial office since the fall. Though in the old dispensation he did not yet have a human nature, we can still speak in this manner because we speak concerning not the divine nor the human nature, but the person.⁸²

The Communication of Properties

The balance between the distinction of the two natures and their union in the person of Christ is preserved by the use of a concept known as the communication of properties, or *communicatio idiomatum*.⁸³ Simply put, this doctrine suggests that the properties of both the human and the divine natures of Christ “are now the properties of the person, and are therefore ascribed to the person.”⁸⁴ Therefore, as Christ is said to be hungry (Luke 4:2), which is proper only to the human nature, so is he said to have been in the beginning (John 1:1), which is proper only to the divine.⁸⁵

In view of the unity of his person, the properties of either one of the natures may therefore also be attributed to the other. Consequently, the apostles write that “the Lord of glory” was “crucified” (1 Cor 2:8), that God was “taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16), that “the Author of life” was killed (Acts 3:15), and that God purchased the Church “with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). In reality, however, only the human nature bled, was crucified, killed, and taken up in glory. But Scripture still predicates those things of God, inasmuch as they refer to the subject or person in the

⁸¹Also, concerning Christ’s kingship over the Church, Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 201, writes, “Christ has all power committed to His hand, for the Church’s good. It requires omniscience to comprehend this, and omnipotence to wield it, especially when we recall the power of our enemies. See Rom. viii: 38, 39; Eph. vi: 12.”

⁸²Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:452.

⁸³Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 1.XVIII.13. Ames pointed out that the union of the two natures in Christ’s person “adds nothing to the divine person and nature except a relationship.” However, the assumption does elevate Christ’s human nature to the “highest perfection,” and makes it, “so to speak, an arm [*membrum*] of the same whole *τησάντε ηροπος*, God-man, of which the divine nature is, as it were, another part.” Cf. A Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:505–10.

⁸⁴Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 324; cf. Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 490; Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol. 2, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 124–7.

⁸⁵Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 1.XVIII.13.

concrete.⁸⁶ The same one who is called almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent is thus also called a “man of sorrows” (Isa 53:3), of limited knowledge and power (Mark 13:32; John 4:6), and subject to human want and miseries (John 11:35; 19:28).

This is not to say, however, that one nature really participates in the attributes of the other.⁸⁷ We must be careful not to assume that “anything peculiar to the divine nature was communicated to the human nature, or vice versa.”⁸⁸ That Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever does not mean that his human nature is eternal.⁸⁹ That God purchased the Church with his own blood does not mean that the divine nature now bleeds. Rather, the *person* of the Son is eternal according to his deity, and the *person* of the Son bled according to his humanity. The person is, therefore, the partaker of the attributes of both natures, “so that whatever may be affirmed of either nature may be affirmed of the person.”⁹⁰ This emphasis upon the unity of Christ’s person ultimately conveys that both the divine and the human natures were necessary in the work of reconciling God and man, for all the actions that tend to this end must refer to the person.⁹¹

The Communication of Operations

As with the communication of properties, the balance between the distinction of the two natures and their union in the *actions* of the Mediator is preserved by the use of a concept known as the communication of operations, or *communicatio operationum*.⁹² This doctrine states that “the redemptive work of Christ, and particularly the final result of that work—the *apotelesma*—bears a divine-human character.”⁹³

⁸⁶D. Glenn Butner Jr., *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 81.

⁸⁷See a Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:507–9.

⁸⁸Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 324.

⁸⁹This is the point at which the great hymn writer Isaac Watts, *Useful and Important Questions Concerning Jesus the Son of God Freely Composed: With a Humble Attempt to Answer them According to Scripture* (London: printed by J. Oswald and J. Buckland, 1746), q.3, sect.2 (pp. 119–129), went astray. he believed that the *pactum salutis*, being made between the Father and the Son from all eternity, necessitated the Son’s humanity. Therefore, the human soul of Christ had to have been begotten from eternity. However, what Watts missed is that while the humanity of the Mediator was *eternally* and *ideally* present according to the eternal counsel of God, it was not, however, *really* present. See Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:446.

⁹⁰Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:392.

⁹¹Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 14–5.

⁹²Also, the *communicatio apotelesmatum*, or “the communication of mediatorial operations in and for the sake of the work of salvation.” See Muller, *Dictionary*, 74.

⁹³Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 324; a Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:509, states, “As God, the Person of Christ functions according to His human nature. Thus, each nature contributes

Calvin made use of this distinction when he and the ministers of Geneva wrote that “certain actions, considered in themselves, refer to one nature, but because of a consequent effect they are common to both.”⁹⁴ As an example, he pointed to the death of Christ as proper to the human nature, but whose effect is that it purifies our consciences, “because he offered himself through the spirit (Heb 9:14).”⁹⁵ Therefore, Calvin concluded that the natures must not be separated in the act of dying, “since atonement could not have been effected by man alone unless the divine power were conjoined” [see Ps 49:7–8].⁹⁶ This is consistent with the Chalcedonian definition, which calls for the preservation of the properties of each nature without confusing or dividing them.

This may be more clearly understood through the following explanation:

- 1) The efficient cause of the redemptive work of Christ is the one undivided personal subject in Christ;
- 2) this redemptive work is brought about by the cooperation of both natures;
- 3) in this redemptive work, each of these natures works within its own special *energeia*
- 4) this notwithstanding, the result forms an undivided unity, because it is the work of a single person.⁹⁷

In other words, the presupposition or *principle which* (*principium quo*) behind the mediatorial work is the God-man. Each of his acts, however, has a *principle by which* (*principium quod*) or “formal principle” (this would be either the divine or human nature), under which the act is carried out. The power of those acts depends upon the formal principle, such that the act itself is human if the *principle by which* is the human nature, and divine if the *principle by which* is the divine nature. Nevertheless, the effect or *apotelesma* is ultimately undivided, for it proceeds from a single person.⁹⁸

to the execution of the *one* work of redemption in all its parts.”

⁹⁴ Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 14–5.

⁹⁵ Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 14–5.

⁹⁶ Calvin, “How Christ is the Mediator,” 14–5.

⁹⁷ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 324.

⁹⁸ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*; cited in Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:379. Turretin summarizes Damascus as follows:

Four things must be accurately distinguished here in reference to the actions of Christ, as John of Damascus pointed out (*Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 4.18 [NPNF2, 9:90–2]). (1) He is one that works (*ho energon*), the agent or principle which acts (which is the *suppositum* or person of Christ). (2) The activity (*energetikon*) or formal principle by which he acts—that by which the agent or person of Christ works (to

This concept, as Turretin pointed out, may be illustrated by human speech. Speech has a “common principle,” which is the person speaking. On the other hand, speech has two “formal principles,” which are the speaker’s body and his soul. As the speaker speaks, then, distinct powers are at work; nevertheless, the end result—the message communicated—is undivided.⁹⁹ Similarly, the work of our redemption bears a divine-human character. The things in Scripture that apply to the office of the Mediator are not spoken simply either of the divine or of the human nature, but of both at once.¹⁰⁰

The Role of the *Pactum Salutis* in Dual Mediation

To Robert Bellarmine, the Protestant doctrine of the theanthropic mediation of Jesus Christ represented a form of Arianism.¹⁰¹ After all, the Reformed had argued that Christ mediates between God and men according to the divine nature—in addition to the human. This, he believed, implied that his deity is inferior to that of the Father.¹⁰² This conclusion, however, grows out of a false premise; namely, that Christ’s medial position is a matter of essence.¹⁰³ In other words, it assumes that the title Mediator is meant to convey a substantial quality.

However, Protestants have historically maintained that the title “Mediator” is one of personal office.¹⁰⁴ As Christ is called Savior because he saves, so he is called Mediator because he mediates between two parties. In other words, theanthropic mediation does not render the persons unequal according to the essence (Arianism), but rather, it distinguishes “the Son from the Father according to a voluntary economy by which he emptied himself.”¹⁰⁵ That is to say, the Son is made “less” than the Father “not in nature (*physei*), but in economy (*oikonomia*).”¹⁰⁶ This economy arises out of the *pactum salutis*.¹⁰⁷

wit, the two natures. . .). (3) The energy (*energeia*) or operation which depends upon the principle-by-which and partakes of the nature of its own principle, so that it is divine if the principle-by-which is the divine nature, but human, if it is the humanity. (4) The effect (*energema*) or accomplishment (*apotelesma*) which depends upon the principle-by-which and is the external work, which we call a mediation.

Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:379.

⁹⁹Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:383.

¹⁰⁰Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.3.

¹⁰¹Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 575.

¹⁰²Bellarmino, *Controversies*, 575, 588.

¹⁰³Calvin, “The Controversy on Christ the Mediator,” 150.

¹⁰⁴See Carl Trueman, “From Calvin to Gillespie on Covenant: Mythological Excess or an Exercise in Doctrinal Development?” in *IJST* 11 no. 4 (October 2009), 378–97: 382.

¹⁰⁵Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:384.

¹⁰⁶Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:383.

¹⁰⁷See Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies*

According to the Reformed doctrine of the *pactum*, the distribution of economic tasks among the persons of the Godhead flows out of an agreement made between them in eternity (Ps 89:3–4; 110:4; Isa 53:10–12; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:2).¹⁰⁸ This agreement, to be sure, was “to plan and execute the redemption of the elect.”¹⁰⁹ The economic offices which result from it are fitting to the particular order of subsisting of each divine person—as the Father is the first person, so is he, in the economy, the Architect, Lord, Creator, Director, Lawgiver, etc.; as the Son is the second person, so is he the Mediator and Surety of his people; as the Spirit is the third person, so is he the Emissary and Advocate of the Trinity, who consummates the work of redemption.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, they do not imply any form of essential inequality among the persons of the Trinity.

After all, as Samuel Willard argued, not only is the design of the *pactum* the glory of one God in three persons, but also, “if we consider the mutual obligation; they stand equally bound, each of them, to the terms that each undertakes.”¹¹¹ In other words, the roles of the divine persons in the economy of redemption are grounded on eternal federal transactions; and this very fact rules out the possibility that one Trinitarian person might be superior to another. So, while the Son may in fact be “less” than the Father in the economy (John 14:28)—and may thus mediate according to his divine nature—he is not so by nature.¹¹²

Rightly, then, do Joel Beeke and Mark Jones state that the *pactum* accounts for “the particularity of Christ’s mediatorial work.”¹¹³ After all, because of it, Christian theology can say that as God, Christ is co-equal with the Father; as man, he is subordinate to God; as Mediator, he is “voluntarily subordinate in the

(Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 54; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 228–9.

¹⁰⁸ For more on the *pactum*, see Quiñones, “In the Council Chamber of the Triune God”; Samuel Willard, *The Covenant of Redemption*, ed. Don Kistler (Orlando, FL: The Northampton Press, 2022); J. V. Fesko, *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption* (Geanies House, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2016); idem., *The Covenant of Redemption: Origins, Development, and Reception*, Reformed Historical Theology 35 (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Fesko, *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*, 131.

¹¹⁰ Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, Vol. 2: *Faith in the Triune God*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 506.

¹¹¹ Willard, *The Covenant of Redemption*, 37.

¹¹² Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, 2 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), II.iii.xx; Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 2:506; John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with Preliminary Exercitations*, A New Edition, in Four Volumes (London: Printed for Thomas Tegg, 1839), Exercitation 28, 1:466.

¹¹³ Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, “The Puritans on the Covenant of Redemption,” in *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, 237–58 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 255.

exercise of his office and that according to both natures.”¹¹⁴ Calvin, on the other hand, rightly stated,

These two facts, that the *λόγος* and eternal son of God is equal to the Father and that the mediator is less than the Father are no more incompatible than these two, that the *λόγος* by itself and separately is a divine person and, nevertheless, that the one person of Christ the mediator is constituted by two natures.¹¹⁵

In other words, the coupling of essential equality with economic minority is no more irrational or impossible than the coupling of the human and the divine nature in the divine person of Christ. Both are mysteries that faith may embrace.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the controversy over dual mediation, for Protestants, consisted in the reaffirmation of the Christology of Chalcedon and its reapplication to present circumstances. At stake was both the unity of the suppositum and the efficacy of his mediatorial actions. The Reformed demonstrated that if the divine Son was going to mediate between God and men, he needed to do so as both God and man. On the other hand, dual mediation opened them up to the question of how he could do so without also forfeiting his true deity. The answer came in the *pactum salutis*. No wonder, then, Herman Bavinck referred to that doctrine as “the divine work par excellence.”¹¹⁶ After all, in it, the Son is made to shine as both true God, and the one who gloriously makes himself less than the Father, in the economy, for us and for our salvation.

¹¹⁴ Muller, “Toward the *Pactum Salutis*,” 61.

¹¹⁵ Calvin, “The Controversy on Christ the Mediator,” 153.

¹¹⁶ Bavinck, *RD*, 3:215. Emphasis original.