

ONE GOD AND ONE MEDIATOR

Preached at Providence Chapel, Croydon Sunday Morning 3rd December, 1865

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim.2:5

We often find in the Scripture, and especially in the New Testament, what I may call concise summaries of divine truth; as, for instance: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." These are so many short summings-up of divine truth. I have thought sometimes, instead of teaching children long catechisms that they cannot understand, if people would make them learn such summaries of truth, these things might be brought, if it were the will of God, to the heart. Not only would it be useful in this point of view, but it would be useful to God's children. Sometimes we have to fall back on first principles. Sometimes we are placed in those circumstances, we have to fall back on the simplest truths of the gospel, such as, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." How sometimes we have to fall on the bosom of these simple declarations.

Again, as we get older in the things of God, we get simpler. Divine Truth is a very simple thing. What the soul in earnest seeks is, the simplicity of truth. When I go to hear a minister, it is not to hear fine words; I want food for my soul. When I preach myself, I want to break the bread of life, and give the people something to feed upon. All appeals to natural feelings may for the time seem to please, but it all passes away; but that is solid food, which is communicated by the Spirit to the soul through the Word that abides. So a text like this is a concise summary of divine truth; it lays it down as with a ray of light. God enable me to open it up, and bring before you the truth God has been pleased to deposit in it, that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men;" and that this one Mediator between God and men is "the man Christ Jesus."

We may connect our text with that verse I read this morning, in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Here there is "one God;" that connects it with "the only true God." "Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;" this connects it with "the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

"There is one God." This does not imply that there is one God, to the exclusion of the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence; but it is to direct our minds to the Father, and show us there is no access to the Father but through his dear Son. Until the Lord is pleased to quicken our souls into divine life, we have no true knowledge that there is one God. I look sometimes on the time when the Lord was pleased to quicken my soul, in the early spring of 1827. I remember as distinctly all the events connected with it as if it were yesterday. I think I can find in the work of God in my soul, these four features. First, a great sense of eternal

realities in my mind. I had talked of religion, gone to church, and said my prayers, yet never had any sense of eternal realities. But when the Lord, in the midst of deep affliction, laid the weight of eternal realities on my mind, then I felt there was an eternity. The next thing I felt was a great softness of spirit. I shed more tears in those six months than I have ever shed before or since. With that, thirdly, a communication of a spirit of prayer, resting on me night and day. And the fourth thing, a bending the ear to hear truth. I am convinced, whatever a man may know by hearing, preaching, or reading books, there is no real acquaintance with God, except there be some ray of divine light, when it shines into the mind out of the great and glorious I AM. "In thy light shall we see light." There must be a discovery, by taking away the veil of unbelief, a discovery of his glorious perfections.

"There is one God." We did not know there was one God; we lived, having no hope, and without God in the world, practically atheists. We talked about God, but, as to knowing there was a God in heaven that knew every secret thought, a God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, a God that could save and a God that could damn, a God before whom all creation was but a bubble and a breath. As to any saving knowledge of a God, we knew no more of that than the beasts that perish. But when God is pleased to rise in the soul on his own beams, and bring a discovery of his majesty and spotless holiness, and by the communication of divine light and life to the soul to draw forth a godly awe and fear of his great name, this is the beginning of wisdom, this is the implantation of divine life, under the drawing near of the Majesty of heaven. Then we know that there is one God.

"There is one God," and thou art a sinner before him. He searches thy heart. Before him you stand as a guilty

criminal; and you must stand, for you cannot get away from him. His eyes follow you wherever you go. Go to the ends of the earth, his eye and hand are there too.

"There is one God," eternal and almighty, whom thou canst not elude, and who will bring thee to stand at his bar. Remember this, it is eternal life. Therefore, not to know the only true God is eternal death. I am not laying down a standard, but there must have come into your mind a discovery of this great God. Paul at Athens found an altar with this inscription, "To the Unknown God." They could not worship an unknown God; so they gave their gods names that they might worship them. How can we love or fear an unknown God? It must be a very uncertain thing to love or fear what is unknown. We know our friends, we know who and what they are, therefore we can love them. So if we are to worship and fear God, and have an acquaintance with him, it must be in knowing him as he only manifests himself to our souls. Now, perhaps, while all this is going on, we have not any right knowledge of the Mediator between God and men. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Our faith first deals with God as infinite, omniscient, omnipresent. We may go on for a long time, with very dim views of there being a Mediator between God and us, to give us any measure of confidence, or good hope through grace. But when God begins his work he carries it on. He first well drills the soul into a knowledge of himself. I am very fond of what I may call good foundation work. In my time I have been a teacher; my aim was to drill the pupils well into the elements, ground them well into the beginning of things. So in religion. I like a religion in which a man has been well exercised in first principles. To be well exercised about the majesty of God, and the holiness of the God of heaven and earth, that will ballast him. If he is jumping here, and leaping

there, before he is led into it by a divine hand, and drilled every step of the way, made to go back sometimes because he has not learned it properly, drilled well in a holy law, in a knowledge of self, the man does not walk safely. But this being well grounded in him, as the Lord leads, he can follow. Some are in tribulation one half hour, in joy the next; then soon ripe, soon rotten, spring up like mushrooms and like mushrooms perish. As of old in the wilderness he drilled them well, so he drills his people well in the first elements now.

After a time we begin to feel there is no approaching this holy God. Perhaps we backslide; fresh guilt falls on the conscience; we find there is no dealing with this holy God. Like the children of Israel, we say, "Let not God speak, lest we die;" his majesty is too great, his law too strict. As we are exercised on these points, the Lord begins to open to us a little about Jesus, speaks to us of his blood and dying love, and brings in some great discovery of his suitability. Every now and then there will beam forth gleams and glances; clouds, mists and fogs; then the sun breaking in; then clouds again; then a breaking-in. By these breakings-in and glorious visitations we come to see, very dimly at first. I believe the work of grace is very gradual. I have no idea of these things being learned in a day. Doubts and fears, and then sweet teachings, to lead the soul along; then driven back through fear and a storm. But by various ways the suitability and preciousness of Jesus comes. In reading the Scriptures, the line of a hymn, or some good book, there is some breaking-in of divine love. All this seems to endear him, yet perhaps we know very little about him all the time; but he appears so blessed, that all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. The soul leaps up, as it were, directly he comes; yet there is no powerful manifestation. Doubts and fears are still working, and yet good hope springs up. Every mark and

testimony of the work is genuine; and yet, measured by some great experience, seems to come very short. Whether it is so or not, the Lord brings his people to this point, that there must be a Mediator between God and men. Look at the words, "a Mediator." What does that imply? It implies two parties; the word means a middle man, one that stands between two parties. It also implies two parties at variance, and that the Mediator is seeking to reconcile these two parties. Two friends are at variance, and another friend tries to bring them together again; but, in order to do this, he must have some dignity. Say (may it never happen), say that our Queen and the Prince of Wales were to fall out, to use a common expression, and say their variance raised up among the people a great feeling of discontent. Who is to bring them together? A lawyer's clerk? A member of the House of Commons? No; they would not have dignity enough. But perhaps the Prime Minister, or Earl Russell, might have dignity enough. Now, look at this spiritually. Look at God, holy; and man, sunk in sin. Who is to bring these together? What man? What angel? Now, view the beauty and blessedness, and every grace of our gracious Lord, the Son of the Father in truth and love. Who so suitable as the Son of God to mediate, containing in himself all the attributes of God? Let heaven, let earth, let all the realms of space be searched, where can one be found, except God's Son, to mediate between God and guilty sinners? He must be one whom both parties can trust. Now, God charges his angels with folly; the very heavens are not clean in his sight. He can trust his own Son, for he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person. He can trust him; with a voice from heaven he proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." How the heart springs up in a moment, "I will hear him." God can trust his Son, put all the matter in his hand, and feel certain he can bring it through. God's Son can be trusted with his Father's

honour, but how can we trust him? How are we to know him? O the mystery! Well may the apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh."

We see that the Mediator must partake of our nature; that there was a divine necessity for him to become one of us, that he might do the work he had to do. None of God's attributes were to be sacrificed. They talk of God suspending his law. God might as well suspend himself; ignorant men thus so talk. Heaven and earth must go to rack before that.

But to return to our subject. Who could do this mediatorial work but God's dear Son? How did he do it? By being made flesh, taking the flesh of the children in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Though it was human blood and suffering, and a human body, yet all the value of divinity was stamped on it. Therefore (wonder of wonders!) what blessedness is contained in it, that this Mediator was God and man! So as God-Man Mediator, he stands between us and God. One with man in relationship, and one with God as his Son. So we begin to drink a little at the fountain-head of all happiness, as this is opened up to us. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." You must know him now.

I have been speaking of glimpses and glances, but these will not satisfy, there must be a manifestation of his Person and work. As I lay in my bed one morning in a severe illness, I had a glorious view of the Son of God in his eternal deity, and in his humanity, and his glorious Person, as combining in that Person God and Man. When we get this, then we see the Mediator in all his blessedness. If I have been able to write on his divinity and humanity, it has been from what the Lord showed me on my bed many years ago. Though we often lose the sight of these things, and get into spots where all

seems gone, yet the reality abides, there is one God and one Mediator. God could not deal with us except through a Mediator. "For there shall no man see me and live." We cannot deal with a holy God, but in the face of a Mediator. How beautifully has the apostle opened up this! "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is seeing the Mediator. Here is the beauty and blessedness, that every perfection of God shines forth in the Mediator, the holiness of God, the justice of God, the purity, the majesty, and the glory. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." View, then, these glorious attributes, his unspeakable mercy, love, and pity to the sons of men. God could not reveal them till they came forth through the Mediator, and they all shine forth through him into a sinner's heart, compatible with the justice and goodness of God. O the blessedness of a Mediator between God and men! We have not to deal with an abstract God, but a God gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, in the face of a Mediator. O the blessedness of there being a Mediator through whom every blessing comes and every prayer ascends! O the blessedness of a Mediator always at God's right hand, ever present there, ever living, ever loving, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him! Who shall describe what the uttermost of some poor soul is? He is able to save to the uttermost, consistent with every perfection of God. O the blessedness of the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus! It is a beautiful subject; I cannot enter into it this morning. The purity of his humanity, yet the tenderness of it; we can only approach him as God- Man. As man he has gone through all the temptations we are going through. As man he bore all the weight of the cross. He knows our frame, he still bears a human heart:

That human heart he still retains,
Though throned in highest bliss. J. Hart.

The humanity of Jesus is raised up beyond all description; not infinite, but raised up into glorious union with his deity. So his deity shines through his humanity; the glorious humanity of Jesus illuminated with all the splendour of deity. Here is the man Christ Jesus; we have not to deal with an abstract God. You may think of the perfections of God till you may almost tear the hair off your head, all for the want of seeing God shine forth through the face of a Mediator. The sun itself we cannot see shining in the middle of the day; we can look at it through a cloud. When we come to a throne of grace, we come through the God-Man. When he is pleased to manifest himself to our souls, it forms the joy of our hearts, the beginning, middle, and end of all vital godliness.