

## The One Mediator Between God and Men

because we, sadly, are man-centred. But the Holy Spirit wisely wrote “one mediator between God and men,” emphasizing the divine initiative and grace in God’s coming to us through the mediator whom He appointed.

In order to do justice to our need for a *human* mediator, I Timothy 2:5 stresses Christ’s manhood: “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus.” Though Christ is, and needs to be, God in order to save us, He must also be man in order to live on earth, die on the cross and represent us in heaven.

I Timothy 2:5 highlights the singularity and uniqueness of our mediator: “there is one God, and *one* mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Why is this? Jesus Christ is so great and glorious and powerful and successful that only one mediator is needed! After all, He is both fully God and fully man and so able to mediate between both. By His substitutionary obedience and particular atonement for all whom the Father gave Him, issuing in His irresistible grace in us, He effects fellowship between the Triune God and His church. This is the blessed union and communion between Jehovah and each and every one of His sheep! There is “one mediator between God and men,” who came all the way from the living God to us and who takes us all the way back to the heavenly Father in the loving friendship of the covenant of grace.

Therefore, there are not two or more mediators. Mary, though a godly woman and the mother of our Lord according to His human nature, is not a mediatrix between God and men. The saints, though our brothers and sisters in Christ, do not mediate between Jehovah and us. The church, though it is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), is not a mediator between the Most High and men. Nor are our works or man’s supposed free will! Forging another mediator besides Jesus Christ is mistrust of, and unbelief in, the incarnate Son of God and a rejection of His all-sufficient mediatorial office. Hence, it is a despoising of Him and His work on the cross.

Praying to Mary or the saints, or viewing the church or anything else as a mediator, is polytheism. But how is that having more than one God? The number “one” occurs twice in I Timothy 2:5: “one God” and “one mediator.” If you have one mediator, you worship one God. If you have two mediators, you serve two gods. If you have three mediators, you have three gods. And so on. Why? Because religious veneration reserved for Jehovah, such as prayer, made to a supposed mediator “deifies” him or her or it.

To look at it from another angle, praying to or through more than Christ is, in reality, a sort of atheism. Whereas polytheism is offering worship to many gods, atheism is having no God. Those praying to, or trusting in, more than the only mediator do not ascend to, or commune with, the Creator and Lord of all. They do not know God!

Seeking to approach God through parties other than Christ alone is double addition: adding other mediators and adding other gods. This double addition is also double subtraction, for one loses both Christ, the only mediator, and the only true God!

Let us believe in Christ’s glorious, sole mediation and pray through Him alone. In this way, we come to the one true and living God and enjoy the forgiveness of our sins and covenant fellowship with Him!

*Rev. Stewart*

What is a mediator? A mediator is one who comes between two or more parties at enmity, removes the enmity and restores them to friendship.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely a diplomatic or political mediator (whose task is to resolve disputes between two or more states or civil governments, or between two or more factions within a state) or a family mediator (who seeks to effect unity between two or more parties in a family) or a marital mediator (who tries to restore communion between a husband and a wife). I Timothy 2:5 speaks of a religious mediator, a mediator between the perfectly holy God and totally depraved men: “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Our religious mediator, Jesus Christ, is definitely a covenant mediator. He removes enmity between God and men—the fault is entirely on our side—and restores us to fellowship with Jehovah. Since the covenant is friendship and communion with God, the Lord Jesus is our covenant mediator. Therefore, the book of Hebrews calls Him “the mediator of the new testament [or covenant]” (9:15) and “the mediator of a better covenant” (8:6; cf. 7:22).

*Where* is or was Christ our mediator? In heaven? Yes. On earth also? Yes. *When* is or was He our mediator? Now? Yes. And during His ministry some 2,000 years ago? Yes. I Timothy 2 clearly teaches this. It was as the mediator (5) that Jesus Christ “gave himself a ransom” while on earth two millennia ago (6).

This makes it crystal clear that the Lord Jesus, our religious and covenantal mediator, brings friendship between God and us not merely as a simple teacher (as if profound words alone could do it) or a moral reformer (as if our ethical transformation alone could be enough to bring us to Jehovah) or as an earnest intercessor (as if His fervent praying for us, all by itself, were sufficient to reconcile us to the Most High). Our religious and covenantal mediator restores us to fellowship with the living God by His sacrifice for our sins on the cross, for our mediator (5) “gave himself a ransom” (6). Thus Scripture glories in “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20).

Notice the order of the two parties between whom Christ mediates in I Timothy 2:5: “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men.” It does not say that Christ mediates between “men and God,” although this would be true. It declares that our Saviour mediates “between God and men.”

If we had penned this verse, to speak hypothetically for a moment, we would probably have written it the other way around: “one mediator between men and God”

*(continued on p. 4)*

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## Revivals and Magistrates (1)

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“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (I Tim. 2:1-2).

In response to my article in the November 2013 issue of the *Covenant Reformed News*, a reader writes, “As prayers for the revival and Reformation of the West, given its knowledge of the gospel and its centuries-long hatred of it and apostasy from it, are a ‘hopeless whistling in the wind,’ what should be our attitude to praying for our rulers? As most of our rulers have rejected the gospel, are they ‘blasphemers against the Holy Spirit’ and so we should not pray for them? Am I right in thinking that we should not desire to ‘lead a quiet and peaceable life’ anyway, as ‘lawlessness’ is increasing at a rapid rate in our land?”

I admit that I have not heard of or read any material on revivals that connects revivals and the rule of civil magistrates. I do not deny that this may very well be true, but it has escaped me. It seems that this connection that is suggested in the question presupposes that revivals are sometimes brought about by decree of the civil magistrate. Or, if a revival is not decreed by a civil magistrates, it is at least approved, promoted and encouraged by a secular ruler.

However that may be, the text in I Timothy 2 has encouraged the questioner to ask some questions about its meaning, and the questions are important ones and worth our attention.

Let it be stated, first of all, and with all possible emphasis, that the admonition of the text to pray for our rulers is a command of our Lord that we must obey. It is a divine obligation, given us in sacred Scripture, so obedience is required of us in our service of the Lord Christ as citizens in His heavenly kingdom. It is my judgment that many are fearful of praying for our magistrates and rarely do so. One argument in support of this failure is that civil magistrates, as the questioner observes, are rarely Christian in the true sense of the word. But that excuse does not justify negligence.

Let it also be emphatically stated that the Scriptures never permit us to speak evil of our magistrates; they forbid us to refuse to obey them (unless refusal is disobedience to Christ); and they require of us respect, honour and even love. This is emphatically Paul’s teaching in Roman 13 and Peter’s teaching in I Peter 2:13-17. These words in these two passages were inspired by the Holy Spirit in days when men, such as the grossly depraved Nero, ruled and were persecuting the church.

This was the godly behaviour of the three friends of Daniel when they were threatened by the king with death in a white-hot furnace (Dan. 3). This was Daniel’s example when he was thrown into the lion’s den (Dan. 6). Above all, this was the example of our Lord Himself before the Sanhedrin, Herod and Pontius Pilate. Peter points us to our Lord’s conduct as an example for us to follow (I Pet. 2:21-25). Submission. We are called to submission. We are called to submission, even when we cannot, for Christ’s

sake, obey. The fifth commandment is decisive.

The reason why we are to honour and submit to—and, emphatically, pray for—our civil rulers is because they are all put into office by Christ Himself. It is Christ’s work that they rule. It is Christ who puts the robe of authority on them, anoints them to serve in their office and calls them to rule in His name. That is their calling. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they [i.e., rulers] that put their trust in him” (Ps. 2:10-12).

It makes no difference whether these rulers are a Nebuchadnezzar, a Nero, a Hitler, a Stalin, a Winston Churchill or a Barack Obama. The commands of the Scriptures are given us to obey. Wicked rulers will have to answer the King of kings in the judgment day for their refusal to rule in the name of Christ.

As Reformed believers, we confidently testify to the great truth of God that Christ, from His throne in heaven, so executes the Father’s will that all things He does are for the sake and salvation of His church for which He shed His blood. “All things work together for good to them that love God ...” (Rom. 8:28).

Christ puts into civil office the one whom He wants in that office because such a one is necessary for the salvation of the church. Yes, everyone who holds such an office: even Antiochus Epiphanes IV, Constantine the Great, Frederick the Wise and, wonder of wonders, even the Stuarts: James I, James II, Charles I and Charles II, along with Mary, Queen of Scots. If Cyrus, the king of Persia, was God’s servant (Isa. 44:28; 45:1), how much more all the kings of the earth? Even the Antichrist is given His authority by the absolutely sovereign God, according to His all-wise decree executed as providence by Christ, His vice-gerent at His right hand.

When we honour them and serve them, we honour God and His Christ. When we disobey them, speak evil of them, revolt against them—as did the Covenanters and the American colonists—we revolt against Christ. If the consequences of our refusal to obey rulers results in persecution, we receive suffering from the hand of Christ (I Pet. 2:18-25; 4:12-19), knowing that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

And so, we must pray for them. Because the admonition is addressed to Timothy, preacher in the church of Ephesus, it is an admonition that is particularly directed to ministers in their prayers in the divine worship services. But it does not alter the fact that the injunction comes also to every child of God in his family prayers and in his personal devotions.

*Prof. Hanko*

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