The service of the one God is one of the great ideas of Deuteronomy. Moses in his discourses surrounding the law code never tires of inculcating the lesson. "Yahweh is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other" (4:39). "Listen, Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone" (6:4). "You must fear Yahweh your God, you must serve him, by his name you must swear" (6:13). "See now that I, I am He, and there is no other god. It is I who deal death and life; when I have struck it is I who heal and none can deliver from my hand" (32:39). Although we have to do here with the concept of the incomparability of Yahweh rather than with a strict monotheism, we may expect the monotheistic religions of late antiquity, Judaism and Christianity, to exploit these statements to underpin their argument. The material ready for checking this, however, is huge. In the following I will therefore concentrate on some uses of Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20, especially their first two clauses, in early Christian literature. Before, however, embarking on our exploration, some basic information should be provided.

Textual matters

The passages in question, 6:13 and 10:20, and especially their first two clauses, can be studied together. The reason for that is simple: the first two clauses of 6:13 are virtually identical with the first two of 10:20, the only difference being the absence in 10:20 of the conjunction we

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1 The translations from Scripture in this article are those of the Jerusalem Bible.
2 As has been well worked out by Cas Labuschagne, to whom I dedicate this essay in memory of long-standing friendly relations in general and an unforgettable journey to Egypt and Jordan in particular. The study I hinted at is of course his Pretoria thesis Die Onvergelyklikheid van Jahwe in die Ou Testament, of which The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament (POS 5; Leiden, 1966) is a revision and translation.
introducing the second clause. Also the respective contexts are similar: both passages occur in the first part of Moses’ second discourse in which he introduces the Deuteronomic Code and stresses its animating principle: to love Yahweh is the essence of the Law.

In the Septuagint the first two clauses of Deut 6:13 are identical with those of 10:20. In the close rendering of the Hebrew parent text which we read in the fourth century uncial MSS. codex Vaticanus and codex Sinaiticus they run as follows:

κύριον τὸν θεόν σου φοβηθήσει καὶ αὐτῷ λατρεύσεις.⁴

There are, however, textual variants in the Greek; usually those of 6:13 correspond to those of 10:20. Two of these variants play an important part in patristic literature: προσκυνήσεις replacing φοβηθήσει and μόνω reinforcing αὐτῷ, so that in Christian texts the usual form of the text is:

κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνω λατρεύσεις

Yet we should not think both variants to be inseparable: μόνω has imposed itself much more absolutely than προσκυνήσεις.⁵

New Testament


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³ In the MT. It is, however, present in a good number of mediaeval MSS., in the versions (including Tg Jonathan), in a Tefillin (4Q138) and in a Mezuzah from Qumran. In the biblical MSS. from Qumran Deut 6:13 and 10:20 have not been preserved.

⁴ As we shall see in a moment, this is also the form found in the New Testament. It has even been claimed that the variants in the LXX were derived from the New Testament, but T. Holtz, Untersuchungen über die alttestamentlichen Zitate bei Lukas (Texte und Untersuchungen 104; Berlin, 1968) 61-63, who studied the question in detail, rejects that.

⁵ For the witnesses to the several variants the critical apparatus of the edition by J.W. Wevers (Göttingen, 1977), should be consulted. - There are also other passages which tend to attract the addition of μόνως to θεος, e.g. Deut 1:17 as quoted by Philo Somn. 2,24; Josh 24:14 as quoted in Macarius Magnes Apocr. 4,23. Judges 10:16 codex Vaticanus. The expression “to serve Yahweh alone” occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, e.g. 1 Sam 7:3-4; cf. also Exod 22:20; 2 Kings 19:15.19. The reading φοβηθήσει, which is in the only place where Philo cites the clause, Migr. 132, is found consistently in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and in the one occurrence of our text in Julian (fr. 67 Masaracchia); it occasionally occurs in Clement of Alexandria (Strom. 4,170,4), Origen (Cels. 7,64; Chain on Job PG 17,104a), Tertullian (Adv. Marc. 2,13,5) and the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions (5,13,3).

⁶ For easy reference I shall mention only 6:13 in the following, taking for granted that 10:20 is included in it.