

The Mediatorial Office of Christ

By Benedict Pictet (1655 - 1724)

Benedict Pictet studied in Geneva under Francis Turretin, one of the ablest exponents of Reformed Theology. In 1687 he succeeded Turretin as professor of theology and became the last of Geneva's giant theologians. What follows is taken from his great work entitled 'Christian Theology', 1696.

Introduction

Christ's mediatorial office is divided into three parts, viz., his prophetic, priestly, and kingly office. These the scripture attributes to Christ, setting him forth sometimes as a prophet, (Deut 18:15,18; Is 61:1); sometimes as

a priest, (Ps 110:4); sometimes as a king, (Ps 2:6). The whole three offices are introduced (in Psalm 110, as also in Zech 6:12,13, and in John 14:6), where Christ calls himself 'the way, the truth, and the life'; and Paul declares that he 'is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption', (1 Cor 1:30). There were three things required touching our salvation.

This salvation was to be proclaimed, obtained, and applied; Christ, therefore, was to proclaim it as a prophet, to obtain it as a priest, to apply it as a king. Again, by the fall these three effects were produced: we were sunk in the deepest ignorance, we incurred the hatred and curse of God, we became the subjects of sin and death; the first of these evils is

remedied by the prophetic office of Christ, the second by his priesthood, the third by his kingly office. And with this threefold office may correspond the three Christian graces of faith, hope, and charity; faith embraces the doctrine of the Prophet, hope relies upon the merit of the Priest, and charity or love bows to the sceptre of the King.

There were three sorts of men who in this respect were types of Christ, viz., prophets, kings, and priests; but besides the infinite difference between the types and the antitype, no single individual among the former held these three offices at the same time. Melchizedek indeed was both a king and a priest, and David was a prophet and a king; and sometimes there were found priests who were also prophets; and although Moses was not only a prophet and leader of the people, but also before Aaron's consecration, discharged the office of the priesthood, (Ex 24:6-8), this was an extraordinary and particular case. To these three offices Christ was consecrated by anointing; hence he is called Messiah, and is said to have been anointed by God with the 'oil of gladness', (Ps 14:7).

Now to understand this, we must remember that the prophets, and priests, and kings, of old were consecrated to their respective offices by being anointed with oil; there is, indeed, but one example of a prophet being anointed, viz., that of Elisha, (1 Kgs 19:16,) and even this

anointing might be understood figuratively of a simple appointment to the office; but the priests under the law, the sons of Aaron, were anointed, as also the kings of Judah. Now the oil with which Christ was anointed was not the typical oil, but the influence of the Spirit, 'the unction of the Holy one', and his being anointed with this implied both his appointment to this Mediatorial office, and the communication of the gifts necessary for the discharge of this office.

Christ was thus anointed and consecrated, in his conception by the Holy Ghost; in his baptism, when the Holy Spirit visibly descended upon him, as he was about to enter on his public ministry: (Mt 3:17); in his transfiguration, when the Father commanded him to 'be heard'; (Mt 17:5); and after his resurrection and ascension, when he was 'made both Lord and Christ', (Acts 2:36), and 'a name was given to him above every name', (Phil 2:9).

The Prophetic Office of Christ

To begin with the first of these three offices, we observe, that it was most necessary; because there can be no knowledge of God and divine things without revelation; 'the natural man not receiving the things of God', (1 Cor 2:14); and because no condition is more wretched than that of man, sunk in ignorance of divine things; and no

salvation can be expected in such a condition. This being premised, in order to have a clear understanding of this office of Christ, we may consider what are the duties of the prophetic office, and how Christ performed these duties.

Now the duties of this office were to teach the way of salvation, to foretell future events, and to confirm the doctrine by miracles and by perfect holiness of life. Now Christ did all these things; for, first, he taught the way of salvation, expounding the law, and preaching the gospel. With respect to the law, he explained its true meaning, he vindicated it from the false interpretations of the Pharisees, and inculcated inward and spiritual obedience, in opposition to the merely outward righteousness of those persons. With respect to the gospel, he taught those saving mysteries, which were before either unknown to men, or obscurely known, and which had not been taught by the law or by nature. Again, he foretold future events, such as the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, the calling of the Gentiles, and abrogation of the ceremonial law, the persecutions of his followers, his own sufferings, crucifixion and resurrection, the denial and the martyrdom of Peter, the treachery of Judas, and the destinies of the church, as revealed to John. Thirdly, he confirmed his doctrine by the most perfect holiness of life, by the most stupendous miracles, and finally by his most precious death.

Christ exercised this office both immediately, i.e. in his own person in the days of his flesh, and mediately by his ministers; and this too, both before his incarnation, by the prophets, in whom, as Peter declares, 'was the Spirit of Christ', (1 Pet 1:11), and hence Christ is said by the Spirit to have 'preached to the spirits in prison' (i.e. the antediluvians who are now condemned in hell; (1 Pet 3:19), and also after his ascension, by his apostles and other ministers.

He also exercised this office both externally, addressing the outward ears by his word, and internally, by turning and moving the heart by his Spirit. When he discharged his prophetic office on earth, his hearers admired the authority, wisdom, freedom, eloquence, and zeal of his instructions. No one, indeed, can sufficiently admire the parables, the exhortations and reproofs of Christ. There is nothing which can be compared with the sayings of Christ, either in the epistles of the apostles themselves, although there is in them an extraordinary force and spirit, or in the writings of the prophets, in which however we see a certain sublimity, and a kind of modest vivacity. Who, indeed, is not astonished at the facility with which the Saviour replied to the carefully prepared sophisms, the difficult dilemmas, the puzzling questions, the entangling subtleties, of the Pharisees and Sadducees; all of which Christ disposed of in such a manner, that even his most obstinate enemies were struck with

amazement.

He far exceeded all other prophets, as the antitype exceeds the type, and the body the shadow; they were servants, Christ a Son, the Teacher of teachers; they only taught outwardly, he writes the law inwardly on the heart; to them the Spirit was given only by measure, to him without measure; the Spirit by which the prophets were inspired was not the spirit of the prophets, but the Spirit with which Christ was filled was the Spirit of Christ; he uttered his prophecies from no other influence than the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in him; his sanctity of life was unspotted, and his miracles were performed by his own power. If the prophets sometimes knew the secrets of the heart by the revelation of God, even this seldom occurred; whereas all things were 'naked and open' to Christ as God, and nothing was hid from his infinite knowledge.

This prophetic office of Christ was often foretold in the Old Testament, especially in that remarkable passage, - 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me', (Deut 18:15), which Peter applies to Christ, (Acts 3:22). And that God here speaks of the Messiah, is evident, not only because the words refer to one individual, and not to more than one, but because God declares that he shall be like unto Moses; and the Jews confess that there has been yet no prophet like unto Moses. Christ is

said to be given 'for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles', (Isa 42:6; 49:6). He is also introduced saying, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings', which words Christ declared to be fulfilled in himself, (Lk 4:21). He is also called, 'The Angel of the Covenant', 'the Counsellor', 'Eternal wisdom' etc.

The Priestly Office of Christ

The second part of Christ's mediatorial office is his Priesthood. The necessity of it is proved by the same arguments which prove the necessity of satisfaction, which therefore we need not repeat. Christ is set forth under this character in scripture - 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek', (Ps 110:4). 'And he shall be a priest upon his throne', (Zech 6:13). And he is set forth under this character in the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews. His priesthood was shadowed by various types, especially by the Levitical priesthood, and that of Melchizedek. He was called to the office by his Father; for 'Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee', (Heb 5:5). The office of a priest was to perform these three things, - First, 'to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins', (Heb 5:1). Secondly, to intercede for the people, (Joel 2:17), which was the peculiar office of the high priest on the day of atonement, when he entered into the holy

of holies with the censer of coals, and the blood of the goat, (Lev 16:12,15). Thirdly, to bless the people, (Num 6:23; Deut 21:5).

Now all these things Christ performed; for first, he offered a sacrifice for sins - 'through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God', and 'by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified', (Heb 9:14; 10:14). By this oblation of himself Christ hath truly satisfied for us, as is proved from those places in which he is said to have redeemed us by the price of his blood; for where a price comes in, there is real satisfaction, (Mt 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:18).

From these and similar places it is clear that our redemption was not effected merely by freemancipation, as in the case of slaves, who are set at liberty by their masters; although we are said to be saved by the grace of God; nor merely by an exertion of power, as when captives are rescued from the hand of the enemy; although we have been delivered from Satan's tyranny by the mighty hand of the victorious Redeemer; nor yet by a simple exchange, such as usually takes place in war; although indeed Christ was put into our place; but our redemption was effected by a just and proper satisfaction in the payment of a price. The same truth is evident from those passages in which Christ is called an 'offering' for men, and a 'propitiation',

(Eph 5:2; Heb 9:14,28; Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 2:1; 4:10). The latter expression alludes either to the expiatory sacrifices of the Old Testament, or to the covering of the mercy-seat. Also, from those passages in which he is said to have 'borne our sins', to have been 'wounded, afflicted, dead'. (Is 53:5-7; 1 Pet 2:24), and especially in which he is said to have been made 'sin', and 'a curse for us', (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13).

We may add those passages, in which Christ is set forth to us as the true priest, properly so called, superior to all the Levitical priests, who by the offering of himself hath appeased the wrath of God, and obtained eternal salvation, and in which we are said to be 'reconciled to God by his blood', (Rom 5:10; Col 1:20). Nor is it strange that men are said to be reconciled to God, and not God to be reconciled to them; for this is the common way of speaking among all nations; when a prince is offended with a subject, if the subject make satisfaction to the prince, he is said to be reconciled to the prince, not the prince to the subject (though the latter is also the case). So our Lord exhorts a man who 'remembers that his brother hath aught against him', to be reconciled to that brother, because he has offended him; and thus the heathen expressed themselves.

We may observe under this head that not only has Christ made a real, but also a perfect satisfaction; which cannot be

doubted, when we consider the dignity of his person, which gave an infinite value to his sacrifice, and when we look at the plain testimony of Scripture, which says that 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'. (Heb 10:14).

Secondly, Christ intercedes for us, like the high priest, who, after he had offered the victim on the altar, carried its blood into the holy place, and there prayed for the people. The necessity of this intercession is sufficiently shown, not only because it was not enough to have purchased salvation, unless it were perpetually secured and applied; but also because we are not such characters as can draw near to God of ourselves, and therefore have need of a most influential advocate to plead our cause before God, against the continual accusation of the devil.

When we say that Christ intercedes, we must not imagine that he falls down at the feet of his Father, or uses any prostration of his body, as a suppliant; for this idea is inconsistent with the glorified state and kingly authority, which he possesses both in heaven and in earth. It simply means, if I may so express it, Christ's continual appearance in heaven before the Father; for the Father cannot look upon him without being appeased; and thus his appearance is equivalent to intercession, and has the same effect, as if Christ were to fall before his Father covered and stained with his own blood, and display

before him his wounds and scars; thus the blood of Abel is said to have spoken or cried out.

It may denote, also, his unchangeable purpose of saving his elect, and also his presentation of our persons and prayers for acceptance before God; thus he is represented as the 'angel with the golden censer and incense to be offered with the prayers of the saints', (Rev 8:3). Now this intercession is opposed to the twofold accusation, which the devil, 'the accuser', brings against us, and which our own sins bring against us, provoking the anger of God.

Thirdly, Christ blesses us, like the priests whose mode of blessing is recorded in Num 6:23, but this blessing of Christ does not consist in bare words, like the blessing of man, but in the real communication of 'spiritual blessings'.

The priesthood of Christ far excelled the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priests were mere men; Christ was the true Son of God. They were sinners who 'needed to offer for themselves also'; He was holy and undefiled, who needed to offer for us only. They were different from the victims which they offered; he was the priest and the victim at the same time. They were many in number; he was one, who needed no substitute or successor. Again, the Levitical priesthood was instituted 'without an oath'; the priesthood of Christ 'with an oath', (Heb 7:20,21).

The former was 'according to the law of a carnal commandment'; i.e. with various ceremonies of an external and transitory nature, which were adapted to the mortal and perishing condition of human nature (for God had declared that the priesthood of Aaron should not be perpetual, and therefore provided successors continually); the latter was 'after the power of an endless life'; i.e. according to a law adapted to the nature and condition of Christ, whose life cannot be destroyed by any casualty, nor perish after any series of ages. Moreover, the Levitical priesthood was 'weak and unprofitable', only expiating sins typically; but that of Christ really expiates all sin, and is effectual to our justification and sanctification; the former was imperfect, and therefore repeated its sacrifices; but the latter was perfect, and needed no repetition of its sacrifice; and finally, the one only lasted a certain time, the other is eternal.

We may just add that Christ is said to be 'a priest after the order of Melchizedek', because, like Melchizedek, he had no successor, or predecessor, and because he is the true 'king of righteousness and peace', 'without father', in regard to his human nature, 'without mother', as it respects his divine nature, uniting in himself the kingdom and priesthood, like Melchizedek, who was both a king and priest, and who is said to be 'without father and mother', because the names of his parents were not written

in the genealogy; and who had 'neither beginning of days, nor end of life', because his birth and death are not recorded, thus representing the eternity of Christ, who is 'from everlasting to everlasting'.

The fruits of Christ's priesthood are, full satisfaction to God's justice - our reconciliation with God - remission of our sins - the gift of the Spirit, of faith, hope, love and other graces - the opening of heaven - and the betrothing of the church to himself. By the discharge of his priestly office, the Saviour displayed the great love of God towards mankind, his own matchless love towards them, and the deep hatred of God against sin. We should therefore learn hence to hate sin 'with a perfect hatred', but at the same time to repose the fullest trust and confidence in Christ, and to love him with all the power of our souls.

The Kingly Office of Christ

Christ's mediatorial office, in the third place, is kingly. His dominion is of two kinds, the one essential, which he possesses with equal glory and majesty with the Father and the Holy Ghost; the other mediatorial, which he possesses as Mediator, and of which we are now to speak. This regal dignity is predicted in many places of the Old Testament, (Ps 2:6; 72. 89. 110. Isaiah 9:5,6;11. Zech 6:13; 9:9), and was remarkably typified by the reigns of David and Solomon, the

former of whom represented Christ suffering and militant, the latter, Christ reigning and triumphant: hence the angel in announcing his birth declared, that he should 'reign over the house of Jacob', (Luke 1:33).

Now the office of a king is to enact laws, to govern the people, and to defend them against their enemies, all which things Christ performed. For he has given us his laws; his law is the gospel, 'the law of liberty, the law of the spirit of life', by which he hath 'brought life and immortality to light', and which is accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit in his people. According to these laws he governs his people, with righteousness, wisdom, mercy, and holiness, and he will also judge the world according to them. He protects and defends his subjects, and renders them victorious over all their enemies; in short, the administration of Christ's kingdom may be rightly said to consist in the calling and gathering in, in the preservation and government, in the protection and defence, and at length in the full and complete glorification of his church. Such a king we needed, - one who could apply and preserve the salvation he had purchased, and under whose protection we might be secure against all the powers of the world and of hell.

The subjects of this kingdom are all Christian believers. The arms of the King are his word and his grace;

the enemies of his government are lies, errors, superstitions, idolatry; in short, Satan, sin, death, and the world. It is a spiritual not an earthly kingdom; which latter assaults, or is assaulted with carnal weapons and forces, and which professes to dethrone kings. Its king is a spiritual king, the Lord from heaven; its throne is the heart of man, therefore it is called 'the kingdom of heaven'; its sceptre is the word of the gospel; its subjects, spiritual men, born not of flesh, but of God; its government is not by might of arms, but by the Spirit; its laws are spiritual, its weapons spiritual, its blessings spiritual, being the remission of sins, righteousness, the gift of the Spirit, and eternal life.

The commencement of this regal dignity was discoverable during the life of Christ. It was seen in his birth, when the wise men worshipped him; in his life, as when Nathanael called him 'the king of Israel', and when he made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem; and in the very moment of death, when even Pilate, though unintentionally, acknowledged him to be a king: but he gave the clearest proofs of his royalty after his resurrection and ascension, when he sent down the Spirit from heaven, gathered in his church through the apostles, subjected to himself the kingdoms of the world, and began to overthrow antichrist. This mediatorial kingdom may be regarded under three characters - as the kingdom of power over all things, angels as well as men, but with a particular reference to the church; - as

the kingdom of grace, set up in the church militant; - as the kingdom of glory, which is established over the church triumphant.

This kingdom will be everlasting; Christ will be always acknowledged the king and head of the faithful, though there will be a different mode of administration. For after the last judgment, Christ will no longer govern the church through ecclesiastical ministrations; he will, as it were, give up to God the disposal of his office, and will present the church before his Father's presence, 'a glorious church'; and then the eternal God will, without the interposition of a mediator, communicate himself to his saints; and thus ' God will be all in all'. (1 Cor 15:24,28). Then Christ also himself, as it regards his human nature, will be subject to God, yet without any diminution of the glory he enjoys.

But we must not omit here, that Christ admits us into some sort of participation in his three offices, since he gives us that 'unction' or 'anointing', which makes us kings, priests, and prophets. That the faithful are made prophets is inferred from various passages in which they are said to be 'taught of God', (Is 54:13; Jn 6:45), 'to have an unction from the Holy One, and to know all things', (1 Jn 2:20). They are under an obligation, as the prophets of old, to teach others, to maintain the truth, to contend with errors and vices, to profess the name of Christ, to promote his kingdom, and to 'show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness

into his marvellous light', not to mention, that in the infancy of Christianity, many received the gift of prophecy. That they are also made kings and priests, Peter teaches us, (1 Pet 2:9, and John, Rev 1:6). Their priesthood consists in their being near to God, so that they can approach freely at any time; in their offering the sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, and devoted obedience; in their frequent attendance on the sanctuary and ordinances of God; and in their sacrificing the old man and its affections and lusts before God. They are also kings, seeing that God hath given them 'all things', (1 Cor 3:21,22). They are publicly inaugurated in baptism; they overcome the world; they subdue their sins, and the lusts of the flesh; they tread Satan under their feet; they possess the spiritual riches of the divine word and the divine grace; and they look forward in hope to a crown of glory.