

RATIO CHRISTI

Welcome to Ratio Christi



at Texas A&M

Welcome!

Ratio Christi, meaning “reason for Christ” in Latin, serves to defend the Christian faith in honest dialogue with both our skeptical & believing friends.

Weekly Meetings: Thursday @ 7:30pm

in person + via ZOOM

RC-TAMU.org



RATIO CHRISTI

Thomistic Institute

The Thomistic Institute exists to promote Catholic truth in our contemporary world by strengthening the intellectual formation of Christians at Texas A&M University, in the Church, and in the wider public square. The thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Universal Doctor of the Church, is our touchstone.

Weekly Meetings: Wednesdays @ 8:45pm, ZOOM

thomisticinstitute.org/texas-am



Secular Students Alliance

The Secular Student Alliance seeks to provide a support network for the atheists, agnostics, and otherwise secular peoples of Texas A&M University.

SSA brings together people from a wide range of religious and ideological backgrounds in order to foster deeper levels of understanding through discussion and dialogue.

Weekly Meetings: Wednesdays @ 8:30pm, ZOOM

Join us for a night of dialogue and question Nov. 11th



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Fall 2020: Confronting Old Testament Controversy

How well do you know your Old Testament?

This fall Ratio Christi at Texas A&M is *Confronting Old Testament Controversy*.

Despite being the majority of the Bible, the Old Testament remains a difficult and sometime perplexing group of writings. With ancient laws, long histories, and confusing prophecies, we are often left wondering... ***what do we do with the Old Testament?*** Each week we will look at the toughest questions surrounding the Hebrew Bible:

- Is the God of the Old Testament evil?
- Did the Exodus really happen? If so, when?
- Were the Israelites polytheists?
- Did Moses write the Torah?

Join us each **Thursday at 7:30pm** to learn a little bit more about the old testament.



Were the Ancient Israelites Polytheists?

Recap of the semester so far

Week 1: How Did We Get the Old Testament?

The text of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) consists primarily of the Greek LXX and Hebrew MT. Inspiration is a process, not an event.

Week 2: How Should We Read Genesis 1-11?

Genre widely considered Proto-History: historical events and personages are cloaked in the mythological language of exalted prose.

Week 3: Does Science Contradict Genesis?

Only the Literal Calendar Day view and "Fixity of the Species" views are in any serious conflict with ancient universe and common ancestry. Darwinism is dead: Evolution is way more than random mutation + natural selection

Week 4: Does Genetic Evidence Contradict Adam & Eve?

There is a range of views; genetic bottleneck at 500 kya, genealogical bottleneck at 10 kya. Secondary theology more influential than raw data.

Week 5: Did the Exodus Happen in History?

The lack of archaeological evidence is not surprising given the region, nor is it concerning given the degree of national witness to the Exodus (Kuzari Principle).

Week 6: Did the Israelites Conquer Canaan?

There is a conquest genre being employed in this literature which cloaks a meta-narrative with stronger language. Once the meta-narrative has been properly understood, there is no significant refutation from archaeology.

Week 7: Did God Command Genocide?

There are a number of views that complement one another in defending the biblical texts from claims of God commanding and condoning genocide and if these verses are a source of discomfort, we can know that Jesus is the most accurate revelation of God.



Were the Ancient Israelites Polytheists?

“I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

- Elijah (1 Kings 19:14)



God replies "Yet **I will leave seven thousand** in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:14-18)

This clearly shows that at one point there were only 7000 Israelites remaining who had not turned to Baal worship.



Was the Bible Originally Polytheistic?

The Controversy

“The God of the Old Testament does not seem to be **omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent**, especially in Genesis.

So somewhere along the way he became those things.

Eating from **the tree of knowledge is supposed to make us more God-like**. After eating the fruit, we become like the God of the Old Testament. If God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent then we missed the mark by a long shot when we ate from the tree.

It’s interesting how **ancient gods are more human-like and flawed**, but nowadays most people worship a perfect god. **The modern god is an evolved form of the original ancient god.**

Also Judaism was originally polytheistic (technically henotheistic), so it wouldn’t make sense to have an omnipotent god if there are multiple gods. - Private correspondence with a fellow Aggie

Origins of Monotheism

“Monotheism asserts its identity by opposing itself to polytheism, whereas no polytheistic religion ever asserted itself in contradistinction to monotheism, for the **simple reason that polytheism is always the older or “primary” and monotheism the newer or “secondary” type of religion.**” (Religions of the Ancient World. A Guide, Cambridge Mass. 2004, S. 17-31).



Jan Assmann - German Egyptologist at University of Constance

What is the problem?

*The real problem here is a challenge to God's uniqueness within the biblical text!
If YHWH is just one of many gods then why does He get our worship above all the rest?*

- The Israelite Religion (*allegedly*) must have evolved from polytheism
- The Tanakh (*allegedly*) alludes to the existence of other gods
 - The Tanakh contradicts itself by talking about other gods?
- Monotheism is (*allegedly*) a later addition to the Israelite religion and Judaism and Christianity by extension.

- Textual Evidence - the evidence from the bible and literature of surrounding cultures.
- Archaeological Evidence - There is plenty of evidence of worship of other gods by the Israelites.
- *A priori* reasoning(?) - “Monotheism asserts its identity by opposing itself to polytheism, whereas no polytheistic religion ever asserted itself in contradistinction to monotheism, for the ***simple reason that polytheism is always the older or “primary” and monotheism the newer or “secondary” type of religion.***” (Religions of the Ancient World. A Guide, Cambridge Mass. 2004, S. 17-31).

Our Priorities



We are an apologetics organization which means we are committed to defending several principles in taking on the argument (and similar arguments) from the slide before.

- Biblical Inerrancy
- Defense of a Unique, Omnipotent, Trinitarian, God (generally considered the Classical picture of God).
-

Recap: What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?

“**Inspiration:** The process by which **God worked through the human authors** of the Bible... and refers to God as the ultimate source of the Scriptures.”

“**Organic inspiration:** The process by which God guided the human authors of Scripture, working in and through their particular styles and life experiences, so that what they produced was exactly what He wanted them to produce. **The text is truly the work of the human authors**—God did not typically dictate to them as to a stenographer—and yet the Lord stands behind it as the ultimate source.”

-Ligonier Ministries



R.C. Sproul

NOTE: Islamic inspiration is based on a “dictation” model, Christianity has historically not taken this view

Recap: What does it mean that the Bible is inerrant?



Inerrancy:

- Being wholly and verbally God-given, **Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching**, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
- We affirm that **God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers** whom He had chosen and prepared.
- We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.



Michael S. Heiser (Ph.D., Hebrew Bible and Semitic Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison) is a scholar of the Bible and its ancient context. Dr. Heiser has over 20 years of teaching experience in both university classrooms and online education. Dr. Heiser is published widely in scholarly journals and is a best-selling author of numerous books including *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Lexham, 2015). Dr. Heiser advocates that interpreting the Bible in proper context means reading it in light of the context that produced it instead of Christian tradition or modern thinking. Readers discover a radical new relevance and coherence when they read the Bible through the eyes of its ancient writers.

Roadmap - Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible

1

The Divine Council Worldview

A survey of the surrounding cultures and the evidence within the biblical text.

2

Divine Plurality

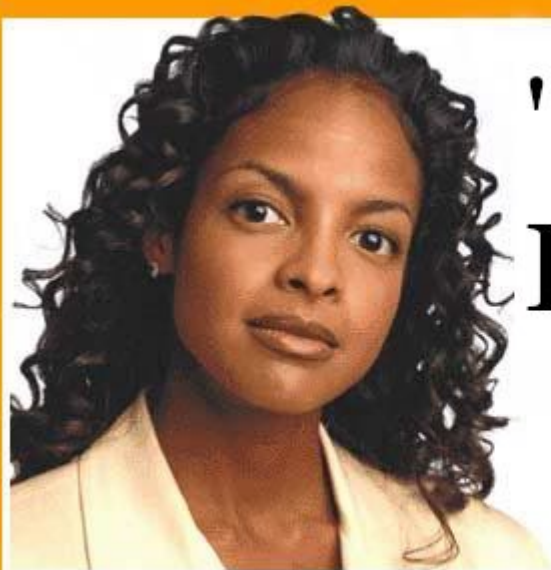
A survey of the two figures of YHWH and the identity of the other gods.

3

Does it Contradict Christ

An integration of the divine council and two powers concepts with respect to the expectations from the Messiah

What does the Bible say about the Divine plurality?



"Polytheism? In *my* Bible?"

It's more likely than you think.

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ויהו דבריו עמים יאבנים
והתקדש ויעזרו אחרי אדניה ויצרוק הפוך
ומתהו בן יהוה ויעזרו הנביאים שמעו ויע
ותגברו אשר לדת לא היו עסאדניה
ויזכרו אדניה וצאו ויבקר ובריא עסאב

וער עמועד וימת מזה עסאב מן הועד
באר שבע שבעים אלה איט: וישלח
ידו המלאך ירושלם לשהחה ויעתכיו

The Tanakh is obviously not polytheistic!

- Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; **besides me there is no god.** Isa. 44:6
- To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; **there is no other besides him.** Deut. 4:35
- Hear, O Israel: **The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Deut. 6:4-5
- For you are great and do wondrous things; **you alone are God.** Psalm 86:10
- That they may know that **you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth.** Psalm 83:18

But maybe...

Psalm 82:1ff (ESV)



God (elohim) has taken his place in the divine council; **in the midst of the gods (elohim)** he holds judgment: “How long will you **judge unjustly** and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*

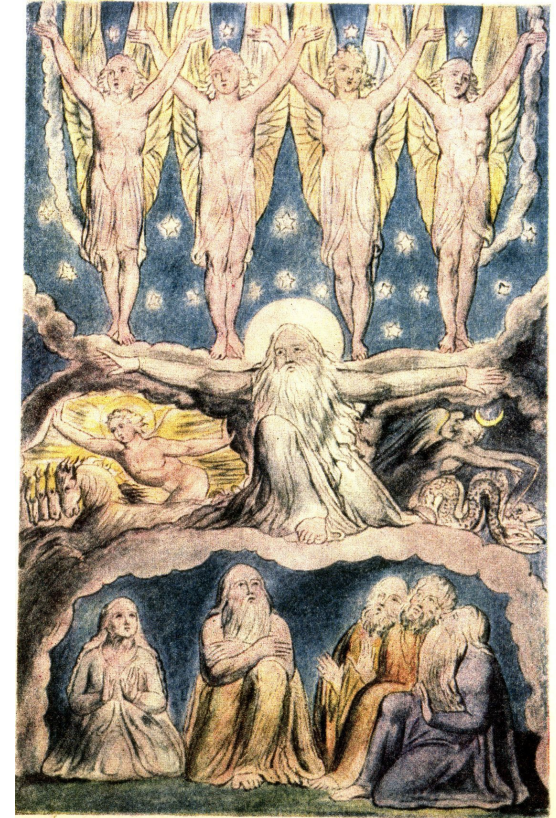
Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

I say, “You are gods (elohim), sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince.” Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations!

Psalm 89

Let the heavens praise thy wonders, O Lord,
thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!
For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,
a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
great and terrible above all that are round about him?
O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty as thou art,
O Lord, with thy faithfulness round about thee?



Job 38:4-7

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone,

when the morning stars sang together

and all the sons of God shouted for joy?



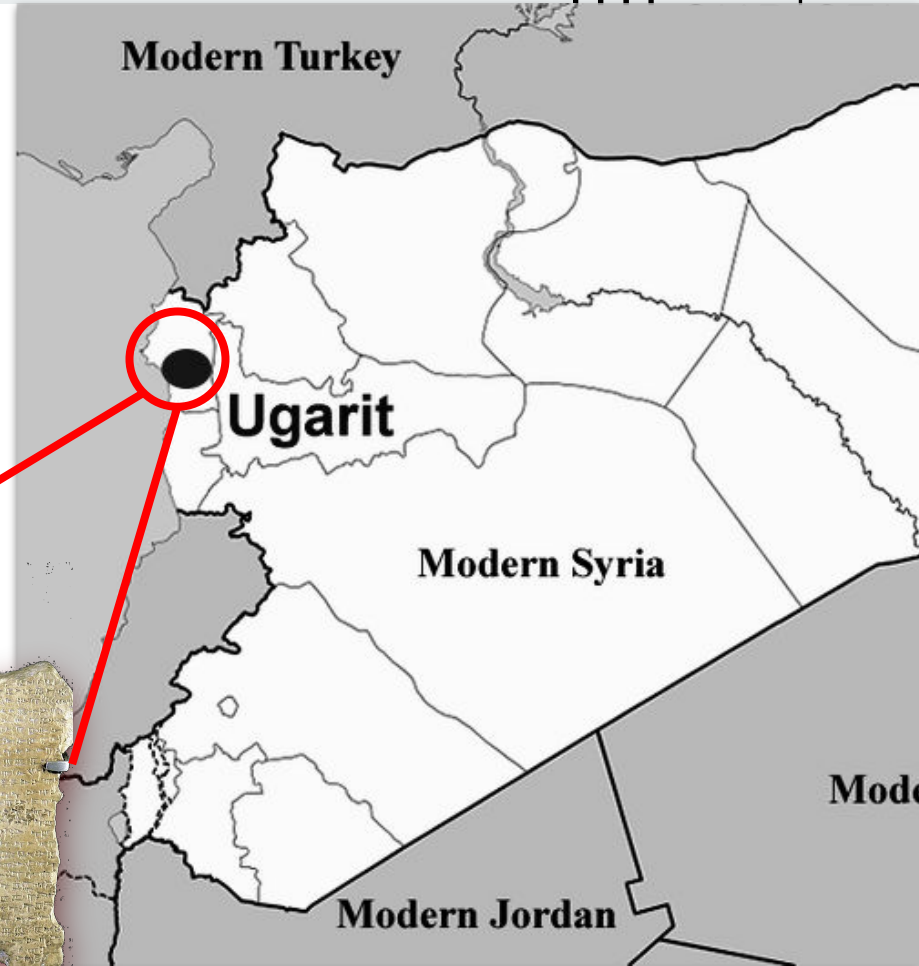
Who are these beings spoken of in these passages.

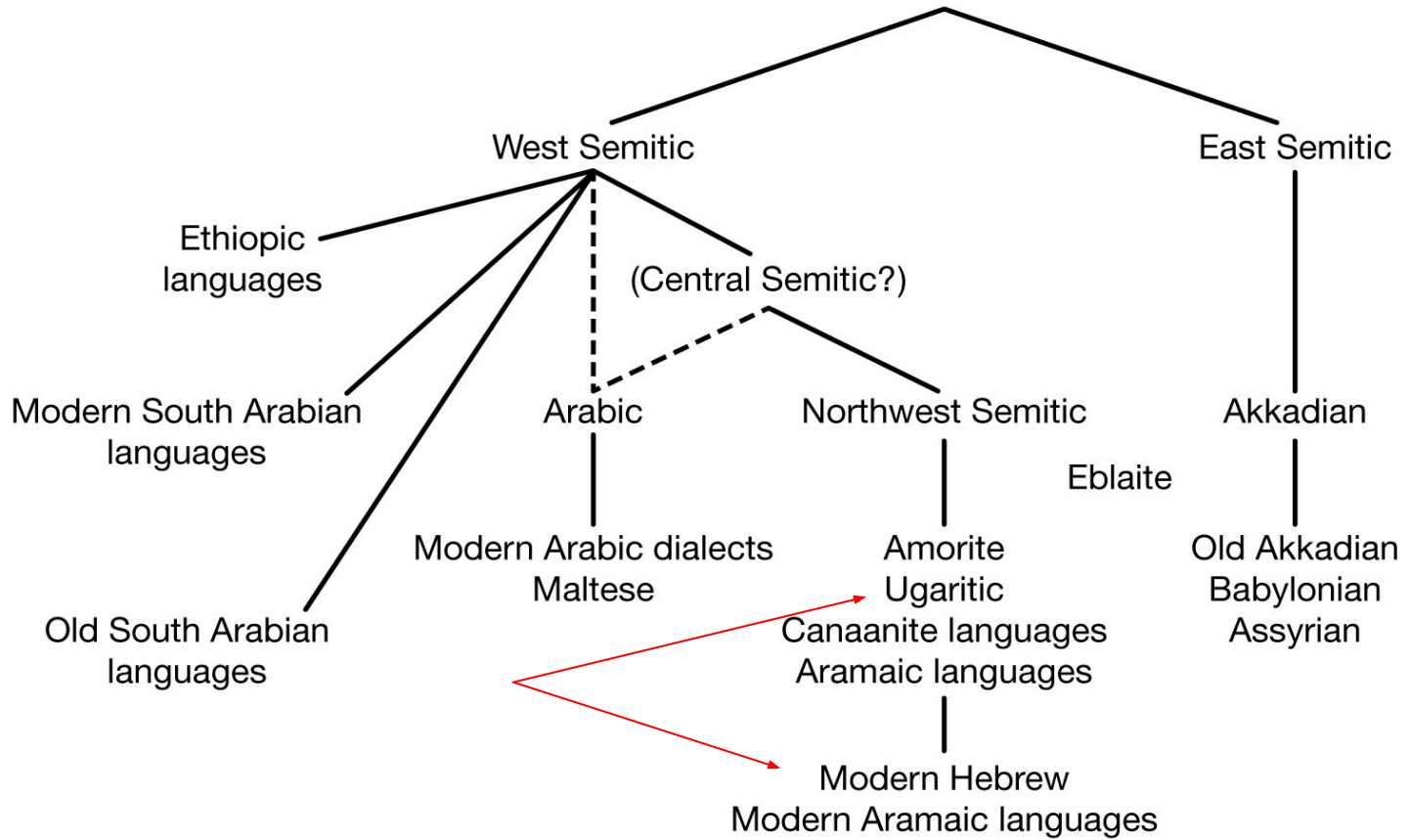
- They are called **elohim** which is translated as **God** in the singular and **gods** in the plural.
 - Morphologically plural, it behaves similarly to English words moose and sheep.
- They have authority but are also subject to God's authority. (*Deut. 32, Psalm 82*)
- They are called morning stars - Celestial Bodies (*Job 38:7*)
- They are called sons of God (*Gen 6, Psalm 82, Job 1*)

What else do we know about these beings and their role in the bible?

Ras Shamra / Ugarit Texts

- Ancient cuneiform discovered 1928 in Ugarit (Ras Shamra) and Ras Ibn Hani in Syria,
- Ugaritic, an otherwise unknown Northwest **Semitic** language.
- ~ 1,500 texts & fragments discovered so far
- Dated between 13th 12th c BCE
- Right: **Baal Cycle**





Ugaritic Divine Council

The Divine Council at Ugarit and in Canaanite / Phoenician sources

El (also Elyon outside Ugarit)
(ultimate high sovereign)

Baal
(The Divine Vice Regent)

Vice-regent of El; the "ruler / king of the gods"; the "Most High" (*ly*); "deputy" or "regent" (<y>*lgr*). He is a son of El, brother to El and Athirat's other 70 sons. The vice-regency was fought for among the sons of El, and so the vice regent is a created son of El who acts as the special agent of El – fights his battles and rules the gods as appointed authority over the other lower ranking divine rulers of the earth, the sons / princes of El.

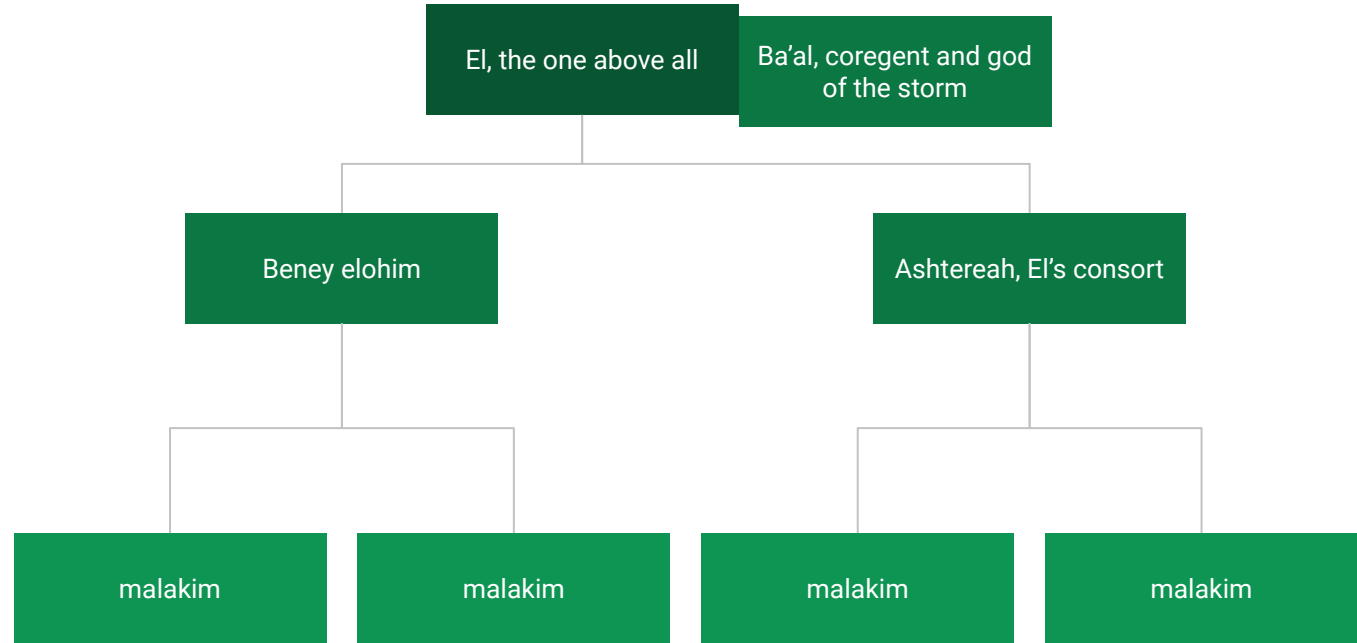
The 70 sons of El (and Athirat, his wife)

Referred to as "princes"; "judges" ["rulers"]; "kings" (cf. Handy and Pardee re. the "many *mlkm*" issue), "stars"; and "sons". This group, with El and Athirat, constitute the "council proper" - the royal house of the heavens as it were.

These many "kings" (*mlkm*) had geographical rule

The *ml'km*

These are part of the council at large, but not the council "proper" since they are not sons of El. They are referred to as gods, though. They take orders and serve El and the higher authorities. They are the "council staff."



“Israelite religion had an assembly of heavenly host under the authority of Yahweh. This assembly has very close affinities to the pantheons of ancient Near East, particularly in Canaanite religion. The most telling example is the literature from Ras Shamra (Ugarit)...Ugaritic is closely related to biblical Hebrew, sharing a good deal of vocabulary...Upon their decipherment, many of the Ugaritic tablets were found to contain words and phrases describing a council of gods that are conceptually and linguistically parallel to the Hebrew Bible. The Ugaritic divine council was led by El, the same word used in the Hebrew Bible for deity and as the proper name for the God of Israel (e.g. Is 40:18; 43:12). There are explicit references to a council or assembly of El, in some cases overlapping word-for-word with those in the Hebrew Bible.”

Heiser, Michael. "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature." (2004).



Michael S. Heiser

God (elohim) has taken his place in the divine council; **in the midst of the gods (elohim)** he holds judgment: “How long will you **judge unjustly** and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

I say, “You are gods (elohim?), sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince.” Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations!

1 Kings 22



The king of Israel said to Jehosh'aphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

And Micai'ah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, **and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left;** and the Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the Lord said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go forth and do so.' Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has spoken evil concerning you."

Reminder: Ugaritic Divine Council

The Divine Council at Ugarit and in Canaanite / Phoenician sources

El (also Elyon outside Ugarit)
(ultimate high sovereign)

Baal
(The Divine Vice Regent)

Vice-regent of El; the "ruler / king of the gods"; the "Most High" (*'ly*); "deputy" or "regent" (<y>*lgr*). He is a son of El, brother to El and Athirat's other 70 sons. The vice-regency was fought for among the sons of El, and so the vice regent is a created son of El who acts as the special agent of El – fights his battles and rules the gods as appointed authority over the other lower ranking divine rulers of the earth, the sons / princes of El.

The 70 sons of El (and Athirat, his wife)

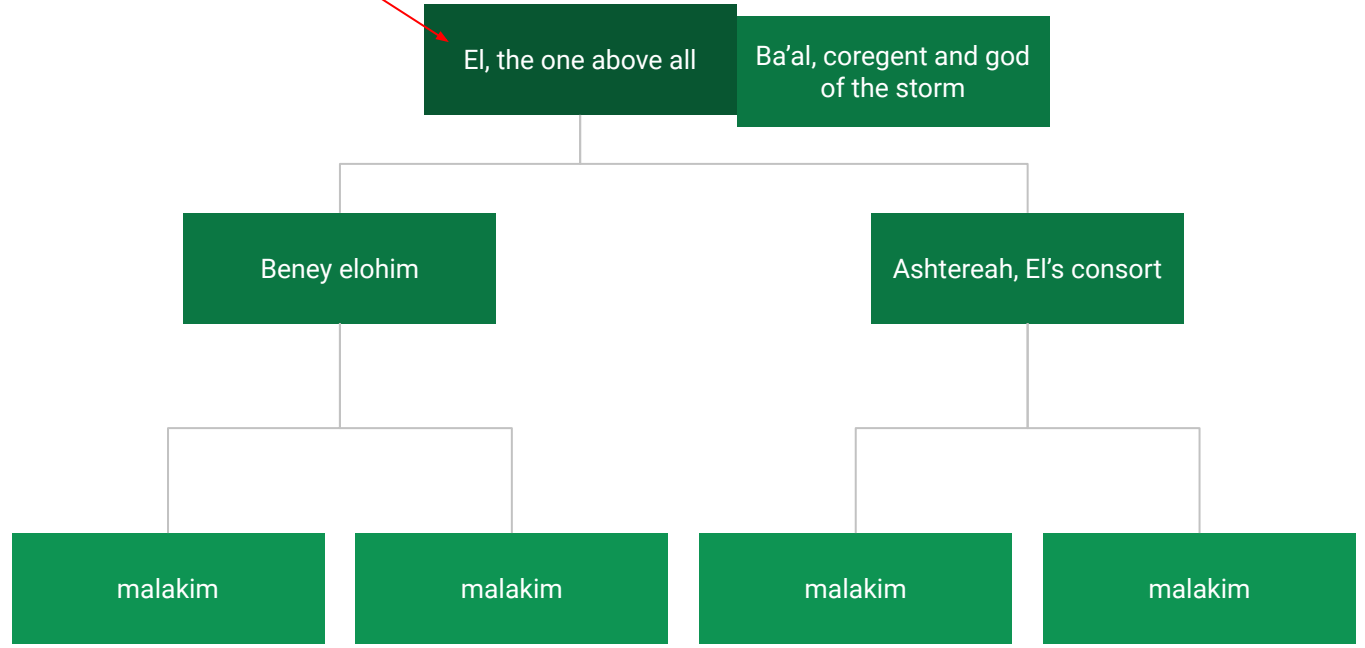
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The *ml'km*

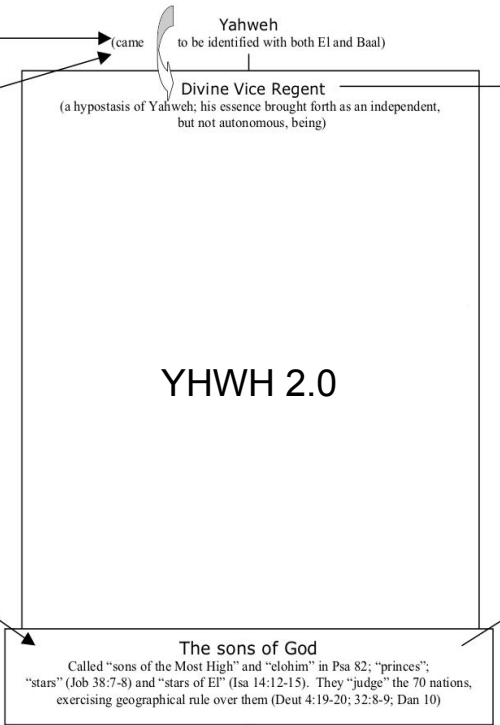
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El == YHWH?

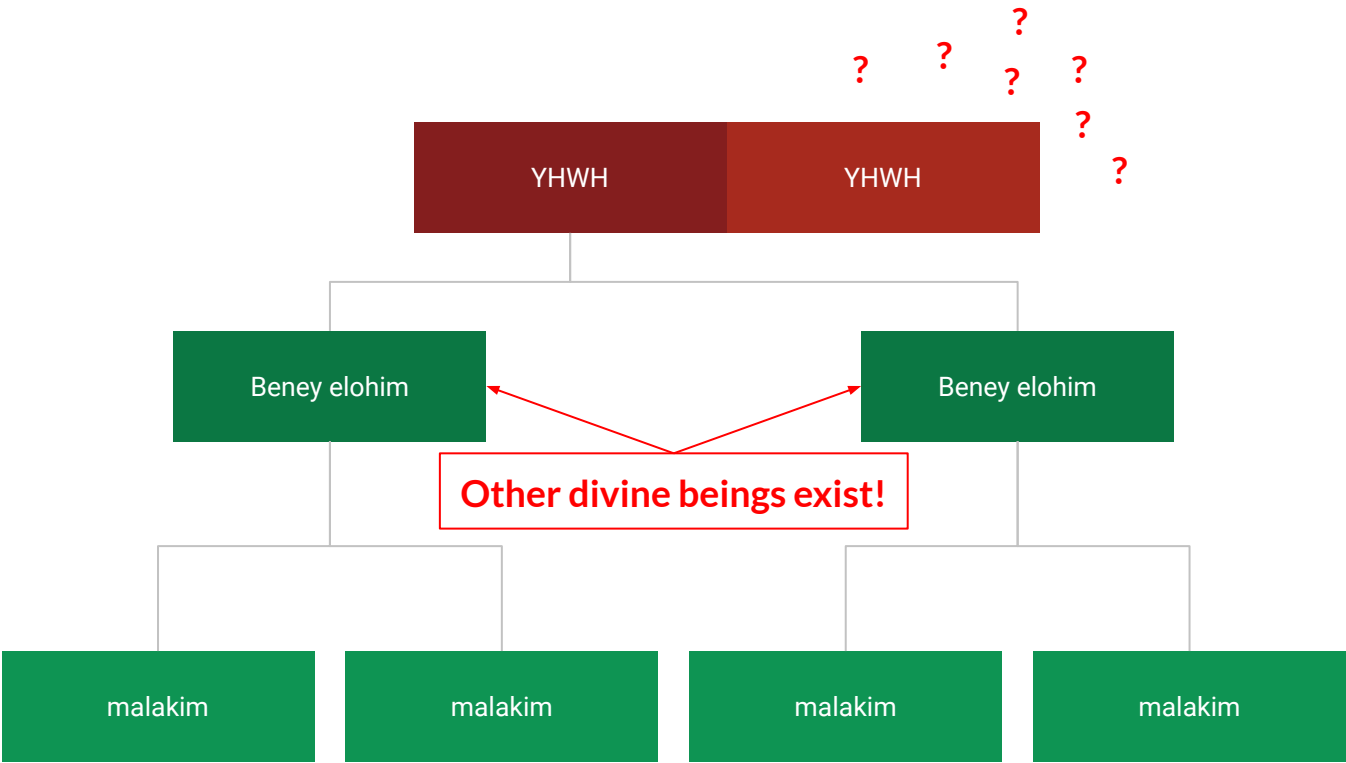


Israelite Divine Council

The Divine Council in Pre-Exilic Israel

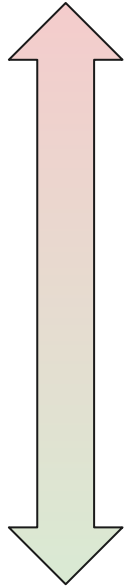


The ml'km
The term is typically translated "angels." They fulfill the same servant roles as Ugarit / Canaan and are not royal sons of Yahweh-El. They may be gods, as at Ugarit, in which case my thesis gains strength (cf. Gen 28:12ff.; cp. Gen 32 (esp. vv. 24-30; 35:1-9 [the God / gods appearing interchange]).



Comparative/Contextual Spectrum

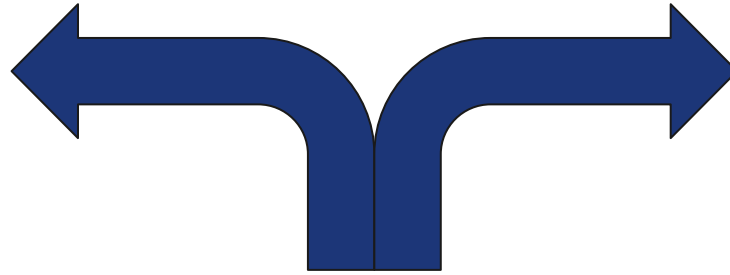
Different



- Totally ignores and presents different view
- Hazy familiarity leading to caricature and ridicule
- Accurate knowledge resulting in rejection
- Disagreement resulting in polemics, debate, or contention
- Awareness leading to adaptation or transformation
- Conscious imitation or borrowing
- Subconscious shared heritage

Similar

Reject council concept and replace with alternative naturalistic interpretations (e.g. the elohim are human judges)



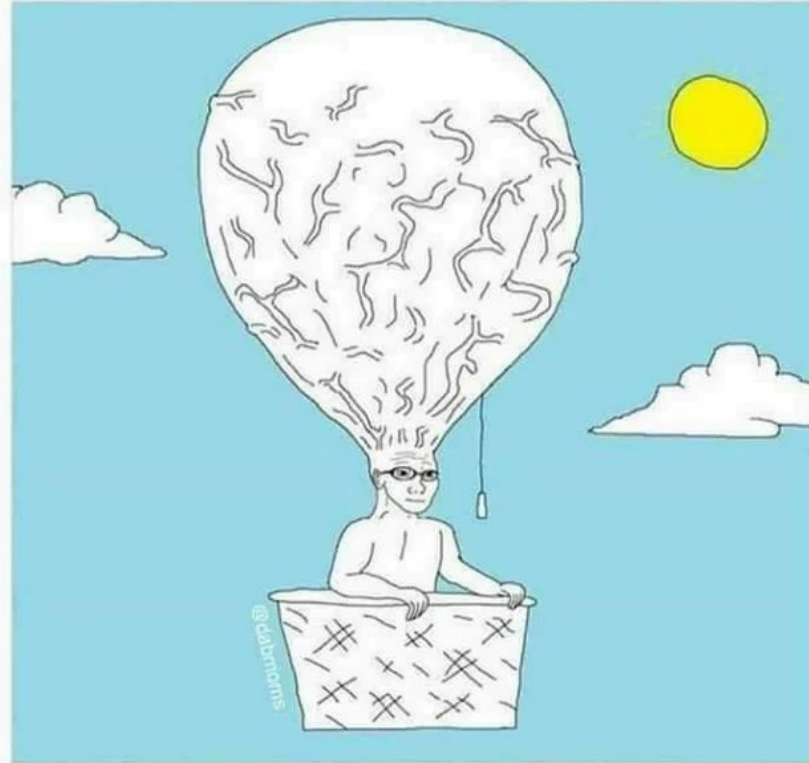
Accept divine council concept and interpret as evidence ancient Israelites evolved from polytheism to monotheism



Responses

When you say "both sides are idiots" without any further opinion or explanation

Reject council
concept and replace
with alternative
naturalistic
interpretations (e.g.
the elohim are
human judges)



Accept divine
council concept and
interpret the
evidence as ancient
Israelites evolved
from polytheism to
monotheism

Is this Polytheism?

- **No because Samuel is not a god:** ¹³ The king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “**I see a god (elohim)** coming up out of the earth.” ¹⁴ He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. (**1 Samuel 28:13-14**)
- **The other gods are clearly not what YHWH is:** Nevertheless you will **die like men.**
- **The other gods are not meant to receive worship:** ² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ **“You shall have no other gods before me.”** (*Exodus 20:2-3*)

Is this Henotheism?

- Henotheism is not the right word, but it is a pretty cool word.

“Historically, henotheism assumes all gods are species equals and the elevation of one god is due to socio-political factors—not theological nuancing. Quoting Max Müller’s seminal work on the subject, Yusa writes that henotheism was a technical term coined “to designate a peculiar form of polytheism” (Heiser 2008)

Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible

Is this Monotheism?

The other gods are just angels - This is not too far off the mark, but...

The other gods are just humans - This is not an option with Psalm 89

Let the heavens praise thy wonders, O Lord,
thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?

Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,
a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
great and terrible above all that are round about him?

O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty as thou art,
O Lord, with thy faithfulness round about thee?

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The other gods are just humans - This is not an option with Psalm 89

This is the Trinity appearing in the Old Testament - This is not an option with Psalm 82

Psalm 82:1ff (ESV)



God (**elohim**) has taken his place in the divine council; **in the midst of the gods (elohim)** he holds judgment: “How long will you **judge unjustly** and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

I say, “You are gods (elohim?), sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince.” Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations!

monotheism (n.)

"doctrine or belief that there is but one god," 1650s, from **mono-** "single, alone" + **-theism**
"belief (of a specified kind) in God, a god, or gods."

Nineveh is the Only City



¹⁵ This is the exultant city

that lived securely,

that said in her heart,

"I am, and there is no one else."

What a desolation she has become,

a lair for wild beasts!

Everyone who passes by her

hisses and shakes his fist.

Babylon is the Only City



⁸ Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures,

who sit securely,

who say in your heart,

“I am, and there is no one besides me;

I shall not sit as a widow

or know the loss of children”:

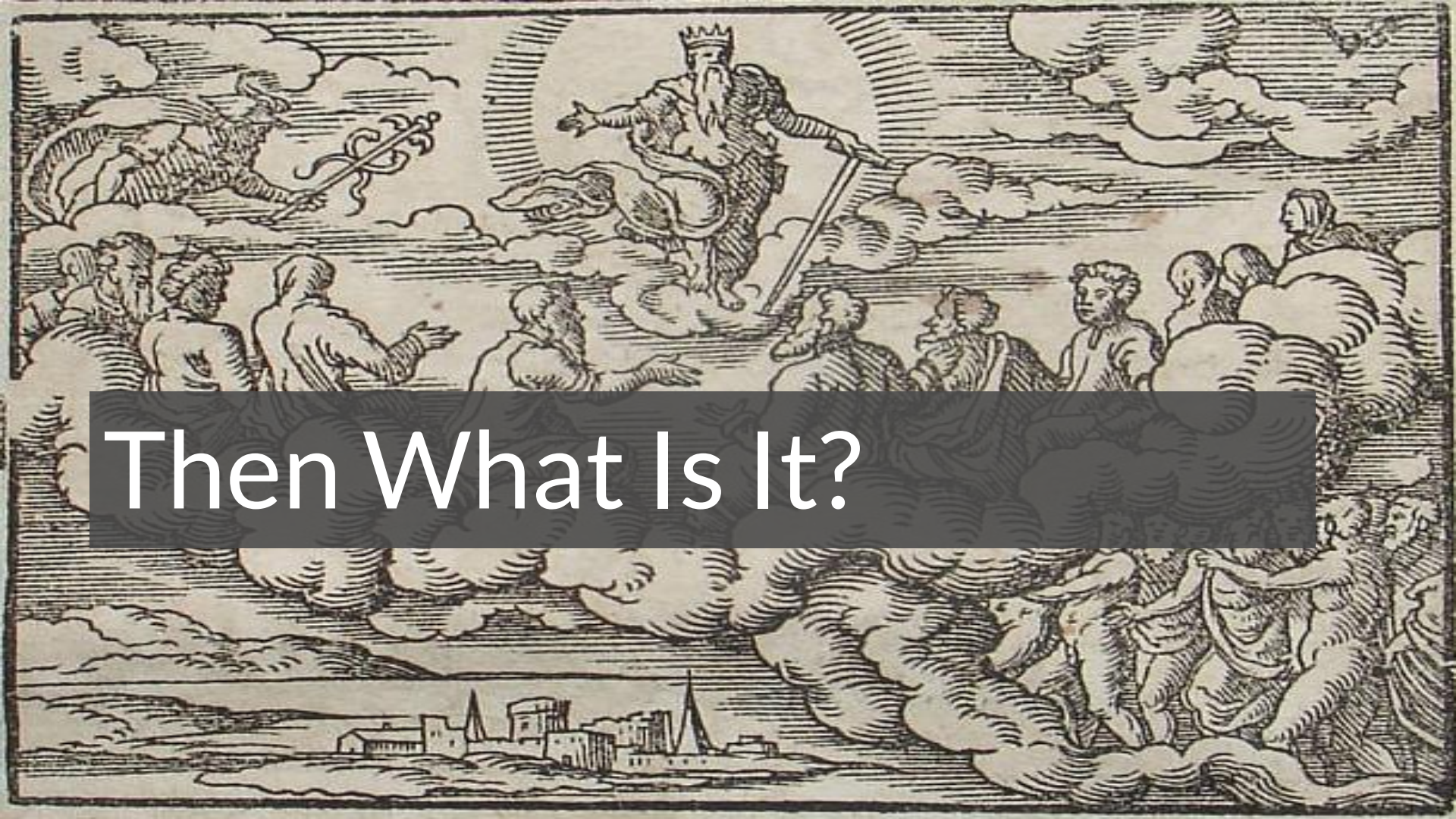
This is a Proto-Trinity



NOPE!!! - You lose, go to jail and do not collect 200 if you pass go.

- The Trinity is *not* plural elohim
- God isn't judging the Trinity for corrupt administration of the nations
 - "how long will you **judge unjustly**?"
- Samuel is not a member of the Trinity
- The biblical authors were not thinking of the Trinity

Note: there *are* good arguments for the Trinity from the Tanakh but this isn't one of them!



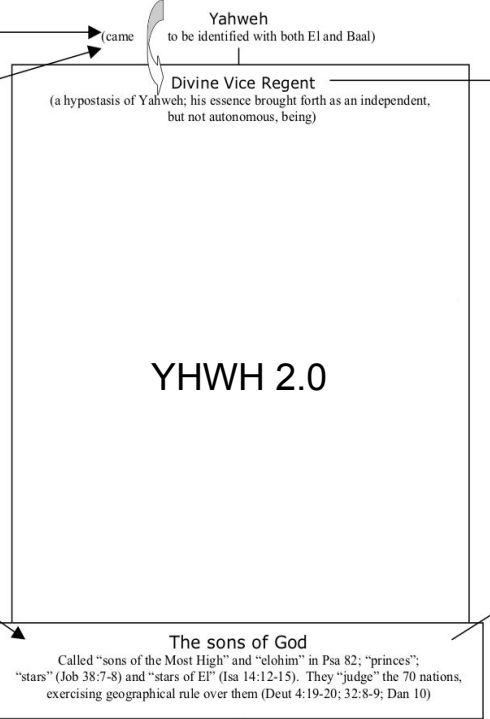
Then What Is It?

YHWH is an
elohim but no
elohim is YHWH

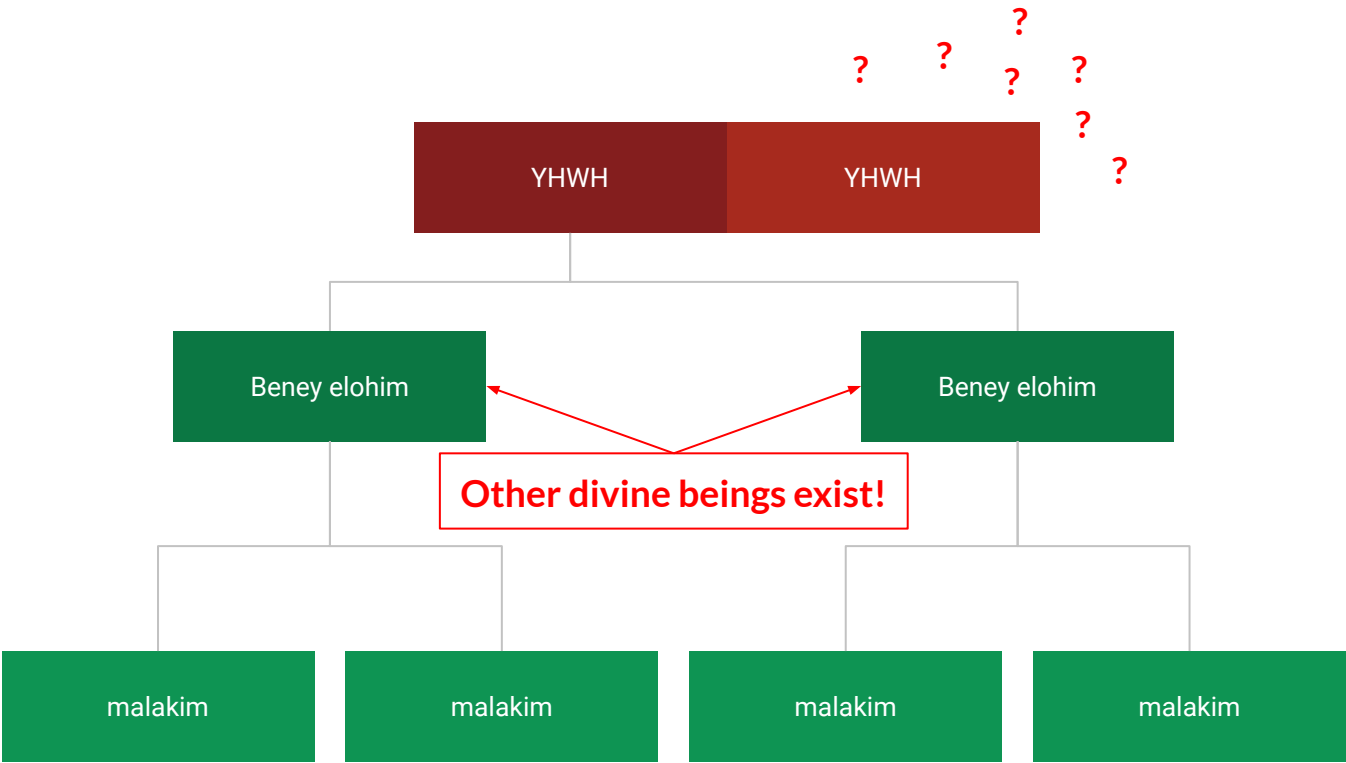
1. God creates the universe (Gen 1) while the **council** watches and praises (Gen 1:26, Job 38:7).
2. Members of the **divine council** rebel (Gen 6:1-4) leading to the corruption of humanity which God judges with a flood (Gen 7).
3. The nations collaborate to rebel against the authority of God and make themselves gods. God rejects this rebellion by disinheriting humanity and assigning them **divine rulers** (Gen 11, Ps 82, Dt 32).
4. These **rulers** are corrupt and God vows to reclaim the nations into **God's family** through the nation of Israel.
5. **Messiah** comes to restore God's rule over all nations, defeat the **spiritual powers**

Israelite Divine Council

The Divine Council in Pre-Exilic Israel



The ml'km
The term is typically translated "angels." They fulfill the same servant roles as Ugarit / Canaan and are not royal sons of Yahweh-El. They may be gods, as at Ugarit, in which case my thesis gains strength (cf. Gen 28:12ff.; cp. Gen 32 (esp. vv. 24-30; 35:1-9 [the God / gods appearing interchange]).



The Angel of YHWH

The Name (Hashem)

The Presence

The Angel of YHWH & The Burning Bush



Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The **angel of YHWH appeared** to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush...

When YHWH saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

The Angel of YHWH & The God of Seeing



The angel of YHWH found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The angel of YHWH said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel of YHWH also said to her, "**I will surely multiply your offspring** so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the angel of YHWH said to her,

“Behold, you are pregnant
and shall bear a son.
You shall call his name Ishmael,
because YHWH has listened to your affliction.
He shall be a wild donkey of a man,
his hand against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

So she called **the name of the Lord** who spoke to her, “**You are a God** of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here **I have seen him who looks after me.**” Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

The Angel of YHWH & The Name



Behold, **I send an angel** before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, **for My Name is in him.**

- Exodus 23:20-21 (ESV)

The Angel of YHWH & The Presence



To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him. Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you. And on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power...

- Deuteronomy 4:35-37 (ESV)

Bonus: The Angel of YHWH & The Presence



Now the **angel of YHWH** went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “**I brought you up from Egypt** and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. **I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you...**

- Judges 2:1-4 (ESV)

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that **Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt,** afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

- Jude 5 (ESV)

Two Powers in Heaven



“For centuries Judaism felt no discomfort with the notion of two Yahweh figures. The idea was referred to as the “two powers in heaven” and was endorsed within Judaism until the second century AD. It is important to note that the two powers were both holy. This is not dualism, where two equal deities exist, one good, the other evil. ...The logic of the two Yahweh figures in the Old Testament reflects an Israelite adaptation of the Canaanite structuring of the top tier of the Canaanite divine council”

The Unseen Realm, pg. 134n1

The Cloud Rider

The Divine Council at Ugarit and in Canaanite / Phoenician sources

El (also Elyon outside Ugarit)
(ultimate high sovereign)

Baal
(The Divine Vice Regent)

Vice-regent of El; the "ruler / king of the gods"; the "Most High" (*'ly*); "deputy" or "regent" (<y>*lgr*). He is a son of El, brother to El and Athirat's other 70 sons. The vice-regency was fought for among the sons of El, and so the vice regent is a created son of El who acts as the special agent of El – fights his battles and rules the gods as appointed authority over the other lower ranking divine rulers of the earth, the sons / princes of El.

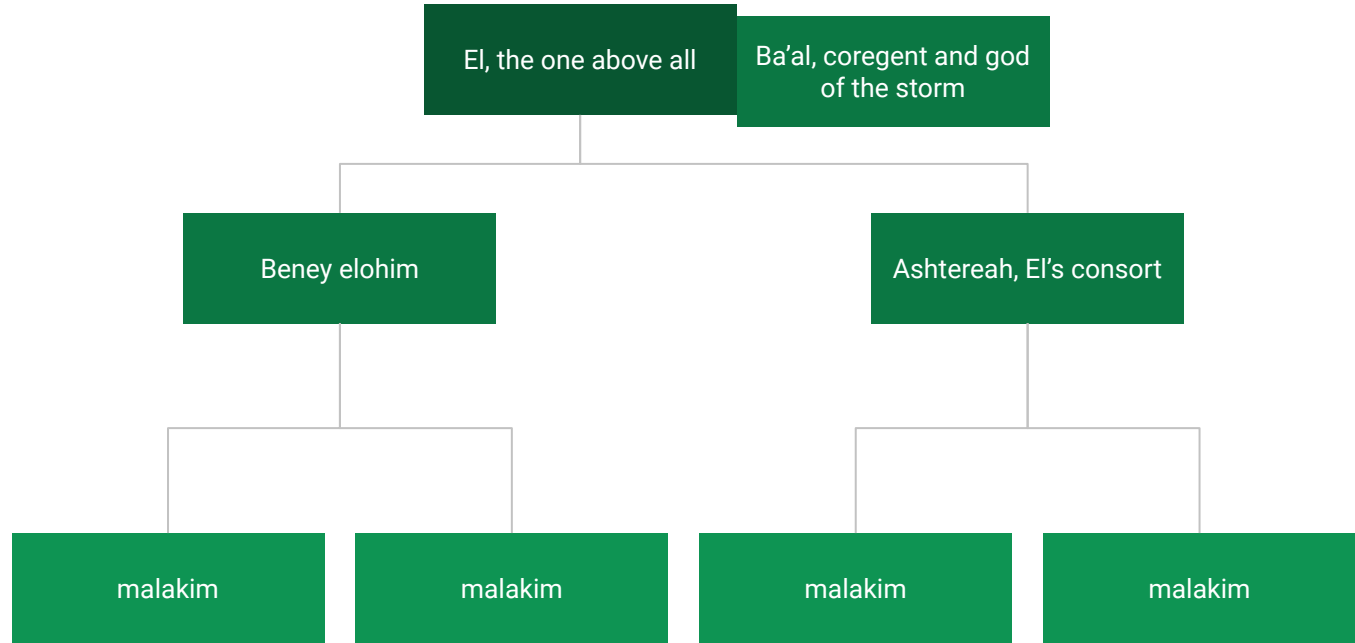
The 70 sons of El (and Athirat, his wife)

Referred to as "princes"; "judges" ["rulers"]; "kings" (cf. Handy and Pardee re. the "many *mlkm*" issue), "stars"; and "sons". This group, with El and Athirat, constitute the "council proper" - the royal house of the heavens as it were.

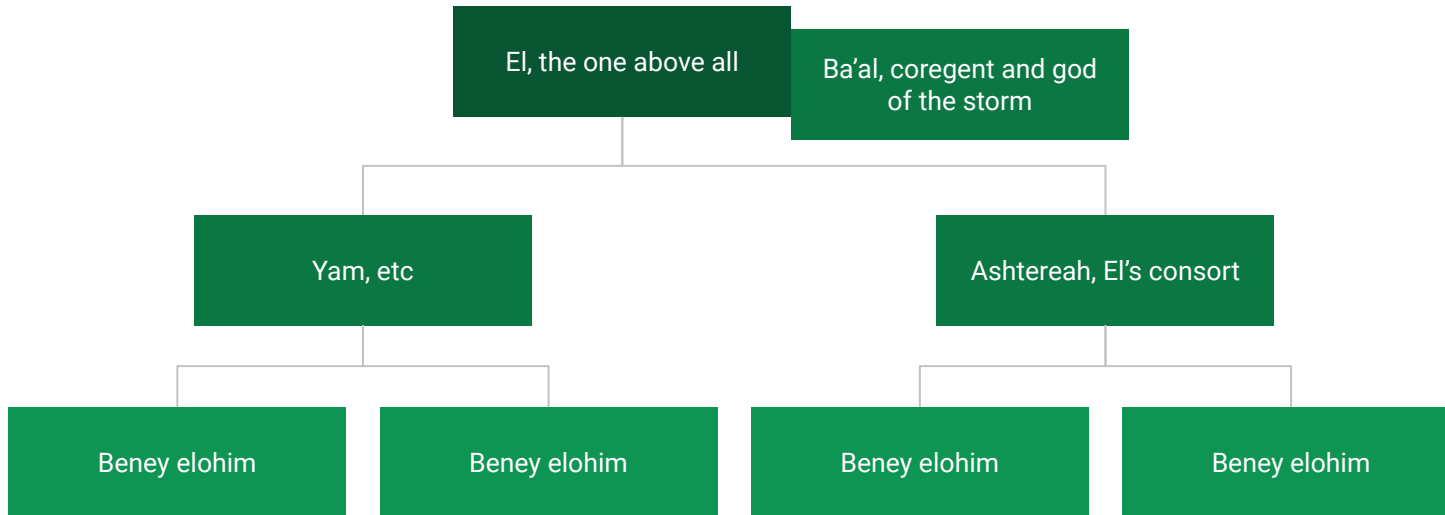
These many "kings" (*mlkm*) had geographical rule

The *ml'km*

These are part of the council at large, but not the council "proper" since they are not sons of El. They are referred to as gods, though. They take orders and serve El and the higher authorities. They are the "council staff."



The Cloud Rider



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The Cloud Rider

And Kothar-u-Khasis declared:

"Did I not tell Thee, O Prince Baal,

Nor declare, O Rider of Clouds?

'Lo, Thine enemies, O Baal,

Lo, Thine enemies wilt Thou smite

Lo, Thou wilt vanquish Thy foes.

Thou wilt take Thine eternal kingdom;

Thine everlasting sovereignty!"



Religious Texts from Ugarit, 2nd Edition

KTU 1.3:3:30-1.3:3:34

1.3 iii 35

Above, her face sweated,
the tendons of her back contracted,
(as did) the muscles⁴⁷ of her shoulders.

She lifted up her voice and cried:
‘Why have Gupan and Ugar come?
What manner of enemy has arisen **against Baal**,
of foe **against the Charioteer of the Clouds**?
Surely I smote the Beloved of El, Yam?
Surely I exterminated Nahar, the mighty god?

The Cloud Rider - Psalm 104



Bless the Lord, my soul;

Lord, my God, you are very great.

He lays the beams of his roof loft on the water above,

making clouds his chariot,

walking on the wings of the wind.

He makes the winds his messengers,

blazing fires his servants.

He established the earth on its foundations,

so that it never falters.

“I kept on watching until the **Ancient of Days** was seated. His clothes were white, like snow, and the hair on his head was like pure wool. **His throne burned with flaming fire, and its wheels burned with fire.** A river of fire flowed out from before him. Thousands upon thousands were serving him, with millions upon millions waiting before him. **The court sat in judgment,** and record books were unsealed.

“I continued watching because of the audacious words that the horn was speaking. I kept observing until the animal was killed and its body destroyed and given over to burning fire. Now as to the other animals, their authority was removed, but they were granted a reprieve from execution for an appointed period of time.”

“I continued to observe the night vision—and look!—someone like the **Son of Man** was coming, **accompanied by heavenly clouds**. He approached the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. To him dominion was bestowed, along with glory and a kingdom, **so that all people, nations, and languages are to serve him**. His dominion is an everlasting dominion—it will never pass away—and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” - Dan 7:9-13 (ISV)



ight vision—and
of Man was coming,
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 ith glory and a

I am [the Christ], and you will see the
 Son of Man seated at the right hand of
 Power, and coming with the clouds of
 heaven.

- Mark 14:62

ed. - Dan 7:9-13 (ISV)



THE UNSEEN REALM

Recovering the supernatural
worldview of the Bible.

MICHAEL S. HEISER

“The most familiar way to process [this information] is to think about the way we talk about Jesus. Christians affirm that God is more than one Person, but that each of those Persons is the same in essence...**This theology did not originate in the New Testament.** There are two YHWH figures in Old Testament thinking - one invisible, the other visible and human in form. Judaism before the first century, the time of Jesus, knew this teaching. That’s why ancient Jewish theology once embraced two YHWH figures (the “two powers”). But once this teaching came to involve the risen Jesus of Nazareth, Judaism could no longer tolerate it.”

The Unseen Realm, pg. 148

The Divine Council in Ugarit and in Canaanite / Phoenician sources

El (also Elyon outside Ugarit)
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The Divine Council in Pre-Exilic Israel

Yahweh
to be identified with both El and Baal

(came

The Divine Council in Post-Exilic Israel / Second Temple Literature

Yahweh

Divine Vice Regent

(The hypostasis of Yahweh idea is preserved and perpetuated through descriptions of a second deity level being who is God’s chief agent – see Daniel, Qumran, Philo, and the idea of the Spirit as the Presence of Yahweh). For example, Son of Man in Daniel 7:9ff.; Melchizedek in 11QMelch; the Logos. At Qumran the vice-regent takes on a more apparent priestly / intercessory role (cf. Baal as intercessor and the Angel of Yahweh’s power to withhold forgiveness of sins). “Sons of God” and “gods” are still used in descriptions of the council (175 such plurals at Qumran). As Segal points out, after the second century C.E., a number of the verses to the left were forbidden reading without the assistance of one’s rabbi since they taught the idea of a second power in heaven. Prior to that time, the second power was not considered a heresy. Second Temple literature made a careful distinction between Yahweh and the second occupant of heaven’s throne (or between the cherubim) as Yahweh’s hypostatized Presence. This person was not a competitor to Yahweh, since he *was* Yahweh in anthropomorphic form. Yet he was not Yahweh since he obeyed Yahweh.

The sons of God

The previous nomenclature is retained, especially at Qumran. It is also supplemented by terms like “Watchers”: “archangel”

The *ml'km*

“Angel” is used as an overlapping term in Second Temple lit for Watchers and archangels, which may mean a blurring of categories. More likely, in view of the retention of the “Deut 4 / 32 worldview”—that the nations have ruling deities assigned by Yahweh—the word took on a purely functional meaning. That is, *any* member of the heavenly host is a messenger (*ml'k*) of Yahweh. If the “angels of God” of Gen 28 / 35 are gods, this prompts a new (monolatrous) perspective of the “geographical ruling deity” language (e.g., “dominions”; “archai”; and “thrones”) in the NT and early Jewish material.

The sons of God

Called “sons of the Most High” and “elohim” in Psa 82; “princes”; “stars” (Job 38:7-8) and “stars of El” (Isa 14:12-15). They “judge” the 70 nations, exercising geographical rule over them (Deut 4:19-20; 32:8-9; Dan 10)

The *ml'km*

The term is typically translated “angels.” They fulfill the same servant roles as Ugarit / Canaan and are not royal sons of Yahweh-El. They may be gods, as at Ugarit, in which case my thesis gains strength (cf. Gen 28:12ff.; cp. Gen 32 (esp. vv. 24-30; 35:1-9 [the God / gods appearing interchange]).



The derivation of the Holy Spirit is left as an exercise for the reader.

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38

1. Monotheism, polytheism, and henotheism are all lacking in precision to describe the biblical worldview.
2. It is important to have the worldview of the biblical authors in your head so that you can be the same kind of reader Peter, Paul, and Jude were.
3. There are gods everywhere so keep your guard up or they just might get you.
4. YHWH is an elohim but not other elohim is YHWH.
5. There is a second being associated with the appearances of YHWH throughout the Tanakh

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Questions?



Further Reading

Michael Heiser

- *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the supernatural worldview of the Bible.* Lexham Press, 2015.
 - <http://www.moreunseenrealm.com/>
- "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature." (2004). Diss.
- "Monotheism, polytheism, monolatry, or henotheism? Toward an assessment of divine plurality in the Hebrew Bible." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (2008): 1-30.
- "You've Seen One Elohim, You've Seen Them All? A Critique of Mormonism's Use of Psalm 82." *FARMS Review* 19.1 (2007): 221-266.
- "Co-regency in Ancient Israel's Divine Council as the Conceptual Backdrop to Ancient Jewish Binitarian Monotheism." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (2016): 195-225.
- <http://www.DRMSH.com>



Appendix

Jesus's Claims in John 10



It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.

Is it not written in your Law, **'I said, you are gods'**? If he called them gods **to whom the word of God came**—and Scripture cannot be broken— do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that **you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father**.

Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

Psalm 82:1 Doesn't Refer to Corrupt Human Judges

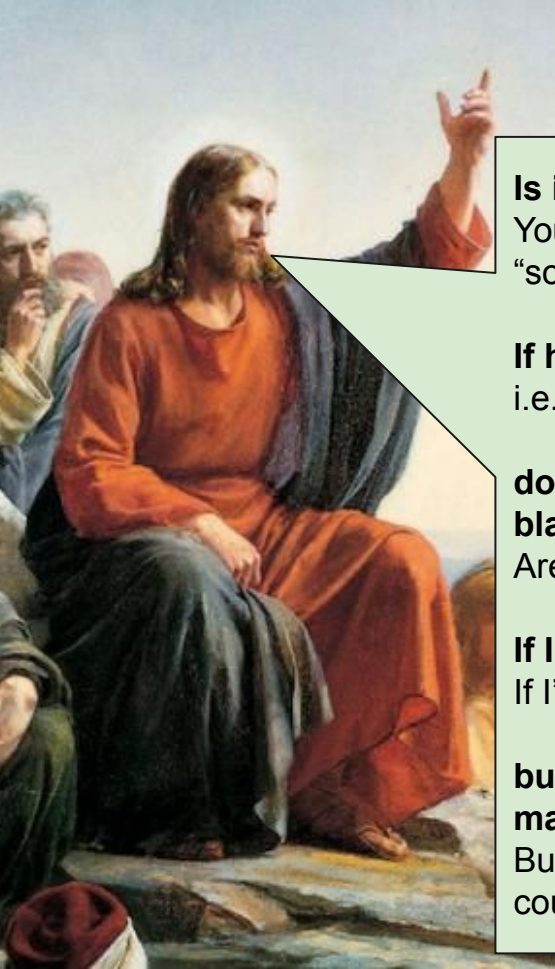


On this interpretation, Jesus quotes Ps. 82 to say “why are you stoning me for blasphemy for calling myself a son of God? Don’t your own scriptures say that every Israelite is a son of God?”

Three Problems

1. This is a step backward for John’s Christology. Why would the author of John start off with an exalted prologue only to have Jesus backtrack later on?
2. The Jewish response doesn’t make sense. If Jesus is backing off and putting himself on equal footing with fellow humans, the charge of blasphemy is resolved. Why seek to arrest/kill him?
3. This interpretation is utterly foreign to the field of Semitics. This only has acceptance among NT scholars and pop-apologists.

An Alternative Interpretation: Jesus Ups the Ante



Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?

Your own Scriptures testify to the existence of other non-human divine beings called the "sons of God".

If he called them gods to whom the word of God came

i.e. the pronouncement in Ps. 82:6ff.

do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

Are you calling me a blasphemer for being a divine council member sent by YHWH?

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;

If I'm not doing the works, fine. I'm not a council member from the Father.

but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

But I am from the Father and when you understand my works, you'll know I'm not *just* a council member - I am the co-regent of the council. I am the visible YHWH

Further Further Reading

- Barker, Margaret. *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*. Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox Publishers, 1992
- Bauckham, Richard, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus" Pages 43-69 in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*. Edited by C. Newman, J. Davila, and G. Lewis. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999
- Bauckham, Richard, *God Crucified: Monotheism & Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998
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"With respect to his own research, the bibliography for items covered in Dr. Heiser's book, *The Unseen Realm*, is voluminous. Dr. Heiser's personal bibliography for that research is **currently at 6,200 entries**. Aside from bibliographic items in *The Unseen Realm*, readers are directed to the companion website [moreunseenrealm.com] for the book."

- DRMSH.com

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- Lee, Aquila H. I. *From Messiah to Pre-existent Son*. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 192. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005; reprinted Wipf and Stock, 2009
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²⁶ Then God said, “**Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.** And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So **God created man in his own image,** in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Wrap-up (Conclusions)

We have surveyed the ancient Near Eastern concept of a Divine Council and how the ancient Hebrews adapted elements of it.

Next, we surveyed the Hebrew concept of “Two Powers in Heaven” where there are two distinct YHWHs, visible and invisible, depicted throughout the Tanakh.

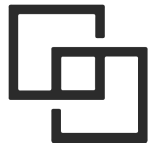
Lastly, we connected these ideas to Jesus of Nazareth as a foundation for Trinitarian thought.

- The Tanakh doesn't depict flat, unitarian monotheism
- Divine plurality in the OT is not (always) crypto-Trinity
- The Cloud Rider is YHWH is Jesus, signifying theological polemic against Ba'al



Three Persons, Two Powers, One God

The doctrine of the Trinity



RATIO
CHRISTI

In Media Reas - Nicene Creed (325)



I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

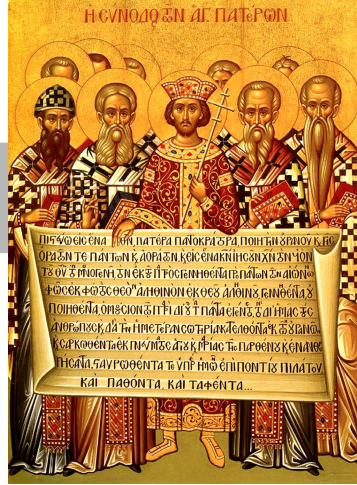
Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Textual/Biblical Objections

“The Trinity is found nowhere in the Bible. It is a Greek invention by Constantine to unify the Church in 325 AD. The Bible *really* says...”



Philosophical Objections

“The Trinity is plagued by incoherence. It either collapses into polytheism or unitarianism. To say there is one God and three persons cannot possibly be reconciled”.



A Latin

Brian Leftow

Faith and

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Brian Leftow

Faith and Philosophy 29 (3):334-339 (2012)

Authors



Authors



Brian Leftow

Rutgers University - New Brunswick

Abstract

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Abstract

William Hasker has rejected my rejection of his criticisms of my "Latin" account of the Trinity. I now reject his rejection

Keywords

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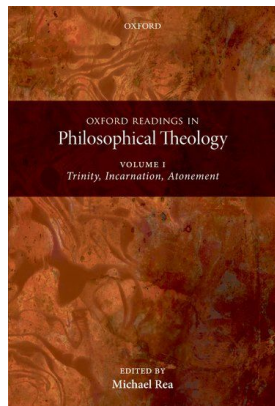
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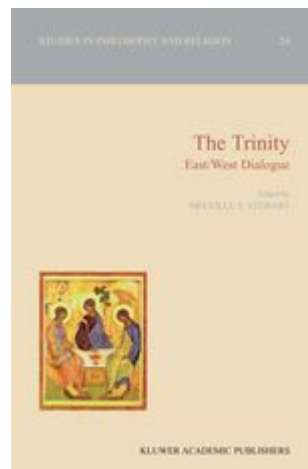
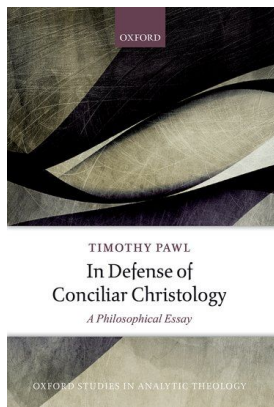
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Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology: Volume 1- Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement



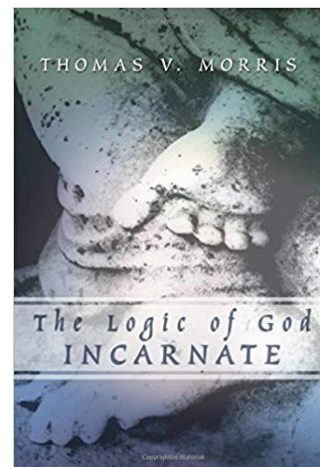
Over the past sixty years, within the analytic tradition of philosophy, there has been a significant revival of interest in the philosophy of religion. More recently, philosophers of religion have turned in a more self-consciously interdisciplinary direction, with special focus on topics that have traditionally been the provenance of systematic theologians in the Christian tradition. The present volumes Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology, volumes 1 and 2 aim to bring together some of the most important essays on six central topics in recent philosophical theology.

This work presents a historically informed, systematic exposition of the Christology of the first seven Ecumenical Councils of undivided Christendom, from the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD to the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD. Assuming the truth of Conciliar Christology for the sake of argument, Timothy Pawl considers whether there are good philosophical arguments that show a contradiction or incoherence in that doctrine. He presents the definitions of important terms in the debate and a helpful metaphysics for understanding the incarnation.



The Trinity: East/West Dialogue

East/West Summit on the Holy Trinity Held in Moscow - A stellar cast from the Society of Christian Philosophers/West and the Russian Orthodox Church/East met to discuss the mystery of God as three in one. Theologians and philosophers, typically rivals, synergized in their pursuit of truth and understanding regarding this central, unifying Christian belief, demonstrating respective strengths in marvellous complementary array. His holiness Alexei II, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia extended greetings and Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk set the stage. History still has its shining moments. The next best thing to being there are the papers that were presented and polished for this volume.

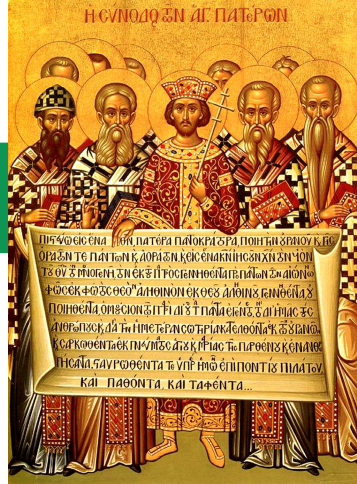


The Logic of God Incarnate

This book is a philosophical examination of the logical problems associated with the claim that Jesus of Nazareth was one and the same person as God the Son, the Second Person of the divine Trinity. How can a being or person who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, etc., have become human given that humans are limited in knowledge and beset with weaknesses? Unless this belief in the incarnation is to be dismissed as pious sentimentality, a philosophical case must be made for at least the possible rationality of the idea. Tom Morris makes such an attempt in this book. Indeed, although it claims only to be arguing that the idea of God Incarnate is not impossible, The Logic of God Incarnate confronts the preponderance of modern philosophical argumentation against the incarnation and manages to put the traditional doctrine in a quite plausible light.

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Biblical Arguments for the Trinity



The Old Testament is unitarian. Once Jesus showed up with his radical claims, “the Jews” had to re-evaluate their concept of God and developed the Trinity.



There are hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament such as “let us make man in our image”. In retrospect, we can see this is Jesus.



The Hebrew Bible expresses divine plurality in two distinct concepts: the divine council and the two powers in Heaven. During the Second Temple period, many Jewish thinkers speculated on the identity of the Second Power in Heaven. The early Jewish followers of the Way continued this thought trajectory by ascribing the identity of the Second Power to Jesus. In response to the growing Christian and gnostic movements, rabbis in the second century C.E. condemned the previously orthodox Two Powers view as heresy.