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ONE GOD, ONE MEDIATOR

The words of this title are taken from the sentence in *1 Tim.* 2, 5. The passage refers to God's plan of salvation which was intended for 'all' men, since God our 'Saviour' wants all men to be saved and to come to know the truth, "for—this is the sentence in 2, 5—one (*heîs*) is God and one also is mediator of God and men, a man, Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all."

Our purpose is to capture the real meaning of this sentence within its immediate context as well as within the broader setting of the New Testament as large. The main question is whether the direct and deliberate intention of the present passage is to teach and stress the concept that there is only one God and only one mediator, with the implication that the possibility of any other God or mediator should be positively excluded. Such an understanding of the text is assumed to be suggested by the presence of the Greek numeral *heîs* (one) applying to 'God' and to 'mediator.'

Doctrinal Direction of the Context

It is obvious that, in *1 Tim.* 2, verses 1-7 form a literary and doctrinal unit with sufficient identity and independence. True, v. 8 goes back to the subject of v. 1 (prayer) but it is obvious that the direction of the entire section vv. 8-15 is moral, it deals with practical life and behaviour. On the contrary, vv. 1-7 deal with 'soteriology'; it is to this soteriological section that the subject of our discussion—v. 5—belongs.

The soteriological character of our section is obvious. God appears here precisely as 'saviour' (v. 3); His will is that men be 'saved' (v. 4); Christ Jesus is presented as mediator, a mediator "who gave himself as a ransom for *all*" (v. 6); the

prayers of the Christian community are not for Christians but for 'all men' (v. 1f), and these men are those who have not yet come to the knowledge of the truth; they are 'kings' and authorities in general. The *oûn* in v. 1 seems well to link this section to the 'reliable and perfectly acceptable doctrine that Christ Jesus came to the world to 'save' sinners . . . those who were to believe in him to obtain eternal life' (1, 15f).

Importantly, the character of the soteriology envisaged is not particularistic at all—the universality of salvation is the predominant feature of our section.¹ No less than four times in these few verses the author insists on the concept "all" to indicate those who are to be saved: Christian prayer is "for all men," "for all in authority"; "all men are to be saved," Christ's sacrifice was "for all." The emphasis of the author on universal salvation is unmistakable. That this is the correct reading of the text is evidenced beyond any doubt by 1 Tim. 4, 10: the living God "is saviour of (for) *all men*, particularly of believers."

It is clear that this universality is here conceived in terms of 'believers' and all other men, i.e. non-believers, between Christians and pagans. God is saviour not only for Christians but also for pagans; God wants not only Christians but also pagans to be saved—and to come to the knowledge (firm conviction) of truth, and this does not apply to Christians. In fact, in this context 'truth' is the Christian truth; in concrete terms it is the Christian religion.² But Christians have already reached this truth; it is the pagans or non-Christians who still have to come to it. It is in this way that God is 'saviour' for all men, for pagans in this case.

The universality of salvation is a doctrine on which Pauline

¹ Dibelius Martin, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, (*Handbuch zum NT*, 13) 4 ed. (completed by Hanz Conzelman), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1966, 33: "Die Ausdehnung der Fürbitte wird mit dem universalen Heilsplan Gottes begründet."

² Kelly, J. N. D., *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New York: Harper and Row, 1963, 62.

theology insists very often. The categories opposed may be Jew and Greek, Christian or pagan, male or female etc., but the point is always the same: God's salvation in Christ is for all men (*Rom.* 3, 21-31; 10, 11f; *1 Cor.* 12, 13; *Gal.* 3, 28; *Col.* 3, 11).

The passage of *Eph.* 2, 11-12 brings this doctrinal aspect into very strong relief. "At one time" the pagans were "without Christ," were excluded from the citizenship of Israel, were foreign to the covenants dealing with the promise, they had nothing to hope for, they were in the world people without God (*átheoi*), i.e. neglected by God, as it were. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in Christ's blood"; and the pagans also have access to the Father. They are not strangers and aliens any longer. The pagans too are *now* fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God.

The predominant idea in this passage is that in Christ God does not want the pagans to be *átheoi* any longer. God wants to be "God" also for them; God does not want the pagans to be "without Christ," i.e. he wants Christ to be redeemer and saviour ('blood, his flesh, cross') for the pagans also. God has decided to be a Father for them also: they have access to the Father. The author will stress that the great mystery consists in this: that *now* the gentiles also are co-heirs with the Jews, they form one body with them, they share the same promise in Christ (*Eph.* 3,6).³

When pagans are said to be *átheoi* the question is not that God was not one (or many), or that there was no 'god' when, in fact, they had "many gods" (*1 Cor.* 8, 5; 12, 2; *1 Thess.* 1, 9); the point is rather that they did not enjoy the 'godliness'

³ The passage of *Eph.* 2, 11ff. fails to use the term 'mediator' to characterize Christ. Still, the concept itself is very present: it is "through him" (*dí'autoû*), Christ, that both Jews and pagans have access to the Father (v. 18); it is "through (*diá*) the cross" (cfr. *Col.* 1, 20: "through the blood of *his* cross") that He reconciled both with God (v. 16).

of God, i.e. His care, protection and bounty; we may say that, from the standpoint of care etc., in a certain sense God was not God *for them*, as He was for others, for those namely who had already enjoyed His loving care. The pagans were "*choris Christou*," not because Christ was not one nor because Christ did not exist, but rather because Christ did not exist for them so far, because they still were deprived of the citizenship of Israel, were strangers to the covenants. They were, we may say, *áchristoi*—just as they were *átheoi*—because Christ's redemption had not affected them so far. But this is being changed now: Christ is going to be Christ for them also, they will not be 'without Christ' any longer; God is going to be God for them also, they will not be *átheoi* any longer. God is going to be God for all, and Christ is going to be Christ (redeemer) for all.

This is Paul's doctrine in *Rom.* 3, 21-31, even though the point of view is a little different. For God there is "no difference" (v. 22) between Jews and Greeks since "all" have sinned, and all need God's gracious salvation, the implication being that God saves "all" graciously through His gift in Christ (v. 24). In fact, God is (God) not only for the Jews but also for the gentiles (v. 29), since the God who is going to justify both Jews and pagans through faith is one and the same. It is obvious that Paul's thought in this passage is articulated between an exclusive "only" (concerning the Jews) and an inclusive "also" which associates "all," Jews and pagans, together in God's saving undertaking. The point is that for God there is "no difference" between the two as far as His saving grace is concerned: Christ's redemption is for all, and the only requirement for all is the same, i.e. faith. It is against this background that God is said to be 'one.'

Paul insists on this point: "no one who believes in him (Christ) will be disappointed." In point of fact, "there is no difference between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord is (lord) for *all*—bounteous for *all* who invoke his name" (*Rom.*

10, 11f). In this passage the Lord is Christ,⁴ and he is lord for all. Again, the two ends of the Pauline thought are the exclusiveness of salvation for the Jews or an inclusive salvation embracing 'all' men: Christ is for all without distinction, "there is no difference." It is against this non-difference that the Lord is said to be "the same" (*ho autós*; not precisely 'one,' *heís*) for all. The basic idea is not different when Paul maintains that "in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female" (*Gal.* 3, 27). *Col.* 3, 11 says that "there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcision and incircumcision, non-Greek, Scythian, slave, freeman." The direction of the last two passages is slightly different; still, the texts do show that Christ is for all kinds and categories of human beings—He is for all.

Such is the broad context in the NT of our passage in *1 Tim.* 2, 5-7 concerning the universality of salvation. With the entire Pauline theology our passage maintains that God's saving play was and is intended for all men; God does not care for just a certain group or groups of men; all men are included in His saving love and plan, no one is excluded; His Redeemer or Mediator was intended for all; He is ransom for all;⁵ Christ Himself gives 'himself' up for all, such is His will and purpose; the Christian prayer is offered for all. This is the real subject of our text: salvation for all.

The other alternative, therefore, is that this passage does not deal with the problem of monotheism, with the 'uniqueness' of God or of 'the' Mediator. There is no polemic in this text against polytheism, against idols, as is the case, for instance, in *1 Cor.* 8, 4⁶ (Cfr. *Io.* 17, 3: *mónos*; *James* 2, 19).

⁴ Althaus Paul, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Das AT Deutsch /NT 6) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1949, 94.

⁵ Kelly, J. N. D., *The Past. Ep.*, 64: "The important words for him were 'for all'; it is the fact that Christ died for all men, without any kind of favouritism, that makes it obligatory for Christians to pray for them all without distinction."

⁶ Dibelius M., *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 34: in *1Tim.* 2, 5 "es heisst nicht wie *1 Cor.* 8, 6: ein Gott und nicht viele, sondern eher im Rückblick auf

An objection is possible: in spite of the general direction of the text, the 'uniqueness' of God may be the reason why God's saving plan is intended for all men; if so, the sentence in v. 5 does stress and teach strict monotheism. It is true that the *gár* at the beginning of v. 5 indicates that this verse provides the reason why God is saviour for all and wants all men to be saved. But the reason for this universal salvation cannot be necessarily linked to God's uniqueness.⁷

Besides other details to be pointed out later on, this much can be noted here: philosophically, God's plan of universal salvation could be real and true even if there were other gods or, conversely, God could restrict His saving plan to some people even if He is the only God; historically, the 'only' God did limit His saving plan and care to the Chosen People, as a matter of fact, for a certain period of time, and there is no apparent reason why He could not do so indefinitely—'one day' the pagans were *áttheoi*, only 'now' have access to the Father (*Eph.* 2, 11ff), but they could continue to be *áttheoi* indefinitely; factually, our text in *1 Tim.* 2, 5 links the universality of salvation not only to God but also to a 'mediator,' and it is obvious that such a universality cannot be based on the fact that only one mediator can exist of necessity: philosophically speaking, many mediators can coexist, and, in fact, it seems well that in *Gal.* 3, 19 another mediator, Moses, has been active in God's unfolding plan of salvation; at any rate, the Jewish tradition understood that Moses was a true 'mediator'⁸ (cfr. *Io.* 1, 17).

pántes: weil ein Gott ist sollen alle gerettet werden."

⁷ Weiss B., *Die Briefe Pauli an Timotheus und Titus* (Meyers Kommentar), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1902, 11: "Auch die gewöhnliche Annahme, dass hier aus der Einheit Gottes die Universalität des göttlichen Heilswillens abgeleitet werde, ist unrichtig; denn die Einheit Gottes schliesst an sich nicht aus, das sein Gnadenwille, der ja in dem Begriff des *theós* an sich nicht liegt, nur auf einen Teil der Menschheit beschränkt sei... (es) tritt hier klar hervor, dass aus der Einheit Gottes nicht der Gnadenwille für alle, sondern die Einheit des gottgeordneten Heilsweges abgeleitet wird."

⁸ Oepke, *The WNT*, IV, 622.619.

The conclusion remains, therefore, that the direction of the text under discussion is not to teach or stress in any way the uniqueness of God and of 'the' mediator, but to bring into a sharp relief the fact that God's salvation is for all men, that God cares for all men. *1 Tim.* 4, 10 stresses that God is "saviour for all men." Without changing the basic concept to any degree, *Eph.* 4, 6 stresses that God "is God and *Father* for all." The Mediator also cares for all men. It is within this theme that the different concepts in this passage have to be understood.

The Being 'one' of God and of the Mediator

In the passage under discussion the author says that "*one* is God and *one* is mediator of God and men" (in Greek: *heîs gár theòs, heîs kai masîtēs theoû kai anthrôpôn*). It is important to realize that this sentence provides the logical reason (*gár*) why God, 'the saviour,' wants all men to be saved: because "*one* is God and *one* is mediator of God and men." Since the idea of monotheism is absent from this text and since the concept of monotheism cannot be the basis of God's universal salvation, the problem arises as to the sense in which both God and mediator are said to be *one* God and *one* mediator respectively as their 'oneness' can be the ground for God's universal salvation. The question regards, first of all, the meaning of 'one'.

Admittedly, *heîs* in Greek, just as *unus* in Latin or *one* in English, usually stresses the concept of uniqueness, of only one single object, with the exclusion of other objects of the kind intended. But it seems clear that *heîs* has not always this exclusive meaning, not even when the reference is to 'one God' in different passages of the New Testament. The meaning 'the same' is normal for *heîs*, and seems to apply in different cases in the NT.

In *Eph* 4, 6 the author writes that *heîs theòs kai patēr pántōn*. Before we attempt a translation of this passage, let us realize

that it is the exact correspondence of the important text in *Mal.* 2, 10: "Is here not *one* ('*echād*) father for all of us (*l'kāl-lānū*)? Has not *one* God created us?" The Greek translation of this passage is this: *Ouchì heîs éktisen hēmâs? ouchì patér heîs pántōn hymôn?* This translation changes the order of the sentences in the Hebrew text, so that the order in *Eph.* 4, 6 is closer to the Greek translation. The text of the prophet has another correspondence in *Io.* 8, 41.

The concern of the prophet is that in the Jewish community 'every one deals treacherously against his brother.' In this text, both in Hebrew and in Greek, the article is missing before 'father' and 'god.' The implication is that the text does not stress the ontological quality and 'unicity' of fatherhood and divinity in themselves, but the *functional* dimension of these qualities for others, for men. In fact, the Hebrew construction with *l'* (for) brings this idea into a sharper relief than the genitive case of the Greek translation. The point of view of the prophet is that God⁹ is father for those who are being wronged also; they are protected by the same father of all, they have the same right to His fatherly protection and, consequently, the right to be treated as brothers. It is interesting that the numeral 'one,' said of the father (and of God), does not mark here the exclusion of other fathers or gods, but is the counterpart of 'all of us': all can claim this one father, all are protected by this one father. All children in a family have one father, but this does not exclude the possibility of other fathers, who are also 'one' for their own children (cfr. *Gen.* 42, 11.13). Then the literary parallelism shows that 'father' and 'God' are

⁹ It is rather strange that Jones Douglas Rawlison, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, London, SCM Press, 1962, maintains that "the whole passage requires that the 'one father' is Abraham." The strictly parallel construction of the verse seems well to militate against this understanding, to the effect that the one Father is Yahweh: cfr Elliger Karl, *Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, II Göttingen: Vadenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951, 191; Deden D., *De kleine Profeten*, Roermond: Romen and Zonen, 1953, 392.

notions virtually synonymous in this text where the point is God's care for all.¹⁰

Similarly, in the sentence of *Eph.* 4, 6 the absence of article before both 'God' and 'Father' is to be noticed—which in this precise context does not recommend the translation "the God and Father of all is one (only)." If the Hebrew text in *Mal.* 2, 19 (*l'kûllânû*) and its Greek translation (gen.) is kept in mind, one realizes that the translation of our text in *Eph.* is rather this: "there is one God and Father for all." Importantly, this text concerns itself with Christians only who are taught a solid basis for a life in love and peace¹¹—just as the text in Malachi deals with the Jewish community only and for the same purpose. This detail shows in both cases that the tendency is not to teach monotheism—which was already accepted by the addressees—since, were this the case, the texts would have to be said to teach 'monopaterism' (*venia verbo*) also, which is nonsense. What *Eph.* (as well as *Mal.*) intends to say is that one God and Father is common to all of them, all Christians have *the same* God and Father—regardless of the question whether there are other gods or fathers. In point of fact there are other true fathers beside God. The problem considered in *Eph.* is not to judge about the possible existence of other gods or fathers, but to relate one and the same God and Father to 'all' Christians.¹²

This is further proved by the use of 'one' in connection with

¹⁰ With *Mal.* 2, 10 the passage *Zach.* 14, 9 can be compared: when Yahweh will be king over *all* the earth, "in that day Yahweh will be one (LXX *heîs*), and his name will be one (*bên*)."¹⁰ The uniqueness of Yahweh as divinity or deity is not intended; Yahweh is unique even before He is acknowledged by all. What is involved here is the recognition of Yahweh as universal God, God for all; all will invoke Yahweh as their God.

¹¹ Cfr. Schlier Heinrich, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1958, 186ff.

¹² Cfr. Schleier H., *Eph.*, 188: "... auch die Einheit Gottes meint hier die alle einigende Einheit." Cfr. in the same direction John Chrysostom, PG 62, 80.

concepts like body, hope, lord, faith, baptism, in the same context (*Eph.* 4, 4f): regardless of whether there are other baptisms (valid or invalid) etc., the author's intention is to stress that all Christians share in *the same* gifts and graces, in one and the same baptism etc. Only this understanding of 'one' can provide a basis for a life of 'mutual' love and peace among all Christians—which basis is not provided by the assumption that only one baptism, one hope, is ontologically possible and real.¹³

Related to both *Eph.* 4, 6 and *Mal.* 2, 10 is the passage in *Io.* 8, 41: *hēna patēra échomen tôn theón*, "we have God for (our) *only* father." The meaning of 'one' is, as in *Mal.* and *Eph.*, that all Jews have one and the same father. Christ has shown that the Jews' claim to be children of Abraham (v. 33.39) is false (v. 39f; cfr. v. 44). The objection of the Jews "we are not born of fornication" (v. 41) is a very likely reference to the slander concerning Christ's irregular (virginal) birth;¹⁴ which is further indicated in v. 18 by the question of the Jews: "where is your father?" Against this background the claim of the Jews not to have been born of fornication suggests for the following sentence the meaning that 'all of us have one single father, God, i.e. that God is father, an *only* father, for all of them; the implication being that they all are worshipers (*doûlōni*; v. 33.54) of *the* (true) God, who has founded ('created,' *Mal.*) the people. From this notion of one and the same origin the evangelist shifts to the notion of 'love' ties in the 'one' family (v. 42). Of course, this is a device of the evangelist to show two things: a) that the claim of his God as father (of all Jews, Christ included) is false, because the Jews do not 'love' Jesus b) who is the true and unquestionable Son of God, who "remains in the house" (v. 35).

¹³ Besides the fact that 'one baptism' can indicate oneness of 'kind' only, not 'oneness' of quantity or plurality, precisely because there are as many baptisms (numerically) as there are people baptized.

¹⁴ This is the understanding of Cyril of Alexandria, PG 73, 881f., Euthymius Zigabenus, PG 129, 1297.

So, the expression 'one father' in fact means 'father of all.' The 'one' connotes, not the uniqueness of the father, but the plurality of children for whom someone—here, God—is father. A profession of monotheism in this passage is out of place; there is no reference to such a discussion. This understanding would be possible only in a phrasing like this: 'we have as father the only God'—which is not the case. Obviously, in the phrasing of the gospel the uniqueness (one) refers to 'father,' and not to God. Furthermore, the point at issue is that we (all) 'have' one father, not that 'there is' one Father; in point of fact, various other fathers are mentioned in the context (vv. 39.33.28.44). This is all the more so since the article is missing before 'father,' whereas it is present before 'God.' The implication is that here 'father' is by no means a title applying to an only father; it indicates a function or quality which can be common to many persons—it is predicative, not attributive. All this is evidence that *heîs* here does not indicate exclusive uniqueness of being but 'sameness' of function or quality in regard to many people.

The text in *James* 4, 12 is also important and illustrative in our discussion. The author contends that a Christian has to fulfill the law and not to judge it when he judges his brother; the implication being that judgment is to be left to God. The reason for this is that *heîs estin nomothêtês kaî kritês*, "one is a lawgiver and judge."¹⁵ Admittedly, the Greek text can be taken to mean that 'there is only one lawgiver and judge,' but one wonders what sense this makes in a context where the problem is not about how many lawgivers and judges there are but about the fact that to pass judgment on a brother is no concern of a Christian, or of any man for that matter.

¹⁵ Critically, the text offers some variations, but this is not important in our present discussion. We accept the text offered by both Nestle and Aland, and try to determine the meaning of a Greek text like this, which is linguistically correct. Incidentally, the meaning would be basically the same: in the event that the article is read before 'lawgiver,' the meaning can still be "the lawgiver and judge is one and the same person."

What the text seems well to say is that passing judgment is God's concern, as it is He who has power to save and to condemn. So, God is judge just as He also is lawgiver; and He is judge—this seems to be surmised—because He is lawgiver and can judge about the meaning and extension of the law itself¹⁶ (cfr. "not to judge the law," in v. 11). The conclusion is that God is both lawgiver and judge.

In this perspective *heís* cannot mean that there is only one lawgiver and judge—which, by the way, is not true because, in fact, there were and are other lawgivers and judges besides God.¹⁷ The meaning can be only this: one and the *same* person (God, in this case) is both lawgiver and judge, both functions fall on the same person. This one person (God) is not only lawgiver, He is also judge. Incidentally, the question of monotheism is completely absent from this passage—to the point that the word 'God' is not even mentioned. The 'one' is connected with various functions or capacities, and this, it may be surmised, in regard to all brothers (cfr. *Rom.* 14, 10),

In *Rom.* 3, 30 Paul maintains that "God is one" (*heís ho theós*). The doctrinal and even literary similarities between this text and our passage in *1 Tim.* 2, 5 are obvious. Any discussion about monotheism is absolutely foreign to this context of *Rom.* As pointed out above, the real subject of Paul's theologizing here is the universality of salvation. On the other hand, any endeavour to find the reason of a universal salvation in the uniqueness of God does not make any better sense here than in *1 Tim.* 2, 5 (see above).¹⁸

In point of fact Paul clearly indicates that God is 'one' because (*eíper*, v. 30) he is not God for the Jews 'only' (*mónon!*), but *also* for the Gentiles; He is 'one' because He justifies both

¹⁶ This is suggested by Oecumenius, *PG* 119, 497; Theophylactus, *PG* 125, 1177.

¹⁷ Unless one admits a comparison between God and the 'judging' faithful in v. 11.

¹⁸ In spite of the fact that this seems well to have been the understanding of D, which read *mónos* instead of *mónon* in v. 29.

of them, and He does so in the same manner, i.e. through faith. God is one because He is for all and because He has one way only to deal with both; God is one because for Him there is 'no difference' between Jews and Greeks, between 'all' those who are in need of God's glory and gracious gift in Christ. The 'oneness' of God here is determined, not by the uniqueness of God as over against other gods who might be excluded, but by the all-inclusive 'oneness' of all those people among whom 'there is no difference' in God's sight.¹⁹ The oneness of God here is projected against an exclusive 'onliness' (*venia verbo*) of God for the Jews (v. 29). It is here that the terms *mónon* (v. 29) and *heîs* (v. 30) have to be contrasted: God is not 'exclusively' for some, since²⁰ (*éîper*) He is 'one.' The reason why God is one is His not-exclusiveness for some, i.e. His inclusiveness of all in His dealings. In short: God is one because He is *the same* God for all, He treats all in the same manner. This is the way *heîs* was understood by those for whom Greek was the native language.²¹ Paul knows very well the exclusive meaning of *mónos* (cfr. v. 29), but this is not the word he uses to say that God is one: he shifts from *mónos* to *heîs*, when *mónos*

¹⁹ Cfr. Schelke Karl Hermann, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New York: Herder, 1956, 70f.: "God governs over all men with the same care. He is also the God of the Gentiles. Thus the way of salvation must be one and the same for all"; Barrett C.K., *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, London: Black, 1957, 84: "Jew and Gentile are equal before God, and neither is in a position to boast." In the same way, Origen, PG 14, 955; J. Chrysostom, PG 60, 44; Theodoret of Cyr, PG, 82, 86; Theophylactus, PG, 124, 388.

²⁰ Cfr. Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexikon of the NT*, ei, IV, 11.

²¹ Origen, PG 14, 955: Paul not only says "unum...esse Deum Iudaeorum et gentium, sed et addat quod *idem* atque *ipse* sit qui justificat (both) per fidem...*Idem enim ipse Deus...* justificat"; (957): Justificat ergo *unus atque idem Deus...* per fidem." J. Chrysostom, PG 60, 44: God is not partial (*merikós*)... but *koinós hapántōn kai heîs; diò kai epágei: Epéîper heîs ho theós. Toutéstin, ho autós kai toútōn kakeínōn Despótēs.*" Theophylactus, PG 124, 388: Jews do not believe "*pántōn homoiōs einai theón* and that he cares for all equally (*epíses*). *Heîs oûn esti, toutéstin, ho autós kai Ioudaíōn kai ethnōn Theós.*"

would have been the appropriate term to mark the idea of exclusivity (cfr. *Rom.* 16, 27; *Io.* 17, 3; *1 Tim.* 1, 17).

That *heîs* means 'the same'—and not precisely the only one—emerges with particular clarity in the NT where *heîs* is replaced by, or interchanged with, *autós*. The concept of universal in *Rom.* 3, 29ff can be expressed in *Rom.* 10, 12, from the point of view of Christ, in this way: as for salvation through faith "there is no difference between Jew and Greek, *ho gár autós kýrios pántôn, ploutôn eis pántas. . .*" Whatever the grammatical construction (see footnote 32) of the Greek expression transliterated here, the meaning is certainly this: "for the same lord is Lord for all, bounteous to all . . ." Instead of *ho autós kýrios* one could say *heîs kýrios*. This is, in fact, what we read in *Eph.* 4, 5, where the *pántôn* after *patér* in v. 6 logically affects each one of the *heîs*-clauses in vv. 4f also, so that the real concept is that 'one is Lord' of all, with the grammatical meaning of *Rom.* 10, 12: "the same person (lord) is Lord of all." When one realizes that both the doctrine and the grammatical construction is the same in *Rom.* 3, 30 and in 10, 12b, he will agree that in *Rom.* 3, 30 Paul could very well have written that God is not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles "since *ho autós theós*" who justifies both

The practical equivalence of *heîs* and *autós* becomes more apparent in *1 Cor.* 12. The source of the different gifts is said to be *tò autò pneûma* in vv. 4.8.9a. But in v. 9b the source is *tò hèn pneûma*, where the meaning is, as in all other cases, 'the same' Spirit. There is more. In this v. 9b we have accepted the reading adopted, v. gr., by Nestle and Aland, but there is a variant reading, strongly supported, which has *autós* instead of *heîs*. Whichever reading is authentic is irrelevant to our discussion. On the contrary, the fact is very relevant that the two readings are evidence that these two terms could be interchanged to indicate the idea of 'sameness' (not that of uniqueness). The evidence that this is true is found in v. 11, where it is said that 'all' these gifts are caused by *tò hèn kai autò*

pneûma, "the one and the same spirit," which is a sort of hendiadys: that one, *that is*, the same Spirit. By the way, I would like to point out that this oneness-sameness of the Spirit is projected against the totality ('all') of gifts. There is no question about the uniqueness of the Spirit in the entire context.

To the same conclusion, i.e. that *heîs* practically means the same thing as *autós*, points 1 Cor. 11, 5, where Paul stresses that a woman with an uncovered head is "one and the same thing (*hèn kai tò autò*) as a woman with her hair shaved off." The point at issue is, not that there was only one woman with her head uncovered (cfr. the neuter), but the 'sameness' of two women in something.

To the same meaning of *heîs* leads the fact that in *Phil.* 2, 2 Paul can use, side by side the same verse, both *tò autò phroneîn* and *tò hèn phroneîn*. Again, the variant reading in the latter case may affect the authenticity of the reading, but not the practical equivalence of both terms.²²

Let us apply the results of our research to our text in 1 Tim. 2, 5.²³ Since the subject of the passage is universal salvation and since *heîs* cannot indicate the uniqueness of God—and still

²² Both Nestle and Aland keep *hèn* in the text.

²³ As Spicq Ceslas, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, I Gabalda: Paris 1969, 366, notes, modern exegesis sees in 1 Tim. 2, 5f. a dense and rhythmic composition which is regarded as a liturgical acclamation. The same character of acclamation is claimed for Eph. 4, 4-6 by Schlier H., *Eph.*, 185f. But precisely because one has to deal with acclamations one should not press the most strict and technical meaning of the terms. Lietzmann Hans, 'Symbolstudien,' ZNW 22 (1923) 268ff. insists on the 'acclamation' character of similar formulas. From pagan religiosity he mentions formulas like *heîs Zeûs Sarápis*: 'es gibt nur einen Zeus Serapis, im relativen Sinne, d.h. dem kein anderer Gott gleichkommt' (italics mine). So, he says, the *heîs theòs*, expanded with the addition of *heîs Christòs* and others, "have been used very often as Christian acclamations at a later time also." The acclamation *heîs theòs*, he maintains was a Christian counterpart against pagan acclamations, (cfr. *Cant.* 6, 9). To what degree the numeral *heîs* may be detached from its 'exclusive' meaning can be seen in one of the Christian formulas adduced by Lietzmann (p. 268), which is very close to 1 Tim. 2, 5: *heîs theòs kai ho Christòs autoû*; cfr. *heîs* (masc.) *theòs kai ho Christòs autoû kai tò hágion pneûma* (neut.).

less the uniqueness of 'a' mediator, there is no article (see below)—the numerical *heîs* has to be projected against the background of the totality ('all') of mankind which God, as saviour of all, wants to be saved, and of all whom Christ gave Himself as ransom. As in many other similar passages, the point at issue is not whether there are or can be many gods or mediators, but rather this: that the *factual* salvation of God and the *factual* mediation of the Redeemer are for all men.²⁴ The saving grace of God gives all men the same right to be saved; the mediational death of Christ is efficacious 'for all' so that all have the right to share in it. God loves all men; Christ dies for all men. The inference is that God is 'one' because God is 'one and the same' for all, without making distinctions or observing differences among men; the Mediator is 'one' because he is 'one and the same mediator' for all indistinctively, and he treats all men in the same manner.

It is important to notice in connection with this, that when the author of *1 Tim.* intends to stress the uniqueness of God, he does not use *heîs* but *mónos* a few verses before, namely in 1, 17, as well as in 6, 15.16. In the entire epistle *heîs* occurs in our passage (2, 5) only. It seems well that the writer felt the difference between *mónos* and *heîs*.²⁵

²⁴ Theodoret of Cyr, PG 82, 797, understands the *heîs theós* in the sense that "not *állos tôn pistôn, kai állos tôn apistôn esti poiētēs*, but *heîs hypárchei demiourgós*." If Greek Patristic theology in general does not explain *heîs* in *1 Tim.* 2, 5 as it does in *Rom.* 3, 30 (cfr. fnt. 21), it is because the Patristic exegetes become involved in the problem of the divinity of Christ, who has to be 'one' with God, and different from Him at the same time; so they are not two, but two (ones): J. Chrysostom, PG 62, 536; Theodore of Cyr, PG 82, 797; Oecumenius, PG 119, 150f; Theophylactus, PG 125, 33.

²⁵ Of course, sometimes the expression *heîs theós* stresses the concept of uniqueness of God in different ways. But it is the context that determines the right sense in each case. If (cfr. fnt. 31) in *1 Cor.* 8, 6 *heîs theós* means 'one only God,' it is because the polemic against idols is obvious (v. 4f.) and because *heîs* is strengthened by *ei mē* (v. 4). Similar considerations apply to 'one Lord' (v. 6). Verse 5, however, is to be noticed. Paul is not so radical in excluding the factual existence of other

Incidentally, to evaluate the meaning of 'one' when it applies to God, no consideration of the metaphysical order (divinity as such) should be brought into the picture. The reason for this is that in the case of the mediator no such reasons can be produced, because the only aspect which is brought into relief is that he is man, i.e. a human being—which, obviously, from a philosophical viewpoint can be no basis for excluding other mediators.²⁶

gods and lords (though he knows they are not real gods); furthermore, the idea of 'one' God and Lord is nuanced by a clear and restricting dative of advantage (*all'hēmîn*). The translation suggested by Arndt-Gingrich for v. 4f. is as follows: "For even if there are many called gods... just as indeed there are many gods..." Important is the commentary by Barrett C. K., *A Commentary on the First Epistles to the Corinthians*, New York: Harper and Row, 1968, 6: "The word *god* as used by the heathen certainly does not denote the God of the Old Testament, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it does not follow from this that it denotes nothing, and that those beings whom the heathen call *god* have no existence. The Old Testament itself presupposes their existence, for example in *Deut. X, 17*, which, is like the present verse, puts *gods* and *lords* together." Cfr. Schlatter Adolf, *Paulus der Bote Jesu*, Stuttgart: Caliver Verlag, 1956, 254; Conzelmann Hans, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, (Meyers Kommentar), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1969, 172: "Die Götter werden Götter, indem sie geglaubt werden. Und der Glaube an den einen Gott und den einen Herrn schafft die Freiheit, jene Mächte nicht mehr anzuerkennen." In *Gal. 3, 20* the expression 'God is one' does not intend to teach monotheism but the oneness of God's juridical personality to act freely and independently. As for 'the' mediator, take note that the first time (v. 19) *mesîtes* is without article (cfr. Miguens M., *Unus Deus, Unus Mediator*, in *De Mariologia et Oecumenismo*, Romae: Pontiff. Academia Mariana Intern., 1962, fnt. 27). In *James 2, 19* the expression 'God is one' indicates strict monotheism (cfr. *Mk. 12, 29.32*).

²⁶ In Hebrew 'one' (*'ehād*) often means the same. This is obvious in *Ex. 26* (one measure for all curtains'), where the LXX translate *mètron tò autò... pásais*. But the same meaning is present even when the Hebrew word is translated by *beîs*: 'one language, one speech' in the whole earth (*Gen. 11, 1*); 'one people, one language' (*11, 6*); 'one people' emerges out of two peoples through intermarriage (*34, 22*); two persons have each one 'a dream in one night' (*40, 5; 41, 11*); as for the seven cows and the seven ears in the Pharaoh's dream, 'the dream is one' (*41, 25f.*); Joseph's brothers are 'all one man's sons' (*42, 11.13*); the pas-

A grammatical analysis of our text (1 *Tim.* 2, 5) can shed some additional light on the present discussion. In the Greek text the wording and the position of the words in the sentences is as follows: *heîs gàr theòs, heîs kai mesîtēs theoû kai anthrôpôn*. Worth noticing is that the article is missing before both *theòs* and *mesîtēs*. This is particularly important in connection with *mesîtēs* because the absence of an article is both surprising and difficult to explain if the reference is to the 'only' and well known Mediator, i.e. to the very *person* of Christ, and if *mesîtēs* is the subject of the sentence²⁷: a translation, v. gr., like 'a mediator of God is one' does not seem to make much sense.²⁸ This remark shows that *mesîtēs* is in fact, not the subject but rather some sort of predicate in the elliptical sentence. The important conclusion that follows is that this term is not a distinctive title of Christ which connotes and defines His very person, but it is the expression of an office or function *common* to every possible mediator. Support for this view is found in *Gal.* 3, 19, where *mesîtēs* appears without any article the first time because the office and not the person of a mediator is intended, even though the reference to the well known mediator (Moses) is unmistakable; and even when the second time the article is present ('the' mediator), the determination is one of category or office—not of a particular person—precisely because the sentence states a general principle or rule, so that no reference is made to Moses, let alone to Christ.

But then I do not know how we can avoid applying the same

chal lamb had to be eaten in 'one house' (*Ex.* 12, 46); 'one law' applies to two different people or actions (12, 49; *Lev.* 1, 7 (LVV 6, 37); 24, 22; *Num.* 15, 16.29); 'One event, thing, place, fate (i.e., death) for all' (*Koheler* 2, 14; 3, 19f.; 6, 6; 9, 2f.); 'one breath for all' (3, 19).

²⁷ One can only wonder how arbitrary is, for instance, the translation of the New American Bible, concerning both the article and the position of the terms: "God is one. One also is *the* mediator..."

²⁸ It is rather strange, therefore, that Oepke, *TbWNT*, IV, 623, fnt. 79 says that no significance should be attached to the missing article. Of course, his contention is that *heîs* is the predicate. In the same way, Dibelius M., *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 34.

grammatical considerations to *theós*, since the two members of the sentence are strictly parallel and symmetric. Accordingly, *theós* is not the subject but the predicate of the sentence, and therefore, a translation like 'God is one' is unlikely, not to say incorrect. Another consequence follows, namely that *theós* does not denote here the radical or ontological being of God—according to which He is unique—but a functional and factual aspect or dimension of God, according to which He may not be unique but just 'one and the same' (individual or person).

Oepk²⁹ observes that all analogies speak against *heís* being the subject in our text. He refers to *Rom.* 3, 30; *Gal.* 3, 20, and mentions *1 Cor.* 8, 6 also.³⁰ I think that each text has to be considered on its own merits. There is no question that *heís* is predicate in *Gal.* 3, 20, but this is made clearer by the position of the words (different from that in *1 Tim.* 2, 5) in the sentence and by the presence of the article before 'God'; besides, the meaning of *heís* here has nothing to do with the oneness or uniqueness of God, God is one because He is not two (contracting partners). *1 Cor.* 8, 6 offers a somewhat different perspective. One thing is certain: that the correct translation is not "the Father is one God, Jesus Christ is one Lord." The clause *heís theós*—as well as *heís kýrios*—cannot be split between subject and predicate, both words belong together—just as in the correlate "many gods, many lords" (v. 5). The point is not that 'the' gods and 'the' lords are many, but rather that 'there are many gods, lords.' Accordingly, "there is one God, there is one Lord." It is obvious, therefore, that *ho patēr* is linked to the following words with which it forms a parenthetical sentence; and the same thing applies to 'Jesus Christ.'³¹

²⁹ *TbWNT*, IV, 622, fnt. 79.

³⁰ Our passage *1 Tim.* 2, 5 is related to *1 Cor.* 8, 4 by Norden Eduard, *Agnostos Theos*, Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1956, 381.

³¹ In view of this, I am not sure at all that v. 6 intends to stress that concept of 'exclusiveness' both concerning God and the Lord. The immediate context certainly deals—and predominantly so—with 'charity' among Christians themselves (v. 1-3.9-13; cfr. *Rom.* 14, 15-23), because

The implication is that they are not the subject of these sentences, in spite of the article before 'Father,' and of 'Jesus Christ' being a proper name. In *Rom.* 3, 30 *heîs* is the predicate, which is evidenced by the article before 'God.' The same thing is true of *James* 2, 19.

But the case is certainly different in *James* 4, 12, according to the generally adopted reading. This text is certainly a grammatical analogy to our passage in *1 Tim.* 2, 5. It is obvious that *heîs* here is the subject of the sentence, since the other two nouns have no article, and also because a translation like "a lawgiver and (a) judge is one" does not make much sense. From a grammatical standpoint our passage in *1 Tim.* 2, 5 is perfectly parallel to this, particularly so in relation to the sentence *heîs mesîtēs*.

Different also is the case in *Eph.* 4, 6, *heîs theòs kai patēr*. Clearly enough, *theòs* and *patēr* cannot be separated grammatically, and, since the article is missing, they can hardly be the subject of any sentence where *heîs* should be a predicate. Only two alternatives are left: either to understand the passage in the sense that "there is one (and the same) God and Father for all," or to consider *heîs* as subject of the sentence: "one (and the same individual) is God and Father of all." The latter alternative, however, seems to be excluded by the other 'one'-clauses in the same passage.

of too much 'knowelge' in some of them. On the other hand, Paul certainly stresses that there is one God, one Lord 'for us'—which is a strong dative of advantage. It is in this connection that the 'one God' is precisely 'the Father,' origin and end of everything and of Christians, and that the 'one Lord' is precisely Jesus Christ as a 'means' through which everything, and particularly the Christian community, came into being. Cfr. Barrett C. K., *The First E. to the Cor.*, 192f. In this perspective this text comes very close to *Mal.* 2, 10; *Eph.* 4, 5.6; *Io.* 8, 41: all Christians should be respected and 'edified' out of love, since all of them have 'the same' God, their Father, and the same Lord, the cause of their existence. That is why I wonder whether this formula in *1 Cor.* 8, 6—as well as that in *Eph.* 4, 6—can be in any way 'Stoic,' as Norden E., *Agnostos Theos*, 241, suggests.

All theological, grammatical and linguistic considerations seem to suggest for *1 Tim.* 2, 5 the following translation: "There is one and the same God (for all), there is also one and the same mediator (for all)." The loving and saving care of God is for all (not only for a few, for Christians), and the redeeming mediation of Christ if 'for all' too.³²

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³² Though no evidence can be produced, one gets the feeling that both *ho autós* and *héis* seem to acquire a sort of pronominal meaning in the sense of 'the same person,' 'one person' or individual. When *Rom.* 10, 12 is read under this impression, it seems that "the same individual is Lord for all"; likewise, *James* 3, 12 would seem to indicate that "one (and the same) individual is both lawgiver and judge." This is certainly the meaning of *autós* in the quotation from Chrysostom and Theophylactus (and Origen) in fnt. 21—and this, as an interpretation of *héis*. This would suggest for *1 Tim.* 2, 5 some translation like this: one (and the same) individual is God (for all), one (and the same) individual also in mediator (for all).