

Mediator vs. Petitioner

One of the most critical skills one can develop when studying Christian apologetics is the skill of listening. When we read, or listen to audio presentations from teachers such as John Martignoni, so much information is being presented that it's often hard to digest what's really being taught. When questioned about Jesus, Martignoni often assumes a position that he takes for granted, and it's easy to ride along with him, not noticing what has taken place. This often sets the tone for the rest of the answer John gives, and it often leads to disaster as we try to grow closer to God.

Take Martignoni's response to a question regarding Jesus being our sole Mediator with God found in his "two-minute" apologetics teachings. Most Catholics take praying to Mary and the Saints for intercession for granted. But the Bible tells us that there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5.) This seems to create a conflict. How can it be okay to pray to Mary for intercession when the Bible says only Jesus can intercede for us? The answer is that there is indeed a conflict between what the Catholic Church teaches on this subject, and what the Bible teaches us, and it's not okay. It's a very serious matter to directly oppose a plain teaching of the Scriptures. There's a problem that needs to be resolved.

Martignoni claims that in the Old Testament, we see Moses, Abraham, and Job intercede on the behalf of others. He says:

"We know that it is okay to ask others here on earth to pray and intercede for us....that's mediating between God and man."

But is it? Is praying for someone the same thing as interceding, and acting as a mediator?

Years ago, I worked in the legal system for a family court Judge. The vast majority of cases that came into the courtroom were directed to a mediator, because it was better to have a mediator get involved to help solve the problems presented by the parties, than to litigate the divorce in front of the Judge, which could be time consuming and expensive. The mediator acted as an intermediary between the parties to bring about an agreement, or reconciliation if possible. The role of the mediator was greater than the role of the attorneys, but not as great as the role of the Judge. The attorneys involved presented a “petition” to the court in order to get the case filed, and set before the Judge, who usually assigned a mediator to the parties. Moses, Abraham, and Job would be more analogous to the attorneys in the family court, than to the mediator, as they prayed, or “petitioned” God. Those who petitioned the court (the attorneys) had no power to fix, or reconcile, the issues between the parties – they had no authority to mediate. They could not effect, or enforce a binding reconciliation, and they understood their role. What's more, as long as the mediator was in the case and the case was in the mediation mode, the attorneys were not engaged.

This is what we're talking about when we say the Scriptures claim that Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and man. This is because only Jesus has the position, and the power to reconcile God and man—a position He alone earned on the cross. None of the Saints, nor Mary, nor you and I, by way of praying for others, has any power at all to mediate. Martignoni states:

“There is only one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, but as members of the Body of Christ He allows us to share in His mediation.”

I ask: where does Martignoni get this? Where do we see in the Scripture above (or anywhere else in the Bible for that matter) that says that we are given any allowance to share in that mediation? If the Catholic Church says this, then where does it get the authority to stand against the Bible Scriptures? Asking through prayer does not accomplish the work that needs to

be done to reconcile us to God.

Contrary to Martignoni, Mary has no power to reconcile us to God, as is stated in 1 Tim 2:5. Keep in mind that the best way to interpret a Scripture as clear as 1st Timothy is to take it for what it says. Don't add anything to it. There's no "yeah, but..." in it. It simply says that Jesus alone is our Mediator—end of story. To claim otherwise is reading into the text something that is simply not there, and can put us at odds with what's written. We see Martignoni struggling in vain to make the passage fit the Catholic world view, but he fails.

To make his case, Martignoni goes on to make the points that we see in Scripture we have only one foundation, Jesus Christ, and we then see elsewhere in Scripture that there is more than one foundation (1Cor. 3:11 – Eph 2:19-20). He says we see in Scripture where we have only one Lord, Jesus Christ, but Scripture then tells us there is more than one lord (Eph 4:4-5 – Rev 19:16), and that we have only one Judge, but then says we have more than one judge (James 4:12 – 1 Cor. 6:2.) I would stress here that Martignoni himself is careful to use a capital "L" for Lord in the first part, and then a lower case "l" in the second, denoting differences. Same with the word "judge." This would indicate that even he realizes that the Scriptures he references are distinguishing between two different titles, and have two different meanings. They're not speaking about the same thing. I would suggest the reader research those scriptures. It will show how John is "cherry-picking", and even misleading by omission to prove a point. He grazes over the passages without fully fleshing out their meaning. This almost always leads to confusion, and misunderstanding. Martignoni claims the above Scriptures don't contradict themselves, and I agree, but not for the same reason. I think they are in harmony because they are not addressing the same point in each passage. He believes they don't contradict each other because we are somehow allowed to participate as mediator with Jesus. His interpretation however brings us into conflict with other passages of the Bible such as 1 Tim 2:5 – so he can't be correct. There are no true contradictions in Scripture.

If Martignoni can support his claim that we are allowed to “share” in the mediation between God and man, then I’d like to see it. It won’t come from the Bible. It may come straight from Catholic teaching, but if that’s all he has, maybe rethinking the word “Bible” in his ministry title is in order. Martignoni’s claim that the Catholic Church has the ‘fullness of the faith’ because it combines both the Bible and tradition fails, because if he can’t produce anything other than Catholic teaching regarding his claim that we share in Christ’s mediation, his argument is without Scriptural foundation, and crumbles as we find disharmony between the Catholic Church and the Bible.

It’s my belief that many Catholics, including John, get caught up in the belief that Mary somehow “offered” Jesus on the cross to the Father, and is therefore qualified to offer her son. However, we see in Hebrews that Mary did not offer Jesus to God, but Jesus offered Himself to God. We read in Hebrews that Christ “...offered Himself without blemish to God (Heb 9:14). Again, John’s apologetic is, of course, steeped in Catholic doctrine, so sometimes the Scriptures may not be clear to him and this comes out in his teachings.

It must be stressed that this is not a matter of simply not being able to find something here or there. It’s a matter of direct disagreement. Either the Bible is correct with regard to our mediator and who can intercede for us, or the Catholic Church is. They can’t both be right. This is a grave issue, because the answer to this question will lead a person one way or the other. If you believe there can be other mediators between God and man, contrary to 1 Tim 2:5, then you’re at odds with the Bible, just as Martignoni is. If that’s so, then the Catholic Church’s position that both the Bible and the Catholic Church have truth is in error. I urge you to dig deeply into the Scriptures to find the truth. If what I say is correct, you need to find that out. Your understanding of the true character of God is at stake, because the misunderstanding of His Word can lead you away from Him, and away from a true and fulfilling relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ.