

DIVINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

By Charles Mwewa

“For, there is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus,” (1 Timothy 2:5)

Page | 1

Introduction

In the barbaric earlier centuries, people resolved conflicts through barbaric means. The first mechanism known to humanity for conflict resolution was war. Thus, from the Bible (and even in the Quran), we find this method sanctioned and even promoted. During what is known as the renaissance, improvements in knowledge and human dignity, led to the prioritization of resolving conflicts by trials, also known as litigation. Recently, the world has embraced an ancient method, referenced in the Bible, as mediation. War is said to be power-based, litigation is right's based, but mediation is interest-based. Arguably, the best mechanism for resolving conflict is a sister-mechanism to mediation known as negotiation. However, for divine redemption, it was nearly impossible to arbitrate negotiation because humanity had no standing before God; man could not buy his way out of sin. God found a mediator through the human person of His Son, Jesus Christ. In this sermon, we consider three points: Mediation impossible without Christ; mediation implausible without a covenant; and mediation possible with a sinless human conciliator. The points will be discussed beginning with mediation implausible without a covenant, followed by the other points in their respective order before a conclusive application and a related prayer are made.

1. Mediation Implausible without a Covenant

It is grossly erroneous to think that human beings invented the “Rule of Law.” It was neither jurists nor politicians who introduced the Rule of Law to governance, God did. Isaiah had written long before Christ that God is a government, with all the three divisions of power in One person: “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”¹ In fact, this verse introduces four branches of government: Judiciary (“judge”); Legislature (“lawgiver”); Executive (“king”); and Commander-in-Chief (“it is he who will save us”). From the beginning, God intended to lead the Hebrew nation in this fashion, where only God was the government. But the Hebrew leaders rebelled and sought for a king just like all other nations: “So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.’”²

The mistake the Hebrew nation made was to choose a leader based on physical characteristics: “Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.”³ They went for a good-looking and tallest boy. And this has been the weakness of human judgment; it equates intelligence, power and skill to outward looks. But God had already warned the Hebrew nation:

This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of

¹ Isaiah 33:22

² 1 Samuel 8:4-5

³ 1 Samuel 9:2

fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day.⁴

These are the characteristics of a ruler who has no regard for man and who does not fear God or respect the law: He considers citizens his servants; he makes the citizens his shield (he leads from behind); he uses girls and women as his sex toys; he grabs the land and uses it for personal benefit; he imposes exorbitant taxes and tariffs in order to enrich himself and his family; he never listens to people, no matter how loud they cry. He is also corrupt, perverter of justice and acts like a demagogue: “They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.”⁵ And the reason humans make this mistake is because they do not look at the heart: “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”⁶ It takes discernment to elect a leader who will rule with justice, empathy and sound judgment. And God eventually chose David – young, unassuming and even despised – to become His own man after His heart.⁷

To govern, one needs a social contract with the people. In almost all civilized societies, that social contract is achieved via constitutions which mandate for free and fair elections. The people, thus, transact a contract with the elected or appointed leaders to rule on oath to the Constitution.

God, the quintessential jurist, does the same. Before He governs a people, He first enters into an agreement with them. This agreement is known as a covenant. The first covenant God had with the Hebrew nation was defective; it had been tainted by sin. God wanted to find a man (holy, blameless and sinless) to enter with him into a new covenant. But “for all [had] sinned and [fallen] short of the glory of God.”⁸ God had no other option, but to become such a Man. So, He “became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”⁹ And not only that, “He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”¹⁰ In this state, as Man (on behalf of men), God had finally found a Man with whom He could enter into a covenant.

That permanent agreement was covenanted through blood: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”¹¹ In this New Covenant, God on one side and us (through Christ) on the other, sin had permanently been dealt with. It restored the once *paradise lost*

⁴ See 1 Samuel 8, *supra*.

⁵ 1 Samuel 8:3

⁶ 1 Samuel 16:7

⁷ See 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22

⁸ Romans 3:23

⁹ John 1:14

¹⁰ Philippians 2:7

¹¹ Matthew 26:28

into a new Heaven gained. And as a human High Priest (who came in the order of Melchizedek),¹² Christ “did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”¹³ Our freedom (redemption) is completed; it is permanent.

Christ has achieved the impossible. First, there was no human who was sinless; Christ became one. Second, in one stroke, Christ became both the representative Man, and also the mediator to link God with men. Remember that even in our own legal traditions, there is no need for a mediator unless there is more than one party involved in a dispute. The Bible is clear on this, too: “A mediator is unnecessary, however, for only one party; but God is one.”¹⁴ Christ stands as a mediator for two parties – God and us.

2. Mediation Impossible without Christ

Christ plays a role not found in human mediation mechanisms. He is the only one who qualifies to mediator in this redemption story. In the English legal system, it is generally understood that one cannot be both a mediator and a witness in the same matter. The reason is because of avoiding conflict of interest and a reasonable apprehension of bias. A mediator by definition is a go-between, that is, an internunciator, or a reconciler. Total independence and impartiality are required for the mediation to have any pursuance.

However, Christ’s mediatorship has a special place. In legal mediation, the parties can choose a mediator together, or one party may choose a mediator. In case of where both parties mutually choose a mediator, both parties will bear the cost of mediation. In situations where only one party chooses a mediator, the party which chose the mediator will bear the cost of mediation. Some mediations are statutory, and in those situations, the law would have apportioned who would bear the cost burden. In some contractual mediation (akin to covenantal mediation), the terms of mediation would have been set in a contract.

A covenantal mediation is based on an exception to the rule. Because for a covenant to be binding, the stronger party must sign it under seal. In the divine mediation, God sponsored the mediation and accepted a payment through blood. Christ, is, therefore, able to both stand as mediator and witness but for different purposes. He is a mediator to the covenant. In other words, He mediates the covenant: ““Now, however, Jesus has received a much more excellent ministry, just as the covenant He mediates is better and is founded on better promises,”¹⁵ and “...to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”¹⁶

And Christ is the appointed arbiter of the New Covenant because of one quality earthly mediators do not possess; He died – thus, completed the process – and He rose again (resurrected) – thus, acquiring a new role altogether, that of a witness as well. And the extent of mediation is in this wise: “Therefore, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal

¹² See Hebrews 5:6

¹³ Hebrews 9:12

¹⁴ Galatians 3:20

¹⁵ Hebrews 8:6

¹⁶ Hebrews 12:24

inheritance, now that He has died to redeem them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”¹⁷

3. Mediation Possible with a Sinless Human Conciliator

In Christ, God achieved another fit, He reconciled us back to Him: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”¹⁸ Reconciliation is the process of re-uniting once enemies into becoming friends. And this is also akin to State-sponsored conciliation: It was God who sponsored the reconciliation process using the only one who could represent man, Christ. In that conciliation process, Christ has an added role, that of humanity’s advocate or lawyer: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”¹⁹ Remember that what initially separated us from God and made us His enemy, was sin. Christ dealt with sin in redemption and as a conciliator, “He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.”²⁰ In ancient times, God had lamented, “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.”²¹

But, thankfully, in the fullness of time, God found Christ, and we are the beneficiaries. Having redeemed us, God reconciled us back to Himself as friends: “For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”²² Reconciliation moved us from just being forgiven into being His friends.

Then God did another fit unimaginable; He adopted us (reconciled as friends) as sons: “For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence. In love He predestined us for adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the Beloved One.”²³

Redemption is key to our salvation. But it came with added benefits. First reconciliation and then adoption. “But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive our adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”²⁴ And with adoption, God has become our Father. And even more beneficial, now we have an inheritance through Christ: “We have also received an inheritance in Christ.”²⁵

¹⁷ Hebrews 9:15

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

¹⁹ 1 John 2:1

²⁰ Hebrews 7:25

²¹ Ezekiel 22:30

²² Romans 5:10

²³ Ephesians 1:5

²⁴ Galatians 4:5

²⁵ Ephesians 1:11

You see child of God; redemption was a legal act. Reconciliation is a political or social act. But adoption is a matter of the heart; it is love: “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”²⁶

Conclusion & Application

When you hear someone say, “It is all because of Jesus Christ,” it actually means just that. From redemption, to reconciliation, to adoption, it is all possible because of Christ. In redemption, sin is dealt with. In reconciliation, enmity is dealt with. And in adoption, we now have a Father. Of course, none of this happened perchance, God had predestined it to be so: “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”²⁷ In other words, we have inherited glory as God’s children: “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”²⁸ In Christ, our inheritance is sure – because Christ protects the proceeds of redemption by standing in three concurrent offices: As a mediator, witness and advocate. This fit cannot be achieved by anybody, except Him who first lived, second, died, and third, He lives again. Thank you, Jesus.

Related Prayer

How magnificent the wonder of this truth in excelsior?
To redemption, add adoption to make us even wealthier;
In glorious exhortations of Thy legendary effulgence;
Found in Thee, Abba, glorious is Thy gracious indulgence;
Words do fail me, Almighty Sir, Oh, gracious Creator;
And for Thee, Christ, my Lord, witness, and mediator;
Be all the beauty, the flowers, the confetti and flurries;
Be worshipped by all, Oh, Attorney of attorneys!

In the name of Jesus, our Lord,
Amen!

²⁶ 1 John 3:1

²⁷ Romans 8:30

²⁸ Romans 8:17