

**MONOTHEISM—STILL A MISUSED WORD IN JEWISH STUDIES?**

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In 1991 Peter Hayman published an article in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* which contended that, “it is hardly ever appropriate to use the term monotheism to describe the Jewish idea of God, that no progress beyond the simple formulas of the Book of Deuteronomy can be discerned in Judaism before the philosophers of the Middle Ages, and that Judaism never escapes from the legacy of the battles for supremacy between Yahweh, Ba’al and El from which it emerged.”<sup>1</sup> Hayman’s discussion advances along a line of argumentation that presupposes the identification of monotheism and monism. He suggests, for instance, that monotheism is not conceivable without a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*,<sup>2</sup> as Yhwh’s transcendence is compromised by the dualism of the *Chaoskampf*. Judaism, he argues, was, and remains, firmly grounded in monarchism, or “cooperative dualism.”<sup>3</sup> This undermines a claim to monotheism.

In his article Hayman avoids defining “monotheism” for the sake of comparison with ancient perspectives on divinity, stating that “Maimonides and the other Jewish philosophers knew a long time ago that Judaism would not match up to such a test.”<sup>4</sup> Rather, he aims simply “to try and observe the pattern of Jewish beliefs about God from the Exile to the Middle Ages to assess whether or not it is truly monistic.”<sup>5</sup> Hayman here commits the etymological fallacy, assuming a specific philosophical and prescriptive definition of monotheism that effectively precludes the possibility of finding the notion outside of the philosophical circles in which it developed.<sup>6</sup> I propose, rather, that monotheism should be defined not according to philosophical propositions, but according to its usage as a theological descriptor. This paper will examine the provenance of the term monotheism, as well as its

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1 Peter Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42.1 (1991): 2.

2 Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” 3.

3 Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” 11.

4 Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” 2.

5 Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” 2.

6 Note R.W.L. Moberly’s objection to a similar methodology: “One may entirely agree with the need to avoid inappropriate imposition upon the text, and yet wish that this did not lead to a kind of positivism in which all one has to do is ‘approach the factual data’ without rigorously considering the adequacy of one’s conceptual categories of interpretation” (“How Appropriate is ‘Monotheism’ as a Category for Biblical Interpretation?” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* [Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. Spirston North, eds.; London: T&T Clark, 2004], 233).

contemporary usage. It will then delineate the boundaries of the belief described by the term and identify the historical roots of that belief.

### *The Meaning of Monotheism*

The first known use of the word “monotheism” comes from Cambridge Platonist Henry More. More first used the term to describe the “*Monotheisme*” of pantheists as “rank *Atheism*,”<sup>7</sup> since they made the world their God and neglected the spiritual existence of the true God. More also classified polytheists as atheists for their worship of non-spiritual divinities. Only those who believed in a spiritual deity could actually offer worship. More’s argument displays the incidental nature of the “mono-” in monotheism, and he states himself that ““there is a *latitude of sense* in the word *One* or *Unity* allowable in the Creed.”<sup>8</sup> His primary concern was not to emphasize the worship of one deity, but to distinguish those who recognized a spiritual deity from those who did not. Those in the second category, whether they believed in no deity, one deity, or several deities, were categorized simply as atheists. Hobbes and the materialists, who emphasized natural religion over revealed religion, were More’s primary targets in this campaign.

The Enlightenment’s propositionalism, which objectified knowledge and sought to classify and organize it for the sake of intellectual convenience,<sup>9</sup> sits at the root of More’s efforts. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, religion became a series of propositions rather than “a kind of transformative and demanding awareness of reality that is rooted in, and inseparable from, a range of moral disciplines and symbolic practices.”<sup>10</sup> For More and the Cambridge Platonists, these propositions privileged a Christian perspective. “Polytheism” as a category only has heuristic value in light of a monotheistic framework. The religions which fall into that category are thus analyzed not on their own terms, but on

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7 More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660), 62.

8 More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, 456.

9 Peter Harrison, “*Religion*” and the Religions in the *English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25–26.

10 R.W.L. Moberly, “How Appropriate is ‘Monotheism’ as a Category for Biblical Interpretation?” 221–22.

monotheism's terms, which heavily distorts their representation. As Nathan MacDonald has argued, the monotheistic religions themselves are also distorted by this process, which looks to philosophy and not to theology for its bearings:

The first use of “monotheism” as a classification to which Christianity belongs occurs in a conflict with the philosophical doctrine of “materialism.” The terms upon which that battle was to be fought were agreed by the Cambridge Platonists and Descartes to be philosophical, rather than theological. The term “monotheism” reflects that agreement. In other words, “monotheism” reflects a classification of religions based, not on an inner-Christian perspective, but on one derived from the early Enlightenment.<sup>11</sup>

While this propositionalism distorts religious categorization, it must also be recognized that the worship of a single deity was a means of distinction that was recognized by Greco-Roman period Jews and Gentiles. (The rationalism of the Enlightenment, after all, was in large part a rebirth of many aspects of Classical philosophy.) Tacitus, for instance, uses monotheism to contrast the Jews with the Egyptians:

The Egyptians worship very many animals and images of composite creatures; the Jews conceive of a single Deity with their minds alone. They regard as impious those who fashion images of gods in human shape out of perishable material. Their God is supreme and eternal, neither capable of imitation nor of death.<sup>12</sup>

Hecataeus,<sup>13</sup> Strabo,<sup>14</sup> and others echo this perspective. Philo states that the greatest repentance possible is to repent of the worship of multiple “rulers,” which he asserts are not gods, and come to the worship of “a single monarch.”<sup>15</sup> Paul states in 1 Cor 8:5–6 that, although there are many “so-called

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11 Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 17.

12 *Histories* 5.5.4. The translation is from Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 206.

13 *Diodorus Siculus* 40.3.4.

14 *Geogr.* 16.2.35.

15 *Virt.* 33.179.

gods,” for Christians there is one God. In the above examples, however, it is a single God as an appropriate object of worship that is primarily in view, not simply the recognition of a metaphysical truth. That worship is contrasted with the worship of entities considered unworthy of veneration, be they manmade idols or subordinate divine beings.

Contemporary Judeo-Christian ideas of monotheism are quite similar. Today acknowledging the existence of divine beings like angels, cherubim, seraphim, demons, or Satan poses little threat to monotheism, although all these beings could be, and were,<sup>16</sup> referred to as *'ēlōhîm*, or “gods.” The most common response today is that these are subordinate and contingent divine beings.<sup>17</sup> They may nominally be “gods,” but certainly not in the same sense that God is. This theology thus appropriates for prescriptive purposes the term “god.” God is their creator, and not in a filial sense. There is an ontological gulf between God and the gods that makes “gods” an uncomfortable epithet in the Judeo-Christian worldview. Other divine beings are viewed as so inferior and servile compared to God that they are viewed as unworthy of their taxonomy, which is qualitatively distinct from God's. Many would say that angels and other divine beings are ontologically more closely related to humanity than to deity. This ontological compartmentalization protects the uniqueness of God and allows Jews and Christians to assert his absolute exclusivity even in a heaven filled with a thousand thousands who serve him. God's demand for exclusive worship is now strengthened by the assertion that other deities are directly subordinate to, and contingent upon, him. As such, they are hardly worthy of worship themselves. I suggest that this ontological compartmentalization best serves to delineate the boundaries of monotheism as it is understood today.

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16 See Gen 48:15–16; Deut 32:17; Hos 12:4–5; Job 1:6; 2:1.

17 Scholars might refer to this as henotheism or monolatry, but these categories have been rightly viewed with suspicion (see, for instance, Michael S. Heiser, “Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible,” 18.1 [2008]: 1–30, and bibliographic information there.). Additionally, “monotheism” was developed as a descriptor of modern Christianity. It is certainly a valid term for modern Jews and Christians.

*Deutero-Isaiah and Monotheism*

This investigation's next task will be to identify the origins of this compartmentalization. The modern academic consensus holds that monotheism developed during the exile as a response to the crisis of the Babylonian exile.<sup>18</sup> This will serve as a convenient jumping-off point. This consensus, however, operates with a distinct definition of monotheism, which it views as the rejection of the existence of other deities. Deutero-Isaiah is highlighted by many as that notion's pioneering author.<sup>19</sup> The following statements, among others, are commonly marshaled in support of this conclusion: “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me” (Isa 43:10)<sup>20</sup>; “Look, you are nothing, and your works less than nothing” (Isa 41:24); “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god” (Isa 44:6).

Since the mid-twentieth century, however, a number of scholars have expressed doubts about reading these statements as strict denials of the existence of other deities.<sup>21</sup> This same rhetoric appears in various contexts unrelated to the gods. See, for instance, Isa 40:17: “All the nations are as nothing (*kě’ain*) before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing (*mē’epes*) and emptiness (*tōhū*).”<sup>22</sup> Yhwh renders the princes as “nothing” in Isa 40:23. In Isa 41:11 those who are angry with Israel will be “as nothing” (*kě’ain*), and in v. 12 those who war against Israel will be “nothing at all” (*kě’ain ûkě’epes*). All who make idols in Isa 44:9 are “emptiness” (*tōhū*). In Isa 47:8 and 10 the author has the personified Babylon imagine in her heart, “I am, and there is none other,” *’ānī wě’ēn ’apśī*. The author

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18 See the discussions in Gnuse, “The Emergence of Monotheism in Ancient Israel: A Survey of Recent Scholarship,” *Religion* 29 (1999): 317–28; and MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 43–52; Ronald E. Clements, “Monotheism and the God of Many Names,” in *The God of Israel* (Robert P. Gordon, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 56–59;

19 For instance, Robert Gnuse calls the theology of Deutero-Isaiah “an absolute and universalistic monotheism” (Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 207).

20 Rather than referring to the non-existence of other gods, this statement simply denies that any came into being prior to Yhwh’s existence or will exist after his existence. The implication is that all the gods that exist were created by, and are inferior to, Yhwh.

21 P. de Boer, *Second Isaiah’s Message* (Leiden: Brill, 1956), 47; James Barr, “The Problem of Israelite Monotheism,” *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 17 (1957–58): 52–62; Ulrich Mauser, “One God Alone: A Pillar of Biblical Theology,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 12.3 (1991), 259, n. 5; R.W.L. Moberly, “How Appropriate is ‘Monotheism’ as a Category for Biblical Interpretation?” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North, eds.; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 229–31; Michael Heiser, “Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible,” *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 18.1 (2008): 9–15.

22 Cf. Isa 41:24: “Look, you are nothing (*mē’ain*), and your work is nothing at all (*mē’āpa’*).”

is unlikely to be portraying Babylon as imagining herself to be the only city in existence, rather the only city of relevance within her purview. She is all that matters for her constituents.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Yhwh is made to assert his exclusive relationship with Israel. MacDonald concludes, “’ên ‘ôd functions not as a claim of the non-existence of other deities, but that Yhwh is the only god for Israel.”<sup>24</sup> Richard Bauckham has recently objected to MacDonald's conclusion, pointing out that the same vernacular is used in 1 Kgs 8:60 and elsewhere where Yhwh asserts his exclusive relationship with the whole earth rather than just Israel.<sup>25</sup> The only limitation on Yhwh's exclusivity is provided by the context, he asserts, not the phrase itself. I would argue, however, that those later texts simply viewed the entire earth as Yhwh's purview rather than just Israel. The context does not introduce a limitation where there was none, it just delineates the implied limitation. The reader need not default to the notion that 1 Kgs 8:60 precludes the existence of other deities, as Bauckham himself points out.<sup>26</sup> Were this rhetoric of exclusivity responding to the question of whether or not other gods exist, we would expect to find ’ên ’aḥer or ’ên ’ēlōhîm ’ăḥērîm. We do not, however. The question this rhetoric seems to be responding to is that of who else Israel can turn to for salvation.<sup>27</sup>

A final consideration on this view of monotheism is the failure of Deutero-Isaiah to rid Judaism's theological landscape of the gods. Post-exilic texts abound with references to other deities.

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23 Hywel Clifford, arguing against this reading, states, “the rhetoric attributed to Babylon is a tradition-bound parody of Yahweh's words: she aspires to a god-like status when in reality she is as vulnerable to civic misfortune as any other. Babylon's hubristic claims are thus no analogy for the gods as idols” (“Deutero-Isaiah and Monotheism,” in *Prophecy and Prophets: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* [Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 531; Edited by John Day; New York: T&T Clark, 2010], 267–89). Babylon's comments are not an “analogy for the gods as idols,” though, they are an analogy for Yhwh's claims of exclusivity. Additionally, Deutero-Isaiah does not present the “daughter Chaldea” as an aspiring deity, or as the city's divine patroness, he presents her as “the mistress of kingdoms” who hopes to be “mistress forever” (47:5–7). Lastly, were this a “tradition-bound parody” rather than simply another manifestation of a literary convention, we would expect the same words to be used rather than merely similar words. ’epes is not used by the author in Yhwh's rhetoric of exclusivity.

24 MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 84.

25 Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Eerdmans, 2008), 69–70.

26 “They do not deny that there are other gods” (*Jesus and the God of Israel*, 70, emphasis in original).

27 Note the representation of the idol in Isa 46:7: “If one cries out to it, it does not answer or save anyone from trouble.” Cf. Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament* (trans. John Sturdy; Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 279; “[T]he Old Testament has probably never strictly denied the existence of gods in the plural. It regarded the gods not as nothing, but as good for nothing; it does not deny their existence, but their power and effectiveness. The decisive question is 'what can other gods do?', not 'Are there other gods?'”

The “sons of God” are mentioned in divine assembly settings in Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7. The Dead Sea Scrolls make repeated reference to the plural “gods.”<sup>28</sup> In the Wisdom of Solomon 5:5 the wicked are said to marvel at the state of the righteous who are “counted among the sons of God.” Even Deuteronomy Rabbah alludes to the pre-Masoretic version of Deut 32:8, stating that the nations “each chose their own god, one chose for itself Michael, one chose Gabriel, yet another chose the sun and the moon.”<sup>29</sup> This is not what one would expect from a religious tradition inheriting an absolute and universalistic monotheism. Rather, it seems Deutero-Isaiah's rhetoric was aimed at the relevance and efficacy of the gods.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the lack of any denial of the existence of other deities, Deutero-Isaiah does promote a new view of deity. Most significantly, Yhwh is first asserted to be responsible for the salvation of the nations in Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>31</sup> This answers the implications of Yhwh's universalization, asserted by portions of Deuteronomy and a narrative arc within the Psalms of Asaph (Pss 79–83). Another theological innovation utilized traditional Syro-Palestinian literary imagery in order to polemicize specific aspects of that imagery which conflicted with developing views of God. Isa 40:1–8 contain a series of plural imperatives with no subject (vv. 1–2)<sup>32</sup> and the proclamation of a divine herald (vv. 6–8), which are motifs within the divine council type-scene.<sup>33</sup> In vv. 13–14, however, the author also

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28 Generally they are *'ēlīm*. See, for instance, 1QM 15:14; 17:7; 4Q181 1:4; 4Q427 7 ii 9; 5Q13 1:6.

29 *Deut. Rab.* On Deut 6:4, quoted in Hayman, “Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?” 6–7.

30 Clifford provides two arguments against this. First, he seems to claim that it would be “undesirable” to assume Deutero-Isaiah was unaware of concepts of ontological existence/non-existence, and so we must assume he *was* aware of the concepts. Since the notion was developed within Greek philosophical circles, I see no reason to avoid the conclusion that the ancient Hebrews had not formulated a rejection of the ontological existence of other deities. Second, he asserts that *'āher* is indeed employed in reference to idols vis-à-vis Yhwh, pointing to Isa 42:8 and 48:11 (“Deutero-Isaiah and Monotheism,” 273–75). In both scriptures, however, the statement is “my glory I give to no other.” In the former, this is followed by “nor my praise to idols,” and so Clifford must be asserting the formal equivalence of the parallelism in 42:8 and reading that parallel into 48:11. Even if this tenuous identification is allowed, there is no rejection of the existence of that “other,” since that would also require that “gods” and “idols” be formal equivalents.

31 Cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6. On this, see D. W. Van Winkle, “The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah XL–LV,” *Vetus Testamentum* 35.4 (1985): 446–58; Joel Kaminsky, “God of All the World: Universalism and Developing Monotheism in Isaiah 40–66,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99.2 (2006): 139–63.

32 See Frank M. Cross, “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” 275–76. On plural imperatives as a divine council motif in general, see David Bokovoy, “שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב”: Invoking the Council as Witnesses in Amos 3:13,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127.1 (2008): 37–42.

33 Cross, “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” 276.

rejects the foundation of the type-scene, asserting that Yhwh needs no direction or counselor.<sup>34</sup> This indicates a move toward the compartmentalization of monotheism, but Deutero-Isaiah has yet to reconcile his worldview with the other gods. He manifests the theological concerns that form the foundation of monotheism, but he has not fully developed his approach to the problem of the gods, and his solution, to assert their utter insignificance and refuse to engage them, ultimately fails to take hold. Deutero-Isaiah is not monotheistic in the modern sense of the word.

### *The Hellenistic Period and Monotheism*

It is not until the Hellenistic period that Judaism found a way to acknowledge the gods without compromising Yhwh's transcendence. The innovation that made this possible is most clearly manifested in LXX Deut 32:43, cola a–d, which have recently received a lot of attention.<sup>35</sup> MT only preserves one of the four cola found in the Septuagint, reading, “rejoice, O nations, with him.” 4QDeut<sup>q</sup> has two, which are widely accepted as most original. It reads, “rejoice, O heavens, with him, and let all the gods worship him.” The last colon in 4QDeut<sup>q</sup> is also found in Ps 97:7. The Greek of Deut 32:43 alters the reading from the scrolls and adds two additional cola, rendering, “rejoice, O heavens, with him, and let all the sons of God worship him; rejoice, O nations, with his people, and let the angels of God strengthen him.” Before discussing the significance of these differences, some text-critical comments are in order.

The divergences from 4QDeut<sup>q</sup> in the Septuagint version are unlikely to derive from the *Vorlage*.  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  likely renders *'ēlōhîm*. While *bēnê 'ēlōhîm* may seem a more simple retroversion,

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34 R.N. Whybray concludes that this polemic is directed specifically against Marduk (*The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiah xl 13–14: A Study of the Sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971], 73–74, 77). Isa 41:28–29 may provide an inclusion, asserting there is no one around to give an answer because the gods are “all a delusion” (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19–23).

35 Van der Kooij, “The Ending of the Song of Moses,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C.J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (F. García Martínez, A. Hilhorst, J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, A. S. van der Woude, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 93–100; Rofé, “The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:32)” in *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretations* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 47–54; Karrer, “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Septuagint,” in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, eds.; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 349–53.

two considerations mitigate that conclusion. (1) We have good textual evidence for *'ēlōhîm*, and (2) the expansion in translation is easily explained.<sup>36</sup> It harmonizes the colon with the translation of Deut 32:8: ἀριθμὸν υἱῶν θεοῦ, “the number of the sons of God,” and it skirts the invective aimed at the θεοί in other portions of the Song of Moses. *bēnē 'ēlōhîm* seems to have been more palatable to the translator and his expected readers than simply *'ēlōhîm*.

The additional cola are also likely exegetical. Deuteronomy is devoid of any mention of divine messengers. The only use of the Hebrew *mēlā'kîm* refers to human messengers (2:26). The association of angels with the *bēnē 'ēlōhîm* is not found in the Hebrew Bible. Angels belonged to a distinct class of being.<sup>37</sup> Their conflation first occurs in exegetical translations within the Greek, like Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7. LXX Genesis, likely the first book of the Septuagint translated, has υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ at Gen 6:2 and 4 in early manuscripts, but ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ replaces it in later manuscripts. While υἱῶν θεοῦ is the earliest rendering of Deut 32:8, most witnesses render ἀγγελῶν θεοῦ.<sup>38</sup>

This identification is carried over to Deut 33:2, which is widely agreed to have referred originally to *'ēlîm*, or “gods,” appearing parallel to *qōdeš*, or “Holy Ones.” Ps 89:6–7 creates the same parallelism between “Congregation of Holy Ones,” and “Sons of El,” explicitly identifying the “Holy Ones” with the deities of the Israelite pantheon’s second tier.<sup>39</sup> V. 8 even references a “Council of Holy Ones.” In the Ugaritic texts the word appears parallel to *'ilm*, and is a clear reference to second tier deities. LXX Deut 33:2 transliterates *qōdeš* with καθῆς, perhaps because of confusion with the singular form, and renders the reference to *'ēlîm* with ἄγγελοι. This reading is also found in later literature. *I Enoch* eschatologically recasts Deuteronomy 33, and refers to the “Holy Ones” who would accompany

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36 This is also the contention of van der Kooij, “The Ending of the Song of Moses,” 99–100.

37 See Sang Youl Cho, *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts and the Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Study of Their Nature and Roles* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007).

38 υἱῶν θεοῦ is found in a papyrus from Cairo (848) and in an Armenian manuscript. See Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 513. Others render ἀγγελῶν θεοῦ, υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ, or some slight variation.

39 *'ēlîm* may be the singular *'ēl* with an enclitic *mem*, which would be directly parallel to the Ugaritic *'ilm*.

Yahweh at Sinai as “angels.”<sup>40</sup> These angels are frequently called “watchers” in *1 Enoch* and other apocalyptic literature, where they also take the place of the *bēnê ’ēlōhîm* from Gen 6:2 and 4.<sup>41</sup> The narrative involving their marriage to human women is expanded in *1 Enoch* and in *Jubilees*.<sup>42</sup> 4Q180 1.7, entitled “The Ages of Creation,” references “Azaz’el and the angels” who sired children with the daughters of humanity. *Genesis Rabba* 26.5 renders Gen 2:4 with “sons of nobles” and actually curses anyone who transmits “sons of God.”

“Angels” is the reading preserved in almost all subsequent allusions to these texts. Jub 15:31–32 explains that God set “spirits” over the nations of the earth in order to lead them astray from following him, but he set no “angel or spirit” over Israel, his special possession.<sup>43</sup> Dan 10:20–21 refer to the guardians of the nations of Persia and Greece as “princes,” calling the angel Michael one of the “chief princes” (v. 13). Enoch’s *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 En.* 10–12) recasts Deuteronomy’s divine stewards as angelic shepherds over the nations who serve to punish Israel. In Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata*, he asserts that “the patronage of angels is distributed over the nations and cities.”<sup>44</sup> Similar readings are also found in the Pseudo-Clementine texts, and in a number of rabbinic texts.<sup>45</sup> What is rare is a reference to these stewards as “gods” or “sons of God,” and where they occur, the context clearly defines them as angels. With the translation of the Septuagint, the understanding of the gods shifted.<sup>46</sup> The different divine beings of the Israelite pantheon were consolidated into the angelic taxonomy, which restricted them to a servile and contingent existence. This allowed the literature to explore their nature and function without fear of undermining Yhwh’s transcendence. As the above

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40 *1 En.* 1:9; 60:4; Jub 17:11 (cf. Dan 4:13, 17, where the “Watchers,” another epithet for angels, are described as “Holy Ones”).

41 See Reimer, “Rescuing the Fallen Angels,” 335–40.

42 See, for instance, *1 En.* 6:2; Jub 5:1; *2 En.* 29:4–5.

43 These “spirits” are the offspring of the Watchers (cf. Jub 10:2–9; Gen 6:2, 4).

44 *Stromata* 6.17.157.5.

45 A few examples are *Recognitions* 2.42; *Homilies* 18.4; *Deuteronomy Rabba* 6:4.

46 For a full discussion, see Hannah, “Guardian Angels and Angelic National Patrons in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception* (Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Niklas, Karin Shöpflin, eds.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 413–35. See also Collins, “Powers in Heaven,” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler, eds.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 11–14.

discussion shows, Hellenistic-era writers took advantage of that opportunity, and a vast and pluriform hierarchy of angels, both evil and benign, developed out of the literature. The use of “gods” declined sharply in most literature during this period, manifesting greater comfort with referring to these beings as “angels.” Their identification became quickly solidified, though, so that by the time of the Qumran community, “gods” could be utilized frequently without fear of misunderstanding.

### *Conclusion*

While Hayman’s article is correct to point out the presence of multiple divine beings throughout the history of Judaism, his approach to monotheism as a strict monism reflects a modern philosophical bias. He cannot hope to find an Enlightenment-era philosophical principle in Judaism’s ancient textual heritage. Those texts express an orthopraxic orientation more closely related to the modern Judeo-Christian laity than to its academy. Although its provenance belongs to the academy, “monotheism” is a categorization that has been fully appropriated by, and continues to be fiercely defended by, millions of Jews and Christians today who recognize many of the same divine beings acknowledged in antiquity. The most meaningful way that this modern term can provide a framework for analyzing ancient Judaism is in its function as a descriptor. If the phenomena it describes within contemporary Judeo-Christianity can be identified in ancient Judaism and Christianity, the term has heuristic value for biblical scholarship (it is not a misused term). I suggest that the Septuagint’s conflation of the sons of God with the angels marks the threshold of modern monotheism. Its solution to the problem of the gods represents a theological innovation that departed from the theology of all previous texts, was quickly adopted by subsequent authors,<sup>47</sup> and has perdured down to the present day.

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<sup>47</sup>In addition to the texts mentioned above, the author of Heb 1:6 quotes a variant of LXX Deut 32:43 in explaining Christ’s temporary subordination to the angels (specifically, he cites the verse as found in LXX Ps 96:7 and Odes 2:43. See Martin Karrer, “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Septuagint,” in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* [Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, eds.; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006], 349–53. *Deuteronomy Rabba* alludes to Deut 4:19 when it warns, “Do not go astray after one of these angels who came down with me; they are all my servants.”