

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

“Neptune” next were discovered not directly but by inference. Thus may not integral parts of the spiritual “system” of which the Sun of our being is the centre, be but waiting for discernment on the field of revelation by inference? Whole worlds of truth are hidden in the depths of the Living Word, ready for the patient and faithful enquirer, who uses fearlessly because trustfully and honestly the instruments which God Himself has given him and as Light shall enable him to apply. Again, as Light also He is our Father.

We too, in virtue of our childship, *in the name of the Son*, must be whatever light as well as whatever heat is; “a burning and a shining lamp” shall each one be, in whom is stored up the beams of the Sun of all Suns, to flash forth at the kindling touch of the Holy Spirit, to radiate truth and shrivel falsehood everywhere.

V. W.-G.

---

### BREVIA.

**Galatians iii. 20.**—I desire to be allowed briefly to supplement the admirable *précis* of the argument of the Epistle to the Galatians, so clearly traced by Professor Godet in the April number of the EXPOSITOR for 1885, with a note on the much contested passage, Galatians iii. 20. None of the manifold interpretations hitherto proposed of this passage (reckoned by Dr. Jowett 420), has succeeded in gaining general assent. The cause of the failure would seem to be the mistaken rendering of  $\delta$  μεσίτης by “a mediator,” in the generic sense of any, or every mediator, instead of “the mediator,” in the special case of “the law” which had just been mentioned (ver. 19), namely Moses.

The translation “a mediator,”<sup>1</sup> which seems now to pass

<sup>1</sup> Even in a grammatical point of view, the propriety of the present rendering is very questionable. If St. Paul meant to predicate something respecting a mediator in the generic sense, why should he render his meaning ambiguous by inserting the article when (especially as following close upon *ἐν χειρὶ μεστρου*) the natural and unequivocal expression would be *μεστρης δέ*, without the article? Such is the usual practice in the case of resumption of a term used in the preceding sentence or clause; e.g. *ἀμαρτία δέ*, Rom. v. 13; *διαθήκη γάρ*, Heb. ix. 17; and even where the article has immediately preceded, as, *ἐλπὶς δέ*, Rom. viii. 24, though preceded by *τῆ γὰρ ἐλπίδι*; *ἀμαρτία γάρ*, Rom. vi. 14, though referring to *τῆ ἀμαρτία* in ver. 13. No example of the opposite usage has yet been cited.

unquestioned on all hands is, we submit, entirely subversive of the Apostle's argument. The proposition with which he starts is, that God had made a covenant with Abraham in which *all nations* of the earth were interested (ver. 8), so that "on the *Gentiles* might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus" (ver. 14). This "covenant, which was confirmed before of God, the law which was given four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (ver. 17). Consequently the law was a mere interpolated dispensation, appointed for a temporary purpose, and which must disappear as soon as the time of the fulfilment of God's "promise" and previous "covenant" (for both terms are applied to the blessings of Abraham, see verses 14 and 15) had arrived. The implied answer of the Jew to this objection evidently is that the law was the fulfilment of this "promise" (*a*), and "covenant" (*b*), and therefore was of permanent and universal obligation; circumcision and observance of all the ordinances of the law being the indispensable means of admittance for strangers to the privileges of the Jew. To each of these pleas the Apostle replies.

To the first (*a*), regarding God's words to Abraham as a "promise," he replies in ver. 18, that law and promise are, in one respect, directly opposed. Law requires obedience to its injunctions—a condition in the case of God's moral law impossible of performance; whereas the promise is gratuitous, and unfettered by conditions other than the simple acceptance by faith.

As to the second (*b*), regarding God's words to Abraham as a "covenant," in reply to what the Jew would object, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" (ver. 19), St. Paul answers: The law, as a covenant with the Jewish people, had a very important function to perform—to convince men of "transgressions," and the awful power of sin, and so prepare for the acceptance of the promised salvation when it came; but he concedes in part to the Jew his plea (ver. 19, latter clause). True, the law has some of the characteristics which might seem to point it out as the fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham. It is a covenant inaugurated with great solemnity, "through angels, and by the hand of a mediator." To this plea St. Paul's reply is *ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ Θεὸς εἰς ἑστί.* "But *the* mediator [in the case of the law] is not [a mediator] of ONE ["seed," including "all nations"], but God is ONE," which reminds us of the analogous expression in the kindred

Epistle to the Romans, iii. 30, εἴπερ εἰς ὁ Θεός, "if so be that God is ONE," of Jew and Gentile. If this reply, as is generally assumed, depends on "the *generic* idea of a mediator," that is, on some quality common to every mediator, the gospel is equally excluded with the law from being the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham.

It would indeed be "a paradox (as Dr. Jowett remarks) to place the superiority of the gospel over the law, in the fact that the law had a mediator, and the gospel had not"! How reconcile this with St. Paul's statement in 1 Tim. ii. 5, where in treating on the very same subject, *the relation of the Gentiles to the gospel-covenant*, he adduces as an argument for the equal title of *all* men to its blessings, "For there is ONE God, and ONE Mediator between God and men"? We confess our difficulty in accepting any interpretation of the passage in Galatians, which so far from helping us to see the connexion between the two statements makes the one contradictory of the other.

The key, which we believe will be found to unlock all the intricacies of this passage, and which lets in a flood of light on this and many other statements of Holy Writ, is the word "ONE," which meets us at the beginning, the middle, and the close.

Verse 16. "ONE" is the "*seed*" of Abraham, to whom the promise was made, including "*all nations.*" "In thee shall *all the nations* be blessed" (ver. 8), was the proposition with which St. Paul started, to prove that "the blessing of Abraham was to come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (ver. 14).

Verses 28, 29, at the close evidently revert to the opening statements at the beginning, "Ye are *all ONE* in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise."

In verse 20, therefore, the ONE-ness in the centre, must, it would appear, refer to the same UNITY. When in the intermediate argument (between the proposition and the conclusion), designed to refute the plea of the Jews (that their covenant was the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham), St. Paul insists on the non-UNITY, or want of ONE-ness connected with a mediator, the presumption is strong that it is to *the Mosaic covenant and its mediator* that he is denying the ONE-ness, which he claims to be fulfilled in the Christian covenant and its mediator.

The steps of the argument will thus be:—

I. Verse 16. ONE is the "seed" of Abraham, to whom the covenanted "blessing" which extends to "all the nations" is promised.

II. Verse 20. The mediator must be a "mediator of ONE" [seed] embracing all, and making all ONE, which Moses is not; but God is ONE," embracing all Jews and Gentiles, "which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith" (cf. Rom. iii. 30).

III. Verses 28, 29. But "ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus," and therefore "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Professor Godet has correctly shown that St. Paul, in the argument which he founds on the singular "seed," not "seeds," being employed in the promises given to Abraham, so far from being ignorant of the collective sense usually attached to the Hebrew term "seed" as denoting posterity, "knows and applies the collective sense" in the case in question. "The opposition which he brings out in the verses before us is not between the Christ as an individual and the multitudes of the Jewish people, but between the *spiritual seed* of faith, which alone is heir to the promises, and other lines of Abraham's descendants of an altogether different character, especially that to which his adversaries referred, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, *i.e.* the Jewish people as such. God, in making His promise to Abraham, had not contemplated for one moment two seeds different, but both equally legitimate, the one by faith the other by the flesh, two hostile families of justified and saved ones. He had ever contemplated but one seed, the characteristic of which is the ever fresh reproduction of the faith of Abraham, and which is all virtually contained in Christ, who is the Head of which it is the body (chap. iii. 15-18)."

But important as it is to understand the sense in which St. Paul regards the term "seed" in the passage before us (strange to say, still a cause of stumbling to some critics), yet it is not on the higher and spiritual sense of "seed" that the Apostle aims to concentrate the attention of his readers, but on the new and higher signification of the term "ONE" connected with "seed"—of a spiritual ONENESS or UNITY including plurality and in which many might partake—and which was first clearly brought out by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In the Old Testament the word seems scarcely to have got beyond the idea of a mere numerical unity. "Hear, O

Israel: The Lord our God is ONE Lord" (Deut. vi. 4), is a protest against polytheism—that ONE only has a right to the title of Godhead, in opposition to the "gods many and lords many" whom the nations around worshipped, and who having forsaken the ONE God and Father of all, lost all true sense of their brotherhood and unity, and became estranged both from Him and from each other. To Christ Himself we owe the conception of a higher UNITY or ONENESS in which a Plurality can partake. He revealed what is the great stumbling block to the Jew and Unitarian, that the UNITY which exists in the Godhead is not a numerical unity, for He ever distinguishes in the most marked manner between Himself and His Father as being two distinct persons (as He does at other times with respect to the Holy Spirit, John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 13); yet in the higher sense of unity He declares Himself to be altogether ONE with the Father. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner" (John v. 19). "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John xiv. 11). "I and the Father are ONE" (John x. 30, *ἐν ἑαυτῷ*). But it is especially in His High-Priestly prayer for His Church, that He brings out with remarkable fulness the spiritual, all-embracing unity that He came to reveal and realize between all the members of His body, and Himself and His Father, "Holy Father, keep them in My name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be ONE, even as we are" (John xvii. 11). "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be ONE, even as we are ONE; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into ONE" (ver. 22, 23).

This idea of unity in the higher and spiritual sense was eagerly caught up by the Apostle to the Gentiles, and repeatedly insisted upon in all different forms as characteristic of Christ's mission and work, as concentrating *all* in one; *e.g.* "We who are many are ONE bread, ONE body; for we *all* partake of the ONE bread" (1 Cor. x. 17). "There is ONE body, and ONE spirit, even as also ye were called in ONE hope of your calling; ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God and Father of *all*, who is over *all*, and through *all*, and in *all*" (Eph. iv. 4-6). The great purpose for which God sent His Son into the world He represents to be that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in ONE *all* things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which

are on earth" (Eph. i. 10). As there is but ONE God for all, so he considers that there can be but ONE mediator for all. In exhorting that prayers and intercessions be made for all men, he assigns as a reason that God "willeth that all men should be saved"—"For there is ONE God, ONE mediator also between God and men, Himself man" [as well as God, and therefore can mediate perfectly between them] (1 Tim. ii. 4, 5). As God is ONE, universal, *all-embracing*, so must the mediator be ONE, universal, *all-embracing*, a "mediator of ONE" [seed] including all, and not as was Moses. This evidently was the leading idea in the Apostle's mind in Gal. iii. 20. Moses was but a partial mediator. He was not a mediator of a perfectly united body, which it was God's purpose, as indicated beforehand to Abraham, to unite in ONE in Christ, the true universal mediator. Understood in this light the passage in question forms a very relevant step in the Apostle's argument.<sup>1</sup>

This idea of an *all-including Unity*, in which many can partake, seems to mould the whole course of the Apostle's argument in Gal. iii. 7-29. This is the view which he takes of the "promises" made to Abraham. Superficially regarded in their literal meaning, the first of the promises, "*In thee* shall all the nations be blessed" (ver. 8), might be held to be sufficiently fulfilled *in Abraham*, as being the progenitor of the Jewish people to whom we owe the transmission of God's Holy Scriptures, and deliverance from the abominations of idolatry, a lesson which it cost them so severe and long-continued chastisements to learn—while the second promise, "*In thy seed* shall all be blessed" might seem little more than a repetition of the first, or be held to be sufficiently fulfilled in Christ's being the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, from whose birth we date the era of a renovated world. But the Apostle teaches us to see a much deeper and more intimate relation as designed by the expression "*in thee*" of the first promise, by explaining it to mean, *In thee* as their spiritual father, *in whom all* believers are contained, and *with whom* they must be ONE in faith, shall all be blessed. "So then they which be of faith are blessed *with faithful Abraham*" (ver. 9). A like union *with*, and inclusion *in Christ*, it would seem therefore, he intends us to understand in the second promise, "*In thy seed* shall all the nations bless themselves."<sup>2</sup> To partake of the blessing,

<sup>1</sup> I use the words of a friend to whom my view was shown.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller view of the distinction between the first and second promise, let me refer to an article in vol. viii. second series, p. 200.

they must be ONE *with*, and find their unity *in* ONE second Head of Humanity, in whom and in His blessing, all the race can be included, as all were included in the first Adam, and in his curse.

Now Moses, the mediator of the Jewish covenant, is not such a "mediator of ONE," uniting all into ONE, making all ONE seed, ONE body, ONE mind and spirit—ONE with God, ONE with each other.

But Christ is exactly such a mediator. He is the ONE seed in whom all find their unity. In Him God and man are made ONE, for He is both in ONE person. In Him all men and nations, the most diverse, have become ONE, being all "by ONE spirit baptized into ONE body" (1 Cor. xii. 13), according to the good pleasure of Him who purposed "that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, He would gather together in ONE all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10).

Christ, as mediator, is a "mediator of ONE" in the fullest sense as making all ONE. "God," the author of the promise, "is ONE" God of all, Jews and Gentiles (comp. Rom. iii. 30).

"Ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus" (ver. 28), being all "baptized into Christ," having "put on Christ" (ver. 27). "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (ver. 29).

*University of Aberdeen.*

JOHN FORBES.

**Secret History of St. Paul.**—The classical passage (Gal. i. 17) which must always be the touchstone to try all theories of the apostolic age, is a reply to a series of mis-statements and innuendoes which the Galatians had before them and we have not. This is especially important with regard to the strange elliptical verses (ii. 3, 4) on the circumcision of Titus. The Galatians did not need to be told—as do we—whether Titus was circumcised or not. Supposing that he was circumcised—though there ought to have been no need of it—because of false brethren, an author writing for posterity would have been careful to make it clear that he denied the necessity, not the fact, but an author writing for contemporaries who knew the facts as well as he did, might write what might be paraphrased as follows:—

"As for Titus, the story that he had to be circumcised (though I may try now to make out that it was only a temporary concession) is false like the rest, like the insinuation that I learnt