

## **APPENDIX E**

### ***Dia* in 1 Corinthians 8:6**

1 Corinthians 8:6 is a very important verse for determining the meaning of Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2 (and any other related assertions). In this appendix I shall explore the meaning of 1 Corinthians 8:6. It reads as follows:

1Cor. 8:4 Περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὖν τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς.

1Cor. 8:5 καὶ γὰρ εἶπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοὶ εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς, ὡσπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί,

1Cor. 8:6 ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

The NASV translation reads like this:

1Cor. 8:4 ¶ Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.

1Cor. 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,

1Cor. 8:6 yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

The context of this is Paul's discussion of whether it is right or wrong to eat meat that has been offered to idols representing pagan gods. His position, in brief, is this: There is nothing inherently wrong with eating meat that has been offered to the idol of a pagan god. We know, in fact, that there is no living god, independent of the creator God of the cosmos, who is any rival to the God we worship. There is only one living God with whom any man has to concern himself. Accordingly, meat offered to an idol is meat offered to NO god with any power and reality outside of God himself. But, not everyone fully understands this truth. Hence, when an unenlightened individual offers meat to a pagan idol, he may very well be acting rebelliously and sinfully in doing so.

For our purposes it is not important to understand the details of this discussion. The thing to note is that the assertion I am interested in, 1 Cor. 8:6, is part of Paul's assertion that God and only God has any relevance to our lives. (In contrast to pagan gods that are utterly irrelevant, because *unreal* to us.) So, in just that context, Paul writes,

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ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἰς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἰς  
κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ. [1 Cor 8:6]

**Indeed, for us, there is one God, the Father, *ek* whom are all things; and we are *eis* him. And there is one lord, Jesus the Christ, *dia* whom are all things; and we are *dia* him.**

Here we have a more specific, particular context in which Paul says that “all things” are *dia* Jesus. Perhaps by understanding this context, we find an important clue with regard to what Paul means in Colossian 1:16 when he says “all things were created *dia* him and *eis* him” and in Hebrews 1:2 when he says, “and *dia* him [the Son] he made the ages [world?].”

**Observations regarding the meaning of 1 Corinthians 8:6**

1) The clear purpose of this assertion is to explain the reality and relevance of God (as well as of Jesus) *vis à vis* the comparative unreality and irrelevance of the pagan gods. There is only one God who is real and relevant: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he is the transcendent creator of all that is. There is only one tangible master who has any real authority over us: Jesus the Christ, the one and only visible image of the very transcendent creator himself; and he embodies in his person the unique authority of that creator. To “worship” an idol—the visible representation of some pagan god—is to worship nothing having any reality and relevance.

2) Note that the rhetorical structure of Paul’s assertion involves a parallelism: we are *eis* God, the Father, because all things are *ek* him. Parallel to this, we are *dia* Jesus, because all things are *dia* him. In both cases, Paul states a fact [all things are *ek* God; all things are *dia* Jesus] and then expresses what he thinks is the implication of that fact for us [we are *eis* God; we are *dia* Jesus]. However we understand these respective implications, they are ultimately intended to make the point that only God, the Father, and his Son, Jesus the Christ, are real and relevant to those of us who are Christians. No pagan god has any reality or relevance to us. Therefore, we know that the offering of to a pagan idol makes no difference to us. It is nothing more than meat placed in the vicinity of some stone statue of no consequence.

3) There is an important ramification of the above observations: our being *eis* God and our being *dia* Jesus must have closely related meaning. Both need to ultimately serve the same purpose: to inform us that it is God (and Jesus) who is the only real and actual authority to us. Hence, here is pretty clear evidence that *dia* plus genitive and *eis* plus accusative can be used to convey meanings that are quite close to one another. Notably, this is what we find in Colossians 1:16, “all things were created *dia* him and *eis* him.” In all likelihood, these are not significantly different ideas. More likely they are very closely related ideas seeking to triangulate toward one basic point; not two completely separate

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and distinct ideas. 1 Corinthians 8:6 would seem to corroborate this reading. The question is this: How are we to construe the meaning of *eis* and *dia* such that the obvious parallelism that Paul intends is preserved? That is, how are we to construe them such that they convey closely related meanings?

4) A likely meaning to “all things were *ek* God, the Father” is this: all things were from God, the Father; that is, all things had the source of their existence in God, the Father. In other words, all things were created by God, the Father. [This is corroborated by the fact that Paul calls him God, the “Father” in this assertion. One of the meanings of ‘Father’ is the *Father* of all that exists, that is, the source of the being of all that exists.]

5) What would it mean that we are *eis* God, the Father, such that that fact is a particular ramification of God being the creator of all things? What would it mean that we are *eis* God, the Father, such that that fact would parallel, as a closely related fact, the fact that we are *dia* Jesus? What could being *eis* God and *dia* Jesus mean such that each of them entails the sole relevance and actual reality of God and Jesus as sole authorities over us? My proposal is that *eis* means something roughly like “in relation to” and *dia* means something roughly like “with a view to.” We exist in relation to [*eis*] God, the Father (in the sense that our existence is defined by and finds its purpose in its being related to God). And we exist with a view to [*dia*] Jesus, the Christ (in the sense that our existence finds its definition and purpose in relation to the reality and centrality of Jesus, the Son of God). Note that, under this reading, *eis* and *dia* amount to roughly the same thing. That is, they are simply two different ways of giving expression to what is essentially the same thing. Consider the following example in ordinary English: “I wrote my dissertation *about* ancient Egypt. It is *on* the history of Egypt’s civilization.” This statement varies the preposition used; but each preposition means roughly the same thing—it indicates the subject matter of the dissertation. Lest one object that there is a subtle difference in meaning, notice that the two prepositions are quite interchangeable: “I wrote my dissertation *on* ancient Egypt. It is *about* the history of Egypt’s civilization.”

6) We must confront the question of whether the two occurrences of *dia* mean the same thing or different things in 1 Cor. 8:6. I see no reason to conclude that they mean different things.

The parallelism in this assertion suggests that there is some sort of parallel between “all things being from [*ek*] God” and “all things being *dia* Jesus.” From a traditionalist perspective, one could argue that “*ek* God” and “*dia* Jesus” are parallel in the sense that all things are created by the ultimate agency of God, while all things are created by the intermediate agency of Jesus. Hence, “*ek* God” is parallel with “*dia* Jesus” in that both refer to their agency in the act of creation—God the ultimate agent and Jesus the intermediate agent. However, this would mean that the two occurrences of *dia* in the second assertion have to mean two different things. (They cannot both mean Jesus’ intermediate agency in creation. If the second occurrence of *dia* means “we have our

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existence *through* the agency of Jesus,” then it destroys the intended parallelism. That is, “we have our existence through the agency of Jesus” is no longer in parallel with “we have our existence in relation to God.”) Why would Paul use *dia* in two different senses in this assertion? There is no independent basis for taking them in different senses— unless one argues that Paul is intending, with regard to both the Father and Jesus, to draw attention to their role as creator. Yet, if Paul (like me) thinks that it is unthinkable that his reader would attribute creatorship to Jesus, then he doesn’t need to specify that *dia* Jesus does not mean the same thing as *ek* the Father, for that would be an utterly unthinkable notion. Absent that reading, we are left with no reason to think that *dia* is used differently in the two occurrences within the last sentence of 8:6. That leaves us with every reason to assume that Paul is using the two occurrences of *dia* in the same sense; and no reason to think that he is attributing a different meaning to the two occurrences. Only if one has an *a priori* commitment to the doctrine that Jesus created the cosmos can one reasonably construe 1 Corinthians 8:6 as asserting such a thing. (Hence, 1 Corinthians cannot be used as evidence of the Son’s creatorship, nor of his pre-existence.)

There is another equally possible alternative: that the two statements are parallel in the sense that all things are created by God [they are *ek* God], yet, in his creating them, all things were created “with a view to” Jesus [they are *dia* Jesus]. (This is exactly how I construe Colossian 1:16, “all things were created with a view to [*dia*] him and in relation to [*eis*] him.”) In other words, in the very act of creating, the reference point that determined his act of creation was how everything he created ultimately related to Jesus. This latter has the virtue of construing both occurrences of *dia* in the same sense. In this case, the emphasis in the last clause is thrown onto the ‘we.’ All things were created with a view to [*dia*] Jesus; therefore, we (being among those “all things”) were created with a view to [*dia*] Jesus.

Here is a diagram of the rhetorical structure of 1 Cor. 8:6:

WE are <i>eis</i> God	because	ALL THINGS are <i>ek</i> God
WE are <i>dia</i> Jesus	because	ALL THINGS are <i>dia</i> Jesus

The above means:

WE are <i>FOR</i> God	because	ALL THINGS are <i>FROM</i> God
WE are <i>FOR</i> Jesus	because	ALL THINGS are <i>FOR</i> Jesus

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**Final decision regarding the meaning of 1 Corinthians 8:6**

In light of all the above observations, to translate 1 Corinthians 8:6 in simple terms, I would render it like this:

**Indeed, for us, there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things; and we exist for him. And there is one lord, Jesus the Christ, for whom are all things; and we exist for him.**

To explain Paul's point: God is the creator of all that is. In creating the cosmos, everything that exists was made with his Son Jesus in view and was created for him, to serve the purpose of accomplishing God's destiny for the Son. Accordingly, these facts define the meaning of our existence. We exist for God, to serve the purpose of being there for and in relation to God; and we exist for Jesus, to serve the purpose of being there for and in relation to Jesus. And it is only these two—God, the Father, and Jesus, his Son—who define the purpose of our existence. No pagan god has any bearing on the meaning and purpose of our existence.

**Implications of this discussion to the doctrine of the Trinity**

If this interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8:6 is right, then all of the following points follow:

- (1) 1 Corinthians serves as an important, independent piece of evidence in support of my interpretation and translation of *dia* plus the genitive in Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2 (and John 1:10).
- (2) 1 Corinthians serves as an important, independent piece of evidence in support of my interpretation and translation of *eis* in Colossians 1:16.
- (3) Since none of these three passages (1 Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16, or Heb. 1:2), interpreted as I have interpreted them, support the doctrine that the Son (the Logos) was the agency behind the creation of the world, then none of these passages require, nor even suggest, the pre-existence of the Son. [This same point also pertains to John 1:10.]