

Cracking the Monolith: Political Monotheism, Territorial Exceptionalism, and the Divine Feminine

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Abstract: This article examines the evolution of political monotheism by analyzing three frameworks: 1) “settler monotheism,” which weaponizes theological sovereignty to justify territorial exceptionalism and oppression; 2) “wild ass monotheism,” representing a decentralized, non-territorial Islamic approach, and; 3) the apotheosis of the feminine through the veneration of the *Theotókos*. It contrasts these to explore how the concept of a singular deity has been utilized for power, expanded across geographies, or transformed to include the divine feminine. Drawing on the work of Peter Schäfer, the research explores how these theological “cracks” led to diverging paths: Judaism’s reinforced strict monotheism and the Christian development of the Trinity through Christology. Finally, it considers how the elevation of Mary as *Theotókos* introduces a feminine dimension to monotheistic structures, suggesting a shift toward a more inclusive theological perspective.

Keywords: Political Monotheism • Settler Monotheism • Wild Ass Monotheism • Trinity • *Theotókos*

Introduction

Studies on monotheism are ‘in’. Suffice to look around at what happens in the wide world and we see all too often the three so called ‘monotheistic’ religions at war with one another. The thesis is that we cannot separate the problems with the New Israel from the Old one, the one of the Bible. Contemporary research therefore concentrates on what is called settler monotheism, this is a way of reading the Bible as road book for modern politics. The God of the settlers is the God of Exodus fulfilling the old tribal dream of possessing these two items: land and descendants—at whatever the costs.

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However, in this construction, called alliance between God and His chosen people, serious cracks show up. For example, what to do with Ismael, future Father of Islam, and above all, who is the angel in Gen 22:12 who stops God from letting Isaac being sacrificed? Is it another “self” within God? Are there finally two Gods in heaven? This fascinating question has been studied extensively by the German theologian Peter Schäfer. It is a question of salvation history which is solved by Judaism in a strict monotheistic way, but on the side of Christians, thanks to the overwhelming action of Christ, is solved by an opening that finally led to the elaboration of Trinity. And this is not the end yet. Within Trinity, here is the role played by Mary, the ‘Mother of God’, thanks to the council of Ephesus (431 CE), which opens the perspective of an almost ‘female’ monotheism.

A Surge of the Heart

Obviously, the “narrative of the ONE” points toward a worldwide phenomenon, known under the technical term of *monotheism*. This term, however, is certainly in need of an additional explanation. For example, does it comprehend the totality of a religious system or does it refer to specific forms and actions *within*, let’s say, a so called “polytheistic” religion. In this case the faithful might concentrate their actions only on one group or one god or goddess within the system—as it is the case for example with the Hindu bhakti. In the Bhagavadgītā¹ we read about Krishna, that he is “the beginning, the middle and also the end” (BG 10,32), or “the self-existent in the heart of all beings... the beginning, the middle and the end of all things (BG 10,20), or again “whatsoever is the seed of all things, that also am I. Nothing moving or

¹ Śrīmād Bhagavadgītā, by Swāmi Swarupānanda.

unmoving can exist without me.” (BG 10,39) On the practical (yoga) level it entails “to fix one’s mind on Me (Krishna) worship Me, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith (*śhraddhā*) (BG 12,2).

It is this strong internal relationship to a freely “Chosen One” (Krishna, Rāma, Shiva, etc.) that has countless followers pushed on the spiritual path, from Gandhi, who died while uttering the name of Rām, or a Rāmdās, a lifelong pilgrim on India’s roads, who once cried out: “O Rām, you are bounty, you are love, you are the great Truth.”² Or: “Have confidence in God and adapt yourselves to all the... situations God likes to put you in,”³ while from the Sufi side we have for example the Afghan born Amir Khusrau (1253-1325): “Beauty surrounds me/ and I warn my heart against love/. But as I stand in the falling rain/ how can my heart remain dry?”⁴ Call these examples of *personal* piety⁵ or *spiritual* “monism” or even “monotheism”— we certainly witness here a spiritual passion transgressing the boundaries of all religions and thus can be found everywhere⁶. However, this is *not* the *basic* foundation of the ONE in Judaism, Islam, or Christianity alike.

It is also different from what we could call a more rational or philosophical monotheism, like the one we find in the wonderful hymn to Zeus by the Stoa

² Swāmi Rāmdās, *Carnet...*, 121.

³ Swāmi Rāmdās, *Pensées*, p. 46, nr. 162 (my transl. ThM).

⁴ Farhardi, *The Meaning of Love...*, 70.

⁵ See again Swāmi Rāmdās, *Pensées* p. 54 nr. 194: “see by yourselves, understand by yourselves, and affirm and manifest your own divine nature!”; see too, for Egypt, Luiselli, *Die Suche nach Gottesnähe*, 232-236.

⁶ See f.ex. Vezzani, *Le mysticisme...*; Frauwallner, *Kleine Schriften*, 50-52, 59/60; Basham, *The Origins...*, 90-92; Thapar, *Early India...*, 132; and also Yoshinori, *Buddhist Spirituality...*; Gard, *Buddhism*; Temple, *The Religion...*; Peterson, *Poems to Shiva...*; Rizvi, *A History of Sufism...*

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philosopher Cleanthes (331/330, Assos in the Troad, Asia Minor, d. 232/31). It is that hymn who makes Paul saying (Acts 17:28), that we are all of God's "genos". For Cleanthes the "universe is a living entity and God is the vivifying ether of the universe."⁷ Zeus "pervades the world as an ever creative fire."⁸ He also "commands to humans to do what is right."⁹ He is asked by Cleanthes to chase away mental blindness and delusions,¹⁰ which are part of the badness which began with the creation of the world.¹¹ Zeus is "all giving"¹² and is called "Father"¹³ and as such "first-born of nature",¹⁴ the "greatest and highest King"¹⁵—a true High God, but in the mythological landscape of Greece, not necessarily the Sole God.¹⁶ And what is true for Zeus is equally true for so many other gods or king-gods emerging from "nature": from Egypt to Mongolia, from the plains of North America to the wide open Pacific Ocean. It is a symphony on the all-compassing theme: nature and power, nature and society.¹⁷

⁷ Cleanthes: <https://www.britannica.com/print/article/120820>
=Greek, Roman and Byzantium Studies 47(2007) 413-429, 413.

⁸ Ibid., 419.

⁹ Ibid., 420.

¹⁰ Kranz, *Geschichte...*, 375. [all transl. by me, ThM]

¹¹ See Cleanthes, 422.

¹² Ibid., 417.

¹³ Kranz, 375.

¹⁴ "Urahn der Natur", *ibid.*, 375.

¹⁵ Ibid., 375.

¹⁶ Whether those gods are high gods (only) or also "sole gods" depends on this: whether they are alone (excluding all others, or "alone" at least thanks to their elevated position) or *absorbing* the others. See Drewermann, *Grenzgänger...*; Frauwallner, *Kleine Schriften*, 50, 59/60; Basham, *The Origins...*, 90; Schmidt, *Origine et Evolution...*, 267-376, 323-355; Eliade, *Mythes...*, 180-194.

¹⁷ To name just a few: Assmann, *Ägypten...*; Schmidt, *Origine...*, 105-156; Eliade, *Mythes...*, 60-79; Mooren, *Making the Earth...*, 233-315, *ders. Gewürzstrasse...*, 284-314; Tarot, *Le symbolique...*; Mauss, *Sociologie...*; Tuwere, *Theologie im Kontext...*; Frauwallner, *Kleine*

Settler Monotheism

Confronted with this extraordinary richness of religious life, of theories and combinations of all kinds, the question which kind of monotheism inspired Judaism, Christianity, and Islam becomes even more urgent. One way of answering this question could be Eliade's way of dealing with what he calls the "monotheistic revolution" of the Hebrews—namely their way of dealing with ethics and sacrificial rituals.¹⁸ This viewpoint is well known. Yet, different approaches are possible. I would begin with Ps 115. Therein we find the most radical "de-sacralisation" of nature—since also idols are made of "nature", of wood, metal etc.:

(The idols of the pagans are) in silver and gold
products of human skill.
Have mouth, but never speak
eyes, but never see,
ears, but never hear,
noses, but never smell,
hands, but never touch
feet, but never walk
and not a sound from their throats.
Their makers will end up like them
and so will everyone who relies on them. (vv 4-8).¹⁹

The world of "nature" is speechless, motionless, lifeless in itself. Compare this to Hall's remarks on "new animism"²⁰: that it is "a sophisticated way of being in the

Schriften, 17; Thomas, *Islanders...*; Radin, *The Story...*; Knappert, *Lexikon...*; Lotkehaus and alii, *Sepik Heritage...*; Wilson, *The indigenous people...*; Evans-Pritchard, *La religion des primitifs...*

¹⁸ See Eliade, *Mythes...*, 189-191.

¹⁹ For all Bible texts, see the translation of *The Jerusalem Bible*, Reader's Edition (Garden City New York 1971).

²⁰ Quoted by Perdibon, *Mountains and Trees...*, 180.

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world...a relational epistemology and a relational cosmology.”²¹ Or Perdibon, this time quoting Harvey, that we have to recognize that “the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others.”²² Also interesting is the following on Mesopotamian ritual: for producing protective wood statuettes, “rites of thanksgiving were held in front of two trees... before being cut... These rites imply a respectful attitude toward the sacred arboreal persons.”²³ In other words, they are part of a broader community of living beings that the ancient Mesopotamians lived in and engaged with.”²⁴ Therefore “this cosmos was conceived as a sacred, divine and relational one, where no strict distinction between natural and supernatural, immanent and transcendent, natural and cultural, appears to have existed in the minds of the ancients.”²⁵

Complete this by the observation on Western culture by the “figurative anthropologist” Descola, i.e., that Western culture is “inverting the premisses of animism: only humans are in possession of an ‘interiority’— a spirit, intentionality and capacity of reasoning...the result is a dissociation between the sphere of the humans, the only ones being able of rational discernment, symbolic activity and social life and the immense crowd of non-humans constraint to a mechanical and non-reflective existence...”²⁶

²¹ See Hall, *Plants as Persons...*, 105.

²² Harvey, *Animism...*, p. XI. Quoted: Perdibon, *Mountains and Trees...*, 180.

²³ Perdibon, op.cit., 181.

²⁴ Ibid., 181.

²⁵ Ibid., 197.

²⁶ Descola, *Les formes du visible*, 58. ([My transl. ThM]; see too ibid., 265, that in animism you might find “animals that think of themselves as being humans and who possess subjectivity, culture and institutions analogical to those of the humans with whom they entertain person-to-person relationships.”([My transl. ThM].

One may not agree with Perdibon on “animism” as a celebration of the “power of life”, as an all-compassing, relational force, yet it seems to me, that Perdibon’s viewpoint could be helpful to see Ps 115 and similar texts in a very specific light. In Ps 115 nature is becoming speechless, motionless, and blind, will say powerless, because of an *absolute power-grab by Yahweh*, the One God, proclaimed the unique Creator. Does not the same Ps 115 begin with “Ours is the God, whose will is sovereign in the heavens and on earth” (v3) and ends in “Yahweh, maker of heaven and earth. Heaven belongs to Yahweh” (v15)? “Nature” might have become speechless—Yahweh’s voice is all the louder: “the voice of Yahweh over the waters, the voice of Yahweh in power (Ps 29:3a/4), a voice that “shatters the cedars” (v15), “sharpens lightening shafts” and “sets the wilderness shaking” (vv7, 8) and much more. And it is a *unique* voice: “there is no other God besides me”! (Is 45:5), and above all no female consort like in Ugarit and the rest of the Near East: “Yahveh himself made the heavens” (Ps 96:6). In sum:

Yahweh is king, robed in majesty,
 Yahweh is robed in power,
 he wears it like a belt.
 You have made the world firm, unshakable;
 your throne has stood since then,
 You existed from the first, Yahweh. (Ps 93:1-2)

“God is king of the whole world” (Ps 47:7; Ps 95, 96, 104, 110 etc) or 1 Chronicles 29:11: “Yours, Yahweh, is the greatness, the power, splendor, length of days, glory, for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours.” Nothing is more often, more forcefully proclaimed through the whole Sacred Scriptures than God’s “kingship”, his sovereign creative power. Yet, to proclaim it in the psalms means *music* enters the stage—so much

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so that what was under a certain orthodox viewpoint speechless and mute, as we have noted above, namely “nature” itself, now begins to sing and cry out for joy: “sing to Yahweh all the earth!...Let the heavens be glad, let earth rejoice, let the sea thunder and all that it holds, let the fields exult and all that is in them, let all the woodland trees cry out for joy” (Ps 96: 2,11/12)! Or: “...all the earth bows down to you, playing music for you, playing in honor of your name!” (Ps 66: 4: see too 81: 2-4).

However, here too, the fact that “nature” has recovered its voice does not mean, that it moves in an orthodox-free space. Rather it is linked, via God’s kingship and creative power, to this other corner stone of God’s being God, the ONE God, namely to God’s *justice*. (Ps 96: 10, 13). Naturally, Justice has, without doubt, many facets. Rooted in God’s own faithfulness (Ps 146: 6), it covers the most basic necessities of life:

(it, i.e. Yahweh) gives food to the hungry,
... liberty to the prisoners,
... restores sight to the blind,
... protects the stranger, ... keeps the orphan and widow
(Ps 146: 7-9).

And in Ps 103 God forgives offenses, cures diseases, redeems our life from the pit, crowns us with love and tenderness, procures prosperity and renews our youth (vv3-5). In sum, “Yahweh who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed (v6). He “hears me when I call him.” (Ps 4: 3). Thus: “under his protection the pious are safe” (Ps 145: 20), while God is “the destruction of the wicked!” (Ps 145: 20). So far for the merciful side of Yahweh. However, regarding the discovery of the specific cornerstone of Hebrew monotheism, it should not be forgotten, that what we discovered so far, will remain *incomplete*, if we don’t take into account that what we are also doing here, is talking

about *politics*. Kingship, creative power, mercy, all this is part of a basically *political* power package. It is Yahweh *and* Israel's enemies, Yahweh *and* his promise, that David will last forever—it is justice first and above all for Israel alone:²⁷

He reveals his word to Jacob,
his statutes and ruling to Israel:
he never does this for other nations,
he never reveals his ruling to them. (Ps 147: 19//20).

If it is true, that Yahweh “has been kind to his people, conferring victory on us who are weak”, these “weak” ones, thanks to Yahweh, can now “exact vengeance on the pagans, ... inflict punishment on the heathen, ... shackle their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters, to execute the preordained sentence. (Ps 149: 7-8). Thus “gloriously are the faithful rewarded!” (v 9) It is politics over territory and descent. Indeed, “I will make you a great nation (Gen 12: 2) is promised to Abram as in Gen 15: 18: “To your descendants I give this land, from the wadi of Egypt to the Great River” or in Gen 17: 1-14, this time to Abraham, within the context of Covenant and circumcision: “I make you father of a multitude of nations” (v4). “I will establish my Covenant between myself and you and your descendants” (v7). The same thing is promised again after the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22: 17/18). No wonder also that the same topic appears over again in Deuteronomy, as in Deut 26: 9/10: “Yahweh brought us here and gave us this land, a land where milk and homey flow.” Same thing in Deut 27: 3. Also in Deut 28, with this important specification in vv12/13: “You (Israel) will make many nations your subjects, yet you

²⁷ “Political” here clearly has the sense of *ethnocentric*. To call it “ultra-nationalist” or “racist” might be more fitting for those “political monotheists” in today’s Israel (see below).

will be subject to none. Yahweh will put you at the head, not at the tail; you will always be on top and never underneath...”

Obviously, adjustments had to be made. To keep the line of descent straight, Ishmael had to be eliminated, since “it is through Isaac that your [i.e. Abraham’s] name will be carried on.” (Gen 12: 12) Ishmael will only be made “into a nation” (Gen 21: 14), he will make his home “in the wilderness of Paran.” (Gen 21: 21). Yet, this is only the beginning. It will get more and more complicated during *Israel’s history*, but the drama will always be the same, as David says in his last words: “Yes, my House stands firm with God, he has made an everlasting Covenant with me, all in order, well assured.” (2 Sam 23: 5). Obviously, this extraordinary position promised by God comes with a condition:

But if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God nor keep and observe all those commandments and statutes of his that I enjoin on you today, then all the curses that follow shall come up with you and overtake you (Deut 28: 15).²⁸

Yet, there still remains one question. When and how did this specific relationship with the “chosen people”, the story of the Hebrews’ *political monotheism*, begin? In fact, it begins in Gen 12:2²⁹ and through *history* it is broken, renewed, broken, renewed and so forth. In the book of Genesis, the foundation is laid of “the God of your Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:15). In the name of this God, called also “I AM who I AM”, a certain Moses is then sent to do his work to liberate a people, who had ended up in Egypt

²⁸ See the terrible list of curses in Deut 28: 16-28.

²⁹ “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous, that it will be used as a blessing!”

—the Joseph story (Gen 37) tells us how—first prospered there, but then suffered slavery (Ex 1). Ex 2: 23-25:

The sons of Israel, groaning in their slavery, cried out for help... God heard their groaning and he called to mind his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God looked down upon the sons of Israel and he knew...

Part of the liberation process is the lengthy story of consecutive warnings to Pharaoh, to let Israel go (Ex chap 7- chap 8): “I myself will make Pharaoh’s heart stubborn, and perform many a sign and wonder in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh will not listen to you.” (Ex 7: 3/4). Indeed, after serpents, water turned into blood, frogs, mosquitos, gadflies, death of Egypt’s livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness—comes the most cruel and decisive one: “All the first born in the land of Egypt shall die” (Ex 11: 5), which is announced also as an act by which “Yahweh discriminates between Egypt and Israel.” (Ex 11: 7). What follows in ch. 12 is the most horrific story of *God himself* killing those whom he had discriminated against. Ex 12: 11/12:

...it is a passover in honor of Yahweh. That night I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, man and beast alike, and I shall deal out punishment to all the gods of Egypt, I am Yahweh!

We could call this the most decisive founding act of Israel as a chosen people, not for nothing also remembered in the psalms: 78: 51 (“by striking down all the first born in Egypt”), 105: 36 (“Next, he struck down all the first-born in their land”), 135: 8 (“He struck down the first-born of Egypt, of man and beast alike”), 136: 10 (“He struck down the first-born of Egypt, his love is everlasting!”) Indeed, the killing is interpreted as a sign of “love” as in 136: 11:

“(He) brought Israel out, his love³⁰ is everlasting!” By no means we are dealing here with an “accident”, but with a constitutive pattern of how to deal with the *enemi*:

He struck the pagans down in droves,
he slaughtered mighty kings,
Sihon, king of the Amorites,
Og, the king of Bashan,
and all the kingdoms of Canaan (Ps 135: 10/11)

with the sole purpose, to give “their lands as a legacy, a legacy to his people Israel” (v.12)! (See too Ps 136: 21-13). In other words, when it comes to the promised land, there is no place for two: for this one to live, that one has to die or disappear!³¹ And that shows Yahweh’s love—political monotheism! One God, One people, one land! In the end, is this a myth? A very powerful founding myth? Has it ever been reality?—which would be a question for archeology, Biblical exegesis etc.³² Or will it ever *become* a reality?

Some might believe so, in which case they might be tempted to read the sacred texts regarding the chosen people etc. as a textbook, a roadmap for the organization of the present and future time. They might be tempted to transform biblical monotheism into the *ideology of the day*. Indeed, in the eyes of some, the chances for such a manoeuvre had suddenly greatly improved thanks to the political reality created by the results of the “6-day war”,³³ the conquest of Judea and Samaria and then again after

³⁰ Maybe *hesed* should better be translated by the German *Huld*. See too Ennery, *Dictionnaire*, 74: bonté, grâce, bienfait, faveur.

³¹ Strangers may be allowed, on the same level as orphans and widows (Deut 27: 18).

³² See, for example, Pritchard, *Die Archeologie...*; Robert et Feulliet, *Introduction....*

³³ 6 day war, <https://en.wikipedia>.

the Yom Kippur War.³⁴ The new perspective meant, that Jews could now return to their “ancestral homeland”—God’s gift and obligation by the Torah! In other words, a massive resettlement program was needed, whatever the human cost.

Among these “neo-imperialist” ultras, we find a specific group of “messianic, fundamentalist, theocratic and right wing” people organized as “Gush Emunim”, “Bloc of the Faithful”.³⁵ “Messianic” was this group, since the new historical situation, experienced also as “process of redemption”, was just a preparation for a speedy coming of the Messiah on the Temple Mount of Jerusalem.³⁶ “While Gush Emunim no longer exists officially, vestiges of its influence remain in Israeli politics and society.”³⁷ The group and its successors “have successfully attracted billions of US dollars for building and supporting of settlements.”³⁸ All this within the perspective of the “Promised Land”. International Law is not counting here³⁹—only the “Bible”. Also, Netanyahu made this clear in a speech delivered on 24 May 2011 at the American Congress, whose members celebrated Netanyahu with 24 standing ovations:

In Judea-Samaria the Jewish people is not an occupying stranger. We are not the British in India, nor the Belgians in the Congo. (Israel) is the land of our ancestors, the land of Israel, to which Abraham

³⁴ Wikipedia, Yom Kippur War.

³⁵ Gush Emunim, Wikipedia; quotation *ibid.*, p.2/6. See too: Enderlin, *Au nom du Temple...*

³⁶ The founder of the group, February 1974, was Zvi Yehuda Kook, after the Yom Kippur War, Yet his ideas go back to 1967. See Gush Enunim, p.1/6.

³⁷ Gush Emunim, p.1/6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.3/6.

³⁹ See the deliberations at the International Court of Justice at den Haag (February 2024) on the legality of the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel.

brought the idea of a One God, where David fought Goliath, land of the vision of eternal peace by Isaiah. No distortion of history can negate the links which since 4000 years unite the Jewish people and the Jewish land.⁴⁰

Let's now hear some more voices from the camp of the "ultras" perpetuating still today the "monotheistic" way of thinking.⁴¹ As we noticed, you are either up or down, head or tail—and that is so still today. Rabbi Yitzhaq Shilat (messianic fundamentalist⁴²) describes the situation in paradoxical terms of face-to-face combat: kill the one who just killed you!⁴³ If you don't kill the enemy now, he will kill you tomorrow. So, you are already as good as dead! To provide the enemy with munition, food etc., means to encourage morally the one who just killed you!⁴⁴ According to the same logic the wife of another ultra nationalist (Betzael Smotrich, member of Netanyahu's

⁴⁰ Elderlin, op.cit., 471 (All transl. into English by me ThM).

⁴¹ What might sound like a naive claim is neither naive nor innocent. Rather, it is a skillful operation of "identity theft", the identification of the "Israelis" of today with the Hebrews of the OT. Being for (or against) "Israel" then means to be for against the God of the Old Testament. Criticizing the *state* of Israel of today means the putting into question God's promises to David etc. We cannot discuss here how far the fact of the Shoa has facilitated (or is still doing so) this kind of "identity transfer". However, the *theological* implications might not have been sufficiently discussed yet. (See the discussion of Berlin theologians around Prof. N. Slenczka [<https://www.theologie.hu-berlin.de/de/st/AT>] on the *canon and the OT*.—For the moment I would only point towards the Jewish movement "Not in my name!", supporting the difference between the Bible and the (dis)functioning of Israel as a *state*. Furthermore, since the two state solution seems to be practically impossible for the near future, the ONE State solution however would need a *radical overhaul* of Israel's self-understanding as a *state*. In sum—is dreaming allowed?—will there be ever, for example, a Jewish Nelson Mandela?

⁴² See Elderlin, op.cit., 359-362.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, 359/60.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 360.

cabinet, 2024) refused, after having given birth, to share the room in a maternity with Arab women: “It is natural that my wife will not live side by side with someone who has given birth to a newborn, who will kill your child 20 years later”, so the husband explained.⁴⁵

Within this perspective, even the murder of children would make sense: “The interdiction ‘you don’t kill’ applies only to a Jew killing a Jew.” The killing of infants is allowed, if it is evident, “that they will grow up only in order to attack you.” In the case of war “it is necessary to kill non-Jewish children in order to defeat and weaken the spirit of the enemy and to make sure that he will not send his soldiers into war—so [the child murder] is allowed.”⁴⁶ The already mentioned B. Smotrich naturally also declared that God himself had given Israel to the Jewish people and that there is no place for any Palestinian state: “There will never be an Arab state on Eretz Israel!” Hundreds of thousands of Israelis should take possession of Judea-Samaria, founding new cities.⁴⁷

Of interest is also the reasoning of Rabbi Azriel Ariel of a settler colony near Ramallah. The Rabbi sees actually two irreconcilable political camps at work. The first camp defends the integrity of the land of Israel. The second “preaches the values of the humanist liberal and universal morality, putting peace at first.”⁴⁸ The two groups represent two different versions of morality. The first version is “authentically Jewish”, the second he calls “Christian”, what really means: “Occidental”. Indeed: the European peoples and the Israeli Left are “asking for

⁴⁵ Ibid., 483/4.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 458, viewpoint of Yitzhak Shapira and Yossef Elitzour of a settler colony near Nablus. Mainstream Judaism has severely rejected this position. But it shows, what kind of convictions can grow in the climate of ultranationalist messianic Judaism.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 482.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 360.

moderation in front of the enemy.”⁴⁹ The Rabbi sees here a position with profound roots going back 2000 years, directly to the “doctrine of the ‘Messiah’ of Nazareth. It is Christianity that preaches to love everybody, including evil doers and criminals—mercy for all, even for the most cruel enemy.”⁵⁰ Because of its humanistic universalism in matters of ethics, so different from the Jewish approach, “it is impossible to explain the defense measures taken by the (Israeli) army.”⁵¹ In fact, the Christians and the occidentalized Israelis ask Israel to “act according to *their* norms and they criticize the Jews.”⁵² Because of this attitude, so the author, they are also hostile to the settler implantations executed in “Judea-Samaria and Gaza.”⁵³

Another voice against “Western”-universal values is the one of Colonel Ofer Winter, who proclaimed in 2014, to have been sent by God to combat terrorists [Palestinians] “who utter blasphemies against the God of the wars of Israel”, and he prays with his soldiers: “listen Israel, the Eternal One is our God, the Eternal is One!”⁵⁴

All these ideas were developed before Israel’s war on Gaza in 2023/24 and one wonders what the authors quoted so far would say today (2024). An in-depth analysis of this war would go beyond the frame of the present text: the horrific events of October 7, 2023, the

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 360/61. See too Rabbi Giora Redler’s position: “The true holocaust is this humanism, the secular culture of ‘We believe in Man’.” (*Ibid.*, 481). However, see also the position by Ronald Lauder, president of the Jewish World Congress, who in 2018 criticized Netanyahu for a similar anti-humanist position, since such a position “would undermine the alliance between Judaism and the enlightenment.” (*Ibid.*, 488).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 362.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 362.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 471.

hostage taking crisis and the military strategies, the target for the war according to Netanyahu together with the ongoing oppression in the occupied territories and so forth. Yet, it is obvious that *the behavior of the ones in power* cannot be understood without pointing toward the religious implications, namely an attitude rooted in the specific form of Israel's "political monotheism" that put Israel on the head and never the tail, subjecting other nations but being subjected to none (Deut 28: 12/13), making it immune from any form of international Law.⁵⁵

There seems to be this unbridgeable difference between a universalist-ethical, humanist "Western" approach to the endless suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and in Gaza—and on the other side, the initial argument of legitimate self-defense truly stretched to its limits, the "earth-bound" Jewish "monotheistic" merciless ethics (merciful only toward *one* people). However, what is even more remarkable, is the fact, that these so called "Western" or "Christian" values are *not at all* defended by the "West" (USA, UK, Germany, etc.), but courageously defended by an African country from the "New Big South", the Republic of South Africa. South Africa brought the case of genocide to den Haag.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ A demonstrator in Tel Aviv during an anti-government demonstration had it right putting it this way: "What the Germans did to us, we are doing now to the Palestinians!"— Acting as an ethno-theocracy Israel, together with Iran in its own way, is one of the most successful theocracies in the Middle East. See too Mooren, *War and peace*, 53, note 51: "It is one of the great ironies of history that the West is asking for the abolition of so-called Islamic theocracies... but closes its eyes to the intrinsic ideological dilemma created by the state of Israel."

⁵⁶ In a very strange way Assmann in *Mose und der Monotheismus der Treue* [Moses and the monotheism of faithfulness; all transl. by me, ThM] comes to a conclusion in some ways similar to the "anti-western" position of the "ultras". Brilliantly arguing with the help of the tools of historical text-criticism, he elaborates on what for him is

Intermezzo: “does a man cast off the wife of his youth?” (Is 54: 6)

At this point in our investigation the question arises: can monotheism, as described so far, as form of religion, still be “saved”? Or better, is it worth to be “saved”? Certainly not in the way it has been “weaponized” or abused to function as an integral background for

the cardinal value of Biblical monotheism as expressed in Exodus monotheism: *faithfulness* [Treue]. “What God is his people asking for is faithfulness, *unconditional, absolute* faithfulness.” (p.18, italics by ThM; see too p. 26 etc). This faithfulness, explicitly is *not* based upon the veracity or moral usefulness of the commandments. They are not made reasonable. The laws are what they are, “not true or false, not binding or obligatory” (p. 28). This is the “specificity of Biblical monotheism” (p. 19). Regarding Exodus Greek philosophy or Western science don’t play a role here in trying to make the law “acceptable” (See p. 33). The Monos of exodus is the pure *revelation* of God in his holiness, choosing a people holy to him (see p. 23). In this way is created what is best described by another key term, namely *exception* (Ausnahme) (see p. 24). This Biblical *exceptionalism* would then be part of the breeding ground for the couple enemy-friend—the reason for the holy war against “the seven peoples who are [already] settlers of the promised land.” (p. 24). Here “treaties are not allowed and no one can be spared” (p. 22).— To make it short: the results of Assmann’s brilliantly developed study regarding the idea of unconditional faithfulness might arise some questions, recalling, for example, the disastrous consequences (WW1) put into motion, among other factors, thanks to the absolute faithfulness (“Nibelungentreue”) of the German Kaiser towards his KuK Counterpart; the absolute faithfulness and unconditional obedience of the German soldiers to the “Führer” thanks to their oath, helping to free the way to the cruelties of WW2; and what about the *attitude*, the “*spirit*” that seems to dominate the Israeli occupation force in the (illegally) occupied territories and not only in Gaza? Finally something else comes to mind: the theory of the political *Ausnahmezustant* [state of exception] in Carl Schmitt’s “political theology”, ideologically shading the III Reich... all these—*avatars* of Biblical monotheism? Assmann does not go this way. Instead he discusses at the end of his essay several ways to “soften” Exodus monotheism, among other approaches referring to Lessing’s *Ringparabel*. Will this be enough?

oppression, ethnic cleansing and even genocide. Yet, *this cannot be the whole story of Biblical monotheism!* What happened to Ex 33: 11: “Yahweh would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”? It is true, this is taken back in Ex 33: vv 20 and 23.⁵⁷ Yet, Ex 33: 11 summarizes at least the *potential* inherent to the relationship between God and His people, of the permanent back and forth between God and Moses (Moses said to Yahweh, Yahweh spoke to Moses), i.e., of true *dialogue*.

What also speaks in favor of dialogue are the *curses!* These curses bear testimony to dialogue, because they indicate situations, where dialogue might be *refused*: “But they did not listen, they did not pay attention; they followed the dictates of their own evil hearts, refused to face me and turned their backs on me. (Jer 7: 24); or: “Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, when your ancestors challenged me, tested me...” (Ps 95: 8/9).

As dialogue, the relationship between God and Man is not a stasis, is never a “done deal”, but for ever *a work in progress!* It is true, at the beginning the “land deal” is part of it (Gen 17, 5-8), as is Ex 12,12, the murder of the non-Jewish first-borns, “justified” as a punitive action against the gods of Egypt. Still, these “concessions”, obviously, did not go far enough, since the “deal” was broken by the Hebrews themselves (see for example Jer 31, 32).

However, this is no longer of importance, since

... the days are coming—it is Yahweh who speaks—when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a Covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of

⁵⁷ v.20: “You cannot see my face”; v. 23: “you shall see the back of me, but my face is not to be seen.”

20 • Cracking the Monolithic Political Monotheism

Egypt—they broke the covenant of mine... (Jer 31: 31/32).

In other words, only *salvation history* will tell us, to which spiritual depth and surprises the dialogue dynamics can lead us. The new “finish line”, so to speak, is extremely daring and truly revolutionary:

Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for neighbor to try to teach neighbor, or brother to say to brother, “Learn to know Yahwe!” No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest—it is Yahweh who speaks—since I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind. (Jer 31: 33/34).

Yet, to arrive at that spiritual height, something else has to happen: the *reformulation* of the *quality* of the dialogue partners. Needed is not only the reaffirmation of the “monotheistic credentials” of Yahweh, so to speak:

... it is I.
No god was formed before me,
nor will be after me.
I, I am Yahweh,
there is no other savior but me.
It is I who have spoken, have saved, have made the proclamation,
not any strangers among you.
You are my witnesses - it is Yahwe who speaks.. (Is 43: 10-12) —

but necessary is also a reformulation of the very nature of the dialogue. That is, why it is molded into *marital* terms of wife and husband!:

Do not be afraid...
For now your creator will be your husband,

his name, Yahweh Sabaoth;
 your redeemer will be the Holy One of Israel,
 he is called the God of the whole earth...
 Does a man cast off the wife of his youth?...
 I did forsake you for a brief moment,
 but with great love I will take you back...
 my love for you will never leave you
 and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken...
 (Is 54: 4-10).

This extraordinary declaration of Yahweh as loving God even has *universal* implications. The wife is the *witness* (Is 43:12) of the “God of the whole earth” (Is 54: 5), that is, the marital love acquires a universal dimension. In fact, that is possible, since the alliance between love and the “universe” existed already at the very beginning, i.e., still hidden in the declaration at the end of Genesis, chapter one: “God saw all he had made and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1: 31).

Very good, maybe—but no longer working according to plan! After the introduction of knowledge, sex, jealousy and murder—“am I my brother’s guardian?” (Gen 4:10)—Yahweh “regretted having made man on the earth and his heart grieved. I will rid the earth’s face of man, my own creation” (Gen 6: 6/7). However, out of this incredible disaster came, thanks to one man, Noah (Gen 6: 8), the first and indeed most important Covenant ever. The Covenant at the end of the flood, the Covenant “I make between myself and you (Noah and his sons) and every living creature (that lives) with you and for all generations... When the bow is in the clouds I shall see it and call to mind the lasting Covenant between me and every living creature of every kind that is found on the earth.” (Gen 9: 12, 16).

In other words: if we consider the iron-clad “monster” of political settler monotheism—with Noah we discover cracks in this ultra solid construction. We could call these

“cracks of mercy”; the cry of the poor, the forgotten ones and the helpless. Cracks which invite us to read the Holy Scriptures not only in the direction of the powerful and the mighty, but to read them in an *inverse* way, *against the grain*, the powerful and the mainstream! And this even more so, since what begins with Noah, will find its fulfillment in that revolutionary text we encountered above, i.e., Jer 31, the Covenant in everyone’s heart.

Yet, before *salvation history* arrives at that highpoint, there are other examples of cracks to discover and to analyze. One of them is the story of Ishmael, Gen chap. 16 and 17.

Wild Ass Monotheism

From the very beginning, there existed this problem: Abraham did not have a son by Sarah, but only by Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl. It turns out that this son, Ishmael, had to go! Abraham said to God: “Oh, let Ishmael live in your presence!” Yet God replied: “No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son whom you are to name Isaac. With him I establish my Covenant, a Covenant in perpetuity, to be his God and the God of his descendants after him.” (Gen 17:19). The language is clear, the exclusion is clear,⁵⁸ no Covenant with Ishmael. However, in Ishmael’s case something extraordinary happened. Ishmael is not thrown away “under the bus” into nothingness, but he will be subject to a “compensation” package, so to speak. No “berit”, no Covenant, but “for Ishmael too I grant you your request. I bless him and I will make him fruitful and greatly

⁵⁸ Unless they are not explicitly directed to everybody (like in the covenant with Noah) covenants qua relationships, by their very nature, *exclude* automatically some while *including* others. This is a “trap”, into which also love relationships might fall. Especially NT theology will have to deal with this problem.

increased in numbers. He shall be the father of twelve princes and I will make him into a great nation.” (Gen 17: 20). Ishmael too will be circumcised (17: 27) and in chap. 21, when Hagar and Ishmael are finally expelled from the family, because of Sarah’s jealousy, God saves Ishmael from dying in the desert⁵⁹, promising again to make him a great nation (Gen 21:18): “God was with the boy. He grew up and made his home in the wilderness and he became a bowman. He made his home in the wilderness of Paran and his mother chose him a wife from the land of Egypt.” (Gen 21: 20/21).

Yes, Ishmael get settled, but it is not the promised land! Ishmael is saved, but as an outsider: “A wild ass of a man he will be, against every man, and every man against him, setting himself to defy all his brothers.” (Gen 16, 12). Why is the story of Ishmael of interest for our research in monotheism? Because we are witnessing here a “crack” in the monotheistic power-play of inclusion/exclusion.⁶⁰ Truly, we are still far away from the “universalistic” break-through we have already encountered in Isaiah chap 43 and 54. And let’s add Isaiah’s vision in chap 25: 6-8, which is truly breathtaking:

On this mountain,
Yahweh Sabaoth will prepare for all peoples
a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines...
On this mountain he will remove
the mourning veil covering all peoples,
and the shroud enwrapping all nations,
he will destroy Death for ever...

Indeed, Paran’s wilderness and the mountain in Jerusalem are not yet the same. But at least, Ishmael

⁵⁹ Ishmael=God has heard.

⁶⁰ See again, *supra*, note 53.

survived his exclusion from the berit-line. However, this is not the only point of interest for us. Indeed, for some theologians, and I am one of them, the Ishmael-story opens up a certain understanding of this other great “monotheistic” religion, namely Islam.⁶¹ Ishmael/Islam—a “wild ass”, everyone against him, getting himself to defy all his brothers... theologically speaking, Islam has it all! Firstly, the strictest exclusivist statement about God’s ahadyya/ONENESS:

He is One
The self-sufficient Master
He begets not, nor has He begotten
there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him. (Surah 112).⁶²

And this God does not belong to the Jews and Christians alone! Surah 5,18:

And the Jews and the Christians say: “We are the children of God and his loved ones.” Say... Nay you are but human beings of those He has created. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills.

No elected, special or separated status for anybody! See too:

And the Jews say: God’s Hand is tied up. Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both his hands are widely outstretched. He spends ... as He wills. (Surah 5, 64).

⁶¹ See Hayek, *Le mystère d’Ismaël*, and idem *Les arabes...*; Mooren, *Macht...*, 39-52.

⁶² See for this too Mooren, “Monothéisme coranique...”, 529-538.— For translations of the Qur’an see *The Noble Qur’an* (with slight changes by ThM). See too Nevo, Koren, *Crossroads to Islam...*; Holland, *In the Shadow...*; Lewis, *The Middle East...*; Hourani, *A History...*; Sabanegh, *Muhammad...*

Therefore the “Covenant” can be concluded with *all* peoples. Yes, it *begins* with Muhammad: “And He revealed to His servant (‘abd) what He revealed.” (Surah 53,10).⁶³ And indeed, the Qur’an is in clear Arabic language (see Surah 42,7), while it is also true that Abraham becomes the “Father” of the Meccan people, the builder of the Kaaba in Mecca⁶⁴ and that Mecca transforms itself into a “city of peace and security” (Surah 14,35)—but there is no *settlement project of a whole people into a foreign country!*⁶⁵ And again and above all: Muhammad is sent to all people:

O Humankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger (rasul) of God, to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. (Surah 7,158).

In sum, the “wild ass” that has settled in the wilderness of Paran (Gen 21,21) has now become the founder of a world-wide community which is nothing but excellent:

You faithful, you are the best (khair) community (umma) ever raised among humans.
You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and you believe in God. (Sura 3, 110)⁶⁶

One cannot help to wonder, whether the worldwide muslim project is not the Ismaelic counterpart to Isaac’s Old Testamentarian orthodoxy. Does Islam not look like what a “Covenant”-blessing could be outside, beyond or

⁶³ See for this too Mooren, *Macht...*, 38.

⁶⁴ “O Lord make us submissive (muslim) unto you and of our offspring (min dzurriyatina) a community (umma) submissive into you.” (Surah 2, 128).

⁶⁵ Medina is not the promised land like Israel. The Prophet had to settle in this place for security reasons (the famous hégire/hijra “emigration” from Mecca to Medina, the “city of the Prophet”, indicates the beginning of the Islamic calendar).

⁶⁶ See also the commentary to 3,110 in Mooren, *Macht...*, 41.

parallel to the Covenant with Isaac? Theologically speaking, could it not be the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham Gen 17: 20/21 to bless Ishmael and to “make him into a great nation”? Truly, like all religions, Islam knows its holy sites (Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, etc), but does not claim a “promised land”. Its political heartbeat is not the Hebrew “settler monotheism” discussed above. From China to Bagdad to Cordoba you can feel “at home”.

Yet, unfortunately, Islam too, as religions in general, is not always as close to “what is right” (Surah, 3,110) as one would wish. Holy wars, slavery, human rights abuses, religious intolerance, ISIS, etc., give to think that also here in Islam, as elsewhere, God’s hands are still tight up (camouflaged as *divine* law!), instead of being wide open. Indeed, the “best of all communities” (Surah 3,110) is still, very much so, a work in progress! Maybe the fact that the divine power is *totally* concentrated in one hand, the dogma of oneness being the *only* really fertile plant in the Ismaelitic “theological wilderness”—“against every man, and every man against him” (Gen 16: 12)—is not always a sign of strength, but also of possible deep human tragedy⁶⁷...

Son-ship Turbulence

So much for Ishmael and Islam! We proposed the Ishmael drama as an example of *inverse* lecture, against the grain, of the “monotheistic mainstream” of the Old Testament, as a “crack in the orthodoxy” established via Isaac. Yet, this is not the only case of “breaking the rule”! Another one is just following in Genesis 22, the sacrifice of Isaac. There we witness the dramatic moment, “when Abraham stretched out his hand and seized the knife to

⁶⁷ See too, for example, Mooren, “New York—Ground Zero...”, 33/4.

kill his son.” (Gen 22: 10). However, the process is interrupted by “the angel of Yahweh” calling: “Do not harm him”! (Gen 22: 12). The question arises: who is the angel? Things are not getting much clearer, if we read in Gen 22: 15/16: “The angel of Yahweh called Abraham a second time from heaven. ‘I swear by my own self—it is Yahweh who speaks—because you have done this’...”.

Clearly, this is extraordinary: if the angel is indeed Yahweh himself, we can only assume, that there are two “selves” in Yahweh: Yahweh and his angel! Two “selves” in clear conflict with one another! Can this not be interpreted as a crisis *within* strict monotheism itself? Are there indeed two Gods in heaven? The problem that is opened up in this way has been studied extensively by Peter Schäfer, in particular in his *Zwei Götter im Himmel*.⁶⁸

According to Schäfer we have to envisage the problem of “binity”, of a *second God*, within the context of Jewish salvation history.⁶⁹ Texts like Dan 7: 13 (The Son of Man vision), the personified Wisdom in Proverbs of Solomon or Ecclesiasticus, the “Self-Boasting Hymn” of Qumran (second half of the first century)⁷⁰, the Daniel Apocryphon (last third of first century BC)⁷¹, figures like Melkisedek (the second God [Elohim] beside the Highest God [El]) and Enoch (Son of Man or “Chosen One”), figures like “Son of God”, “Son of the Most High” or Metatron, the

⁶⁸ See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...* [all transl. into English by ThM].

⁶⁹ I follow here my study of Schäfer in my *The mystery of Faith...* inside the chapter *Monotheism Revisited...* (pp. 210-223).— The need (in salvation history) for a “second God” according to Schäfer arises from the time after the destruction of the “Second Temple” (70 AD) onward up to the Rabbinic Judaism and the early Jewish mysticism. (See Mooren, *The Mystery of Faith*, 210).

⁷⁰ “Nobody comes to me since I have taken a seat on a heavenly throne” (see *ibid.*, 211).

⁷¹ Here we find a figure called “Son of God” (bar de-’el) or “Son of the Most High” (bar ‘eljon), see *ibid.*, 211.

highest angel and clearly later on a second God—all this points to important moments in the salvation of Israel.⁷² Salvation and Son of God belong together! “From Enoch we are led to the ‘Son-of-Man-Messiah’ in pseudo epigraph 4 Ezra (circa 100AD). In this text the Messiah clearly receives the title ‘Son of God’.”⁷³

Thus, Schäfer concludes: “The Messiah in 4 Esdras is really a Son of God, a younger God besides his father, the elder God.”⁷⁴ And Schäfer confirms that it is no wonder that the Christians readers could see in this “Son of God, without difficulties, their own Messiah Jesus Christ.”⁷⁵

In other words, the difference between Jews and Christians lies in this: the Christians were so enthusiastic about their savior, that they put him quasi “outside” the womb of the ONE God, since this would better explain all the great deeds he had accomplished, including dying on the cross and then rising from death as a consequence of the mystery of incarnation. One is tempted to say, all this simply needed more *narrative* space!

⁷² See the highest angel’s work at the entry into Canaan: “I shall spread panic ahead of you... I shall make all your enemies turn and run from you” (Ex 23: 27).—It can, indeed, “be shown that for the great binitarian heroes like Daniel, Enoch and so forth their guiding force is liberation from misery and oppression.” (Mooren, *Monotheism revisited*, 214; See Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 43).— Regarding Metatron, angel of the divine Face or the identification Enoch-Metatron, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 85-88. See too *ibid.*, 85 (Mooren, *Monotheism Revisited...*, 214, note 567): “In earlier Jewish texts the angel Metatron was conceived as having redeeming function. Some of these views are related to the redemptive role of God’s leading angel, who possessed the divine name in Ex 23: 20-21... Gen 48:16 or Is 6: 9.”— For Metatron as a central cosmic force in Jewish theosophy see also Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 279.

⁷³ Mooren, *Monotheism revisited...*, 212, quoting Schäfer, *Zwei Götter...*, 65.

⁷⁴ Schäfer, *op.cit.*, 65.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

On the other side, Jewish theologians kept the *monos* tight, for example when it comes to decide between mercy and anger.⁷⁶ God's unity in this case is not broken apart, it always remains God against God himself, *within* himself. "Indeed, the whole dynamics of binitarian theology is nurtured by nothing less than the dispute between these two... divine attributes [justice and mercy]. And it is mercy, and with mercy *Israel* that wins... The Babylonian Talmud delivers a hint in this direction, hence therein we find the discussion of the question, whether God prays or not. The answer is, so the Talmudic tradition, yes, which begs the question: to whom is He praying? Answer: *to Himself!*"⁷⁷

We can easily see, how this dramatic situation would cause a final, definitive break away of the Son from the Father and of Christians from the Jews. And once this was done, binity could almost naturally become *trinity*. As soon as Father and Son, El and ben El, the old God and the young God, were conceived as "separate entities", face to face, it was "easy" to place a "third person" in between—as the energy that keeps them together, as manifestation of the essence of their relationship: *love!*

However, that any kind of "trinitarian" theology (One God in three persons, etc.) is still "monotheism", is one of the most complicated positions to defend. To keep the "monarchy" intact, historically was one of the most arduous tasks of the Church Fathers.⁷⁸ Baschet, for

⁷⁶ See Schäfer, *op.cit.*, 91/2.

⁷⁷ Mooren, *Monotheism Revisited...*, 214, see Schäfer, *op.cit.*..., 136/7. See too Mooren, *op.cit.*, 215, note 572.—In early Christian mysticism as in Manichaeism the question of the "himself" emerges as the theory on the "divine twin" in the process of revelation (see van Vliet, *Manichaeism...* 44-48) or, for example, the Gospel of Thomas, the spiritual process of "faire de deux un", to make one out of two, the God and the mystic. (Puech, *En quête de la Gnose II...*, 283, etc).

⁷⁸ See Brox, *Kirchengeschichte...*, 172: "The beginnings of Trinitarian theology of the Church were felt [by the people] to be

example, calls trinitarian theology an “untenable theology,”⁷⁹ since: what to do “with a relation [Father-Son as equal] that totally contradicts the normal experience of filiation”?⁸⁰

We will not analyze within the frame of the present text all the meanders, ways and side-walks of trinitarian theology.⁸¹ However, there is one side-effect, so to speak, of the trinitarian drama that, maybe, is even more important than the trinity itself. The following thoughts try to cover this aspect.

The Apotheosis of the Female

Looking back, we have seen that with *radical* monotheism the female was not part of the “divinity”, neither in Isarel, where Yahweh did not have a consort, contrary to neighboring Ugarit, nor in Islam. With prophetic theology things changed dramatically, with Israel as spiritual bride of the Creator and especially with incarnation and trinity on the Christian side. Yet, the Messiah of Nazareth is still the *Son* of God and God is his *Father*. The Virgin Mary, rightly introduced into the divine “family history”, nevertheless had to “operate” within these boundaries, son-ship and fatherhood. It is however her *motherhood*, that had the most explosive effect on Christian piety and theology in the wake of the council of Ephesus (431 CE). The detonator of the Ephesian theological “bomb” was one word, one attribute,

polytheism and were rejected in the name of the God of the Bible as heresies.” [all transl. by ThM]. See too Franzen, *Kleine Kirchengeschichte*..., 76-90; Baschet, *La civilisation*..., 664-672 [all transl. by ThM].

⁷⁹ Op.cit., 666.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 668.

⁸¹ However, it is notable, that Baschet concedes that “maybe the trinitarian doctrine has become one of the striking examples of the dynamics of Western thought.” (Ibid. 668).

namely declaring Mary as “theotókos”, as Mother of God!⁸²

Nestorius, since 428 Patriarch of Constantinople, had strongly criticized the title *theotókos* for the Virgin Mary, not because it was a theologically impossible title, but because it could open the door to misunderstandings—like that “God” qua “God” could be born! Nestorius therefore proposed the title *christotókos*, Mother of *Christ*! In fact, purely technically speaking, *christotókos* was possible, since the child to be born, i.e., Christ, *was* God *and* Man according to the dogma. That is with Christ the human being “automatically” the divine person was also born. However, the possible conclusion that with Christotókos *everything* was said, was not enough for the opponents of Nestorius—which leads us directly to Ephesus.

Among the ruthless and compromise-less anti-Nestorius voices we find the patriarch of Alexandria (since 412) Cyril⁸³ and finally the voice of the council of Ephesus itself. For the anti-Nestorians *christotókos* simply was not good enough. They saw the *one* nature of Christ in danger—a viewpoint that in the end became the teaching of the Miaphysits (Monophysits).

Finally, really important regarding this dogmatic infighting is the fact, that with “theotókos” the deep feeling of the *people* of the East won the day. In other words, it was the victory of the old *Isis* of the Orient, the powerful, deeply venerated Mother-goddess. With “theotókos” the female element was firmly introduced into the highest ranks of divinity—and thus the way

⁸² See for this Franzen, op.cit., 84/5; Brox, op.cit., 186/7; Baschet, op.cit., 673.

⁸³ In the anti-Nestorius camp we also find pope Coelestine I (422-432) supported by emperor Theodosius II (408-450) and Valentinian II (425-455), emperor of West-Rome.

towards a kind of “*female monotheism*” was free!⁸⁴ Mary was now seated “at the table of the Three”, as numerous *art works* testify! For the people Christianity became almost the same as “adoration” of the Virgin.⁸⁵ What began with Yahweh being ONE and ALONE ended with the coronation of the Mother of God by her Son and Father⁸⁶; with Mary protecting the Holy Trinity⁸⁷ or even being quasi part of it!⁸⁸

To conclude

Given the long and turbulent history of monotheism it seems that the most evident pastoral conclusion consists in the absolute necessity to read the Bible in the correct way, as an example of the never-ending dialogue between God and humankind, i.e., not as a roadbook for political extremism, racism, and exclusion theories. Claims like ‘chosen people’ etc. have to be seen in the light of Jer 31: 31/33:

... the days are coming—it is Yahweh who speaks—
when I will make a new covenant with the House of
Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a Covenant
like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I
took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of
Egypt—they broke the covenant of mine...
this is the covenant I shall make with the House of
Israel when those days have come, Yahweh declares.
Within them I shall plant my Law, writing it on their

⁸⁴ See for example the “Fatima-Veneration” by Pope John Paul II.

⁸⁵ See Baschet, *op.cit.*, 673-679 and in particular *ibid.*, fig. 47, p. 675, a crowned Virgin sitting together with Christ in position of power. See Dupront, *L'image de religion...*, 260-293.

⁸⁶ Dupront, *op.cit.*, fig. 19, p. 154; also fig. 17, p. 150.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, fig. 52, p. 273.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, fig. 18, p. 153.— See too Rombach, in; *Sein und Nichts*, 13-27, interpretation of the Virgin of the main altar of the cathedral in Freiburg (Breisgau).

hearts. Then I shall be their God and they will be my people. [italics supplied]

or otherwise it will lose its meaning in today's world.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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