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GALATIANS 3:19-20: ΜΕΣΙΤΗΣ AND THE MEDIATOR OF THE *PACTUM SALUTIS*

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GALATIANS 3:19-20: ΜΕΣΙΤΗΣ AND THE MEDIATOR OF THE *PACTUM SALUTIS*

The book of Galatians serves a dual purpose, as (1) a polemic against false teachers who sought to pervert the church in Galatia, as well as (2) a boon for those churches to not embrace false teaching and to remind them of the gospel he first preached. Galatians 3:19-20 comes toward the beginning of Paul's admonition of his readers (after introductory remarks in chapter one and a defense of his apostolic authority in chapter two).

Within these two verses Paul gives an answer to the perennial question, “why was the law given?” His answer, τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, is followed by a curious statement on the seed of Abraham and the perplexing clause, διαταγεῖς δι’ ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου (“ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator”). Verse 20, which follows immediately after this reference to the mediator, seems on the surface to be Paul's elaboration or clarification on the mediator, describing something about him, before he declaims God's unity.

Seemingly in an attempt to strip Gal 3:20, and by extension Paul's larger argument, of most of its theological significance, biblical scholars have removed any theological notions that may be inherent in it, save of course Paul's exuberant monotheism and seemingly spontaneous Judaic ritualism by acknowledging his statement, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἰς ἐστιν, as a reference to the Shema.¹ Rather than seeing that the Apostle had a rhetorical reason, firmly built upon the context of his argument in Galatians 3, for proclaiming the unity of the Godhead, many commentators

¹ Scholars, both conservative and liberal, are divided over what exactly to make of Galatians 3:20. That Paul's statement in 20b is a reference to the Shema, however, is not an issue that divides them. Thomas R. Schreiner (*Galatians*, ECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010]) and James D.G. Dunn (*The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentary 9 [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993]) who agree on little when it comes to interpreting Paul, especially his use of the law, both see ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἰς ἐστιν as a reiteration of the Shema. Paul's reference to the unity of God here is sometimes held up by scholars as a proof-text of sorts to show that Paul was indeed “an uncompromising monotheist” (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993], 401). While there is little doubt that this is part of Paul's purpose, it can hardly be the only one based on the argument he makes in the context leading up to the verse.

see this as a random, tangential outburst, “merely a rabbinic genuflection on his part,”² and yet another reminder to the churches that God is one, and therefore has one plan of salvation.³ While v. 20 is certainly instructive in bringing forth an understanding of Paul’s Theology Proper, we must mine beneath the surface to extract the Christological gold laying within it.

In order to faithfully exegete this verse, and to understand the argument the Apostle Paul delivers in Gal 3:19-20, the context within which these verses are located must be established. Galatians is a book-long defense of Paul’s apostleship and therefore his divine authority to proclaim God’s message and the gospel of Jesus Christ. His goal is to remind the Galatian churches of the Gospel he preached to them when he founded their churches, and to keep them from abandoning the true gospel and embracing a different, false gospel. This study, after briefly examining the context of Galatians 3, will then turn to the two verses under consideration, analyzing the structure of Paul’s argument in vv. 19-20. Once this analysis is complete, we will look specifically at Paul’s two uses of the noun μεσίτης, as much of the debate among scholars on these verses rests on Paul’s two uses of μεσίτης, or mediator. Verse 20 in particular has lead commentators to ask a multitude of different questions. Who is the μεσίτης? Moses? Jesus? Does it matter? Should we give up and admit, along with Wallace, that Paul’s argument is complex, that “more than likely, it is a subtle argument which has been lost to us”?⁴

² Daniel B. Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20: A *Crux Interpretum* for Paul’s View of the Law,” *WTJ* 52 (1990): 244. This is not Wallace’s view, but one he sees in many commentators.

³ Arguments proposing that Paul’s comment on God’s unity points to the unity that the church must now have with one another remain unconvincing. Schreiner’s comments on this verse are indicative of this line of thinking: “The declaration that ‘God is one’ recalls one of the fundamental tenets of Judaism, found in the Shema of Deut 6:4... It is intriguing that both in Romans and here in Galatians the oneness of God is introduced where Paul defends the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God apart from the law. Since there is one God, there is one way of salvation” (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 243). F.F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982], 179), and Douglas J. Moo (*Galatians*, ECNT [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013], 237) also follow this line of reasoning.

⁴ Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20,” 244. Similarly, Moo is despondent, asserting that “unfortunately, the argument he intends to make is unclear and perhaps not even recoverable” (Moo, *Galatians*, 235).

Like many passages of Scripture, we must probe beneath the surface to find the author's intended meaning, which means that we must follow hermeneutical guidelines, such as one proposed by the Westminster Divines in the Westminster Confession of Faith: unclear passages of Scripture are to be interpreted in light of the clear ones.⁵ We cannot exegete Scripture in a vacuum, and we cannot divorce our hermeneutical method and subsequent exegesis from their theological underpinnings. We cannot set our theology to the side in order to faithfully exegete a verse, nor can we do the inverse, and read our idiosyncratic theological biases into every verse.⁶

While Paul's references to the law in Gal 3:19-20 are essential to understanding his view of the Old Testament law and God's ways of interacting with his people within the previous administration of the one covenant of grace, it is his reference to the "mediator" which will take up the final part of this study. It is to this μεσίτης, and especially the reference to him found in verse 20, that our study will turn after discussing Paul's argument throughout Galatians 3, and especially how that argument weighs upon vv. 19-20. The variegated interpretations of verse 20 leave many questions unanswered. Over against much of the scholarly discussion given to verse 20, the μεσίτης Paul mentions is not Moses, angels, or some other merely creaturely mediator, but is in fact the very Son of God, Jesus Christ. Christ's mediatorial role is highlighted in other portions of Scripture, particularly in reference to his High Priestly office throughout the book of Hebrews, and is essential for understanding the present work of Christ. Though Paul only uses

⁵ WCF 1.9 reads, "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."

⁶ Schreiner's warning should not go unheeded. Arguing against Baugh's interpretation of Galatians 3:20, he writes, "we must beware of reading our theology into a text" (*Galatians*, 241 n17). While eisegesis is a perennial concern for the theologian, the burden of proof is on Schreiner to show where Baugh's interpretation of this verse errs, and to prove that eisegesis is in fact what he does. Also, it seems as though this is an a-historical tenet of hermeneutics, as from the time of the Reformation onward theologians have noted the fact that theology should (and indeed does, whether the interpreter intends it or not!) most certainly guide interpretation.

the word μεσίτης once more in his corpus of letters (1 Tim 2:5),⁷ his use here shows his understanding of Christ’s mediatorial role, and gives exegetical proof for a major tenet of Reformed Covenant Theology: the pretemporal, intratrinitarian covenant known as the *pactum salutis* or Covenant of Redemption. Paul’s use of μεσίτης points to Christ’s mediatorial role, and helps ground the exegetical roots of the *pactum salutis*.

Logical Progression of Galatians 3:19-20

19 Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;
 τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη,
 ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα
 ὃ ἐπήγγελται,
 διαταγεὶς δι’ ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου.

20 ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν,
 ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἰς ἔστιν.

An exegesis of the full argument of Galatians, even that of just chapter three, falls outside the scope of the current study; therefore, an overview must suffice. All throughout the letter to the Galatians Paul is concerned to communicate the gospel clearly; in doing so he is quick to remind his readers of the gospel of Jesus Christ which he preached to them. Due to the influence of agitators known as the Judaizers, the Galatian Christians were in danger of abandoning the truth for “a different gospel,” as he says in 1:6. Due to explicit statements and identifying markers within the text of Galatians, it is plain that “Paul writes Galatians to combat people who

⁷ Though “most scholars in the critical/liberal world believe Paul only wrote seven letters,” and 1 Timothy is one touted as “Deutero-Pauline,” there is little reason to abandon Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy (Robert J. Cara, *Cracking the Foundation of the New Perspective On Paul: Covenantal Nomism Versus Reformed Covenantal Theology*, Reformed Exegetical Doctrinal Studies Series [Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2017], 128.). For more on scholars critical of Paul’s authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, see Cara, *Cracking the Foundation*, 155 n85.

are pressuring the Galatians to undergo circumcision and submit to the law of Moses as a means of completing their Christian experience.”⁸

These agitators make it necessary for Paul to reiterate the basic truths of the gospel, as he is uncertain whether or not the Galatians actually understood it properly the first time. After giving a defense of his apostleship, Paul begins chapter 3 by chastising the Galatians and reminding them that they are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not by works of the law. It is through Jesus Christ that man is saved, for he bore God’s curse by becoming a curse (v. 13). This is “Gospel 101,” and Paul goes to great lengths to be straightforward and simple.⁹

The next section of chapter 3, vv. 15-22, highlight Paul’s continued insistence that “(1) obedience to the law is in no way a necessary requirement for justification, either in the present or in the future; and that (2) the law should not be required of Gentiles.”¹⁰ This, while being the main thrust of the letter, is of particular interest to Paul here, and this section of chapter three contains the verses presently under consideration.

Verses 15-18 build upon the argument showing, by way of example, that seeing as how no one can change or annul a human covenant, there is nothing that can void the promises of God. Indeed, not even the law of God can nullify the promises that God made to Abraham through his covenant.

Paul continues his line of argumentation from the previous verse by asking a question that serves as a transition to a different aspect of the topic he is considering: Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος?

⁸ Moo, *Galatians*, 19. For an overview of Paul’s opponents and their influence on his letter see Moo’s introduction, especially “Occasion and Purpose,” 19-31.

⁹ An example of the simplicity of Paul’s arguments here is seen in the discussion questions at the back of Derek Thomas’s *Let’s Study Galatians* Bible study guide. The questions that correspond to Thomas’s commentary on Galatians 3:1-14 are ones such as, “define... redemption, penal substitution, and satisfaction. Discuss how each of these truths are vital for a biblical understanding of the gospel” (Derek Thomas, *Let’s Study Galatians* (Let’s Study Series), rev ed. [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015], 176).

¹⁰ Moo, *Galatians*, 224.

Paul's use of the Greek phrase τί οὖν immediately raises the issue as to "whether we should translate τί οὖν as 'Why then' or as 'What then.'"¹¹ This is a question all exegetes must ask, as it has implications for interpreting the rest of the verse. Wallace's argument to take τί adverbially, and thus render the question "why then the law?" is convincing, and this is the interpretation most commentators favor.¹²

The answer to Paul's rhetorical question is rather hasty, but clear and succinct nonetheless. The law "was added on account of transgressions."¹³ Much has been made in recent years of Paul's attitude toward and use of the Old Testament law. The so-called New Perspective on Paul, and the whirlwind of debate that has risen in its wake, has sought to redefine Paul's stance toward the law.¹⁴

It is interesting to note Paul's use of παράβασις ("transgression") here rather than the more common ἀμαρτία ("sin").¹⁵ Indeed, "Paul uses 'transgression' in key places with a meaning distinguishable from 'sin' in that transgression is the violation of a published and sanctioned law

¹¹ Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 253.

¹² Wallace's arguments for this interpretation are in Wallace, "Galatians 3:19-20," 231-3. Witherington (*Grace in Galatia*, 253) and Moo (*Galatians*, 232) both draw on Wallace to assert the adverbial use of τί and Witherington notes that "the οὖν is retrospective, which tells us that the question being raised is raised because of what has been said in the first argument. It is fair to say that the first argument did not raise questions so much about the nature or essence of the Law, but rather what *purpose* it could possible have if one gets promise, Spirit, inheritance through faith in Christ and not by works of the Law" (Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 253, emphasis original). Therefore, the immediately preceding context clues the reader in to the fact that Paul is attempting to elucidate the reason God gave the law in the first place.

¹³ Author's literal, wooden translation

¹⁴ Unfortunately, a proper explanation of and interaction with the New Perspective on Paul falls outside the parameters of the current study. For more on the topic see Cara, *Cracking the Foundation; Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Response*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004); Stephen Westerholm, *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013). While these are certainly not the only works produced in response to the New Perspective on Paul, they, and the bibliographies contained within them, will aid the curious reader in understanding much of the debate and what is at stake in it.

¹⁵ A BibleWorks lemma search on both words shows that Paul only uses παράβασις five times throughout his letters (three times in Romans, once in 1 Timothy, and once here in Galatians), while he uses ἀμαρτία in 53 verses (and in some of those verses he uses it more than once).

code which imposes an obligation for obedience on the subjects.”¹⁶ Transgressions are only such when a law is in effect, which means that the law is in place to drive sinners toward their Savior.¹⁷ Witherington helpfully notes that “the Law makes quite clear that every sin is a sin against God,” and that it “turns sin... into transgression.”¹⁸ This is what has been known as the second use of the law, which “is designed to show us our sin and required penalty, and thereby it drives us to the need of Christ for our sinful state.”¹⁹ Therefore the law was given to show God’s people how much they needed a Savior, to show that they could not attain salvation on their own but needed divine intervention. But the law, added to show forth the peoples’ transgressions, was not in effect forever. No, it was only in place “until the promised seed” arrived.²⁰

Again, the reader is left with many questions: Who is this seed (or is it seeds)? When was he (they?) promised? Promised by whom? By looking at the context and grammar of 3:19, many of these questions can be easily answered. Paul’s use of *tō σπέρμα* ties back to his previous use of *σπέρμα* in this passage, in 3:16. There he says, at the end of his argument, *καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου, ὃς ἐστιν Χριστός* (“and to your seed, who is Christ”). The singular construction here leads Paul to clarify a point about God’s promise to Abraham: he did not promise him

¹⁶ S.M. Baugh, “Galatians 3: 20 and the Covenant of Redemption,” *WTJ* 66 (2004): 62.

¹⁷ There are odd textual variants that appear in a small number of manuscripts in v. 19. These “idiosyncratic readings” change *vόμος*; *τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη* to say, “It was established on account of traditions,” or “Why then the law of actions? It was established until...” or “Why then the law of actions?” These variants notwithstanding, the agreed upon reading, found in the UBS⁵ and the NA²⁸ “is strongly supported” by most reliable manuscripts (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London, New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], 525).

¹⁸ Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 256.

¹⁹ Cara, *Cracking the Foundation*, 48.

²⁰ In his intermediate Greek grammar, Wallace notes that “the subjunctive is frequently used after a *temporal adverb*... meaning *until*,” and that when this structure is in place, “it indicates a future contingency from the perspective of the time of the main verb.” This construction is found in this verse, as *ἔλθῃ* is an aorist active subjunctive and *ἄχρις* (“until”) begins the clause. These markers indicate that this construction is what Wallace classifies as the “Subjunctive in Indefinite Temporal Clause” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 479, emphasis his).

“seeds” but “a seed,” and that seed is in fact Christ himself. Because of this, Paul’s use of σπέρμα in v. 19 can only have one referrant, Jesus Christ. He is the seed who “had been promised.”²¹

The last clause of v. 19 is where we first encounter the word under consideration: διαταγεῖς δι’ ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου. Wallace shows that the aorist passive participle διαταγεῖς and the δια plus the genitive which follows, indicate that this construction is a passive of intermediate agency. This means that “the subject of a passive verb receives the action that is expressed by δια + genitive.”²² The subject of this clause, ὁ νόμος, is then that which was ordained through angels.²³ The curious phrase ἐν χειρὶ (lit. “in the hand”) is “a Hebraism meaning by means of.”²⁴ This law is given by the hand of the mediator.

This leads Paul to the vexing v. 20, where he declares that while the mediator is not “of one,”²⁵ God is one.²⁶ Many interpreters follow the line summarized in BDAG, claiming that the verse, “probably means that the activity of an intermediary implies the existence of more than one party, and hence may be unsatisfactory because it must result in a compromise.”²⁷ As will be

²¹ The perfect passive construction of ἐπαγγέλλομαι indicates that this seed was promised in the past, but that his “being promised” has present implications. This is because “the aspect of the perfect is stative: it describes a state/condition rather than an action,” and it is “a situation described with no reference to change or expenditure of energy” (Rodney J. Decker, *Reading Koine Greek: An Introduction and Integrated Workbook* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014], 329). Reference to the promised seed has obvious connections to God’s promise to Abraham, reiterated in 3:15-18.

²² Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 432.

²³ For more on the law coming through angels, see the interesting discussion in Andrew J. Bandstra, “The Law and Angels: *Antiquities* 15.136 and Galatians 3:19,” *CTJ* 24 (1989): 223-40.

²⁴ Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 257. The phrase is found a few times in the OT to indicate agency.

²⁵ So goes a literal rendering of the genitive ἐνός.

²⁶ See the discussion above for much of the scholarly consensus on the meaning of this phrase.

²⁷ BDAG, 634.

shown, the context does not allow for this interpretation of μεσίτης.²⁸

Paul's Use of μεσίτης in Galatians 3:19-20

What then is the meaning of Galatians 3:20? Many commentators have taken up this question because the verse is perplexing, and on first glance does not appear to fit within the context of Paul's argument. To give just one articulation which summarizes much of the scholarly consensus on the intended meaning of v. 20, "Paul's point was this: the promise to Abraham came directly from God, not through angels, nor by means of a merely human mediator such as Moses."²⁹ Following this interpretive line then, Paul claims that the promise made to Abraham was better than the law because the promise came directly from God whereas the law came through angels and a mediator. While this point may be true, can it be exegetically derived from the verse under consideration? Indeed, any interpreter must, "figure out how Paul's claim that 'God is one' functions in relationship to the first half of the verse."³⁰ However, before looking at the second half of the verse, we must give consideration to the first half and answer the question: who is the μεσίτης?

Paul's use of μεσίτης is rare, occurring only one time outside of these two verses, in 1 Tim 2:5. There the mediator mentioned is clearly Jesus Christ, as he is referred to by name. The

²⁸ Though falling outside the parameters of the current study, it is beneficial to note that the exegesis in the previous section is "further corroborated by the direction of thought in the verses that follow. If Moses did not and could not mediate the promise, the question naturally arises whether we should view the issuing of the law by Mosaic and angelic mediation as somehow interfering with the promises of God in redemptive history (v. 21). But Paul flatly denies this false implication... The law was given for reasons other than in order to substitute for faith in the inheritance of the promise" (Baugh, "Galatians 3:20," 66).

²⁹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 258. This is the interpretation favored by many English Bible translators. The ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, NET, NIV, and NLT all translate ὁ as a generic use of the article, rendering it "a mediator." The other option is the "anaphoric" article, which is "the article denoting previous reference" (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 217). Taken as an anaphoric article, it would refer back to the mention of μεσίτης made in v. 19. It seems as though neither interpretation would change the meaning of the verse significantly enough for it to make a difference how one parses this use of the article.

³⁰ Moo, *Galatians*, 236.

ESV translates the verse, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”³¹ As this is the only other use of *μεσίτης* in Paul’s corpus, its use is instructive for our purposes. Again, the mediator between God and man is certainly Jesus Christ, as he is the God-man, fully God and fully man. He is the only one who can stand before God to represent his people.

This is the general thrust of *μεσίτης* when used in the book of Hebrews as well. There, in reference to Christ’s role as High Priest, he is seen as the mediator of a better covenant (8:6), διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης (“the mediator of the new covenant,” 9:15), and again, in 12:24, Christ is referred to as the mediator of the new covenant. This usage, while almost certainly not Pauline, is still instructive for Paul’s use of the word as it, along with the use in 1 Timothy, shows, among other things, the fact that the only other instances of *μεσίτης* in the New Testament have Jesus Christ as their object and antecedent.

We must also look to the LXX to see how the word is used, as Paul would have been familiar with this translation of the OT. The only use of *μεσίτης* in the LXX is in Job 9:33, where Job laments that there is no one to stand between him and YHWH: “Would that there were an arbiter for us and an investigator and one to hear the case between us two.”³² Job is crying out for a mediator; he desperately needs someone to stand up for him, as he knows that he cannot stand before God on his own. The only person in the history of the world who can fill this role is Jesus Christ. He is the only *μεσίτης* who can stand between God and man. Again, this use of *μεσίτης* is instructive for Paul’s use of it, as this is the role Christ fulfills through his mediatorship.

Scholarly opinions vary as to the identity of the mediator mentioned in vv. 19-20. Aside from minor oddities, the two options traditionally given in answer to the mediator question are

³¹ See note 7, above, on Pauline authorship of 1 Tim.

³² NETS Translation. The word translated “arbiter” is *μεσίτης*.

either Moses or Christ. Some, like Luther in his commentary on Galatians, see the two references to the μεσίτης as two different mediators: the first is Moses, the second Christ.³³ This is a minority position, particularly amongst modern scholars. These scholars, almost to a person, see the μεσίτης as Moses, and him alone.³⁴ Wallace even claims that “the last phrase in v. 19 [ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου] is now almost universally recognized as referring to Moses.”³⁵ Indeed, only two commentators consulted for this study see Christ as the μεσίτης: Chrysostom³⁶ and Calvin.³⁷

Though most consensus seems to be pointing to Moses’ mediatorship here, this is not the best way to interpret this phrase, nor does it help to make sense of Paul’s argument. Indeed, insisting that the μεσίτης is Moses only further obfuscates Paul’s meaning in the context and ruins the thoroughly Christocentric rhetorical argument Paul is building. When, as has been suggested, the only other instances of μεσίτης in the NT or the LXX point to a divine mediator between God and man, why would Paul have Moses in mind as the mediator? Based on the context of the whole letter, but Galatians 3 in particular, it is clear that though Paul discusses the

³³ Martin Luther, *Commentary On Galatians*, ed. John Prince Fallowes, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979).

³⁴ The following scholars interpret μεσίτης along this line: Hans D. Betz, *A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979); Bruce, *Galatians*; Dunn, *Galatians*; George, *Galatians*; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians*, NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982); Joseph Barber Lightfoot, ed., *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations.*, 4th ed., Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874); Moo, *Galatians*; Herman Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, trans. Henry Zylstra, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953); Schreiner, *Galatians*; Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20”; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*.

³⁵ Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20,” 243. Immediately following this remark Wallace surmises, “If it had not been for Origen’s influence on the link of this text with 1 Tim 2:5 (where μεσίτης is also used), few would have ever entertained the thought that the intermediary mentioned here is Christ” (Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20,” 243).

³⁶ John Chrysostom, “Commentary of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Gross Alexander with Anonymous, vol. 13, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889).

³⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, Calvin’s Commentaries 11 trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009).

law, the human through whom the law was physically delivered to God's people is not in view at all. The simple fact that Paul nowhere mentions Moses' name in the entirety of Galatians should give us pause before attempting to show he is the *μεσίτης*! For Paul to shift from talking about Abraham and the seed, Christ, to a discussion of the inferiority of Moses' mediatorship is strange, to say the least.

This idea, of Christ being the only one able to stand between God and man, is not confined to the use of *μεσίτης* in the NT. Silva cites John 14:6 and Matt 11:27 as two examples of the fact that “other NT passages where *μεσίτης* does not appear give expression to the same truth.”³⁸ Jesus is the only way to the Father, and as such no one can know the Father apart from the Son. This is implicit within Paul’s declaration of God’s unity in v. 20. And, following this declaration (and keeping in mind Moo’s advice referenced in note 30 above), it is clear that Moses is certainly *not* the mediator Paul has in mind. This is because, as Baugh comments,

Moses was not mediating the promise to us, for he would have had to mediate the promise to the Son also, but no such mediation is possible within the unity of the divine counsel. *That* eternal, intratrinitarian arrangement cannot be nullified, abrogated, or even mediated by human agency because it was made between the members of the Triune God, and God is one.³⁹

God’s unity demands that no merely human mediator can stand between God and man, so based on the fact that God is one, Moses is decidedly not the *μεσίτης*, as the *μεσίτης* must be able to represent both God and man, who must be reconciled because of human sin.⁴⁰

Christ is the “one mediator between God and man.” This is not a role which was forced upon him, but one he freely took up, committing himself to the redemption of the Father’s elect.

³⁸ Silva, NIDNTTE, 287.

³⁹ Baugh, “Galatians 3:20,” 66, emphasis original.

⁴⁰ So Turretin, “Christ is properly called Mediator by act and exercise because he exercises the office of Mediator to establish a union between God and men, separated from each other on account of sin” (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr, trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. 2, Eleventh Through Seventeenth Topics (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 375).

Since theologians first began articulating the *pactum salutis* many verses have been held up as proofs of this important event in the history of redemption.⁴¹ While Galatians 3:20 is not one traditionally viewed as espousing the doctrine, all of the pieces of the *pactum* are found within the context, so that we may understand the verse as a further indication of its exegetical basis.

The *pactum salutis*, or covenant of redemption, is the pretemporal, intratrinitarian covenant in which God the Father swore to give to his Son a people, the elect, and God the Son covenanted with his Father to be the mediator for those elect, vowing to accomplish their redemption. This covenant is the “eternal self-determination of the blessed Trinity, who wills to communicate the bliss of his triune life to elect sinners through the mediation of Jesus Christ for the glory of Jesus Christ.”⁴² The *pactum salutis* shows clearly that from before the foundations of the world, “it is the triune God alone, Father, Son, and Spirit, who together conceive, determine, carry out, and complete the entire work of salvation.”⁴³

Therefore, in referring to Christ’s mediatorship and, significantly, in his affirmation that “God is one,” the Apostle Paul draws on this intratrinitarian covenant in arguing for the greater promise, made to Abraham but fully and finally brought to God’s people through Abraham’s seed, Jesus Christ, “light of light, very God of very God.”

Conclusion

⁴¹ For an excellent overview of the different strains of biblical argument used to extract the *pactum* from Scripture see Richard A. Muller, “Toward the Pactum Salutis: Locating the Origins of a Concept,” *MAJT* 18 (2007): 11-65, but especially section III “Exegetical Trajectories: Text and Interpretation in the Early Orthodox Era,” 25-48.

⁴² Scott R. Swain, “The Covenant of Redemption,” in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 109.

⁴³ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 215.

The grammatical exegesis of Galatians 3:19-20 shows the unity of the Apostle Paul's thought. Any attempt to interpret the Apostle's message, no matter the verse, pericope, or letter, that neglects or disregards his Savior is one that surely de-theologizes, bastardizes, and altogether neuters his staunchly Christ-focused arguments. The confusion over Galatians 3:20 is certainly on the interpreter's end and not Paul's, as he is clearly focused on his μεσίτης, the only mediator who can stand between God and man because indeed θεὸς εἰς ἐστιν, and a proper doctrine of the *pactum salutis* maintains the unity of the Godhead. Before he created anything God the Father covenanted to give to his Son a people of his own, and God the Son covenanted with the Father to be the μεσίτης, standing between God and man, all through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is because of this that we can proclaim, alongside Paul, that θεὸς εἰς ἐστιν.