The Social World of Biblical Antiquity, 1

Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority:
An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology
by Bernhard Lang

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I will do my best to give as probable an explanation as any other - or rather, more probable.

- Plato, Timaeus 48d

ONE of my predecessors at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Johann Lorenz Isenbiehl, was imprisoned from December 1777 until December 1779 because of his allegedly heretical view of biblical prophecy in general and Isaiah 7.14 in particular, a passage he did not take to be messianic in the traditional sense of the word. He simply dropped the passage from the list of messianic prooftexts and suggested a different reading. After having recanted his heresy, he was released one Christmas Day - aptly enough on the day celebrating the fulfillment of that prophecy by Isaiah. According to Isenbiehl biblical prophets were more deeply involved in contemporary society than concerned with some vague and distant future. Now, two centuries later, there is hardly any ecclesiastical supervision of historical research in the Bible, and critical issues are left to scholarly debate.

In a new age of scholarship Isenbiehl's problem is no longer on the agenda (though there has been some discussion whether a certain Hebrew word of Isaiah 7.14 should be rendered as 'virgin' or 'young woman' in an official German translation of the Bible). However, it seems to be difficult to find two specialists in the field whose views of prophecy as a powerful institution in ancient Israelite society are identical. By focussing on biblical texts rather than on the society in which they originated, most textbooks avoid the issue altogether and are therefore of little help. This situation is equally unsatisfactory for both scholars and students who have to find their way through an almost impenetrable jungle of periodical literature with its characteristic thicket of assumptions that are often as wild as they are widespread. The present publication is my personal path through this
jungle which is, of course, much more untidy than may be apparent from the unavoidable notes, learned references and bibliographical details.

The essays which make up this book must speak for themselves, but it may be helpful to indicate some general conclusions which I have arrived at and approaches I recommend. Firstly, there is the ongoing debate about literary criticism a term which, in this field, has nothing to do with literary evaluation but is concerned with secondary passages or words in our biblical sources. There can be no doubt about the non-authenticity of some prophetic texts. Recent scholarship, however, seems to have exaggerated the possibility of establishing the secondary nature of texts to such a degree that one starts doubting both methods and achievements. Generally speaking, I have not found many valuable insights in studies which seem to rely on an almost infallible approach of divide et impera. The preoccupation with minutiae is so complete that the larger issues often seem to be obscured. Nobody would argue that the many volumes of hermetic textual analysis so characteristic of our discipline cannot contribute anything; but is it not obvious that the specialist argument can work quite effectively to block the larger, the more interesting and, perhaps, the more intellectually serious perspective?

Secondly, there is the question of the prophets' 'intention' or, more precisely, their involvement in day-to-day politics. The issue, dealt with at some length in my book on Ezekiel (Kein Aufstand in Jerusalem: Die Politik des Propheten Ezechiel, 1978), is taken up in the review of literature appended to the second essay of this volume. I had the opportunity to study the problem at the Collège de France in Paris in 1975/76 under Professor André Caquot who has contributed a valuable essay on the political objectives of Hosea. There is now a much wider recognition of prophetic politics than before when I first studied the problem. However, prophetic politics still seems to be a neglected factor in biblical studies.

The third point to be emphasized is the state of uncertainty, if not crisis in biblical scholarship. Many of its leading theories are in eclipse. Assumptions which have been upheld for many decades are suddenly questioned, e.g. the theory of four pentateuchal sources or certain views of patriarchal religion which can no longer be taken for granted. The established version of Israel's religious history seems to be largely questionable, but a new one not yet emerged. I
have worked on the problem myself and with my students, and I have received much inspiration from Morton Smith's 'Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament' a book which has not yet received the attention it deserves. It may be worth mentioning that Smith's work can be seen in continuity with that of some earlier writers, and that his view of ancient Israelite polytheism was anticipated by the American scholar, Louis Wallis. The cooperation with Morton Smith, Hermann Vorländer and the Iranian scholar, Mary Boyce (School of Oriental and African Studies, London) was extremely stimulating and has helped me to come back to a radical version of De Wette's and Wellhausen's distinction between Israel and Judaism, and to see the truth of the saying that Israel went into exile a nation and returned a church - indeed a monotheistic one.

Put briefly and somewhat simplified, my view entails a four-stage-development of biblical religion: (a) The first period of Israelite religion (or, Hebrew paganism, ca. 1250-586 B.C.) is as polytheistic as any other West Semitic cult but includes (b) a group which demands and promotes the exclusive worship of Israel's state god, Yahweh. The religion of the Yahweh-aloneists, the first clear evidence for which is found in the Book of Hosea (ca. 750), can be called Proto-Judaism. (c) The Babylonian exile of the sixth century sees the formation of (Early) Judaism which continues and further develops the case of the Yahweh-alone movement. (d) During the first half of the second century B.C., a new feature of Jewish belief emerges: the expectation of a new, universal and eternal kingdom of (the Jewish) God. Beginning with the Book of Daniel one can speak of an 'eternal-kingdom movement' which soon develops into the Eschatological Judaism of Pharisees, apocalypticians, Christians, Essenes, etc. Morton Smith's attempt to carefully distinguish between different groups, 'movements' and 'parties' within Israel was extended to first century A.D. Judaism by one of his students, Jacob Neusner, in a particularly fruitful way: Both Yahweh-aloneists and Pharisees were a minority among eighth century B.C. prophets and the sages active before 70 A.D., respectively.

Last but not least, mention must be made of social anthropology and the scientific study of religion which have an ever-growing impact on biblical studies and, indeed, will give it a new dimension if not a new direction. Several essays of this volume refer to studies by social scientists and adopt their approach, their results, or both. However, one section
is almost exclusively based on comparative evidence and anthropological theory: the article on 'The Social Organization of Peasant Poverty'. I feel that the use of a concept developed in the 1950's and 1960's, that of 'peasant society' (a social system in which peasant communities are controlled by urban centers) was overdue. Given the wide interest in prophetic social criticism one wonders why this has not been done earlier. For some of the other essays I found particularly helpful and illuminating the old-fashioned functionalist theory and the work of Hjalmar Sundén, the Swedish psychologist of religion. Max Weber's work, too, has been a constant source of inspiration. Perhaps one can say that the present influx of anthropological, sociological - and to a certain extent: literary - methods, together with the above mentioned 'crisis' in the established historical-critical tradition, constitute 'the state of Old Testament studies'. This 'state' is not static, but a state of change, and what may at first appear uncomfortable to the beginning student may very soon reveal its exciting and even revolutionary nature. The obstacle can become a challenge.
Chapter One

THE YAHWEH-ALONE MOVEMENT
AND THE
MAKING OF JEWISH MONOTHEISM

There is no God but Yahweh and Israel is his prophet.
- Julius Wellhausen (1921, 152)

The introduction of monotheism into the consciousness of mankind is the greatest single achievement of the ancient Hebrews.
- Raphael Patai (1977, 349)

In terms of the biblical evidence it seems almost natural that 'heathen' polytheism should be the illegitimate offspring of a much older monotheism. According to such a view, polytheism derives from the still pure beliefs held by the immediate descendants of Noah, hero of the flood. Time and again, the idea of a primitive and primordial monotheism (the German 'Urmonotheismus') is even recognized by critically and empirically orientated scholars. For instance, the English philosopher Herbert of Cherbury (1582-1648) took the veneration of one single god to be the essence of religion in the classical world, its polytheistic character being nothing but its facade. Actual polytheism, however, is an invention of 'priestcraft': by pretence and deceit, priests have dissuaded their peoples from a thoroughly monotheistic 'Urreligion'. It is not difficult to see what the father of English deism is aiming at: he is looking for a reassuring empirical and historical basis for his belief in the deistic god and, overwhelmed by discovering this god in ancient sources, he feels happier than the Greek thinker, Archimedes /1/.

The first to relate the idea of a primordial monotheism to both ancient and contemporary religions is the French Jesuit, Jean-François Lafitau (1681-1740), a former missionary in Canada and one of the founders of modern comparative religion. Starting from the fact that classical religion, as well
as that of the Chinese, the Indians, Peruvians, Amerindians and many other peoples, includes a Supreme Being, he goes on to conclude that this reflects a primordial monotheism, mediated to man by an original revelation. Polytheism, on the other hand, is taken to be some degenerate form of the belief in angels which must ultimately derive from the same supernatural source /2/.

The great Enlightenment critic, Voltaire, is still of the same opinion. "I dare to believe", he writes in his 'Dictionnaire Philosophique' of 1764, "that in the beginning, people knew of one god only and that later on a plurality of gods was assumed due to human frailty" /3/. In the twentieth century, this theory of decadence was revived by Father Wilhelm Schmidt SVD (1868-1954) in his many-volumed 'Ursprung der Gottesidee' on the basis of anthropological research. Nowadays, critics differentiate Schmidt's evidence from the dogmatic framework in which it was presented and conclude, that the idea of a High God is almost universal. This concept, however, is not to be confused with monotheism proper /4/.

How Old is Yahweh-Alone Worship?
Review of Some Theories /5/

The student of the Old Testament whose documents recall the beginnings of recorded human history is easily led to endorse the theory of a primordial monotheism. How will he react when being assured that one can only think in terms of an evolution which makes monotheistic belief a later form of religion? Since 1757, when David Hume published his famous 'Natural History of Religions', this view has been gradually gaining ground and is now generally accepted. Hence, the beginnings of Israelite monotheism, or, to be more cautious, the beginnings of monolatric religion, are sought in the history and, especially, the early history of the biblical people. Various authors place the nomadic religion of the patriachs, the religion of Moses, that of some tribal league, or the prophets at the first stage of the developing belief in one god. The view which one adopts does not only depend on actual historical evidence (which is meager), but also on the requirements of one's church doctrine or personal bias, as we see in the cases of Father Schmidt, Father Lafitau, and Herbert of Cherbury quoted above.

The same is true for Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891) who is remembered as one of the founders of modern Old Testament criticism. His theory of the prophetic origins of Jewish
monotheism is aptly summed up in the concept of 'ethical monotheism', an expression Kuenen seems to have introduced himself and which has enjoyed wide circulation:

What did the Israelitish prophets accomplish? What was the result of their work, and what value are we to assign to it? Ethical monotheism is their creation. They have themselves ascended to the belief in one only, holy, and righteous God, who realises his will, or moral good, in the world, and they have, by preaching and writing, made that belief the inalienable property of our race /6/.

In Kuenen's work, as later in that of Max Weber, Israel's prophets figure among the first to promote the ethos which became normative for Western society. The emphasis on progress ("they have themselves ascended"), the implied concepts of evolutionary perfection, and of morality as the center of religion are typical ideas of the late nineteenth century. The liberal Dutch theologian's book on prophecy was published in the same decade as Charles Darwin's 'Descent of Man' (1871!)

To most contemporary scholars, Kuenen's view of monotheism seems out of date, as it clearly over-estimates prophetic creativity. Recently, however, the same view was eloquently advocated by Nikiprowetzky. This author returns to the concept of 'ethical monotheism' and recognises the prophets as the actual creators and promotors of a monotheistic belief which is one of the "moral and intellectual bases of modern society" /7/. "Born of national pride and self-confidence, it grew and gained strength along with it", Kuenen writes on monotheism /8/. In Nikiprowetzky, we read:

As intolerant and fanatic champions of Yahweh, the prophets started the religious war in reaction to the Philistine expansionism that led to the conquest of the highlands. The preaching of the prophets represented, on a religious level, calls to battle against the Philistines and to form an Israelite state. Monolatry became symbolic of an imperative duty to Yahweh and to the Hebrew nation /9/.

Prophetic nationalism, then, is the cradle of monotheism - at least in the view of the authors quoted. Would Durkheim have taken this as confirming his theory that the divine is a symbolic abstraction or representation of society, and hence, in the final analysis, society itself?
Although Kuenen's late dating of the birth of Yahwistic monolatry may be historically accurate, his work is now passé. Scholars prefer to look at earlier periods of Israel's history for the origins of monotheism, without, of course, immunity from ideology or bias. This is particularly true of writers of 'dialectical theology', advocates of a sternly dialectical exegesis, the classical representative of which is Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971). He opens his 'Theology of the Old Testament' with an interesting, yet somehow inadequate outline of the history of Yahwism. In the middle of a well-documented report that gives evidence to the long and undisputed co-existence of Yahweh with a host of other gods in Israelite religion, one is surprised to encounter the following dogmatic statement:

Right from its beginning (...) Yahwism's claim to exclusivity did not tolerate peaceful co-existence with other cults. One cannot conceive of a worship of Yahweh which did not respect the First Commandment /10/.

Such a statement would be quite fitting for a Karl Barth, but can it be accepted as a historian's judgement? Its source seems to be the Deuteronomist's work, which was aptly called the implicit or 'secret' center of von Rad's Theology /11/. Was he aware of the limitations and doubtful historical accuracy of the Deuteronomist's perspective? Von Rad's view may be explained, and perhaps excused, by saying that our problem, the origin of Jewish monotheism, was not his. He was concerned with the distinctive traditions of Israel.

From this strictly inner-biblical, phenomenologically orientated approach, which has always been stressing rather than actually demonstrating the distinctiveness of Israel in all respects, monotheism was no subject to be discussed at any length; for monotheism is only meaningful as the opposite of polytheism which is not particularly prominent in Israel's national traditions /12/.

One may add that, during the Third Reich, this simple view of Israel's uncompromising worship of Yahweh alone contributed to the status of the Old Testament as the unquestionable property of the Confessional Church /13/. But should such indisputable merit silence scholarly argument?

While von Rad allows for an Israelite origin of the exclusive worship of Yahweh, which he relates to a sacred tribal league prior to the monarchy, Victor Maag /14/ goes far back into the desert to look for origins. He refers to a
documentary film by the famous Sven Hedin which deals with the Bachtiars of Iran. When the usual pastures of these herding people are insufficient or unavailable, they migrate for long distances, often venturing into unfamiliar territory. They base their hope in finding rich pasture-ground on a divine promise mediated by an inspired leader. Maag identifies this with the religion of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and even with that of Moses, as an exclusively worshipped god of the wilderness guiding his people. This interesting and extremely witty view of Maag has often been criticized and refuted, even by Maag's own students /15/.

Ulf Oldenburg looks even further back in desert society than Maag /16/. Coming out of the desert earlier than 3000 B.C., the Canaanites have a purely monotheistic religion whose god is called El. Their belief, however, does not remain in its original form as other peoples enter their society along with their gods. When, from the late Third Millennium onwards, the Near East is flooded by the Amorites who come out of the Arabian peninsula, El is supplanted by the Amorite pantheon, the best known representative of which is Baal, a young character full of vitality. The Israelites are the only ones to resist foreign influence and continue their exclusive worship of El, whom they call Yahweh, the intolerant god of monotheism. Thus, the Israelites appear to be the true Canaanites, the genuine Semites who stubbornly conserve and defend their inherited religious identity. The reader of Oldenburg's book is strongly reminded of Ernest Renan's (1823-1892) famous phrases that "The desert is monotheistic" [now transformed into: Canaan is monotheistic] and "The Semites never had a mythology". Further, "The intolerance of the Semitic race is the logical consequence of their monotheism" /17/. Perhaps echoing Renan, Lawrence of Arabia, who had a first-hand knowledge of the desert, wrote in the same vein that the Arab's "desert was made a spiritual ice-house, in which was preserved intact but unimproved for all ages a vision of the unity of God" and further, that "this faith of the desert was impossible in the towns" /18/. However, such views have long rested in the graveyard of out-dated theories, and R. de Vaux's comment on Oldenburg's book is to the point: "There are accurate observations, but unfortunately they are marred by views no longer used in the history of religions (Urmonotheism, the pure religion of the desert, etc.) and by an entirely uncritical reading of biblical texts" /19/.
A different approach is taken by N. K. Gottwald in his bulky study on 'The Tribes of Yahweh' the subtitle of which reveals the author's perspective: 'A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel'. According to Gottwald, mono-Yahwism is the out-growth of an innovative social revolution taking place in pre-state Israel. Whereas polytheism is a feature of the traditional, hierarchically stratified city-states of Canaan, mono-Yahwism is Israel's own property and is related to the conscious creation of a classless commonwealth:

One way of viewing the relationship of religion and society in old Israel is to recognize in Yahwism an experimental, conceptual-institutional alternative to repressive human authorities. In Israel the element of experimental calculation is reflected in the people's free choice of the covenant relationship with the deity. Thus, while in explicitly cultic terms the demands of Yahwism were strict and excessive compared to the demands of official Canaanite religion, the actual empirical situation was that the 'tolerant' Canaanite cult justified the centralized political rape of human and natural resources and energies by a small elite, whereas the 'strict' Israelite cult justified the development and enjoyment of human and natural resources and energies by the entire populace. Yahweh, in appearing to demand much more than Canaanite gods, actually gave back to his worshippers the benefits of productive human life which a small Canaanite minority had arrogated to itself under the symbolic approval of hierarchic polytheism /20/. [In brief:] Yahweh forbids other gods in Israel as Israel forbids other systems of communal organization within its intertribal order /21/.

I am afraid that this eloquently conjured 'monotheistic experiment' is a modern idealization of Israel's origins, the romantic idea of an ancient peasant revolt, wishful thinking rather than a plausible reconstruction of historical events!

In his book on 'Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament', Morton Smith engages in a truly critical reading of the Bible. Coming from von Rad's outline you have to slowly adapt your eyes to a new perspective. According to Smith, the notorious worship of many gods by the Hebrew people is not a lapse, or defection, from an earlier and metaphysically higher faith revealed at Sinai, but merely exemplifies the polytheism of all ancient and primitive nations. Israel's religious history is not characterized by the
fight for restoring the original, monolatric orthodoxy, but rather by the fluctuating fate of a minority Yahweh-alone movement, whose own presentation of the story in the Books of Kings should not mislead the modern scholar as it is the biased view of the victorious party.

We cannot confidently reconstruct the origin of monolatry. The factors that may have contributed to its formation include, (a) rivalry between the priests and prophets of Yahweh and those of other gods, (b) opposition of conservative nomads against Canaanite cult and culture, and (c) the wish to keep the ritual and cultural life of the immigrating overlords separate from that of their native subjects. Rivalry in cultic matters can be illustrated by the destruction of the Yahweh temple in Elephantine by the Egyptian priests of Khnum (5th century B.C.), and by the return to the 'gods of the fathers' implied by a passage in Herodotus on the Caunians in ancient Greece. Actual influence of the monolatric idea is not attested before the 9th century B.C. when it is advocated by the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, in the northern kingdom, and by the reforms of kings Asa and Jehoshaphat in the south. The exact aims of the monolatric movement are as difficult to grasp as the origins of its ideology. In the southern kingdom, temple prostitution and icons are abolished, and in the north there is a fierce battle, not between the adherants of Baal and Yahweh, but between an official polylatric cult patronized by King Ahab and a group supporting Yahwistic monolatry. Ahab's spouse, Jezebel, persecutes the members of the monolatric movement, while King Jehu appears to support them, most probably for political rather than religious reasons.

For a long time to come there are no records on the monolatric movement; perhaps they saw their foremost objectives fulfilled. It is documented again when Hosea appears on the scene in eighth century Israel, when King Manasseh persecutes the Yahweh-aloneists, and when, in the late seventh century, the reform of King Josiah inaugurates a true growth period for monolatry.

Despite the brevity of his presentation, Smith tries to include many well-argued details. He notes that unlike Hosea, Amos does not seem to be an advocate of monolatry but the monolatric movement takes up his interest in social matters, and that political pressure in favour of polylatric worship applied by the Assyrian overlords, often assumed by modern scholarship, is unlikely /22/. The cultic monopoly of
Jerusalem, realized under King Josiah, may be taken to be a new objective of the movement, dating from the days of Hezekiah or Manasseh. The Josianic reform seems to be supported by various groups which have dissimilar interests. The priests of the Jerusalem temple favour the idea of making it the center of worship, merchants are interested in the lucrative business connected with pilgrimages, and the king in political centralism, while nomadic and ascetic circles want the suppression of fertility rituals and to re-invigorate the legendary figure of Moses /23/, etc.

Although one may have reservations about some of the details, it seems clear that this fresh view is the most probable and empirically sound interpretation of available facts.

The following pages try to reexamine the sources and, adopting Smith's approach and some of his conclusions, give an outline of the history of the exclusive worship of Yahweh. We have to start with the oldest form of Israelite religion, i.e. polytheism.

The Background: Israelite Polytheism

During the four and a half centuries of Israelite monarchy (ca. 1020-586 B.C.), the dominant religion is polytheistic and undifferentiated from that of its neighbours. The religions of the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Tyrians, etc., are local variants of the common Syro-Palestinian pattern which is not transcended by their individual traits and distinctive features. The original religion of Israel belongs to this group of West-Semitic cults. Every individual Israelite clan, from the king down to serfs and slaves, honours its own tutelary god or spirit who is taken to be responsible for the family's health and well-being. It respects the local god whose name is used in oath-taking and who is thought to punish the wicked members of the residential community be it village or town. It worships Yahweh, the god of country and nation, whose special domains are kingship, war, and peace. Finally, there are 'departmental gods' whose fields of competence may be weather, rain, female fertility, and the like. It may be that the Baalim, so often mentioned in the Bible, are but the gods of cities and provinces of Israel, whereas Yahweh is the great Baal, or lord, of all the kingdom. In any case, Yahweh, the 'god of hosts', is surrounded by a host of gods.

Female prestige depends on male children, since only they can provide old-age pension. Hannah does not take comfort in her husband's tender assurance that, to him, she is worth
more than ten sons; she prays to the clan god, worshipped on the occasion of a yearly feast, for a son (1 Sam 1). Other women direct their prayers to the 'Queen of Heaven', apparently their special patronness, who is honoured by burning incense, by libations and by offering of a particular kind of cake /24/.

From the vast repertoire of religious ideas, institutions and practices, let me single out just a few, especially those that were suppressed or transformed later, and analyze them briefly.

(1) The National God

Yahweh's position as Israel's national god is undisputed even in polytheism. All the neighbouring peoples have one single national god each - the Moabites worship their Kemosh, the Ammonites Milcom, the Assyrians Ashur, and the Egyptians Amun-Re. Just as Israel is the people of Yahweh, so Moab is the "people of Kemosh" - and the Moabites the sons and daughters of the same divinity /25/. Generally speaking, aliens are "the people of a foreign god" (Dan 11.39). The idea of a national god is well expressed in Micah:

All peoples may walk, each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of Yahweh our god for ever and ever /26/.

As god of the country where he resides, Yahweh's sphere of responsibility and influence may be conceived of as either very limited or relatively extensive. Aramean enemies take him to be a 'god of the hills', i.e. of the Palestinian hill country, whereas Amos thinks in terms of the Davidic-Solomonic empire and even includes some adjacent areas /27/. A much more modest idea can be seen in a Hebrew inscription found some years ago and now on exhibition in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Around 700 B.C. a Judaean has the following sentence engraved on the wall of his tomb chamber: "Yahweh is the god of all the country, the hills of Judah belong to the god of Jerusalem" - possibly the refrain of some psalm or national song /28/.

The close correlation between god, land and people implies 'other countries, other gods', and to go abroad means 'to serve other gods' (1 Sam 26.19-20). "How could we sing Yahweh's song in a foreign land?" (Ps 137.4) the exiled psalmist asks melancholically. On the other hand, national gods may be worshipped even abroad, and foreign gods enjoy the right of
hospitality in the Yahweh temple of Jerusalem, where their statues and altars are installed. Further, the Moabite Kemosh and the Ammonite Milcom have their own separate shrines on the hill immediately east of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 11.7). In these sanctuaries there are icons of these gods which are tended and maintained by a special, and possibly foreign, clergy.

The images of gods may be taken abroad or even deported in war (Jer 49.3). But how to worship Yahweh, the aniconic god, in another country? The Aramaean commander, Naaman, finds a solution which does honour even to a military leader's ingenuity. He takes a load of soil on two mules and thus is able to worship the owner of this soil, Yahweh, even in Damascus (2 Kgs 5.17). Naaman's promise to worship Yahweh exclusively, and his apology for his involvement with the cult of Rimmon may be the product of the imagination of a biased narrator, rather than the usual logic of polytheism. Israelite polytheists are people "who bow down before Yahweh, yet at the same time swear by Milcom" /29/. Even after his rise to world dominion, the Yahweh of the fifth century does not lose the nature of a god whose sphere of influence is geographically defined, "Yahweh's greatness reaches beyond the borders of Israel" (Mal 1.5). If it is to be properly understood, this statement must be read in terms of its implication that there was a time when Yahweh's power did not extend beyond the borders of the country.

(2) The Creator God

A national god such as Yahweh need not be conceived of as the creator of the universe. For most of ancient Israel, as well as for its immediate neighbours, man and world were created by a mighty god called El or Elohim. Accordingly, one text speaks of "El, the Most High, creator of heaven and earth" /30/. Some passages give clear evidence to a later and quite conscious identification of Elohim and Yahweh, see above all the well known creation narrative: "Then Elohim, (i.e.) Yahweh, formed a man from the dust of the ground" (Gen 2.7). The added name of Yahweh betrays how the earlier concept of Elohim was supplanted by the belief in Yahweh alone. The same process of identification and assimilation can be seen in Am 9.6:

He builds his stair up to the heavens and arches his ceiling over the earth, he summons the waters of the sea and pours them over the land. Yahweh is his name.

The concluding exclamation, "Yahweh is his name" is
repeated several times in secondary passages /31/ in Amos, and is the creed of a later period which sees a struggle to supplant Elohim by Yahweh and exclusively worships the latter. "Yahweh is his name" means to say that Yahweh is the creator god, not Canaanite El! Belief in El, however, is not directly opposed, but El or Elohim are simply identified with Yahweh, so that both merge into one, single deity. (The emergency of the 'aloneist' creed will be discussed later in this chapter.)

(3) Iconolatry

Another feature of Israel's oldest religion is an array of idols, or cult images representing gods or goddess in human shape, or symbolizing some divine power, perhaps some secondary aspect of a deity, in animal or vegetable form. It seems that Yahweh himself is never represented in iconic form /32/, but that a bronze serpent, a golden calf-bull and a sacred tree /33/ can symbolize his power to heal and to dispense fertility in various domains, serving as the focal points for sacrificial activities - see, e.g., the altar which Aaron erects in front of the Golden Calf (Ex 32.5). The idols themselves are so powerful that just by looking at them one can receive divine blessing, soaking it in, as it were, with one's eyes. Fortunately, later tradition did not altogether suppress what may be called the 'sacrament of seeing'. "When a snake had bitten a man", one passage reads, "he can look at the bronze serpent and recover" (Num 21.9). At least one psalm echoes what it means to the worshipper to 'see', i.e., to meet, his god in iconic representation: "I seek thee early with a heart that thirsts for thee (...) So longing I come before thee in the sanctuary to look upon thy power and glory" /34/. Some features of the famous golden calf incident at Mount Sinai, in particular the priest's formal presentation of the image to the people, suggest the existence of an elaborate ritual of consecration and induction, which in the Book of Daniel is reported for Babylonia /35/.

(4) Divine Kingship

This expression does not just entail that kingship is a divine institution, but that the monarch himself is a divine figure and can legitimately be called a 'god' or a 'god's son' /36/. The precise meaning of these terms in the framework of Hebrew mythology escapes us as the idea could survive later censorship only in poetry open to a metaphoric or 'sterilized' re-reading. How can it be that the king is the son of Yahweh,
a god without a consort? Or are we looking for too much consistency in the realm of myth, and of ideology presented in the form of myth? (Some possible interpretations are suggested in this volume's section on the Making of Messianism.)

(5) Human Sacrifice

One of the institutions of the polytheistic cult, later considered heresy, is human sacrifice. It is not a regular feature of worship, but is thought to be powerful in the event of a national disaster. When the king of Moab was encircled in one of his towns by the Israelite military, leaving him no possibility of escape, "he took his eldest son, who would have succeeded him, and offered him as a whole-offering upon the city wall" (2 Kgs 3.27). Incidentally, the Israelite military, afraid of some supernatural action on behalf of their enemy, immediately returned to its own country. Micah 6.7 leaves no doubt that the Israelites themselves occasionally resort to the same practice of human sacrifice. The Phoenician large-scale sacrifices, where two hundred or more children have to satisfy some god's insatiable appetite, seem to be the product of the unrestrained imagination of such story-tellers as Diodor and Flaubert /37/, who are writing with an eye toward a readership which expects sensations.

(6) Temple Prostitution

Many sanctuaries have their own temple brothel which includes both female and male prostitutes. Contrary to widespread assertion, there is no evidence for a religious or magical meaning of copulation, such as the ecstatic experience of the divine in orgasm or the promotion of fertility. According to biblical texts, the brothel is one of the temple's sources of income, perhaps an important one /38/. The temple women of Jerusalem, and elsewhere, may be obedient servants of some goddess of love who has her icon in the temple. Their actual business, however, is as profane as that of the prostitute who may seek a female innkeeper's protection or keep an inn herself. The temple brothel probably provides shelter and income for a woman who, for whatever reasons, can no longer count on the help and solidarity of her clan. The temple brothel serves humanitarian ends, at least from the temple management's point of view.
Ancestor Worship

The cult of the dead /39/ seems to play an important role, but as it is rejected by a later phase of Israelite religion, it is hardly recognizable in the sources. According to the older view, the ancestors are not the weak and feeble beings of later dogma, but rather powerful ghosts or 'gods' (the latter designation being used by 1 Sam 28.13) who are able to influence their descendants. Extra-biblical data suggest that the injunction to honour one's father and mother refers not only to the care for the aged parents but also to some form of cult of the dead. Ancestor worship is the basis of the idea of a family tomb and of the wish to live close to it. Writing in the sixth century B.C., the prophet and priest, Ezekiel, is shocked by the fact that the, seemingly unclean, family tomb of the Davidic dynasty is within the 'city of David', probably even within the royal palace itself /40/, and, in any case, quite close to the temple. Although this situation fills the priest with horror, it is actually encouraged by an earlier tradition, which confines the idea of ritual impurity to a short period of mourning and burial.

This polytheistic and 'pagan' religion did not remain static. Some of its transformations may be seen as steps towards monolatry, whereas others lack such direction. Of the Judaean king, Asa (912-871), we are told: "He even deprived his own grandmother Maacah of her rank as queen mother because she had an obscene object (?) made for the worship of the holy tree /41/. Asa cut it down and burnt it in the gorge of the Kidron" (1 Kgs 15.13). The passage reveals an intimate connection of politics and religion: "It seems likely that the king removed a particular cult object, perhaps the image of a mother goddess of special concern to the queen mother, from the temple, in order to express, even by this, the end of the gebirah's political influence" /42/. However, this reading is far from certain. The reason the biblical writer gives for Maacah's deposition sounds "so typically Deuteronomistic that doubts about the historical accuracy can hardly be suppressed" /43/. Maybe the biblical author, known for his interest in religious reforms, has modelled the ex-queen mother on the prototype of other idolatrous women associated with the royal court. In this case, he would have indulged not only in arbitrarily supplementing the sources available to him, but also in falsely attributing the cultic ideal of a later age.

An episode involving Nadab and Abihu is less obscure, even though, in its brevity, it is not entirely clear. These two
priests once "presented before Yahweh illicit fire which he
had not commanded" and were, so the story tells, killed by
the sacrificial fire (Lev 10.1-5). This anecdote seems to
reflect an argument about some sort of incense offering
which was rejected or tabooed by a certain group of priests,
for whatever reasons. Undoubtedly, the story of the two
disobedient priests' fate was told to all apprentices at the
temple in order to inculcate the strictest obedience and to
eliminate a former feature of the cult. For us, this conflict
about the incense offering indicates that there were issues
unrelated to monolatric worship. Even the cult is not free
from human rivalry - just as any other realm of society.

The Fight against Baal in the Ninth Century (Phase 1)

We have several highly interesting politico-religious re-
ports for the northern kingdom in the ninth century:

(1) In the period of King Ahab (874-853) the Yahweh
prophet, Elijah, has a large number of Baal prophets
murdered, after the king's consort, Jezebel, had killed those
of Yahweh (1 Kgs 18; 19,1).

(2) King Jehoram (852-841) removes a stone monument of
the god Baal from the temple of Yahweh in the capital of
Samaria (2 Kgs 3,2).

(3) Following a coup d'état, the usurper king, Jehu
(841-813), has a temple of Baal destroyed and orders the
killing of the priests and prophets of this divinity (2 Kgs 9-10).

With the exception of the brief report about King Jehoram,
we are dealing here with texts which are to be classified as
prophetic legend or history recast in terms of later religious
concerns. Their immediate evaluation as historical sources is
therefore impossible. Because the narrator projects his
particular preoccupation, the exclusivity of the worship of
Yahweh, on to the events of the ninth century, we can no
longer determine the true extent of the conflict between
Yahweh and Baal, and between their respective supporters.
Whether the murder of prophets and priests really took place
we do not know, though it is certainly possible. The key to
the events lies in the figure of Jezebel. A daughter of the
Sidonian king, Ethbaal, she is a fervent worshipper of the god
of her Phoenician home town /44/. King Ahab demonstrates
his pro-Phoenician policy through the marriage to Jezebel
and through promoting her to chief wife. This invigorates
trade and strengthens Ahab against the Assyrian Empire,
which is rising threateningly on the horizon, and results in the
increased worship of Baal.
King Ahab himself endows an altar for the foreign god, perhaps even a shrine, if 1 Kgs 16.32 is not an exaggeration. This is nothing unusual; in the middle of the ninth century, Bar-Hadad, king of Damascus, erects a stela for the Tyrian Melcart and calls the foreign god "his lord (baal)" /45/.

What can be the meaning of the alternative, 'Yahweh or Baal', stressed in the biblical reports, in the context of polytheistic religion? The following considerations may be offered:

1. Perhaps the newly introduced cult, with its center on or at the Carmel mount /46/, is very popular and leads to a financial loss for Yahweh's priesthood. We can see that these priests are ill-disposed towards Baal and his, certainly, foreign priests /47/, and that the rivalry can escalate into open conflict.

2. Following a suggestion by Astour /48/, one must reckon with an opposition to the Phoenician traders, whose financial center is the temple of Baal. This supposition is by no means irrelevant. In antiquity, temples are institutions for religious cults, and also fulfil many a task of the modern bank. "So great was your sin in your wicked trading that you desecrated your sanctuaries" (Ez 28.18) says Ezekiel to the king of Tyre, a sentence which makes little sense unless the temple functions as a trading bank. Even though we have no immediate evidence for the rejection of foreign traders in this period, it is not totally unthinkable. Foreign traders' branches require royal protection just for this reason (1 Kgs 20.34).

3. The political re-orientation under King Jehu, away from Phoenicia and towards Assyria, is certainly no spontaneous decision. Clearly, an anti-Phoenician circle with sees its future in an alliance with Assyria had existed for a long time. Such circles have as little respect for the Baal cult as they have for Sidon and Tyre, and are easily won over to a 'Yahweh instead of Baal' slogan, if it is not created within their own ranks. One does not worship the god of the enemy. In a parallel illustration, the Shilluk of southern Sudan are forbidden to worship the tribal god of the Dinka, their neighbouring enemies. The ethnographer, Hofmayr, can even document a violation: In an extremely dry year, a desperate Shilluk who set up a secret shrine to the powerful god, Dengit, is discovered and fined one ox /49/.

4. In addition to the financial and political rivalries, there may be some which can be regarded as directly religious confrontations. Perhaps the adherants of Baal really...
try to make the Phoenician god into the national god of the northern kingdom, leaving only an inferior place for the traditional god of the country. Or does this particular historical situation result in two gods of the country, sharing more or less equal status, i.e., Yahweh and Baal? Even the flexible logic of polytheism cannot accommodate two national gods at a time, and the result is not a fight between Yahweh and the Phoenician Baal, but "between Yahweh and what one might call the duo-theistic posture of the kings" /50/. Just the thought of such a situation offends Yahweh's prophets and injures their national feeling. Whatever may be the historical truth about the bloody fights under Ahab and Jezebel, Ahab's second /51/ successor, Jehoram, bears, perhaps consciously, a name containing Yahweh's, and removes a stone monument consecrated to Baal from the temple of Yahweh in the capital city.

The events of the Jehu revolution are harder to judge. The records assume prophetic incitement and, accordingly, that Jehu allows full rein to religious, and not just power-political interests. However, it seems to me that the greatest caution is advisable on this point.

The participation of prophetic circles in the plotting of the coup d'état looks more like royal propaganda than historical fact. A prophetic oracle of the type, "This is the word of Yahweh, the god of Israel: I anoint you king over Israel, over the people of Yahweh" (2 Kgs 9.6) can only strengthen a powerful chief and will not miss its mark with the people. But what about Jehu's pitiless action against the god Baal and his priests? It is a priori probable that the new king replaces the priests devoted to his predecessors Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram, with new ones, in order to eliminate a possible or even probable opposition. We know from his merciless extermination of the families of his predecessors that Jehu does not shrink from murder in such cases (2 Kgs 10.1-14). Even if the destruction of a Baal temple corresponds more to a wish of a Deuteronomistic writer than to historical fact, one must nevertheless reckon with measures against the cult of the Phoenician god. For Jehu does not continue the pro-Phoenician policy of his predecessors, but takes sides with the enemies of the Phoenicians, i.e. the Assyrians /52/. A contemporary Assyrian stela shows King Jehu kissing the dust at the feet of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser /53/. The logical implication of Jehu's policy is that opponents of the pro-Assyrian course are to be found among the friends of the Phoenician temple and have to be eliminated.
In the events of the generation of 874-840 later adherents of the Yahweh-alone movement see key concerns of theirs realized or, at least, enhanced. In the ninth century, however, the struggle between Yahweh and Baal is still contained within the framework of polytheism, and has its closest counterpart in the rivalry between Ashur and Marduk, the major gods of Assyria and Babylonia, respectively. Every time Babylon is incorporated into the Assyrian Empire, the cult of the Babylonian Marduk loses prestige and is consciously reduced at least twice. Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 B.C.) conquers Babylon and takes the statue of Marduk to Assyria. Sennacherib (704-681) destroys the temple of Marduk in the enemy's capital and carries the statue of Marduk back to his homeland with him. It is his grandson, Ashurbanipal (669-627), who brings it back to Babylon. According to W. von Soden /54/, Sennacherib has propagandistic cult theatre performed which shows Marduk in the pitiful role of the accused before the court of the gods. All of these are measures for the defamation of the Babylonian national god and to the greater glory of Ashur.

Such acts originate from a narrow-minded national pride and it is the known characteristic of most peoples to brand everything strange as barbaric and reject it, especially when it appears right on their doorstep. That is the end of the tolerance otherwise practised or declared. Even Roman history provides an illuminating example for this. When many people turn to foreign (and hence, allegedly, superior) cults during a devastating epidemic, they are denounced as mentally ill, or superstitious, or they are defamed as the victims of profit-hungry swindlers, and, finally, these cults are formally forbidden. The conservative Romans of 428 B.C. defend themselves successfully against the importation of foreign cults with the slogan, 'Only Roman Gods'.

And not only were men's bodies smitten by the plague, but a horde of superstitions, mostly foreign, took possession of their minds, as the class of men who find their profit in superstition-ridden souls introduced strange rites into their homes, pretending to be seers; until the public shame finally reached the leading citizens, as they beheld in every street and chapel outlandish and unfamiliar sacrifices being offered up to appease Heaven's anger. The aediles were then commissioned to see to it that none but Roman gods should be worshipped, nor in any but the ancestral way /55/.
Because neither an Ashur-alone movement nor an 'Only Roman Gods' party did arise from this rivalry, caution must be exercised in the interpretation of the corresponding events in Israel. The violence and radicalism of certain episodes in the religious battle should not mislead us. The opponents of the Phoenician Baal are not monotheists, nor do they worship Yahweh exclusively to the detriment of all other gods. One can realize only later that the beginnings of the Yahweh-alone fanaticism lie here, and it is this which will finally drive out polytheism.

The Prophet Hosea (Phase 2)

In the period between the coup d'état of Jehu (841) and the appearance of the prophet Hosea (around 750) a religious movement comes into being in the northern kingdom which, following Morton Smith's suggestion, can be called the 'Yahweh-alone party' /56/. Our knowledge of this group is very limited and essentially rests on the Book of Hosea, whose value as a source is not above suspicion. The Book of Hosea must be regarded as the oldest, classical document of the movement and its influence can be proved without difficulty even two hundred years later. As the movement further develops its teachings and objectives, these are partly incorporated into the book. At any rate, critical research takes this factor into account, though it is, admittedly, very hard to prove for individual passages. In our context, however, it is less important to reconstruct the original wordings of Hosea's oracles, than to read the book as a reliable witness to the intentions of the Yahweh-alone movement. In this way, we can placate the critical consciousness by pointing out that the typical teachings of the seventh and sixth centuries, limiting the sacrificial cult to Jerusalem and actual monotheism, are not to be found in that book. It can be valid as a thoroughly genuine document of the eighth century.

A second important source is the book of the Prophet Amos /57/ who lives in the same generation as Hosea. It is a source in a totally negative sense, because Amos reveals nothing of a polemic against false gods. Amos is indeed a prophet of Yahweh but the Yahweh-alone idea does not find expression in his written legacy. Not every worshipper of Yahweh is simultaneously a supporter of the Yahweh-alone movement, which one should not imagine to be too influential. If we evaluate the Book of Hosea we see that the programme of the movement at that time includes criticism of gods other
than Yahweh and criticism of temple prostitution. We will now take up these points.

(1) The Israelites should worship Yahweh and neglect all other gods on principle.

In the words of Hosea's god this reads:

But I have been Yahweh, your god, since your days in Egypt. You shall know no god but me! There is no saviour beside me! (Hos 13.4)

What sounds like a play on the words of the decalogue to the ears of a later Jew or Christian well-versed in the Scriptures is, in fact, the basis of the Ten Commandments, which appear much later and allude to the words of Hosea. The worship of Yahweh alone is the cause of a small group only. The official trend of the religion of the Temple remains, of course, polytheistic:

They must needs sacrifice to the Baalim and burn offerings before carved images. (Hos 11.2)

They resort to other gods and love the raisin-cakes offered to their idols. (Hos 3.1)

Raisin-cakes, therefore, are not part of the Yahweh cult. In short, "Ephraim, keeping company with idols" (Hos 4.17). More than once it can be perceived clearly that this conception is an extension and escalation of the fight against Baal. 'The other gods' are simply called the "Baalim":

I will punish her (i.e. Israel) for the holy days when she burnt sacrifices to the Baalim (Hos 2.13)

says one oracle, and another one:

and I shall wipe from her lips the very name of the Baalim; never again shall their names be heard. (Hos 2.17)

Now opposition is not only to the Phoenician Baal alone, but also to all his local manifestations. Wherever a Baal, whether it is the Phoenician or any other, is worshipped, the Yahweh-alone movement rejects his cult. Apparently, the opposition is now extended to deities who do not belong to the Baal type, for example the god of the plague, the god of death, etc., and of course the female deities as well. The Baalim are mentioned emphatically, but this is probably less due to the wide distribution of Baal shrines than to the memory of the 'original conflict' between supporters of Yahweh and those of the Phoenician Baal. Now all the gods
are denounced as 'Baalim', as supposed rivals of Yahweh.

(2) Prostitution should be banned from the temple area

Hosea, husband of a temple woman (Hos 1.2-3), is a harsh opponent of the temple brothels:

At Israel's sanctuary I have seen a horrible thing: there Ephraim played the wanton, and Israel defiled herself. (Hos 6.10)

Apparently, prostitution in the temple can barely be differentiated from the same trade carried on at the edges of simpler venues for worship, such as the village threshing floors. The reproach here is:

You have loved a harlot's fee on every threshing-floor heaped with corn. (Hos 9.1)

It is hard to decide what the prophet in chap. 4.13-14 is referring to. Is he talking about the orgiastic cults at holy shrines, in which every male participating in the service of worship is paired with a woman at its end? In this sense, W. Rudolph paraphrases the prophet's reproach:

The men who indulge in these practices must notice that they offer a bad example to the female members of their own families, who are also present at the cult festivals. If anything happened to them a hue and cry would be raised (the woman is not allowed to do what the man lays claim to as his obvious right). But Yahweh says that he cannot count it ill if the young girls and wives, befuddled by wine, take the heads of their own families as a model and give in to their impulses /58/.

But the prophet may be referring to a fertility rite which the women undergo before marriage. In the shrine, they have sexual intercourse for the first time with any stranger present or with a priest /59/. Whatever the intent may be, Hosea, and with him the Yahweh-aloneists, condemns all sexual practices which occur in connection with Israelite temples and worship. He is a 'Puritan'.

The reader of Hosea may note that I have not dealt with the rejection of images and of idols, which plays a role in the prophet's book. I consider the polemic against icons to be post-Hoseanic additions /60/. As Yahweh is never presented in iconic form /61/, the condemnation of other gods must simultaneously be the rejection of images. The Golden Calf symbolizing Yahweh's power and potency, set up as a statue
in the Temple of Bethel, is clearly mentioned without polemic in Hos 10.5-6. If Hosea considers the fabrication of idols of silver and gold a sin (8.4), then he is thinking of the statues of Baal, and not of this calf-shaped icon. That is the opinion of the editor who added 8.5-6 and 13.2. Hosea does not take exception to the Golden Calf of Bethel. Only the temple brothel disturbs him. In the secondary polemic against the Calf we can grasp a teaching of the Yahweh-aloneists which only appears after Hosea's days, but perhaps before the end of the eighth century. It is interpolated by the editors of the book for the sake of completion and elucidation.

At this point it is necessary to look back at the development of the worship of Yahweh alone. By now it should be clear that no straightforward path leads from the confrontations of the ninth century to the developed Yahweh-alone theology of Hosea. If we lack sources to reconstruct this path, we can at least reconstruct some of the forces which must have been at work. We can refer to the 'temporary monolatry' known in the Ancient Near East and first analyzed by the Dutch Assyriologist, A. van Selms [62]. In certain situations, larger groups of Mesopotamians, Persians, and apparently Israelites, too, practised the exclusive worship of one divinity. Such a cult suggests neither the rejection nor the absence of other (i.e. non-worshipped) gods. Instead, in a period of crisis, worship is directed towards a single divinity from whom, after this extraordinary attention, help is expected. The temporal bounds of such worship shows that this sort of monolatry remains within the framework of polytheism. As sources, van Selms quotes two texts from the Babylonian Atrahasis-Epic where, on one occasion, Namtara, and on another, Adad, temporarily receive monolatric worship, in order to bring an end to plague or draught, respectively. A passage from the first tablet of the Atrahasis Epic is particularly impressive:

Command that heralds proclaim
and make a loud noise in the land,
"Do not reverence your gods,
do not pray to your goddesses,
but seek the door of Namtara,
and bring a baked loaf in front of it.
The offering of sesame-meal may be pleasing to him,
then he will be put to shame by the gift
and will lift his hand."

Such an effort cannot prove unsuccessful:
The offering of sesame-meal was pleasing to him, he was put to shame by the gift and lifted his hand. Plague left them, the gods returned to their (men's) offering.

The same practice was current among the Arabs to whom Mohammed preached his message. To the prophet's dismay people discontinued the exclusive worship of Allah as soon as they saw their prayers answered:

When distress touches a man he calls his Lord, turning repentant to Him. Then when He confers on him a favour from Himself, that man forgets what he had called upon Him for before, and makes peers for God (i.e., returns to polytheism) to lead people astray from His way! (Surah 39.11)

Further examples for such concentration of the cult are the thirty-day monolatric worship which the Persian king demands for himself, according to Dan 6.8, and the exclusive worship mentioned in 1 Sam 7.2-14 during a war against the Philistines, if the latter text is not already stamped by the later views of the Yahweh-alone movement. Dan 11.37-38 may be read as a clear statement of temporary monolatry by order of some king who considers himself to be the prophet of the god who is to be worshipped exclusively:

He will ignore his ancestral gods, and the god beloved of women; to no god will he pay heed but will exalt himself above them all. Instead he will honour the god of the citadel, a god unknown to his ancestors, with gold and silver, gems and costly gifts.

Finally, Jer 44.18 may give evidence to the fact that all cults except Yahweh's were discontinued during the siege of Jerusalem in 587/586 B.C.:

From the time we left off burning sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven and pouring drink-offerings to her, we have been in great want, and in the end we have fallen victims to sword and famine protest the people whom Jeremiah tries to convince of the Yahweh-alone idea.

If we suppose that 'temporary monolatry' is known in Israel and practised from time to time, then we can, at least provisionally, consider it the prototype of the Yahweh-alone idea. Israel, afflicted by continual inner social crises and
military-imperialistic threats from the outside, is a milieu in which the idea can arise of adopting, not just a temporary, but a permanent monolatry of the state god. Consequently, Yahweh-alone worship can be understood as a crisis cult which is continued beyond the actual crisis situation. Or, rather, the crisis situation is perceived as permanent.

Moreover, Yahweh's capacity to become an opponent of Baal, and of any other god or goddess, must be found in his being, which is developed and explained in myth. Eastern mythology usually does not report about an individual and isolated god but about god-figures who are joined to one another in multifarious ways. The customary link is that of marriage, family and kinship. The gods appear, like men, not as single or isolated 'individuals', but are social beings who meet in a network of kin-like relationships. To give just one example, the Egyptian Isis is the wife of Osiris and the mother of Horus. Apart from genealogical organization, mythology also presents the nation of the gods, with king, council and allocations of rank, especially among the Sumerians. The idea of a heavenly court is also known from the Old Testament. Just think of the prologue to the Book of Job or Ps 82, where Israel's god sits in judgement in the circle of the gods (or, following the Hebrew wording, stands up in order to pronounce judgement). But, as Yahweh lacks every link to a family of gods, so the idea of a gods' state is rather incidental. Yahweh appears as a lone figure who is outside the usual bonds. Later, in the Koran, it is written: "He begets not nor is he begotten" (Surah 112.3). From a polytheistic point of view, this signifies that in the normal cases a god has a father and son and thus is in the web of kinship and pantheon. The childless god is the exception /64/. To have kinship relationships implies a certain diminuation of power. In kinship-based societies the leader's kinsmen want to share in his power and privileges or, alternatively, tend to encroach upon his autocracy. The really powerful leader, therefore, does not surround himself with kinsmen, but with followers and dependents such as slaves. The proverb, "A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, and in his own house", suggests that he is not respected by his family who wants him to be like the other kinsmen. Sons, moreover, involve a father in endless generational conflicts that ultimately aim at replacing him.

Yahweh, as the 'Lord of Sinai' (Ps 68.9), has little to do with the well-organized world of the gods of Canaan. He is as much a foreigner as are his immigrant worshippers in the
land, who are, or consider themselves to be, foreigners. The outsider in the world of the gods is the god of the outsiders. Because the Israelite tribes are not, or only in part, related to the Canaanites, their god cannot be genealogically linked to the latters' gods. The lack of a kinship relationship means, consequently, possible enmity. Clearly, it is this special position of Yahweh which makes possible his enmity with Baal and the other gods. One result of this elective affinity is not seen until later, i.e. the exclusivity of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Whoever worships a 'normal' god-figure comes into contact with the clan and nation of gods. Just as a person cannot be isolated from the net of genealogical associations, so it is for a god and goddess. What, then, if a god has no kinship? Here may lie an important cause of the Yahweh-alone idea and thereby, ultimately, a root of monotheism. The lonely Yahweh becomes the only god.

The Hezekian Reform (Phase 3)

While the Book of Hosea gives clear evidence for the existence and concerns of the Yahweh-alone movement in the northern kingdom, we know virtually nothing about the situation in the southern kingdom of Judah. Prophets Isaiah and Micah appear in the time of kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (ca. 739-699), but the traces of the Yahweh-alone idea which we find in their books seem to be later additions /65/. In his poem on the birth or ascension to the throne of Hezekiah, Isaiah describes the king, according to polytheistic courtly style, as god-like (Isa 9.5). Isaiah is no Yahweh-aloneist.

Yet, the influence of the Yahweh-alone movement, or, more exactly, the influence of one of its demands, can be assumed from the cult reform of King Hezekiah (728-699). In the cult reform, according to the existing text, Hezekiah fulfils all the objectives of the movement: abolition of the high places, smashing the images of the false gods, cleansing the Jerusalem Temple of heathen features. But it has long been recognised that here the later period incorporated its conceptions of an orthodox cult reform.

In reality, Hezekiah's reform consists of the relatively modest measure of removing a certain serpent-shaped cult symbol from the temple. He "broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for up to that time the Israelites had been burning sacrifices to it; they called it Nehushtan ('bronze image')" (2 Kgs 18.4). This serpent is not an image of
Yahweh, nor is it a divinity in its own right, but it is probably meant to symbolize Yahweh's healing and rejuvenating powers which find expression in the well-known legend of its healing effect during the Moasaic journey through the wilderness (Num 21.6-9). The Yahweh-alone movement seems to have extended to such symbols a much older taboo which originally only prohibited the iconic representation of Yahweh himself. Now the movement demands the abolition of all images somehow related to Yahweh and perhaps understood by the people as representations of the national god himself. We can probably link the rise of the polemic against the images of the Golden Calf with the age of Hezekiah, those statues which King Jeroboam I of the northern kingdom (931-910) had endowed, in reality or supposedly, to the shrines of Dan and Bethel (I Kgs 12.28-30). In the Deuteronomist we find a continuous hostility towards these statues. He goes so far as to connect the political fall of the northern kingdom (722) with them by giving them first place in a list of all the ritual abominations which called forth Yahweh's wrath (2 Kgs 17.16). This sort of polemic is certainly from a later phase of the Yahweh-alone movement, but the basic idea, opposition to cultic symbols of Yahweh, must have been alive in the age of Hezekiah. Scholarship dates the story of the Golden Calf which Aaron had made, and around which the people danced while Moses met his god in the solitude of Mount Sinai, to the same period. The story receives its polemical propagandistic point of criticism from the fact that Moses does not sanction the action of Aaron and the people (which must have been the common attitude of the priests), but angrily grasps hold of the Calf, burns it and grinds it to powder (Ex 32).

Perhaps one can explain the facts as follows: after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., the supporters of the Yahweh-alone idea come into the southern kingdom, so that the movement already in existence there receives a political stimulus. The movement links the traumatic fall of the northern kingdom to the fact that their objectives, as advocated by Hosea, for instance, were not followed. Additions and clarifications in the Book of Hosea and a special version of the story of Aaron's image of the Golden Calf impart greater weight to the argument.

The objectives and arguments of the movement do not lack effect on King Hezekiah, who must tremble for the survival of his own kingdom. The crisis brought about by the Assyrian policy of expansion - in 722 Samaria is destroyed, and in 701
Sennacherib's troops are in front of Jerusalem - offers the movement its first chance to realize one of its goals in the southern kingdom. Apparently, Hezekiah's reform marks "the beginnings of a prophet-inspired cult praxis in Judah" /66/.

The Josianic Reform (Phase 4)

We have no further sources on the influence of the Yahweh-alone movement until the time of King Josiah (641-609) and the subsequent decades of the Judaean state. However limited our documentation may be, it is more detailed than for the whole of the preceding period. This is not due to a chance transmission, but is connected with the success the movement experiences.

During the first two years of Josiah's reign the prophet Zephaniah appears. In the collection of his words there is an oracle which shows him to be an adherent of the Yahweh-alone movement:

I will stretch my hand over Judah
and all who live in Jerusalem;
I will wipe out Baal from this place
   to the last remnant /67/,
and the very name of the heathen priests,
those who bow down upon the house-tops
to worship the host of heaven
and who bow down before Yahweh,
yet at the same time swear by Milcom,
those who have turned their back on Yahweh,
who have not sought Yahweh or consulted him. (Zeph 1.4-6)

The editor of the book of Zephaniah, himself clearly an adherent of the movement, places the oracle at the beginning. In this the special hatred for the priests of Baal is conspicuous, and is obviously an established tradition in the movement.

Although we are not informed about Zephaniah's actual influence he must be among the forerunners of the events of 622 B.C. /68/. Even before this year there are supporters of the Yahweh-alone movement among the priests of the Jerusalem Temple and at court, but it is in this year that the king himself is won over to the movement and immediately puts a comprehensive and drastic programme into practice. The report given in 2 Kgs 22-23 may in some respects be exaggerated and idealized, yet it is clear to see that the movement has succeeded in the coup d'état of a reform. Hilkiah, high priest of the Temple, presents the still youthful
king, twenty-six years old at that time, with a book which has supposedly come to light during restoration work on the Temple. According to 2 Kgs 22.11 the king accepts the regulations of the book in a spontaneous act of devotion - he rents his garments. It has become customary in recent historical writing, it is true, to reckon with a genuine find; on the other hand, scholars such as J. Wellhausen and Morton Smith may be right to suppose a forgery: when the book is read out aloud to King Josiah the ink is barely dry. Ashurbanipal, who had just died in 627 B.C., ordered all the archives to be searched for old texts in order to incorporate them into his library in the Assyrian capital, Niniveh. One is wont to point to this in order to credit the age with an interest in ancient writings, so that the finding of Hilkiah gains credibility /69/. This fashionable antiquarianism may have been welcome to Hilkiah and his friends, however, in order to secure attention for their 'find'. If one considers the fanaticism and unwillingness to compromise of the Yahweh-alone preaching of some prophets, as well as the blindness to history with which Israel's past is judged in the movement, then the 'find' is by no means out of place. Yahweh-aloneists stop at nothing to achieve their objectives. Religious zeal shrinks at no method.

Because the report of the reform agrees with the substantial provisions of the law of Deuteronomy, one usually identifies Hilkiah's book with the nucleus of Deut 12-26. The most important measures of the reform are:

(a) Centralization of the cult

The legitimate cult of Yahweh is only to be carried out at the Temple of Jerusalem. The provincial shrines will be closed.

(b) Purification of the cult

Both unity and purity of the cult are demanded. All features are removed from the Temple of Jerusalem which offend the eye of the Yahweh-aloneists. The king orders: "remove from the house of Yahweh all the objects made for Baal and the sacred tree and all the host of heaven" (2 Kgs 23.4). As to be expected, the dethronement of Baal is mentioned first.

In second place comes the 'sacred tree' (Hebrew: asherah) which represents Yahweh's power of blessing made visible in vegetable form; there is no goddess called Asherah as is presumed by modern translation /70/. The banning of the
images is extended to this symbol because it is plainly popular and adorned with all sorts of ornaments, especially with the pieces of fine cloth mentioned in verse 7. Perhaps these were sold to visitors to the temple, who decorated the cult symbol with the items bought so that the tree shifted into the role of a god's icon to which one made sacrifice. That the temple brothels also fall victim to the cleansing goes without saying.

(c) The new order declared national law

With this measure the Yahweh-aloneists reach their actual goal, viz. the permanent control of the entire worship in Judah. We do not know how far the reform can actually carry through its programme in fact. There is certainly no mass-conversion to mono-Yahwism, but the latter becomes an officially established fact.

When Josiah falls in the battle against the Assyrian army in 909 B.C., the reform is not continued and the movement loses control of national worship. As we know from Ez 8, the images of the gods return to the temple. The prophet Ezekiel, active in a Babylonian colony of Jewish exiles from about 593 B.C. onwards, lashes out at this; he comes from a family of priests and from his youth belongs to the Yahweh-aloneists. He now supports the movement far from his homeland. His invective against idolatry pervades his whole book, provoking Wellhausen's judgement that he is "more a judge at the court of the inquisition than a prophet" /71/. He wants to have only adherents of the Yahweh-alone idea among his clients. He gives oracles only to them, others receive a tirade of insults which he extends into an attack on Israel's religious policy in the whole of its history /72/. Simultaneously, Jeremiah is active in Jerusalem (from 609 B.C. /73/). He too is an uncompromising exponent of Yahweh-alone theology. Like Ezekiel, he comes from a priestly family who has shared in Josiah's reform. After the destruction of Jerusalem (586) he is driven to Egypt where we meet him, once again, quarrelling with the opposition party. The latter stands firm on its point of view:

We will burn sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven and pour drink-offerings to her as we used to do, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. (Jer 44.17)

The eloquent rhetoric of Jeremiah that follows cannot hide the fact that the Yahweh-alone idea is innovative, rather
than traditional polytheism. The Jews and Aramaeans of the military colony of Elephantine even have a temple dedicated to this Queen of Heaven. In any case, a letter addressed to an inhabitant of the island in the Nile was found with "greetings to the Temple of Bethel and to the Temple of the Queen of Heaven" /74/.

The Breakthrough to Monotheism (Phase 5)

In 586 B.C., when Jerusalem is reduced to ruins, the hour of the Yahweh-aloneists has come. Polytheistic Israel is dead, and out of its ashes arises Judaism, being firmly based on the teachings of the aloneist movement. The decline of the state and the Babylonian exile are represented as results of polytheistic heresy and as punishments of the god who is to be worshipped exclusively. The bulky history of the Deuteronomist /75/ starts with the exhortations of Moses, who, time and again, impresses Yahweh-alone worship upon his audience and promulgates or repeats all the laws which are now edited in their final form /76/. The work proceeds with the history of Israel, which is a story of how a people "turned wantonly to worship other gods and bowed down before them; all too soon they abandoned the path of obedience to Yahweh's commands which their forefathers had followed. They did not obey Yahweh" (Jdg 2.17). During the course of seven centuries there were not many events to be reported that find the Deuteronomistic historian's approval. Both monarchies, north and south, are dealt with in impressive parallelism. The northern kingdom dies of its idols first, but it is followed by the south. We read about Josiah, "He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh; he followed closely in the footsteps of his forefather David, swerving neither right nor left" (2 Kgs 22.2), but his successors revert to polytheism, so that the comment on Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, the four kings of the last twenty-five years of Judah, is the same as pronounced on many kings before: "He did what was wrong in the eyes of Yahweh, as his forefathers had done" /77/, and, "Jerusalem and Judah so angered Yahweh that in the end he banished them from his sight" (2 Kgs 24.20). Accordingly, the course of history follows rules that are clear and straightforward; no one can help but hear Yahweh's footfall through the history of his people. The immense work which comprises several long scrolls is a detailed sermon of repentance, urging obedience to the law of Moses and, in particular, to its central tenet: the exclusive worship of Yahweh. Actual
historiography, on the other hand, is less important. For many details the reader is referred to the 'Chronicle of Solomon' or the 'Chronicle of the Kings of Israel' and similar books, writings which were, unfortunately, not transmitted to posterity.

The most important literary sources for the Yahweh-alone movement dating from the exile are, apart from the Deuteronomistic History, the books of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. The Yahweh-alone idea contributes to the foundation of Judaism through four major issues which stand out in this literature: education, the sabbath, control of orthodoxy, and national restoration. Let me briefly comment on each of them.

(a) Education

Deuteronomy shows a remarkable interest in education and is, at times, quite emphatic in this. Every Jew is to be taught the basic elements of religion from early childhood, so that "a wise and understanding people" (Deut 4.6) will be the consequence. Learning and teaching become the essential religious duty, and parents are their children's instructors. The Decalogue which I date to this period is a brief statement both of law and creed, reduced to a form that is easily memorized. It is prefaced by the formula, "I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods to set against me" (Deut 5.6-7), clearly reminiscent of Hosea, one of the earlier and classical authors of the aloneist movement. Though an original creation of a Deuteronomistic writer the rest of the Decalogue, too, echoes Hosea (Hos 4.2; 13.4). It is true that the Ten Commandments may provide the commoner with sufficient religious knowledge, but for the expected king of a restored Israel this text is inadequate. He is supposed to

make a copy of this law in a book (...) He shall keep it by him and read from it all his life, so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God and keep all the words of this law and observe these statutes (Deut 17.18-19).

Although it is presumed that the king would be able to read, this is not expected from the commoner, so it is important to teach him his duties on ritual occasions. According to Deut 31.9-13, this education is to occur every seventh year, during the feast of Tabernacles. Since there is no thanksgiving in the fallow year, then, everybody is
expected to "listen and learn (by heart)". Later, this rather modest program of religious instruction once in seven years (!) develops into more regular teaching on every seventh day, on sabbath in the synagogue.

(b) The Sabbath

I take the sabbath to be an institutionalization of the Yahweh-alone idea. This weekly day of rest is not an ancient, religiously tabooed day, but a conscious creation of the sixth century /80/. In using the sabbath to moor monolatry in popular custom, it cannot be introduced in a vacuum, but has to be connected with some already existing practice. The founding fathers of the sabbath start from two institutions which are undoubtedly very popular. The first is the seventh day of rest which ancient Israelite law grants to the agricultural labourer at ploughing time and harvest, i.e. at the period of hardest work /81/. The second is the day each month when the moon is full, which, since time immemorial, is called the sabbath. It is not just a day without work, but a day set aside for ritual observances /82/. It is clear that in pre-exilic times, ritual obligations were not only due to Yahweh but also to other gods; in Hosea, the sabbath is one of those holy days called 'days of the Baalim' /83/. The fathers of the exilic sabbath make every possible effort to rededicate this day to the exclusive worship of Yahweh. The Decalogue is quite explicit on this point; "the seventh day is a sabbath of Yahweh your God" /84/. 'Sabbath of Yahweh' is a cliché common to literature of the sixth and fifth centuries /85/ which seems to reflect the élite's insistence on the connection between Yahweh and the sabbath; the sabbath is for Yahweh, and for him alone. Thus, the sabbath is subordinate to the first commandment, "you shall have no other gods to set against me", and exists to promote its observance. One may even say that in the 'sabbath of Yahweh' the first commandment is given a tangible, practical, and, as it were, sacramental form. Early Judaism outside Palestine which is suddenly forced to lead a life poor in ritual creates the sabbath as a substitute for the distant temple and uses the emerging synagogue as the people's meeting place on sabbath. A secularist's use, or rather misuse, of the sabbath as a day for leisure, and not for religious ritual, would no doubt have horrified the Yahweh-aloneists.

(c) Control of Orthodoxy

By introducing a series of statues, the founding fathers
of Judaism try to safeguard the new community's loyalty /86/. They leave no doubt about their intolerance. Prophecy calling for following other gods is punishable by death (Deut 13.2-6). If such an invitation is pronounced by one's brother, son, daughter, wife or friend, then "you shall have no pity on him, you shall not spare him nor shield him" (Deut 13.9). In this way, a system of control is established which even interferes with, and works within, the family. The religious community is considered to be more important than kinship solidarity - a revolution in a kinship-based society, but characteristic of new religious movements such as early Christianity, Islam and some well-known contemporary cults /87/. In particular, marriage arrangements are subject to public control. Traditional endogamy (marriage within the closer kin group, Gen 24.3-4) is developed to take on a new meaning. Mixed marriage with non-Jews is not only discouraged but formally forbidden, as it endangers the community's stock of members /88/.

(d) National Restoration

One of the main objectives of the Yahweh-aloneists is the future restoration of the Jewish state, with its only cultic center to be the temple of Jerusalem. For this purpose the legal code of Deuteronomy is substantially revised; the new texts inserted provide the most vital regulations for the new Jewish commonwealth and is official religion. Ezekiel's book, too, includes a detailed draft of a national constitution dating from 573 /89/, the outlines of which most probably go back to the prophet himself. While Deuteronomy and Ezekiel are concerned rather with constitutional theory and planning, Deutero-Isaiah (546-539) is the prophet of a return to Palestine. According to one of his oracles, Israel "has fulfilled her term of bondage" (Isa 40.2). As for the head of the new commonwealth, there is no uniform idea in our three authors. Deuteronomy thinks in royal terms, Ezekiel pictures a rather simple cult warden and mayor. By transferring the name of messiah, an ancient ritual title of the Israelite king, to the Persian monarch, Cyrus, as the liberator from the yoke of Babylon, Deutero-Isaiah /90/ seems to imagine the new commonwealth as a purely religious community under Persian political control. In spite of such differences there is a common objective to all of these practical and theoretical activities - to firmly establish monolatric Judaism and to provide for it in perpetuity.

Some of the texts which doubtlessly belong to the
Yahweh-alone tradition are interested in completing the monolatric belief by introducing a totally new principle: the denial of the existence of other gods, i.e. monotheism. The formula of Deut 6.4, which was to become the classical creed of Judaism, is still monolatric and expresses the traditional programme of the Yahweh-aloneists: "Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone" /91/. But there is another and quite new dimension in its variants:

Yahweh is God, there is no other. Deut 4.35  
Yahweh is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other. Deut 4.39  
Yahweh is God, he and no other. 1 Kgs 8.60  
... so that all kingdoms of the earth may know that thou, O Yahweh, alone art God. 2 Kgs 19.19

Such expressions are not only to be found in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist's work, but also in Deutero-Isaiah:

There is no god but me; there is no god other than I, victorious and able to save. Isa 45.21  
... for I am God, there is no other. Isa 45.22  
Before me there was no god fashioned nor ever shall be after me. Isa 43.10

Deutero-Isaiah imagines how the Egyptian subjects of the then world-ruling Israelites bow down in supplication and humbly confess: "Surely God is among you and there is no other, no other god" (Isa 45.14). This conviction is underlined by repeated polemic against idolatry. One ironical text reads: "Those who squander their bags of gold and weigh out their silver with a balance, hire a goldsmith to fashion them into a god; then they worship it and fall prostrate before it." For the Yahweh-alone movement there can be no doubt about what the prophet adds: "Let a man cry to it as he will, it never answers him; it cannot deliver him from his troubles" /92/.

This is monotheism, but it never disregards the national conviction that Yahweh is and will remain the god of Israel; the only god is Israel's god. Time and again this national dimension is brought to the attention of the later Jew in the liturgical "Hear o Israel: Adonai is god, Adonai alone" /93/. Therefore, a Talmudic saying is quite appropriate: "Whoever rejects the worship of other gods is called a Jew" /94/, and not simply a monotheist. There is no God but Yahweh and Israel is his prophet! /95/

No doubt there is a polytheistic variety of Judaism which survives the exile and can be studied from the 5th century.
documents of the Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt. However, the restored temple of Jerusalem, consecrated in 515 B.C., remains from the outset under the rule of a Yahweh-alone priesthood. The monolatrists or, as we may call them now, the montheists, are no longer a minority but rather assume the leading role and set the fashion. The political and religious élite of post-exilic Judaism is firmly rooted in the monotheistic faith. Jerusalem remains the only legitimate place for sacrificial ritual, and the exclusive worship of Yahweh becomes a general feature of Judaism in so far as it adopts the temple and the emerging synagogues as its centres.

Monotheism is born, but how to account for this major event in Jewish and, perhaps, universal religion? First of all let me state that our source material is too fragmentary to allow for a comprehensive and satisfactory answer. In fact, there are hardly any sources at all, so that one could reasonably give up any attempt to elucidate the advent of monotheism. When I try to consider some suggestions and develop some possibilities, this proviso has to be kept in mind.

The first theory to be considered is that of Norbert Lohfink /96/. He challenges the usual clear-cut dichotomy of polytheism and monotheism and argues that there has always been a latent monotheism or montheistic undercurrent within the ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern religions. Paganism, too, sensed the fundamental unity of the divine. The urban or national deity often worshipped exclusively and taken to be the ultimate cause of all life is the focus of the divine in its entirety. The local god is god 'tout court'.

There can be no doubt that the Sumerians actually believed in the many gods, and in every single city another god took the role of the urban deity just described. But in the final analysis they experienced the one and universal deity whose hidden presence they felt in their particular god. In their god they had the whole /97/.

This latent monotheism had only to be grasped and made explicit theoretically, as well as to be verified in ritual practice. This final step was taken in Israel and in other places, and mainly so in the sixth century B.C. Lohfink points out that monotheism proper emerged in Israel not before new theoretical insights into the divine were discovered in other parts of the ancient world. Zoroaster in Persia
and the pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece are Deutero-Isaiah's contemporaries /98/.

Hence, the religion of Israel does not have an individual and isolated development but participates in the general development of the other religions of antiquity, just as Israel's culture does in other respects, too. However, by virtue of its firm commitment to Yahweh-alone worship, Israel was in a position to take the final step towards monotheism.

Recently, Hermann Vorländer /99/ proposed a theory which is far more detailed than Lohfink's. In fact, Vorländer takes Lohfink's article as his basis, but takes us beyond a general account of Israel's affinity with its neighbours. His key figures are Zoroaster and Deutero-Isaiah. Apparently, Zoroaster's monotheistic worship of Ahura Mazda dates from the second millennium, but it became more and more influential during the reign of the Achaemenid kings of the sixth and fifth centuries. In his inscriptions Darius I (522-468 B.C.) mentions no god but Ahura Mazda whom he seems to acknowledge as the only god and creator. Around the middle of the sixth century the teaching of Zoroaster spread to the Jews exiled in Babylonia and served as a catalytic agent in the restatement of their theology, an observation which was anticipated by the Enlightenment philosopher, Lessing, in the eighteenth century. Influenced by Zoroastrian teachings, Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed his monotheistic kerygma which is, even verbally, echoed in the Deuteronomic secondary texts quoted earlier.

This suggestion comes as no surprise, as there are other well established or very cogently argued connections between Deutero-Isaiah and Persian sources. As early as 1898, Rudolf Kittel /100/ was able to notice some parallels between the cylinder inscription of Cyrus and several passages of Deutero-Isaiah. They are now understood as not merely reflecting the 'Babylonian court style' (this was Kittel's original suggestion), but rather as a clear echo of Persian imperial propaganda. To the Judeans, the agents of Cyrus must have represented their king as chosen by Yahweh to punish Babylon and restore Israel. Deutero-Isaiah accepted this view and supported it with his own prophetic authority. The fact that Deutero-Isaiah got his political programme from propaganda for Cyrus makes it plausible to look for other Persian connections in his book. Morton Smith /101/ has made, I think, a good case for tracing Deutero-Isaiah's theology of creation back to the same source on which Yasna
Vorländer's view is well argued and his presentation is the most satisfactory one available. In pointing out the likelihood of a powerful Persian influence, he has opened up neglected, if not new and promising, perspectives for research /102/. It may be too wide a perspective to be dealt with in the present context. However, we can take up Deutero-Isaiah's monotheism and theology of creation, both of which appear to be a fitting response to the problems raised by the exile. In the sixth century, Jewish theology has to face two serious problems:

(1) Is Yahweh, whom Jewish theology professes to be its only god, less powerful than the gods acknowledged by other nations? To answer this question in the positive means to renounce Jewish identity. Uprooted from a comfortable, home-grown Israel-centered theology, Jewish thought has to clarify the relationship between Yahweh and the other gods once and for all.

(2) The second problem is closely related to the first and concerns the mythic dimension, without which it is impossible to make any statements about the divine. How to speak about Yahweh meaningfully after much of the older tradition on his special concern for kingship, nation and land has suffered a loss of prestige?

The solution to these problems is that Yahweh is the only god, and that the only god is the creator and ruler of the whole world. In this period, the least useful item of Israel's theological repertoire is the royal tradition. Even Ezekiel makes little use of it. When speaking of Israel's future leader he does not use the royal title at all, but presents him as the mayor of Jerusalem. Largely ignoring the royal and Jerusalem traditions, exilic theology refers to unexhausted subjects such as the Mosaic period, the patriarchal times and creation. Among these traditions, the theme of creation enjoys special privileges as the creator god, by his very nature, is concerned not with Israel alone but with the entire world, thus meeting the challenge of exile.

Let me add that I do not want merely to repeat what Wellhausen said almost a century ago. Impressed by the fact that Gen 1 and Deutero-Isaiah date from about the same period, he concluded that the belief in Yahweh as creator and ruler of the universe did not antedate the exile. I do not share this view. It seems to me that there are at least two original oracles pronounced by Jeremiah which clearly express belief
in Yahweh as creator and lord of the world, viz. Jer 27.5-6 and 32.27. The former text reads as follows:

It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and the animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him.

Interestingly enough, the situation is not altogether different from Deutero-Isaiah. Both he and Jeremiah support a foreign overlord whom they try to integrate into the religious system of their people, and for both of them creation theology provides the basis for doing so. I am well aware of the fact that the history of Israel's doctrine of creation is far from clear; there is the problem of the cosmological hymns in the book of Amos and there are secondary texts in Jeremiah of an almost Deutero-Isaianic flavour such as chap. 10.1-10. In any case, it seems almost certain that Jeremiah paved the way for Deutero-Isaiah's theology of creation. If we are justified in looking for a foreign influence on Deutero-Isaiah, we are still more justified to look for inner-Israelite precedents.

To refer to Jeremiah, however, is not to say that his belief in Yahweh's creative activity is an autonomous and original feature of Israelite religion. Isaiah, for example, did not link his god's control of history to his status of cosmic creator, and it seems reasonable to assume that Jeremiah was the first explicitly to claim that Yahweh had power over all the kingdoms of the earth by virtue of being the cosmic creator.

In a lecture delivered at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1975, and now published as 'The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel' /103/, Professor Saggs has suggested that Jeremiah was taking over for Yahweh claims he found already made for Marduk of Babylon. Indeed, one can demonstrate that the very language of Jer 27.5-6 reflects conventional Babylonian, rather than Israelite, phraseology /104/. But let us return to Deutero-Isaiah and the birth of monotheism!

In Deuteronomy we can see both the novelty of Deutero-Isaiah's monotheism and the way in which it became part and parcel of the Jewish mind. Monotheism was neither incorporated into the legal collection of chaps. 12-26, nor into the so-called historical creed of chap. 26, nor even into the Decalogue. All of these texts are still based on the older
conception of the Yahweh-alone idea. No more than a handful of scattered references in Deut 4 and the Deuteronomistic History attest the advance or final victory of an idea which was to become the central, and possibly only, dogma of Judaism.

The Assimilation of Polytheistic Survivals

How does monalatric, if not monotheistic, Judaism cope with its polytheistic past? In the Deuteronomistic History the official polytheism of the nation is unsparingly stigmatized. Perhaps the 'reform kings', Hezekiah and Josiah, were transfigured into national heroes, but otherwise we see no inclination to gloss over faults of any member of the royal dynasty. The Deuteronomist's denunciations are even surpassed by Ezekiel, whose chap. 20 finds nothing positive or even edifying in Israel's past.

In the world's whole literature there is hardly a document which represents the history of the author's own people in such a negative and uncompromising manner. Israel is a human community which stubbornly refuses its own salvation from the very start, never fulfills the meaningful and judicious precepts of its god and behaves worse than any other nation of the world /105/.

Given this attitude towards the past, it is clear that the canon of sacred literature which emerged gradually after the exile does not contain anything of the polytheistic literature which must have existed. It is completely lost. However, defamation of the fathers and the outlawing of their literature are not the only methods for dealing with the past. In addition to these relatively unsophisticated methods there are more subtle ones: assimilating, adopting and re-interpreting traditions which may conserve polytheistic elements within a monotheistic context.

The divine name of Shaddai provides an example for this. Just as the Babylonian called his protecting spirit 'shedu', which is a kind of guardian angel whom he considers to be a minor but very accessible deity, so the Israelite polytheist acknowledged his Shaddai. Yahweh-aloneists identified Shaddai with Yahweh, who thus acquired the new role of the individual's protecting spirit to supplement his status as the national deity. However, this identification did not imply that the name and notion of Shaddai were forgotten and no longer used. In the Book of Job, a monotheistic document dating
from the fifth century /106/, Yahweh, in his role as personal god, is called Shaddai. Klaus Koch who studied this curious phenomenon concludes his analysis as follows:

The deity, not polymorphous but manifold, approaches man in various extensions, refractions or modes, however one may call this concept. The poet's monotheism is not monolithic. Shaddai is one of these specific refractions, one aspect of God which relates to the human individual, comes close to his body to make him either happy or to wound him deeply. The Shaddai of the Job dialogue is not the Almighty One as some of the modern translations have it, but rather the divine neighbour, somehow to be compared to the personal guardian angel of later centuries /107/.

As Shaddai, Yahweh is particularly responsible for the human individual and the well-being of his family. Just compare how happy Job was,

while Shaddai was still there at my side, and my servants stood round me, while my path flowed with milk, and the rocks streamed oil (Job 29.5-6).

The name of Shaddai conserved its own message for a long time after the abolition of its originally polytheistic meaning. This can be seen from a Jewish custom based on Deut 6.9 which is still alive and practiced today. This commandment tells us of the Deuteronomistic creed formulae to "write them up on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates". The commandment is fulfilled by writing Deut 6.4 and some parallel texts on a slip of parchment, the reverse of which is inscribed with 'Shaddai'. The rolled-up parchment is enclosed in a little case, and through a small opening one can read the name of Shaddai. This amulet, called 'mezuzah', is attached to the doorpost to ensure the blessing of God or, to use the older and more original name, of Shaddai. A rendering of this name would be 'my god', which is, in fact, occasionally used by the Septuagint /108/.

Beautiful polytheistic texts about an Israelite goddess can be found in Proverbs, chaps. 1-9, a self-contained little book which I date to the pre-exilic period /109/. The goddess is called 'Hokhmah', in English 'wisdom' or 'shrewdness', and was later taken to be a simple poetic personification of school wisdom or of God's own wisdom. But to take Prov 8.22-30 as referring to the wisdom of the only God is contrary to sound textual analysis, as was observed by the Hispano-Arabic
Muslim polemicist Ibn Hazm in the eleventh century /110/. And he is right, for wisdom is the goddess of school and instruction or, more precisely, the patroness of scribal education and training. She is a relative of the Sumerian school goddess, Nisaba, bearer of the beautiful title 'Mistress of Science' /111/. At least according to their teachers, the students are expected to entertain an especially intimate and personal relationship with the school goddess. Prov 8.17 alludes to the relationship of love when the goddess says, "Those who love me I love". Even more explicit is Prov 7.4, where the student is invited to declare his love to her. He is to say, "You are my sister", what is in plain English something like, "You are my darling (or sweetheart)". (For the Hebrew, 'sister' was a pet name for girl friend or wife.) A further example of erotic language is Prov 4.5-9, where the sequence of 'acquiring' and 'embracing' is unambiguous. The student is not to have just an affair with this goddess, but a permanent marital relationship.

Mythologically, Wisdom's father is Yahweh, but no mother is mentioned, and Prov 8.22-31 does not provide any information on this point. I do not recommend postulating a mother, as the history of religions knows of several gods without mothers, see, e.g., Athena, whose father is Zeus but who has no mother. In mythical parlance this is represented by saying that Athena sprang from Zeus's forehead, and Pindar adds to this information, given by Hesiod, that Hephaestus struck open the head with an ax. Similarly, the Egyptian god Thoth, himself inventor of the hieroglyphs and therefore related to writing and school, sprang from the head of Set, in this case because Set involuntarily had swallowed the semen of Horus. Such a paradoxical phenomenon is labelled 'male pregnancy' and 'male birth', an idea not entirely foreign to Gen 2.21-22, where Eve is taken from within Adam's body. Concerning Wisdom, the relevant idea may perhaps be taken from Sir 24.3 which is, however, a much later text. According to this source, Wisdom came forth from the mouth of God. We can never be quite sure of the details of Israel's lost polytheistic mythology. However, let me indulge in a little speculation and propose that the original father of Hokhmah may not have been Yahweh at all, but rather El, the actual Semitic creator god /112/.

Apart from passages dealing with Lady Wisdom, there is at least one further hint at the original polytheistic nature of Prov 1-9. It is in the final paragraph and reads: "The first step to wisdom is the fear of Yahweh and knowledge of the Holy One(s) is understanding" /113/.
The 'Holy Ones' are either taken to be angels (thus the Septuagint), or, if one prefers the translation 'the Holy One' in the singular, Yahweh himself. Without doubt, the couplet is open to both interpretations, which can be justified with reference to the parallelism in biblical poetry. For this reason, the sentence could be transmitted in monotheistic Judaism. But originally, the 'Holy Ones' are the gods of polytheistic Israel, among whom Lady Wisdom belongs.

Perhaps the school goddess was a rather pale figure of which the students were not very fond, in spite of her erotic attraction. It was all too evident that the school masters were putting their own exhortations into her mouth, see Prov 1.20-33. Hence, she cannot be dangerous to Yahweh-alone or to monotheistic doctrine and, reduced to a mere figure of poetic speech, she leads a miserable life in the text-book of post-exilic apprentice scribes. However, there is the possibility that her original nature was remembered in polytheistic, i.e. non-converted, Jewish circles. In 1906/08, German archaeologists, while working on the Nile island of Elephantine, discovered a bundle of papyrus leaves which eventually turned out to be an Aramaic version of the well-known Assyrian Ahiqar story. The leaves date from the fifth century B.C. and were read by members of the polytheistic Jewish military colony. One passage, first reconstructed by A. Ungnad from two papyrus pages, refers to a goddess who bears exactly the same name as Israel's patroness of wisdom /114/. Like the Ahiqar story as a whole, the home of this goddess must be seventh century Mesopotamia. Unfortunately, the Ahiqar passage on wisdom is too short and fragmentary to allow for further conclusions. Israel's school goddess may have had innumerable parallels in Near Eastern mythology, but considering her an imported element cannot be argued on the basis of the Ahiqar passage.

A polytheistic reading of the poems on Lady Wisdom may help us to understand their original meaning, but misses the intention of the editors who are committed monotheists. In the process of demythologizing, a vital figure in religion degenerates into a mere poetic being of ornamental value. For the monotheist reader, Wisdom loses much of her original reality and vitality; what remains is a shadowy figure with some poetic charm. The orthodox reader has to be satisfied with this. A nostalgic memory of the pagan gods is possible and permissible, not for a Jew, but for a Friedrich Schiller:

Keine Gottheit zeigt sich meinem Blick,
Ach, von jenem lebenswarmem Bilde
Blieb der Schatten nur zurück /115/.
What Schiller says of Greek mythology applies as well for polytheistic survivals in Judaism: "My eyes see no deities. Alas, what remains of the picture warm with life is nothing but a shadow."

Concluding Remarks

Having now concluded our survey, we can look back and sum up. It is particularly surprising that so many factors have contributed to the formation and eventual establishment of Jewish monotheism. Let us try to single out the most important and decisive ones. Yahwistic monolatry, which was to become monotheism, develops from three premises in a particular historical situation. (1) The first premise is a common feature of ancient West Semitic religion, namely the prominence of one single deity as the national god. (2) The second premise is the particular character of the god whom Israel worships as her national deity: Yahweh's lack of kinship connections with other gods sets him apart from them. (3) The third and perhaps even more effective premise is the temporary monolatry of one single god chosen out of a pantheon of many because of some special competence, and exclusively worshipped in order to receive his help or appease his anger in a time of crisis. (4) From the eighth century B.C. onwards, these two features of Semitic religion find their particular expression in Israelite religious thought and, later on, dominate Judaism.

The most general answer to the question of why this was the case must refer to power politics. Beginning in the ninth century, the two petty kingdoms, Israel and Judah, come into the orbit of the Near Eastern superpowers. Both states become dependent on, and indeed tributary to, Assyria. In 722 B.C. the Assyrian overlord abolishes the vassal kingdom of Israel by reducing it to a mere district administrated by a governor. Likewise, in 586 B.C., the Babylonian military decides to discontinue the existence of the rebellious vassal Judah. During this apparently unending period of crisis, a small but growing group which we call the Yahweh-alone movement clings to the state deity and demands its exclusive worship. While Judah, as a political entity, is shattered by a superpower, the idea of the only god is born. Monotheism, then, is the answer to political emergency, in which no solution is to be expected from diplomatic manoeuvering or foreign military help. There is but one saviour: the only God. The story of his emergence is part of a larger story, that of a petty nation's political destruction.
It should be clear that monotheism as a doctrine cannot be the solution to problems faced by ancient Israel. There is a dimension of doctrine in monotheistic thought, it is true; but unlike later scholastic speculation, Yahweh-aloneists and Jewish monotheists are not primarily concerned with dogma and doctrine. Theirs is a theology of hope, the expression of which is embodied in Hosea's and Deutero-Isaiah's precise statement that there is no god other than Yahweh, victorious and able to save /116/. In theological jargon one could say that soteriological monotheism is older than monotheistic dogma, or that hope precedes belief.

Jewish monotheism does not appear abruptly or at one stroke, but has a history in which, as we have seen, various forces operate. Let us try to define the structure of this historical process more accurately with reference to the concepts of evolution or revolution which have often been used in this context. Does monotheism grow up slowly and steadily by mastering difficulties and antagonisms, constantly moving towards its final form, so that the concept of evolution would apply? "The rise of biblical monotheism, as an exceptional cult amidst the ancient pagan world, is analogous to the rise of the human brain in the process of biological evolution", asserts Louis Wallis /117/. Or is it an individual's conscious creation which transcends the limits of its culture, time and environment, in the sense of Gressmann's words about Zoroaster, Moses and Mohammed: "Monotheism, on the other hand, has always been the achievement of great personalities" /118/. According to another author, Pettazoni, such creativity can never be unconscious and evolutionary, but is quite conscious and revolutionary in nature: "Monotheism is not the result of evolution, but of revolution. The rise of a monotheistic religion has always been connected with a religious revolution" /119/.

Taken in its strictly dogmatic form which suggests religious virtuosi to be the true 'founders' of monotheism, Pettazoni's concept of revolution does not apply to Israel. On the other hand, the history of the Yahweh-alone movement does not seem to be due to some hidden, unconscious mechanism of evolution which guarantees the victory of Yahwistic monolatry in order to further elevate it onto the level of monotheism. There is, I feel, no equivalent of Darwin's 'natural selection' and 'survival of the fittest' in the history of religions. Further, there is neither an intrinsic and 'natural' inclination of the Semitic mind towards it, nor a
geography or ecology of monotheism which could, by itself, initiate the process or create its premises. No serious scholar will today consider a view which attributes any major cultural feature to the influence of the mere physical environment as anything but an unfounded assumption.

The Yahweh-alone idea, it is true, makes its appearance suddenly, but there must always have been people who were concerned about the influence of this new form of belief, who fought against the worship of other gods, and helped the monotheistic cause to gain recognition and, finally, victory. Moreover, the survival of an idea whose superiority and persuasive power is far from self-evident is always at stake. There may be competing theories of fishing in which rival coteries of experts develop vested interests. The question can be decided with relative ease by seeing which theory is most conducive to catching more fish. But how about competing notions of female beauty and other aesthetic issues? A fortiori, no obvious criterion exists for deciding between a non-polytheistic (i.e. monolatric or monotheistic) and a polytheistic religion. Thus, theologians and religious leaders are likely to substitute abstract argumentation for pragmatic testing - see the rival claims that Jerusalem's defeat in 586 B.C. was due to an abominable monolatric experiment or to the equally abominable neglect of the exclusive worship of one single deity (Jer 44). By its very nature such argumentation does not carry the inherent conviction of pragmatic validity; what is intellectually satisfactory and convincing to one may not be to another.

Even though many of the protagonists and leaders of the minority Yahweh-alone movement remain anonymous, we may call them the 'founders' of proto-Jewish monolatry and Jewish monotheism, thereby slightly stretching a concept used by historians of religion. However fragmentary our knowledge of the development of Israel's religion is, we may describe it as a chain of revolutions which follow one another in rapid succession /120/, leading from the fight against the Phoenician Baal in the ninth century, via the Yahweh-alone idea in the eighth, through the prevalence of the monolatric system in the late seventh, to the final establishment of monotheism in the sixth century B.C.

Perhaps further research will help us to improve our still inadequate knowledge of this most exciting chapter of religious history.
Appendix to Chapter One

HOW EXCLUSIVE WAS THE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH IN TRIBAL ISRAEL?

In this appendix we will argue that Yahweh was the main, though not only, god worshipped in pre-state Israel. He was the head of a pantheon in which there was room for lesser deities invoked on minor occasions. Some pre-Islamic tribes of northern Yemen were, like Israel, defined as religious confederacies and shared its cultic pattern.

What was the religion like that Israel practised in its early and pre-state period? In the foregoing essay we did not deal with this issue since biblical sources do not provide enough reliable information. In fact, Old Testament research has not produced a satisfactory account of Israel's early history and social structure - not to mention a reconstruction of its most ancient religion. Beginnings are always shrouded in darkness. However, there are certain approaches that can serve as a basis for discussion.

According to A. Lemaire (1981b: 5-15; 1982) the following development led to what was to become Israel. In the 14th and 13th centuries B.C., Egypt looses its traditional and long-established control over Syria and Palestine. Palestinian society slowly disintegrates, possibly due to the Aramaean movement. Two new formations emerge in the political vacuum: the Bene-Jacob and Bene-Israel. The Bene-Jacob, Aramaeans in Transjordan, cross the Jordon river and settle north and north-east of Shechem. The Bene-Israel leave Egypt under Ramesses II (ca. 1279-1213, according to Hornung's chronology), live for some time in the Negev, and eventually penetrate into central Palestine, settling south of the Bene-Jacob. When, towards the end of the 13th century, the two groups conclude an alliance, Israel is born. The confederacy is soon joined by other tribes - Naphtali, Zebulun, and Benjamin. Two hundred years later in the time of David, Judah and Simeon join. Lemaire emphasizes the religious nature of the alliance arguing that Yahweh is its tutelary, and assuming this deity's exclusive worship by all its members. He even dates an early form of the decalogue to this period. The first commandment tells the league's members, "You shall have no other gods besides me". Sup-
pressing the deity traditionally worshipped by the Bene-
Jacob (Josh 24.23; Gen 35.2) and promoting the religious
leadership of the Bene-Israel, the original contract
establishes the monolatric principle as the foundation of
religion. Yahweh is the federal god, and the confederates are
nis people.

Lemaire's reconstruction of the political side of Israel's
formation is well-argued and plausible, but his account of the
religious aspect is open to criticism. It seems too much
influenced by the dogmatic view of later 'aloneist' orthodoxy.
There can be of course no doubt about the religious
implications of the alliance, for who else but Yahweh could
have been the federal deity? The exclusive nature of Yahweh
worship and the assumed early date of the decalogue seem
questionable. In his capacity of federal deity, Yahweh must
have been worshipped exclusively; there is no other federal
god besides him. The tribes and clans that made up the
confederacy may, however, have continued the cult of former
gods and goddesses. Each of these lesser deities had a domain
quite different from that of the federal god, and never
claimed his title. In polytheistic mythology, gods may be
rivals; in polytheistic ritual, each receives his share.

Admittedly, this account is as hypothetical as Lemaire's.
Any reconstruction depends on one's confidence in the
reliability of the relevant biblical traditions. In such cases
the informed historian has only one tool to render his views
plausible, the method of checking analogies. Given reliable
information about society A, and that society's sufficient
resemblance to society B, it can be argued that knowledge
about A can be hypothetically used in reconstructing certain
features of B. Shared economic and social systems, for
instance, may provide a sufficient basis for assuming similar
religions. More commonly, fragmentary evidence from
religion B can be elucidated on the basis of more detailed
information about religion A. This method which never
produces more than tentative results, or 'informed guesses',
has always been used by students of the earliest history of
the Hebrews.

A possible analogy to early Israel is provided by pre-islamic
tribes of northern Yemen, whose religion and social structure
have recently been studied by C. Robin (1982: 24-26). Like
early Israel these groups formed alliances which they defined
in religious and cultic terms. Each tribe or tribal league had a
central sanctuary dedicated to its tutelary god, the worship
of whom was exclusive without being hostile to the cult of
lesser deities. Let us have a closer look at these matters. According to evidence from 3rd to 1st century B.C. inscriptions, the ancient Yemenite tribes refer to themselves as owners of a particular territory or descendants of a common ancestor. However, the decisive definition of the tribes is neither based on genealogy nor ownership of land, but couched in religious terms. Each tribe or, in the case of larger alliances, each tribal league worships a common pantheon. Accordingly, tribes that are politically dependent are required, even forced, to acknowledge the gods of the leading group - without having to abandon their traditional gods. Their original pantheon suffers a loss of prestige, but is not suppressed and replaced. All members of a tribe or tribal league worship one main god at a central shrine. The tutelary of the Sumtay tribe of highland Yemen is Ta'lab; his temple is called Tur'a and is located on mount Riyâm. The Mat'ín tribe of lowland Yemen worships its god 'Athtar dhū-Qabṣ in a sanctuary called Riṣāf which is in the town of Qarnâw. The entire country is dotted with such temples that serve as cultic centers of certain groups. By offering sacrifice in an appointed shrine people express their tribal affiliation and solidarity. In some cases, religious rhetoric links individuals to a tribal deity rather than a tribe - see the expressions "children of [the god] Almaqah" for the Sabaeans, and "children of [the god] 'Amm" for the Qatabānians.

In addition to the central shrines there are many minor cultic institutions, dedicated to the worship of lesser deities. Frequent by people living in their immediate neighbourhood, they enjoy only local importance. Interestingly enough, the tribe's tutelary is usually included in the pantheon worshipped there. Other gods neither challenge the tutelary's pre-eminence in the pantheon, nor weaken his role of providing his tribe with identity and cohesion.

Some tribes of the Yemen eventually worshipped their tutelary in an exclusive way (Robin 1982: 26). However, neither in Israel nor elsewhere can such monolatry be regarded as an original religious notion. Monolatry and monotheism presuppose polytheism. This is the lesson we can learn from studying the tribes of pre-islamic Yemen.
NOTES

1 Herbert of Cherbury 1967: 218; cf. 158-168.
3 Voltaire 1967: 360 (entry on 'Religion').
6 Kuenen 1877: 585. 7 Nikiprowetzky 1975: 86.
8 Kuenen 1883: 118-119. 9 Nikiprowetzky 1975: 80f.
10 Von Rad 1966: 39.
11 Herrmann 1971: 156, 168. The author even dares to make the statement that "Theology of the Old Testament, however differentiated, will be, in the final analysis, a theology of Deuteronomy" (167).
18 Lawrence 1962: 40.
19 De Vaux 1971.
20 Gottwald 1980: 616.
22 Cf., however, Spieckermann 1982: 307-372 who argues that the Assyrians have their vassals worship Assyrian gods on a regular basis.
23 Tracing back customary law to nomadic ancestors such as Jonadab (Jer 35) may have been widespread and be implied in, or have given rise to, the idea of Mosaic law.
24 Jer 7.18; 44.25. Baking-molds in the shape of a goddess were found at Mari, see Rast 1977.
25 Num 21.29; Jer 48.46.
26 Micah 4.5. Cf. also the list of local gods in 2 Kgs 17.30-31.
27 1 Kgs 20.23,28 (cf. Jdg 1.19); Am 9.17. Yahweh's domain is co-extensive with the land of his people, Israel. Any divine activities beyond the confines of this area are based on Israel's kinship connections with neighbouring peoples or on political treaties, see Wright 1965: 236-237. For a similar reading of Hab 3.3 and the epigraphically attested "Yahweh of Teman" see Emerton 1982: 9-13. The narrow geographical perspective of Ex 19.5; Deut 7.6; Am 3.2 is often obscured, viz. enlarged, by modern translations, see the comments of Wildberger 1960: 74-77.
29 Zeph 1.5. Cf. 2 Kgs 17.33.
31 It is possible that, as creator, Yahweh is the monotheistic god, see the comments below ('Phase 5') and the following Septuagint addition which seems to imply a monotheistic reading of Hos 13.4: "I am the Lord your God [LXX: who established the heaven and created the earth, whose hands created all the host of heaven, and I did not show them to you in order that you might follow them. And I brought you up] from the land of Egypt."
32 Pfeiffer 1926; Obbink 1929; Dus 1961.
33 Lemaire 1977. The 'asherah' which I interpret as 'sacred tree' is not the personal name of a goddess as is assumed by modern translations. Cf. below, note 70.


35 Dan 3.2-3. For the priestly presentation see Ex 32.4; for parallels: Smith 1925 (Mesopotamian statues); Krairiksh 1979: 220-224 (statues of the Buddha).

36 Ps 2.7 (cf. 110.3); Isa 9.5.

37 Diodor 20.14 on the Carthaginians (310 B.C.): "In their zeal to make amends for their omission (i.e. to honour their gods), they selected two hundred of the noblest children and sacrificed them publicly; and others who were under suspicion sacrificed themselves voluntarily, in number not less than three hundred."

38 Cf. the polemical statements Micah 1.7; Deut 23.19.


40 Ez 43.7,9; 1 Kgs 1.10; 11.43.

41 See above, note 33.

42 Hoffmann 1980: 91. 'Gebirah' ('mistress') is the Hebrew title of the queen mother who enjoyed an important position at the royal court.


44 1 Kgs 16.31. For Jezebel's Sidonian (rather than Tyrian) origin, the 'Baal of Sidon' as god of her home town, and her legendary rather than actual involvement with the prophet, Elijah, see Timm 1982: 224-231, 235-236, 295-303.


46 Yadin 1978; Mazar 1978.

47 Mattan, priest of Baal in 9th century Jerusalem (2 Kgs 11.18), has a Phoenician name. Levin 1982: 62-64 argues that the passage is a late addition that cannot be used as a source for pre-exilic religion in Judah.

48 Astour 1959.

49 Hofmayr 1925: 160. In times of crisis (drought) one is inclined to think that one is left or neglected by one's own gods and hence has to turn to foreign or new ones; see also below, note 55.


51 Ahab's immediate successor, Ahaziah, reigns for no more than two years (853-852): 1 Kgs 22.52.

52 Ahlström 1977.

53 Cf. below, note 244.

54 Von Soden 1955: 162ff.


56 Cf. "Yahweh alone" Deut 6.4; "Yahweh and no other" 1 Kgs 8.60.

57 It is not quite clear whether Amos, whose activity is in the northern kingdom, is a native of the south as is generally assumed. His northern origin is advocated by Koch 1978: 81-82.


60 For the secondary nature of Hos 8.5-6; 13.2; 14.4; see Willi-Plein 1971.

61 See above, note 32.


For pre-Islamic gods 'without a son' see Winnett 1938; Moeren 1981: 555-557.

For Micah 1.7; 5.11ff see Jeremias 1971; for Isa 2.7-22; 10.10-11 see Stolz 1980: 178 note 85.  

For this translation see Rudolph 1975.

Scharbert 1982. However, the authenticity of Zeph 1.1-6 is not beyond doubt and it may well be that date and oracle are the work of a Yahweh-aloneist editor: Levin 1981: 437-439.

Herrmann 1971: 170 note 32.

See above, note 33. For the 'pieces of cloth for "asherah"', mentioned below, cf. the sacred trees of traditional Arab Palestine to which rags of cloth are frequently attached: Curtiss 1902: 90-92 (with plate facing p. 90); Frazer 1919: 45-51; Elan 1979 (esp. plate 2).

Wellhausen 1878: 419.  


Comprising the Books of Deut, Josh, Jdg, Sam and Kgs.

"You must not add anything to my charge, nor take anything away from it." Deut 4.2; cf. 13.1.

You must not add anything to my charge, nor take anything away from it.

2 Kgs 23.32; cf. 23.37; 24.9, 19.

1 Kgs 11.41; 14.19, 29; 15.23 etc.

In the early 6th cent. B.C., Ezekiel knows no sabbath as the seventh day - Ez 46.1 clearly contains an addition, see Lemaire 1973: 182-183.

Ex 23.12; 34.21. Babylonian workmen have every tenth day off (Lautner 1936: 129-133). According to Von Soden (1979: 9) Mesopotamian rulers used to decree release or relief of debts and to increase free days at the beginning of their reign; "one has, however, to keep in mind that in those times a day off did not necessarily imply that there was no work to be done; in many cases a leave of absence was granted to allow men to do work in their own houses that was necessary and could not be coped with by the women alone."

Am 8.5.

Ex 20.10; Deut 5.14.

Ex 16.23, 25; 31.15; 35.2; Lev 23.3, 38; 25.2, 4.

This 'spirit of control' is modelled on the control system of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires; see Weinfeld 1972: 91-100.


Deut 7.3; Josh 23.12.

Deut 6.4.

Cf. Wellhausen 1921: 152.

Lohfink 1969: 58.

Vorländers 1981.

Smith 1963.

Several inscriptions of King Nebuchadnezzar combine motifs of creation with those of world dominion, e.g.: "I [Nebuchadnezzar] am the prince who is ready to serve you [Marduk], the creature of your hand. You have created me, you have given me kingship over the totality of the peoples" (Langdon 1912: 122-125). Other Mesopotamian texts universalize and symbolize royal power by calling the king Lord of the Animals; thus Shalmaneser II: "Ninurta and Pali, who love me as their high priest, handed over to me the animals of the fields and ordered me to hunt them" (Michel 1947/52: 473). The 'owner of animals' motif is found elsewhere in the Bible (Ez 19.8-9; Dan 2.38; Judith 11.7) in passages with Mesopotamian echoes. That Jeremiah should take up Babylonian ideas is likely from the historical setting of his oracle: it is addressed to the members of an anti-Babylonian meeting held in Jerusalem in 594 B.C. who were planning to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet sides with the Babylonian overlord.


Gen 17.1; 28.3; 35.11; 43.14; 48.3; 49.25; Ex 6.3.

The view presented here is a revision of Lang 1975.

See his religio-philosophical and apologetical study Kitāb al-Fiṣal, treatise 1 (ch. 15, no. 208) = Asín Palacios 1928: 367.


One scholar takes the goddess Anatyahu to be Yahweh's daughter (Kraeling 1953: 91); according to Porten 1968: 171 she is rather his consort.

Prov 9.10 in the context of the final passage 9.7-12 (which is displaced in the present text). For ' qedoshim' 'gods' see Deut 33.2; Job 5.1; 15.15; Ps 89.6ff.

Lang 1975: 149ff.

F. Schiller, Die Götter Griechenlands (poem).

Isa 45.21; cf. Hos 13.4; Dan 3.29.


118 Gressmann 1913: 477.

Pettazoni 1960, 117.

Keel 1980: 21: "The model of a chain of revolutions in relatively rapid succession, leading towards monotheism, seems inevitable."

Holladay 1970; Scanlin 1978; cf. also Weinfeld 1976: 392ff. For the general situation in Palestine, the following entry in Sennacherib's Annals, referring to an incident of ca. 700 B.C., is particularly revealing: "The officials, the patricians and the common people of Ekron had thrown Padi, their king, into fetters because he was loyal to his solemn oath sworn by the god Ashur" (Pritchard 1969: 287b).

