

QUESTION 26

On Christ's being Called the Mediator between God and Men

Next we have to consider Christ's being called the mediator between God and men. And on this topic there are two questions: (1) Is it peculiar to Christ (*proprium Christo*) to be a mediator between God and man? (2) Does this belong to Him because of His human nature?

Article 1

Is it peculiar to Christ to be a mediator between God and men?

It seems that it is not peculiar to Christ to be a mediator between God and men (*quod esse mediatorem Dei et hominum non sit proprium Christo*):

Objection 1: A priest and prophet seems to be a mediator between God and men—this according to Deuteronomy 5:5 (“At that time I was the mediator and in the middle between you and God”). But it is not peculiar to Christ to be a prophet and a priest. Therefore, neither is it peculiar to Him to be a mediator.

Objection 2: What belongs to both good and bad angels cannot be said to be peculiar to Christ. But as Dionysius explains in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, it belongs to good angels to be in the middle between God and men (*esse medium inter Deum et homines*). Again, as Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 9, this likewise belongs to bad angels, i.e., demons, since the demons have something in common with God, viz., “immortality,” and they have something in common with men, viz., that they are “mentally passive” and, as a result, “wretched” (*quod sint animo passivi et per consequens miseri*). Therefore, it is not peculiar to Christ be a mediator between God and men.

Objection 3: The role of mediator involves appealing to one of the parties between whom he mediates on behalf of the other. But as Romans 8:26 points out, “The Holy Spirit pleads for us [to God] with unutterable groanings.” Therefore, the Holy Spirit is a mediator between God and men. Therefore, this is not peculiar to Christ.

But contrary to this: 1 Timothy 2:15 says, “There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

I respond: The role of a mediator is, properly speaking, to join together those between whom he is the mediator (*mediator*), since the endpoints are united in the middle (*in medio*).

Now uniting men with God in a perfect way belongs to Christ, through whom men are reconciled to God—this according to 2 Corinthians 5:19 (“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”). And so Christ alone is the perfect mediator between God and men, insofar as through His death He reconciled the human race to God. Hence, after the Apostle had said, “... mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” he added, “who gave Himself as a ransom for all (*qui dedit semetipsum redemptionem pro omnibus*).”

However, there is nothing to prevent certain other individuals from being called mediators between God and man *in a certain respect (secundum quid)*, viz., insofar as they cooperate dispositively or ministerially in uniting men with God.

Reply to objection 1: The prophets and priests of the Old Law were called mediators between God and men *dispositively* and *ministerially*, i.e., insofar as they foretold and prefigured the true and perfect mediator between God and men. By contrast, the priests of the New Law can be called mediators between God and men insofar as they are ministers of the true mediator, administering the saving sacraments to men in His stead.

Reply to objection 2: As Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 9, good angels are not correctly

called mediators between God and men: “For since they have beatitude and immortality in common with God, whereas they have none of these in common with wretched and mortal men, how are they not instead more removed from men and more conjoined to God rather than set up in the middle between them?” Yet Dionysius maintains that they are indeed in the middle, since, as regards the level of their nature, they have been situated below God and above men. And they do exercise the role of mediator—not, to be sure, in a principal and perfective way, but ministerially and dispositively. Hence, Matthew 4:11 says, “Angels came and ministered to Him,” viz., to Christ.

On the other hand, the demons do have immortality in common with God and wretchedness in common with men. “Hence, the immortal and wretched demon interposes himself in the middle in order to keep men from passing to a beatified immortality,” and in order to lead them all the way to a wretched immortality. Hence, the demon is like “an evil mediator, who separates friends” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 9).

Now Christ had beatitude in common with God and mortality in common with men. And so “He interposed Himself in the middle so that, with His mortality having been brought to completion, He might make immortal men out of dead men—which He demonstrated by rising again Himself—and so that He might make beatified men out of wretched men, for which reason He never left us.” And so He is “a good mediator, who reconciles enemies” (Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 9).

Reply to objection 3: Since the Holy Spirit is in all respects equal to God, He cannot be said to be in the middle, or to be a mediator, between God and men; rather, this can be said only of Christ, who, even though He is equal in His divine nature with the Father, is nonetheless, as has been explained (q. 20, a. 1), less than the Father in His human nature. Hence, a Gloss on Galatians 3:30 (“Christ is the mediator”) says, “... not the Father or the Holy Spirit.”

Now the Holy Spirit is said to plead on our behalf because He makes us plead.

Article 2

Is Christ the mediator between God and men as a man?

It seems that Christ is not the mediator between God and men as a man (*Christus non sit mediator Dei et hominum secundum quod homo*):

Objection 1: In *Contra Felicianum* Augustine says, “The person of Christ is one, lest there not be one Christ, not one substance; lest, the role of mediator having been denied, He be called only the Son of God, or only the Son of Man.” But He is the Son of God and the Son of Man not as a man, but as God and man together. Therefore, one should not say that He is the mediator between God and men only as a man.

Objection 2: Just as Christ, insofar as He is God, agrees [in nature] with the Father and the Holy Spirit, so, too, insofar as He is a man, He agrees [in nature] with men. But because, insofar as He is God, He agrees with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He cannot be called the mediator insofar as He is God; for a Gloss on 1 Timothy 2:25 (“... mediator between God and men”) says, “He is not in the middle insofar as He is the Word, since [insofar as He is the Word] He is equal to God, and God with God, and at the same time one God.” Therefore, He likewise cannot be called the mediator as a man, and this because of the agreement [in nature] that He has with men.

Objection 3: Christ is called the mediator insofar as He has reconciled us with God, which He accomplished by taking away the sin that separated us from God. But to take away sin belongs to Christ not insofar as He is a man, but insofar as He is God. Therefore, it is not insofar as He is a man that Christ is the mediator, but insofar as He is God.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 9 Augustine says, “It is not because He is the Word that Christ is the mediator. For being maximally immortal and maximally blessed, the Word is far removed from wretched mortals. Instead, He is the mediator as a man.”

I respond: There are two things that can be thought about in a mediator: (a) the *notion of the middle*; and (b) the *role of conjoining*.

Now it is part of the notion of the middle that the middle is distant from both of the endpoints, whereas the mediator conjoins them by bringing what belongs to the one down to the other. Now neither of these features fits Christ as God; instead they fit Him only as a man.

For as God He does not differ from the Father and the Holy Spirit in nature or in the power of Lordship; nor, again, do the Father or the Holy Spirit have anything which does not belong to the Son, so that the Son might be able to bring down to the others that which belongs to the Father and the Holy Spirit as if it belonged to [persons] other [than Himself] (*quasi quod est aliorum*).

By contrast, both features fit Him insofar as He is a man. For as a man He is distant from God in nature and distant from men in the dignity of both grace and glory. Again, insofar as He is a man, it is appropriate for Him to join men to God by displaying the commandments and the gifts to men and by satisfying God on behalf of men and pleading with God on their behalf. And that is why it is absolutely correct (*verissime*) for Him to be called the mediator *as a man*.

Reply to objection 1: If the divine nature is subtracted from Christ, what is subtracted from Him as a result is His singular plenitude of grace, which belongs to Him insofar as He is “the only-begotten of the Father,” as He is called in John 1:14. Because of this plenitude, He is such that He is set above all men and is closer to God.

Reply to objection 2: Christ as God is equal to the Father in everything. But even in His human nature He *exceeds* other men. And that is why He can be the mediator as a man, but not as God.

Reply to objection 3: Even though taking away sin by His own authority (*auctoritative*) belongs to Christ as God, nevertheless, making satisfaction for the sin of the human race belongs to Him as a man. And it is on this score that He is called the mediator between God and men.