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THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND FOR PAUL'S USE OF

"PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS"

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Bible Exposition

Dallas Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

_____

by

Ronn A. Johnson

May 2004

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ABSTRACT

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND FOR PAUL'S USE OF "PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS"

by

Ronn A. Johnson

Dallas Theological Seminary

Readers: Dr. James E. Allman, Dr. Elliot Johnson, Dr. Harold W. Hoehner

This study seeks to provide the Old Testament background for a proper understanding of Paul's reference to evil spirit ruling powers. Paul's unique use of the phrase ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐξουσία/ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10) has elicited considerable debate within modern scholarship, though most discussion has centered its attention on Greco-Roman parallels found in the New Testament era. This study will instead argue that Paul's celestial cosmology was identical to that of the Hebrew Bible, in the end identifying his powers as the created gods of the first commandment.

This project is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 reviews "principality and power" research over the past two centuries, noting that former studies have avoided a careful examination of evil spiritual beings in the Old Testament. Chapter 2 attempts to identify these spirits, finding that Yahweh is openly described in the Hebrew Bible as dwelling among a host of created divine beings or gods (אֱלֹהִים). Chapter 3 further explores the role that these אֱלֹהִים play in the Old Testament, noting that some of these divine beings are loyal to the cause of Yahweh, while others appear to be disloyal. At least some of these disloyal spirits are found to have been assigned rule over the created world, though they are also prophesied to be punished due to their wickedness.

Chapter 4 outlines the future of these gods as described in Dan 7. At the end of this climactic vision, these evil rulers are deposed and their authority is given to the Son of Man (7:27). Since the Old Testament would soon be translated into a different language, however, chapter 5 details how Hebrew אֱלֹהִים came to be known as Greek ἄγγελοι within

the writings of the intertestamental period. The gods will have been lost, but only in translation.

The final chapter of this dissertation attempts to view New Testament uses of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία through the lens of an Old Testament cosmology as developed previously in our study. In acknowledging that modern scholarship has ably defined the meanings of these two terms, four thematic lines of argumentation are used in equating Paul's powers to the created gods of the Old Testament. First, the powers of Paul and the powers of the Old Testament are similar in *character*; they are spirits which are antagonistic to the temporal causes of God and his people. Second, the two groups of powers are similar in *role*; both are given temporary rule over humans on earth according to the ultimate pleasure of Yahweh. Third, both groups of powers suffer the same *destiny*; in the end they will have their rule taken from them and they will be punished. Finally, the specific titles ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι are used in the LXX passage which functioned as the climax to the Son of Man vision.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.* Edited by J. B. Pritchard. 3d. ed. Princeton, 1969
Ant.	*Antiquites of the Jews,* by Josephus Flavius
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
Bib	*Biblica*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible.* Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden, 1995
DPL	*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters.* Edited by G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin. Downers Grove, IL, 1993
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. Grand Rapids, 1990–1993
ErJb	*Eranos Jahrbuch*
EstBib	*Estudios biblicos*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1976
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*

JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KTU	*Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTS	*Old Testament Studies*
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Following the trend of society as a whole, biblical scholars have increasingly spent time discussing the issue of angelology. On an academic level this trend has been encouraged by the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, which have revealed a rich interest in angels within early Judaism. For Paul, the subject of angelology appears to be particularly relevant in the development of his Christology, soteriology, and eschatology.[1]

Within Paul's angelology the specific concern of this dissertation is Paul's use of the shorthand "principalities and powers" (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10). The value of this study is evident when it is discovered that the precise meaning of these terms in their various contexts continues to be a matter of scholarly debate. After overviewing the various options, this dissertation will argue that Paul's specific use of the phrase ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐξουσία/ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι recalls the created gods of the first commandment and their role under Yahweh. In doing so it will further recommend that Paul interpreted the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ as fulfillment of the divine council scene of Dan 7, which in turn finds its climax in the New Testament message of redemption and subsequent victory over the principalities and powers (Eph 1:21). These creatures who were originally granted authority and rule through their creation in Christ (Col 1:16) now battle the Christian (Rom 8:38; Eph 6:12) and will someday be the principal objects of shame and defeat in the parousia of Christ (1 Cor 15:24; Eph 3:10).

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[1]G. H. C. MacGregor, "Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of Paul's Thought," *NTS* 1 (1954–55): 17.

1

The Need of the Study

Difference of opinion continues to exist among scholars on the identity of Paul's use of principalities and powers primarily because a consensus has not been reached for the means of determining such an answer. Most research has been content to conduct a search for Greco-Roman parallels found in the New Testament era.[2] While this method has afforded some helpful insights, it has not offered conclusive answers. In some ways, in fact, this approach has succeeded in moving the focus away from a careful understanding of Old Testament angelology. In describing the need for this study the following three points can be noted.

First, Paul's reliance on the entire Old Testament for the development of his angelology seems to be understated. When scholars have described Paul's view of the spiritual world, they have nearly unanimously concentrated on the textual linkage of the New Testament vocabulary for powers to that of the late Jewish apocalypticism of the Second Temple Period.[3] This may be true insofar as a book such as Daniel can be regarded as late and apocalyptic; but it will be argued here that Paul was equally dependent upon earlier Hebrew Scriptures for his development of New Testament terms and themes which described the spiritual realm. I believe Paul spoke with a Second Temple vocabulary that was conceptually consistent with a First Temple angelology.[4] Thus Paul's identification of

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[2]John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society*, Bible Speaks Today, ed. J. A. Motyer and John R. W. Stott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 267–74; Jung Young Lee, "Interpreting the Demonic Powers in Pauline Thought," *NovT* 12 (1970): 56; Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (New York: Herder, 1961), 13.

[3]Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 34 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974),170–76. Clinton Arnold, representing an evangelical viewpoint, described Paul's cosmology as Jewish, but largely "indistinguishable from the Hellenistic world" of his day (*Ephesians, Power, and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting*, SNTSMS, ed. G. N. Stanton, vol. 63 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 52). See also MacGregor, "Principalities," 19.

[4]Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 56.

principalities and powers will be identifiable to the Greco-Roman world but will not be borrowed from its (largely pagan) belief structures.[5]

Second, as a foundational issue related to this specific study, there is a need to further develop the Old Testament presentation of a plurality of אֱלֹהִים ("gods") which hold positions of power and authority surpassed only by Yahweh. While research in this area has steadily increased after the discovery of the Ras Shamra (Ugaritic) texts in 1929, there has been virtually no attempt to apply these findings to Pauline studies. The case is more ominous than I expected when this study began. I have searched in vain for one article, book, or monograph which carefully ties together on the one hand a study of Old Testament gods and on the other hand a description of the evil spiritual powers in the New Testament. One would think that these two lines of research would happily make contact with each other and blend their efforts into one discussion; instead it appears these studies have been content to run side-by-side for half a century without considering each other, even in the footnotes.[6] A goal of this dissertation will be to describe these two themes (the Old Testament gods and Paul's powers) in such a way as to make the connection between the two seem natural and seamless. It will be argued that Paul's view of principalities and powers are developed squarely on the shoulders of an Old Testament world view which underscored the existence and importance of these divine ruling beings who bore a unique relationship to their creator.

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[5]Ibid., 53. See also Clinton Morrison, *The Powers That Be: Earthly Rulers and Demonic Powers in Romans 13:1-7*, Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. C. F. D. Moule et al., vol. 29 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960), 17-24.

[6]The examples are too numerous to mention here, though many examples will be evident throughout this study. It is hard to blame Old Testament or Israelite religion scholarship for this problem, as their efforts are often purposely limited to texts that predate the New Testament. Yet one has to wish that such a provocative work as Mark S. Smith's *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) would include more than the two NT references that occur within his 243 pages. The same could be said for Lowell K. Handy's insightful book *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994) who again has two NT references in 215 pages. These scholars have articulated ideas that yearn for New Testament application. As I will later show it appears that their ideas have been ignored (or repudiated without explanation) in the search for identifying the powers in Pauline literature.

Third, in combining the ideas above, there is a need to demonstrate that Paul's specific use of ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐξουσία/ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι is best identified both lexically and thematically with the ruling spiritual beings depicted in the magnificent divine council scene of Dan 7. No research detailing Paul's mention of principalities and powers develops any significant tie to this chapter, though it will be shown that the material evidence exists for such a development.[7]

The Method of the Study

My method of study in this dissertation will reflect what I consider to be a logical response to the three needs outlined above. In reviewing principalities and powers research of the past two centuries, I will maintain that all former study in this area has been guilty of ignoring or disregarding the gods of the Old Testament. I also believe that modern studies argue from a traditional (and mistaken) theology of angels rather than working from the Hebrew Bible's development of a celestial cosmology. I maintain that these studies, while evidencing great care, have produced improper results because they have operated within a construct which has been developmentally—as opposed to textually—oriented.[8]

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[7]"It is possible that *archai* and *exousiai* were commonly understood terms from Jewish apocalyptic writings or from pagan magical incantations. More likely, however, Paul derives the language and the idea behind it from Daniel 7" (Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan, and Principalities* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998], 137). See also Peter T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," In *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context,* ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 110–28; idem, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 143; Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 52; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 277; Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 114-42; Morrison, *Powers*, 94; Richard J. Mouw, *Politics and the Biblical Drama* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 87.

[8]I thus reflect the urgency and phraseology of Peggy Day as she began her 1988 Harvard monograph *An Adversary in Heaven: 'Satan' in the Hebrew Bible.* Consider her frustration with historic studies on the being of *satan* in the Old Testament: "The study of satan has for too long been developmentally oriented. By this I mean that the end product—Satan—is always in sight as if latent in the noun itself was some kind of knowledge of where it was headed. The 'character' or 'personality' of *satan* (or rather, the Satan) is typically discussed, and questions posed as to the order in which he acquired his various nefarious qualities, and the process by which he became estranged from God." (Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: 'Satan' in the Hebrew Bible*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 43 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988], 5). I share her concern in finding that we have moved too fast in thinking about Old Testament terms (such as מַלְאָךְ) through the lens of a developed New Testament theology. In the end, Day's recommendation is as brilliant as it is startling: "If anything, we must divest ourselves of the notion of Satan if we are to accurately perceive how the noun *satan* functions in [the Old

Chapter 2 will begin our study in earnest by attempting to confirm the real (as opposed to fictional or mythological) existence of plural אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament. It will take note of every major passage in the Hebrew Bible where plural אֱלֹהִים could be in view and, in the end, argue that the writers and speakers of the Old Testament accepted the face-value meaning of the first commandment. Chapter 3 will evaluate the role of these gods, noting that a full description of their responsibilities in the plan of Yahweh aptly mirrors New Testament descriptions of spiritual conflict. The gods will be found to look suspiciously like the spiritual powers yet to be described by Paul.

Chapter 4 will prepare for our departure from studying the gods of the Old Testament by examining the famous divine council scene of Dan 7. This vision is notable in that it presents a plurality of divine beings (i.e., the "thrones" of Dan 7:9) very late in the Hebrew canon, thus denying the common accusation that textual evidence of divine plurality was suppressed by the rabbis of later Judaism.[9] Contrariwise, it will be argued that a sound view of monotheism could flourish in Judaism even with Dan 7 in view. This is further evidence that the gods of the Old Testament can exist as we turn into the pages of the New Testament.

Chapter 5 will show, however, that a vocabulary shift took place in the Jewish writings (including the LXX) of the Second Temple Period. As the Greek language took root among Hebrew-speaking Jews, ἄγγελος became the term of choice for describing divine beings in general, and was not used exclusively as the lexical equivalent of the Hebrew מַלְאָךְ when speaking of the celestial realm. Quite regularly, in fact, ἄγγελος will be used as a replacement for אֱלֹהִים where it occurs in the Hebrew Bible. With the help of the

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Testament]" (15). Likewise, I believe that we would do well to divest ourselves of the modern notion of *angel* if we are to ever understand the Old Testament teaching on evil spiritual powers.

[9]Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 148-49.

Greek language, then, the gods of the Old Testament will disappear from view for the time being.

Chapter 6 will consider the New Testament uses of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία and other words for "power" or "authority." It will lay out the lexical and thematic evidence which forms a connection between Paul's use of the phrase "principalities and powers" and the narrative and theology of Dan 7. I will argue that Paul generally avoided identifying Old Testament evil spiritual powers by the expected title θεοί ("gods") and instead chose to expose them in more theologically meaningful ways ("world rulers," "evil spiritual beings in high places," Eph 6:12), much like Daniel and other writers of the Old Testament did. By warning his readers of the principalities and powers, then, Paul will be noting that the gods of the Old Testament never disappeared from their world though they had somewhat been lost in translation. Though they have been ultimately defeated at the cross (Col 2:15), their influence was still felt in Christian experience (Eph 6:12).

The History of the Discussion

The following overview of principalities and powers research will reveal that basic disagreement still exists regarding who these beings are and what role they play in created history. Some writers believe that these powers are not independent, personal beings at all; others will differ on whether these beings are primarily physical or spiritual. This lack of agreement, as one could suppose, will extend into almost every area of Paul's larger angelology. In conclusion this writer will note that principality and power research has largely failed because it has not developed the link between Paul and an Old Testament depiction of the gods of the first commandment.[10]

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[10]An early impetus for this dissertation was Reid's overview of the subject, followed by his suggestion linking Paul's use of principalities and powers to Old Testament warfare (Daniel G. Reid, "Principalities and Powers," in *DPL*, 747). Within his own article, however, Reid did not reference a single major work which attempts this direction of study.

Little was said about Paul's identification of powers in the nineteenth century.[11] Discussion was largely confined to a traditional orthodoxy of doctrine about angels and devils, or else these powers were "seen as vestiges of antiquated mythology in Paul's thought."[12] Thus the nineteenth century dealt with Paul's powers only incidentally and without noticeable effect. This paucity of serious work in the powers basically continued into the twentieth century as well, at least in the opinion of those who toiled in the subject. Wink began his programmatic treatment of the powers in 1984 with the sad note that "Despite several excellent studies of the 'principalities and powers' over the last fifty years, there has been no comprehensive treatment of the theme."[13]

The twentieth century did find renewed interest in the discussion of spiritual powers, however, through the efforts of German theologians. Berkhof believed that the German people had been specially prepared by their recent history for a new understanding of the powers as described in the Bible. "After World War I and especially after the rise of Nazism some theologians began reading these texts with new eyes."[14] Before this time power had meant something invisible and metaphysical; now it began to take on concrete meaning as the word was applied to nations and their striking forces.[15] "It is understand- able but regrettable," mused Berkhof, "that the problem of the Powers was thus one- sidedly bound up within the political issue."[16] This view was soon to become that of the confessing church, bringing with it the views of K. L. Schmid[17] and other leading German

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[11]Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John Howard Yoder (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1977), 15; O'Brien, "Opponents of the Church," 111.

[12]Berkhof, *Powers*, 15.

[13]Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, vol. 1, The Powers (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 6.

[14]Berkhof, *Powers*, 15.

[15]Albert H. van den Heuvel, *These Rebellious Powers* (New York: Friendship, 1965), 40.

[16]Berkhof, *Powers*, 73.

[17]K. L. Schmid, "Die Natur- und Geisteskräfte bei Paulus," *ErJa* 21 (1947).

scholars. Berkhof well-summarized the handling of the powers in postwar Germany by admitting, "What has come to my attention has been too much under the impress of postwar attitudes and too little disciplined by exegesis to be of lasting importance."[18]

Modern discussion of the powers may be traceable back to Otto Everling's *Die paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie* in 1888. Working within the backdrop of Second Temple Jewish literature, he held that Paul saw the powers as demonic beings working under the authority of Satan.[19] The same could not be said, however, for what Everling himself believed. He found that no serious attention needed to be given to the topic of Pauline powers since it represented an outdated world view soon to be forgotten as society moved into the technological world.

In 1909 Martin Dibelius built upon the work of Everling with his *Die Geister-welt im Glauben des Paulus*. His conclusions were close to those of Everling, as he too was a proponent of the history of religions school. He differed only when it came to the importance of the powers to Pauline thought, finding that belief in the spirit realm bore special significance to Paul in the areas of eschatology and Christology.[20] With Everling, Dibelius traced Paul's handling of the powers back to Jewish apocalyptic.[21] And, along with other liberal theologians of his time, Dibelius believed these powers were nothing more than mythological elements which would be eliminated as time went along and culture grew in understanding. In the same way that the earth was discovered to be round so Dibelius believed that the modern theologian could dispense with the notion of personal spirits that inhabited the metaphysical realm.

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[18]Berkhof, *Powers*, 73.

[19]Otto Everling, *Die paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888), 109.

[20]Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), 5.

[21]Ibid., 182.

Heinrich Schlier produced two books in the 1960's (*Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* [1961]; *The Relevance of the New Testament* [1968]) which equated Paul's powers to the now-common phrase "fallen angelic beings."[22] These spirits were hostile cosmic powers identical in origin with the good angels[23] and were, in his opinion, specifically encountering the modern Christian as "power and might."[24] Schlier followed another modern trend by believing or assuming that the titles of the powers of evil were basically interchangeable in the New Testament (e.g., Satan, devil, demon, spirit, principalities, powers). While he can be credited for his trepidation in trying to interpret the beings of the celestial world (e.g., "It is difficult to understand what they are supposed to be"[25]), he improperly concluded that the whole attitude of the New Testament towards spiritual powers differed from that of Judaism in that it had no theoretical or speculative interest in them.[26] He believed the powers were quite real and even ubiquitous in their effect upon the Christian and his natural world:

> Thus, according to the New Testament teaching, Satan and his hordes, those manifold developments and effusions of the spirit of wickedness with their combination of intelligence and lust for power, exist by influencing the world and mankind in every sector and at all levels, and by making them instruments and bearers of their power. There is nothing on earth which is absolutely immune from their power. They can occupy the human body, the human spirit, what we call 'nature,' and even the forms, bearers and situations of history. Even religions, including the Christian teaching, can become tools of their activity. Their spirit penetrates and overwhelms everything. . . . When the principalities penetrate the world and the circumstances of human life in order to exercise their power through them, they thereby conceal themselves in the world and in the everyday life of mankind. They withdraw from sight into the men, elements, and institutions through which they make their power felt. To seem not to appear is part of their essence.[27]

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[22]Heinrich Schlier, *The Relevance of the New Testament*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder, 1968), 172.

[23]Ibid., 174-75.

[24]Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (New York: Herder, 1961), 19.

[25]Ibid., 15.

[26]Ibid., 13.

[27]Ibid., 28-29.

Schlier suggested that, though the powers could now be considered evil in their designs upon mankind, it is quite probable that the original state of the powers was actually on the side of good. "It follows [from Col 1:16] that in origin, and in the source of their being, the principalities are good. But this is where the nature of these principalities is revealed: that they no longer exist as that which they are. They present themselves now having discarded their divine origin, and become autonomous."[28] In noting Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4, Schlier concluded that God "ordained and assigned a position of power for these angels—the principalities—which they no longer exercise, nor do they occupy the locality where God had placed them."[29] In sum, Schlier made a positive move beyond his predecessors in emphasizing the strong *personal* reality of the concept of heavenly powers of the New Testament, having been himself convinced that giving the powers their proper place was essential to understanding early Christian belief.

Wesley Carr wrote *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase Hai Archai kai hai Exousiai* in 1981 as a monograph condensed from his original doctoral dissertation at the University of Sheffield. Hailed as "the most thorough and detailed background and exegetical work on the 'powers' since Dibelius,"[30] Carr surprised the scholarly world with a unique position on the powers:

> There was at the time of Paul . . . no demand from the world for release from powers or for a doctrine of a cosmic battle in which Christ rescues men from the domination of such forces . . . . We must conclude that far from being a fundamental part of the background and proclamation of the Christian message, the notion of the mighty forces of evil raging against man was not part of the earliest Christian understanding of the world and the gospel. There is nothing in the Pauline writings that refers to a battle between Christ and hostile forces. Indeed, it is also noticeable that there is not conflict directly between Christ and Satan.[31]

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[28]Ibid., 37.

[29]Ibid., 38.

[30]Clinton E. Arnold, "The 'Exorcism' of Ephesians 6:12 in Recent Research," *JSNT* 30 (1987): 183.

[31]Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase Hai Archai kai hai Exousiai*, SNTSMS, ed. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 175-77.

In short, Carr believed that Paul's principalities and powers were good angels. To do this, he had to work with numerous texts in what still appears to be creative ways. He interpreted the ἀρχόντων in 1 Cor 2:8 and the ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν in 1 Cor 15:24 as solely human rulers and authorities,[32] which allowed him to avoid describing the harmful intent of these powers in relation to Christ and his victory at the cross. In Col 2:15, where the powers are clearly celestial, Carr believed that they were no longer Christ's vanquished enemies, but they were the heavenly host, or the good angels, who accompany Christ in his procession.[33] His new translation read, "He laid aside his battle-dress (his flesh); He publicly paraded his army of the heavenly host; he there on the cross led them in his triumphal procession."[34] Thus Carr proposed that the powers were not enemies of the cross but were instead victorious angels of heaven moving in triumphal procession in concert with Jesus Christ.[35]

This left Carr open to criticism with regard to Eph 6:12, where the heavenly powers are clearly described as thwarting the Christian lifestyle. Carr had a ready answer—though few to this day find that his idea has much merit: Eph 6:12 was, in Carr's opinion, "incorporated into Ephesians in the first half of the second century so that it was fully accepted by the end [of the second century]."[36] There remained no need to explain a passage that was not original to Ephesians, nor to its original theology.

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[32]Wesley Carr, "The Rulers of This Age—1 Corinthians 2:6–8," *NTS* 23 (1976): 21; Carr, *Angels*, 91, 115-20. Here he also understands the ἐξουσίαις in Rom 13:1 to be human rulers, siding with the majority of commentators on this point.

[33]Carr, *Angels*, 65.

[34]Note Arnold's careful dispute of this translation (Arnold, *Ephesians, Power, and Magic*, 79).

[35]A somewhat similar interpretation is found in Roy Yates, "Colossians 2:15: Christ Triumphant," *NTS* 37 (1991): 257.

[36]Carr, *Angels*, 110.

Many commentators have since criticized Carr's basic thesis of good spiritual powers as textually and theologically untenable.[37] Arnold admits this view goes against "virtually every book and article treating the powers."[38] For purposes of this study, it should also be noted that Carr felt that any discussion of plural אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament was "insignificant to Jewish cosmology,"[39] a position which I will judge to be unfounded.

Hendrikus Berkhof's original Dutch monograph *Christus en de Machten* was published in 1953, followed by John Yoder's English translation (*Christ and the Powers*) in 1962.[40] Berkhof's main proposal was to look to the latter parts of the Old Testament for background sources to the powers.[41] He believed that early Hebrew writers were not as nearly interested in angels and their influences in terrestrial events as the later, apocalyptic period. Paul's terminology of the powers thus pointed most clearly to Jewish apocalyptic writings, and were not the result of Paul's own invention.

Berkhof demythologized the powers he found in these apocalyptic writings, however. On the one hand he could admit that two things were "always true of the powers in apocalyptic and rabbinic writings: they are personal, spiritual beings, and they influence events on earth, especially events within nature."[42] On the other hand, Berkhof concluded that "for Paul the Powers are something quite different from what Jewish apocalyptic circles had in mind."[43] Using Rom 8:38 as his example, he noted that Paul paired the

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[37]Arnold, *Ephesians, Power, and Magic*, 71; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall, W. Ward Gasque, and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 169; O'Brien, "Opponents of the Church," 125-28; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin, vol. 42 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 64; Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 6.

[38]Arnold, *Ephesians, Power, and Magic*, 72.

[39]Carr, "Rulers," 23.

[40]The short work by van den Heuvel (*Rebellious Powers*) is a distillation of Berkhof.

[41]Berkhof, *Powers*, 16.

[42]Ibid., 17.

[43]Ibid., 23.

mention of power with impersonal forces (such as death and life), thus likely signifying that the powers themselves were impersonal forces of nature.[44] With Paul again pairing the powers with the στοιχεῖα of Col 2:8 (which refer closely to the structural, human traditions of the Colossian church), Berkhof felt he could boldly assert that the "powers *are* the structures."[45] In the end, for Berkhof, the powers in Paul's vocabulary are "structures of earthly existence."[46] They were created by God (in the forms of tradition, morality, justice, and order) but have become tyrannical and objects of worship that both preserve and corrupt society.[47] Christ conquered the powers in the sense that his cross and resurrection "unmasked" these powers as false gods so that now Christians see through the deception of the powers and question their legitimacy.[48] Their proper proportions are laid bare, thus neutralized and even "christianized."[49]

Another presentation of the powers was given by George Caird in a series of lectures at Queen's College in 1954 which was published in 1956 as *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology*. He punctuated this work with a strong and accurate opening statement: "The idea of sinister world powers and their subjugation by Christ is built into the very fabric of Paul's thought, and some mention of them is found in every epistle except Philemon."[50] He rightly felt that the importance of identifying the powers of Paul could not be underestimated. "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that any interpretation of Ephesians stands or falls by [Eph 6:12]."[51]

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[44]Ibid., 18-19.

[45]Ibid., 21.

[46]Ibid., 23.

[47]Ibid., 32.

[48]Ibid., 38.

[49]Ibid., 58.

[50]George B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), viii; so also Morrison, *Powers*, 21.

Caird believed, with Berkhof, that Paul's use of powers was to be limited to impersonal forces. This much is made clear in his concluding paragraph:

> I have tried in these pages to expound Paul's view of man's dilemma, that he lives under divinely appointed authorities—the power of the state, the powers of legal religion, the powers of nature—which through sin have become demonic agencies. To expect that evil will be defeated by any of these powers, by the action of state, by the self-discipline of the conscience, or by the processes of nature, is to ask that Satan cast out Satan. The powers can by robbed of their tyrannical influence and brought into their proper subjection to God only in the Cross. The final victory, then, is the Parousia of him who once was crucified; and that means that when God pronounces his last word in the drama of this world's redemption, he will vindicate the way of the Cross, and he will vindicate nothing else.[52]

By his own admission Walter Wink has given three decades of his life to "experience, explore, and write about the powers."[53] This is because, with Caird, he emphatically claims that the language of power pervades the whole New Testament, so much so that no New Testament book is without such language.[54] Wink's study of the terms and phrases pertaining to powers as used in the New Testament is nothing less than impressive, spanning three books (*Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* [1984]; *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* [1986]; *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* [1992]).

The abiding theme of Wink's position on the powers is that they should be taken as comprehensively as possible unless the context specifies otherwise. This is due to the fact that, as Wink argues, "for the ancients, heaven and earth were a seamless robe, a single interacting and continuous reality."[55] Thus the New Testament powers should be thought of as both "heavenly and earthly, divine and human, spiritual and political, visible

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[51]Caird, *Principalities*, 66.

[52]Ibid., 101.

[53]Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, vol. 3, The Powers (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), xiii.

[54]Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 7, 99.

[55]Ibid., 16.

and structural."[56] Put another way, "The Powers could be understood as institutions, social systems, and political structures . . . . But always there was this reminder, something that would not reduce to physical structures—something invisible, immaterial, spiritual, and very, very real."[57]

But Wink will be, in the end, uncomfortable with the idea that principalities and powers should be thought of as personal beings. He thinks of the powers as he would of computer viruses that "behave almost willfully even though they are quite impersonal."[58] Or, in another attempt to describe how powers can be real, but "not independent operatives from on high," he recalls the feeling of darkness over the face of America in the days following the assassination of John F. Kennedy.[59] He believed that the writer of Ephesians (not Paul) "moved a considerable distance toward demythologizing the language of power in the book," concluding that the powers in this letter were "the withdrawal of the mythic projection of the real determinants of human existence out onto the cosmos and their identification as actual physical, psychic, and social forces at work in us, in society, and in the universe."[60]

Wink concludes that the broader and more significant question in dealing with the principalities and powers is to ask how power was conceived by people in the first century and by the New Testament authors in particular. He properly noticed that power language did not exist in a vacuum in the New Testament era, and that the normal use of the terms described the political, religious, and economic structures and functionaries with which people had to deal.[61] It will be by this evidence, moreover, that Wink cautioned away

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[56]Ibid., 100.

[57]Ibid., 5.

[58]Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 8.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 62.

[61]Ibid., 14.

from finding "too quickly that their use in the New Testament implies exclusively angelic or demonic powers."[62] When it comes to the significant term ἐξουσία, for instance, Wink noticed that a full eighty-five percent of its uses refer, not to spiritual beings, but to ideological justifications, political or religious legitimations, and delegated permissions.[63] He boldly asserts that "there is not a single instance of the use of ἐξουσία for angels, demons, or spirits prior to the New Testament."[64]

Unlike many writers before him, Wink is not averse to bringing the gods of the Old Testament into the conversation of New Testament powers. As can almost be predicted, however, he did not take their personal reality too seriously. "Contrary to widespread misunderstanding, the ancient believers in Yahweh did not deny the existence of the gods. They merely denied their ultimacy. . . . I will argue that the gods or angels of the nations have a discernible personality and vocation; that they too, though fallen, pernicious, and insatiable, are a part of the redemptive plan of God; and that our role in this redemptive activity is to acknowledge their existence, love them as creatures of God, unmask their idolatries, and stir up in them their heavenly vocation."[65] Later Wink continues, "If we conceive of heaven not as a super-terrestrial realm in the sky, but think of it instead as the interiority of earthly existence in all its potentialities, the image of war in heaven can be understood as the struggle between two contending spiritualities or national spirits for supremacy. Everyone knows it is the spirit of a nation that determines its capacity to fight."[66]

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[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid., 16.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence,* vol 2, The Powers (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 88.

[66]Ibid., 91.

Wink believes that this national spirit is not a personal being, but "the felt sense of its cohesiveness, stability and power,"[67] thus clarifying that, in his opinion, the gods are no more real than imagination. They sound very similar (even in terminology) to the gods of Berkhof.

> I am suggesting that the gods are the "mentality" and "communicability" of the instincts or institutions, their capacity to 'speak' and thus provide information to an organism or a society. They are not rendered less real by being located, whether at Olympus or in the psyche. They are not a postulate or a hypothesis, but an experience. They are known through revelation, today just as in all times, in the dreams and visions of everyday people. They are not mere projections of subjective states. They are the very structures by which personality and society are formed. They are as real as anything in the world. Without them we would not exist.[68]

In listening to Wink long enough, we might begin to wonder what prevents him from wandering into the dangerous and dark waters of animism: "'Principalities and powers' are the inner and outer aspects of any given manifestation of power. As the inner aspect they are the spirituality of institutions, the 'within' of corporate structures and systems, the inner essence of outer organizations of power. As the outer aspect they are political systems, appointed officials, the 'chair' of an organization, laws—in short, all the tangible manifestations which power takes."[69]

Among current evangelicals there is no more active author dealing with the concept of power in Paul than Clinton Arnold of Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. He concurs with most interpreters in believing that Paul's use of the phrase "principalities and powers" is best understood in light of the broader scope of spiritual powers in the New Testament. Arnold is content to think of the four terms for power in Eph 6:12, for instance, as collectively speaking of "demonic spirits."[70] These terms are

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[67]Ibid., 92. This also reflects Wink's view of the στοιχεῖα ("elements") of Col 2:8: "They are not beings as such, though they certainly are 'real' insofar as they are fundamental principles or cultural symbols or derived axioms or psychological archetypes" Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 132). Note Boyd's disagreement with Wink here (Boyd, *God at War*, 60).

[68]Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 110.

[69]Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5.

"normally found together in Paul's writings and appear to be a summary way of referring to all sorts of evil powers. They were a part of the first-century parlance in Judaism for speaking of angelic beings."[71] This will be a recurring theme in Arnold's writings; the powers are demons or spirits or angelic beings—each term is basically interchangeable with the other.

> While the terms may imply a hierarchy within the demonic realm, we have no means of discerning the various ranks by the use of these terms. We cannot establish, for instance, that the ἀρχάς have higher authority than the ἐξουσίας, and so on. These terms probably do not represent the so-called territorial spirits that we find in Daniel—that is, a demonic prince with responsibility over a country or region. The emphasis in the Ephesian passage is on the day-to-day struggle of every believer, a struggle that involves us as individuals and requires us to be individually prepared. There is no special meaning to each of the terms that would give us further insight into the demonic realm.[72]

Arnold colors all of his writings with the theme that there were several major contact points between the language of power for Paul and the Gnostic astrological religious beliefs of the day, as well as the Hellenistic magical practices in Asia Minor.[73] He consistently and carefully proposes that a knowledge of Hellenistic magic and the cult of the Ephesian Artemis may very well be the most important background for understanding why the author highlights the power of God and corresponding powers of evil in such a book as Ephesians.[74] Because "the overriding characteristic of the practice of magic throughout the Hellenistic world was the cognizance of a spirit world exercising influence over virtually every aspect of life,"[75] Arnold contends that we have here found why Paul would be so quick to utilize power language.

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[70]Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, Three Crucial Questions, ed. Grant Osborne and Richard J. Jones (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 38.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., 39.

[73]Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 5-40.

[74]Ibid., 20-40.

[75]Arnold, *Ephesians, Power, and Magic*, 18.

Of specific interest to our purposes is Arnold's use of the Old Testament. He opens *Powers of Darkness* with a chapter entitled "First Century Beliefs in the Powers." He begins, "The belief in spirits crossed all religious, ethnic, and geographical boundaries. The Jews, Greeks, Romans, Asians, and Egyptians all believed in spirits who populated the heavens, the underworld, and the earth."[76] While this may be true, one has to wonder if Arnold's goal to "uncover the world view of the populace"[77] is the best place to begin when deciphering what Paul meant by his use of powers language. Is a preacher, for instance, best understood by asking what the audience knew—or what the preacher knew?

Thus the opening question for Arnold should be *Did Paul agree with his pagan contemporaries in their current conception of the spirit world?* Arnold presumes that Paul did. This may appear to be a workable theory, we could assume, but Arnold never demonstrates it to be true. It is just as possible that Paul disagreed with the current "world view of the populace." We have good evidence, in fact, that this is the case on at least a few occasions (e.g., Acts 17:22-33; 19:26). In my opinion Arnold should admit to terminological similarities between a Hellenistic cosmology and that of the Hebrew Bible, while yet maintaining that stark differences exist in their view of the spirit world.

Secondly, Arnold appears to overlook the possibility that Paul could have been using terms familiar with the Hellenized populace but with a meaning attached to his regular source for spiritual information, the Hebrew Bible itself. It must at least be admitted as a point of departure that Paul spoke of ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐξουσία to a Christian audience that had been seasoned in the apostolic faith to some degree.

Arnold yet admits that the starting point for finding Paul's belief about the powers should be the Old Testament.[78] He does not take the time, however, to construct an

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[76]Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 19.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid., 55.

Old Testament cosmology using Old Testament terminology. He claims that he does so

while generally undermining what the Hebrew Bible actually says.

> It is often thought there is virtually no demonology in the Old Testament, and it is only when we turn to the New Testament that we find any substantial teaching on this theme. While the issue of the demonic is more to the forefront in the New Testament, demonology is not absent from the Old Testament. The Old Testament writers assume the existence of a major figurehead of evil and a plethora of evil spirits. The authors spend no time reflecting on the nature of this realm. Satan, demons, or evil spirits suddenly make an appearance from time to time in the text as hostile opponents to the people of God, with the writers giving very little description of their identity or how they operate. The Old Testament authors apparently felt little need to explain what these beings were; rather, writers and readers apparently shared a common awareness of the distinctive traits of this realm.[79]

Thus Arnold admits that the Old Testament writers assume the existence of "a

plethora of evil spirits." Later, within the same page, he denies that the Old Testament

writers attributed any "real, independent existence" to the gods commonly associated with

ancient cultures (El, Dagon, Baal, etc.).[80] Arnold's dismissive attitude toward the literal

existence of plural אֱלֹהִים—coupled with his firm belief in evil spirits—sets up the entire

framework from which he draws his thinking regarding the spirit world.

Is it possible for Arnold to believe that the Old Testament writer believed in the

world of spirits but not in the world of gods? If this is a working hypothesis, we need to

hear how this sort of logic works out, especially within the Old Testament itself. I have

searched in vain through Arnold's writings to find why he believes in spirits but not gods.

What emerges, as I read him, is not so much an argument as a set of assertions which run in

a tight circle, summarized here in four points:

First, Arnold believes that the Old Testament speaks of gods as "idols," a way

of referring to the images of these gods and goddesses as the focus of worship.[81] In

Arnold's opinion this reveals that the gods did not exist in the minds of the Old Testament

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[79]Ibid., 55-56.

[80]Ibid., 56.

[81]Ibid., 56-57. He does, of course, have a case here (e.g., Gen 31:30, 32; 35:2, 4; Exod 20:23; 32:31; 34:17; Lev 19:4; Deut 4:28; 28:36, 64; Josh 24:14).

writers.[82] Idols instead "emphasized the unreality of all the pagan gods" in Arnold's opinion.[83]

But secondly, Arnold admits that some kind of spiritual dimension existed in idol worship—else Yahweh would not have been as furious and jealous as the text made him out to be. Arnold argues that this is because the real problem behind idol worship was not worship of other actual gods, but of demons.[84] He appeals to the only two Old Testament texts that mention שֵׁדִים (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37) but regrettably does not define what שֵׁדִים means as first used.

Thirdly, when Arnold considers the meaning of the term *demon* he is forced to admit that originally "the word [had] no moral connotations."[85] The word was used, he admits, to speak of the gods Apollo, Dionysus, and Hermes in the classical period prior to the New Testament. At times it was used of the supernatural beings regarded as somewhat lower than the gods. He then says that the term "increasingly" was used of supernatural intermediaries and the spirits of nature.[86] With this definitional shift in hand Arnold makes the point that the term "demon" will "be used in reference to evil spirits"[87] in his book.

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[82]See the excursus at the end of chapter two which handles this seeming problem in the Old Testament. In short, while it can be admitted that some texts equate the gods to idols (Isa 44:10, "Who has fashioned a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing?"), other texts demand a spiritual power behind the idol (Exod 22:20, "He that sacrifices unto any god, save unto Yahweh only, shall be utterly destroyed") or demand that אֱלֹהִים be thought of as spiritual beings and thus separate from an idol (Deut 7:25, "The graven images of their gods shall you burn with fire: you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto you, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to Yahweh your God").

[83]Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 56. The ancient Jew would have a hard time accepting Arnold's view. The making of an idol did not emphasize the god's non-reality as much as it brought that god to the forefront of physical worship (Ex 32:4, "These are your gods, O Israel" ASV). See Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 159-72.

[84]Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 23.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid., 24.

In the end we are left to wonder what a "spirit" is in the mind of Arnold. After briefly noting their presence in such Old Testament narratives as Judg 9:23, 1 Sam 16:14-23, and 1 Kgs 22:21-22, he ends, without argument, by equating these spirits to angels.[88] And angels are not gods, however, since gods do not exist.[89]

For Arnold, then, the Old Testament gods are dismissed through a series of statements which circles back upon itself: gods do not exist because false idol worship was actually serving a demon which was an evil spirit which was an angel which cannot be a god since angels are not gods.[90] It is ultimately hard to pin blame on Arnold, however, when one realizes that his reasoning is so popular as to be considered almost orthodox.[91]

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[88]Ibid., 62. It will be noted later that the term מַלְאָךְ never occurs in any of these texts. To equate a "spirit" to an "angel" needs at least a few lines of careful defense.

[89]"Biblical writers attributed no real, independent existence to these deities. Instead they called them idols, a way of referring to the images of these gods and goddesses as the focus of worship. . . . The Jews claimed to worship the one true, real God. All the rest were phonies" (ibid., 58).

[90]Because this sort of admission is usually not made by any author, including Arnold, one has to watch how the writer exchanges terms from one sentence to the next. In relation to the meaning of στοιχεῖα (Col 2:8), Arnold finds that scholars "have been divided in trying to determine whether Paul was using this term with reference to spirit beings [as opposed to nonpersonal entities]." Three sentences later he notes that "Those who take a nonangelic interpretation of *stoicheia* point to its basic meaning as 'elements'" (ibid., 53). In comparing these sentences, then, we can see that Arnold equates spirit beings to angels.

[91]It is hard to know, in fact, who is first guilty of making this angels-are-spirits-which-are-not-gods identification. Neither of Merrill Unger's two books on demonology (Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* [Wheaton, IL: Scripture, 1952]; idem, *Demons in the World Today: A Study of Occultism in the Light of God's Word* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1971]) dealt with the phrase "principalities and powers," for in Unger's opinion the powers were to be thought of in the most general of terms. With such an opening statement as "The only created beings revealed to have existed before the creation of man are angels" (Unger, *Demons in the World*, 14), it becomes clear that more specifics are not to follow. At every turn, in fact, Unger classifies all evil spiritual beings as unconfined fallen angels (ibid., 15). Yet he never argues where this idea comes from nor how it can be defended.

As it was for this writer some twenty years ago, many evangelical students went off to Bible college and were assigned C. Fred Dickason's *Angels Elect and Evil* as part of their academic introduction to angelology. Dickason's approach mirrored that of Unger, as his footnotes aptly show (C. Fred Dickason, *Angels, Elect and Evil* [Chicago: Moody, 1975], 228-31). His conclusions, as Unger's, were based on reading a New Testament vocabulary of angels back into the Old Testament. With this hermeneutic it would follow that, to Dickason, all Old Testament references to spirit beings are speaking of the simple and single status of "angel." Dickason never refers to the Pauline phrase "principalities and powers," citing such passages as Eph 6:12 only in reference to "demons who live and move in the stellar heavens" (76).

Sydney Page falls into the same temptation of placing the word "angel" or "angelic" on every being that is celestial, spiritual, or paranormal. In handling Gen 6, for instance, Page uses the general appellation of "angel" for the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים (Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 52). He calls the אֱלֹהִים of Ps 82 "suprahuman beings" on the same page that he calls them "fallen angels" (58) and designates the "sons of God" in Job 1 as "angels" even though he quickly admits that no Old Testament text that speaks of Satan describes him as belonging to a

Conclusion

The above survey finds that no writer dealing with the subject of Paul's powers has carefully attempted to identify them with the plural אֱלֹהִים of the Old Testament. Any references—casual or otherwise—to these אֱלֹהִים have also been found to presume a developed cosmology which has allowed the character of these gods, once they have come into the New Testament, to become "angels" or "demons." With these two burdens in mind we turn to our next chapter and examine the existence of these gods, which will prepare us to stretch this spiritual battle across the testaments and into the writings of Paul.[92]

"class of fallen angels" (59). He later calls "members of the heavenly council" in 1 Kgs 22:19 "angels" for again no apparent textual reason (69). In referring to the visitation of a man dressed in linen to Daniel (10:5-6), he says that "it is apparent that this man was an angel" (63). In short, Page appears to treat every reference of "god," "son of God," "power in the heavens above," "prince," "demon," and "spirit" as an "angel," and he can even accomplish the feat on one page (81).

[92]Freedman teases us in this regard from an Old Testament angle: "A special and perhaps overriding feature of [the oracles of Balaam] is the stress on a different kind of warfare being conducted by Yahweh on behalf of his people—not against armies in the field but what Paul describes (see Eph. 6:10-13) as a spiritual struggle against principalities and powers and the combined and concentrated forces of evil" (David Noel Freedman, "'Who Is Like Thee among the Gods?', the Religion of Early Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 332).

CHAPTER 2

IDENTIFYING THE *ELOHIM* OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Ever since God uttered the words, "Let us make man in our image," there has been a lurking suspicion that more than one divine being affects the affairs of the cosmos. On the whole, the Hebrew Bible serves to heighten this suspicion: God warns his people that they are not to worship other gods lest they awake his jealousy; God is said to dwell among a "host of heaven" which appears to include personal and independent beings; Jews and their pagan neighbors speak as though they believe other deities exist. The aim of this chapter is to investigate how both singular and plural אֱלֹהִים can exist in the Hebrew Bible while working toward a faithful understanding of Israelite monotheism that demanded the worship of the one Creator. It will find that the Old Testament presents these gods as real[1] or actual spiritual beings who exist by Yahweh's creation and who are designed for his larger purposes. This chapter will set the groundwork for determining the apparent role of the plural אֱלֹהִים in both the Old and New Testaments, which will in turn prepare our understanding of Paul's use of the phrase "principalities and powers."

Elohim as a Singular Noun

Identifying the gods of the Old Testament would be a much easier task if not for the issue of vocabulary. The first verse in the Bible presents in part our initial difficulty: "In

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[1]The struggle to define "real existence" appears to be an honest one, as writers (such as Wink, Berkhof, etc.) fight over the meaning of words such as *real* and *existence*. For my definition throughout our study, I will be arguing that the created gods who compete for Israel's attention were accessible "persons" in that they functioned as authentic "thou's" and personal "others," with no less real personal existence as Yahweh revealed himself to his own people. See Horst Dietrich Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox, 1992), 1:140.

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the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). The term for God here is אֱלֹהִים, a common noun in the Hebrew Bible which appears some 2600 times. The word represents a descriptional title more than it does an actual name.[2] Add to this that the lexical background for אֱלֹהִים is much disputed,[3] and we quickly are led to admit that a consistent translation for אֱלֹהִים is hard to identify. Our options (in English) may include such ideas as "God," "god," "godhead," "spirit," "deity," "divine being," or "strong one," with each option often accompanying its own theological agenda. In short, it is often difficult to determine which English word best supplies the intended meaning of אֱלֹהִים in a given biblical text. It is sometimes impossible to do so with any certainty when theological and textual clues are absent. Genesis 3:5, for instance, references אֱלֹהִים twice: "For God (אֱלֹהִים) knows that in the day you eat it that your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God (אֱלֹהִים), knowing good and evil." The first occurrence of אֱלֹהִים is benefited by the verb "know" (יָדַע) which is singular. Therefore we know that we are speaking of one being, and in this case every major English translation chooses "God." The second use of אֱלֹהִים, however, is followed by the plural participle "knowing" (יֹדְעֵי) which has no sure textual referent. It appears that we cannot be sure who the serpent has in mind in his plea to Eve. In such a case as this, every possible interpretive option of אֱלֹהִים becomes fair game. The translator must make his choice and move on.[4]

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[2]To be more clear, we could equate this to God's title that can be used as his name, much as we call our fathers "Dad." Note our study to follow, where we will find that אֱלֹהִים (and its Ugaritic equivalents) is consistently used for both the title and (secondarily) the name for the chief god of the Syro-Phonecian pantheon.

[3]Scholars are now content to admit that the etymology of אֱלֹהִים will never be known with any certainty . Even if its original meaning was something on the order of "power" or "fear" it would influence our understanding of the biblical use of the term little. Our word "deity," for instance, comes from a root known in Sanskrit to mean "sky," yet we do not feel the need to draw definitional meaning from this background. For current research on the background of אֱלֹהִים see the recent and thorough overview provided by Joel S. Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim*, SBL Dissertation Series, ed. Saul M. Olyan, vol. 183 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 1-6.

[4]The NKJV translators broke rank with their KJV forefathers here by translating this as "God" and not "'gods." Though one's understanding of authorial habit may come into play here (Cassuto finds it improbable that both a plural and a singular use of אֱלֹהִים would be found in such close proximity [Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press,

Our interpretational options are again multiplied when we realize that the Hebrew Bible employs אֱלֹהִים when referring to physical beings or even inanimate objects. Most lexicographers are content to believe that its root idea seems to describe strength,[5] giving way to Ezek 32:21's reference to "mighty chiefs" and Ps 80:10's "mighty cedars." As one could expect, there are several times that a reference to אֱלֹהִים splits translators almost evenly (Exod 31:6, RSV "God" vs. KJV "the judges") when determining whether the referent is physical or spiritual.

The lexical form of אֱלֹהִים carries a plural ending, giving us reason to think that it is the plural form of either אֵל or אֱלוֹהַ.[6] Old Testament writers, however, repeatedly use אֱלֹהִים to refer to a singular being, connecting it to singular verb forms as well as singular adjectives and pronouns. In our opening reference of Gen 1:1, for example, the text mandates that only one being created the cosmos since the work was done through a verb placed in the singular (בָּרָא). There is no hint of plurality within the being himself at this point.[7]

Hebrew University, 1961), 146]; though see Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:147), it appears that one's theology plays the most consequential role.

[5]Jack B. Scott, "אֵל," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 41.

[6]Ibid.

[7]The use of plural Akkadian *ilanu* as a singular in the Canaanite vassal correspondence (over one hundred references to the Pharaoh alone) was recognized early on in the study of the Amarna letters as a parallel to the use of אֱלֹהִים. See Johannes Hehn, *Die biblische und die babylonische Gottesidee: Die israelitische Gottesauffassung im Lichte der altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913), 171-73, and Burnett, *Reassessment*, 7-24. This serves to show that the Hebrew term, though lexically considered plural, could easily and consistently stand for a singular being. Albright long ago suggested that the use of the "majestic plural" comes from the tendency in the ancient Near East toward a universalism of sorts, wherein (for example) the plural *Ashtorôt* is used to present a "totality of manifestation" for the deity (William Foxwell Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2d ed., Doubleday Anchor Books [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957], 213). Others have coined helpful terms such as "abstract plural" (Carl Brockelmann, *Grundriss der Vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* [Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1913], 29) or "plural of intensity" (Aaron Ember, "The Pluralis Intensivus in Hebrew," *AJSL* 21 [1905]); Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* [Wageningen, Holland: Veenman & Zonen, 1958], 196) or a plural of "honorifics and the like" (Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 7.4.3a-f), moving in basically the same direction to make the final point that this kind of Hebrew construction does not necessitate (nor even suggest) a plural being unless the context clearly calls for it.

It is easy to envision, then, why אֱלֹהִים was the most common title for Israel's head deity, known by both Israel and her neighbors.[8] It was used both as a title for Israel's God[9] and as their God's personal name as commonly used in direct address (Pss 5:11; 51:3, etc.). Jews still acknowledged the generality of the term, however. Save for Jonah, the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible does not use אֱלֹהִים without enclosing it as a defined subject within a sentence "because this appellation of God is for them probably not concrete enough."[10] It is generally acknowledged that the specificity of the name יהוה and the generality of the title אֱלֹהִים led biblical writers to use the former when speaking of the special relationship that Israel enjoyed with her God, while using the latter to speak of the general power that God provided over the entire cosmos.[11] In the end, however, יְהוָה was אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים was יְהוָה in the mind of the faithful Israelite.

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[8]The great wealth of material emerging from the study of Ugarit has led to the finding that the Ugaritic and Akkadian literature from Ras Shamra parallels much of what is found in the Hebrew Bible. The languages of Ugarit and Jerusalem were very closely related, having grown out of a common cultural background. Specific to our study, אֱלֹהִים finds its antecedent—its exact parallel, in fact—in the Late Bronze Age cuneiform documents found in Amarna, Qatna, Taanach, and Ugarit. The use of the Akkadian *ilanu* (literally, "the gods") could stand for both singular or plural usage depending on the needs of the writer. This is merely to substantiate, then, that אֱלֹהִים was not invented as the term for Israel's chief deity; meaning "strong one," it simply came to be used as a matter of course for the title of this and other deities. Böhl, 36.

[9]It appears that אֱלֹהִים can be used interchangeably with the shorter forms אֵל (238 times in MT) and אֱלוֹהַ (fifty-eight times in MT) when referring to the deity of the Israelite nation as well as the deities of ancient Near East cultures (Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., vol. 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1955], 10); Burnett, 1.

[10]Werner H. Schmidt, "אלהים *Elohim* Gott," in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni (Munich: Kaiser, 1984), 1:154.

[11]Vriezen, *Theology*, 197. It should here be noted that the modern practice of capitalization is to be viewed as a theological (and not merely textual) exercise. How likely would it have been that, given the opportunity, either Pharaoh (Exod 8:25, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם "your God" ASV) or Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:47, אֱלָהֲכוֹן "your God" ASV) would have thought to capitalize אֱלֹהִים? For theological and practical reasons, of course, English versions have begun אֱלֹהִים with *G* or *g* to help the reader identify which god was to be recognized among a host of alternatives. The biblical text, however, worked with no such means of specificity. Its writers opted for a lengthier and more poignant way of describing which אֱלֹהִים was in question when the question was being raised (Deut 10:17 "For Yahweh your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty, and the terrible." Cf. Ps 136:2; Dan 11:36; etc.).

Elohim as a Plural Noun

Following its lexical form, however, אֱלֹהִים may also refer to a plurality of beings. The first of the Ten Commandments warned against worshipping competing אֱלֹהִים, using the plural adjective אֲחֵרִים ("other") to make certain that its legislation was understood to include plural beings. Thus in the close quarters of Exod 20:2-3 we find that אֱלֹהִים can be used with both singular and plural intention. The God of the Israelites ("I am Yahweh your God") was a lone אֱלֹהִים ("who brought [הוֹצֵאתִיךָ, singular] you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage") who strictly warned against the worship of other, plural אֱלֹהִים ("You shall have no other gods before me"). The writer of this text apparently expected the reader of this passage to quickly make proper sense of both terms. As we shall see, this ability will be adequately spread across the ancient Near East in how the ancients spoke of their deities.

A text such as Ps 82:1 presents this ability to speak of both a singular and plural אֱלֹהִים within tight spaces: "God (אֱלֹהִים) stands in the congregation of gods (בַּעֲדַת־אֵל); he judges among the gods (אֱלֹהִים)." The first occurrence of אֱלֹהִים is followed by the singular verb "stand" (נִצָּב) while the second is preceded by a noun meaning "amidst" or "among" (בְּקֶרֶב). In terms of vocabulary, then, the concept of other and plural "gods" can be expressed adequately and simply by biblical writers.

At times a plural use of אֱלֹהִים appears where we would not expect it. Abraham, in conversation with Abimilech, said, "And it came to pass, when God (אֱלֹהִים) caused me to wander [הִתְעוּ, plural] from my father's house, that I said unto her, 'This is your kindness which you shall show unto me'" (Gen 20:13). The pairing of אֱלֹהִים with a plural verb form would not have been thought of as unusual for Abimilech, of course, who would have been working from the dominant world view of the time that believed in a multiplicity of gods. It would not have surprised him, in other words, to hear that Abraham's gods were responsible for his venture into Canaan. Yet we also know that Abraham (as well as the narrator) knew that singular verbs could be used for the singular אֱלֹהִים who had called Abraham to

himself (20:3, 6, 17). Maybe Abraham spoke with a plural verb as a means of acquiescing to Abimilech's world view. We are not given enough information to make this judgment.

Biblical portrayals of non-Israelites using אֱלֹהִים offer us predictable insight to their world view. During the judgeship of Samuel the Israelites attempted to use the Ark in battle. As the Ark was moved into the enemy camp the Philistines shouted, "Woe to us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods (הָאֱלֹהִים הָאַדִּירִים)? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness" (1 Sam 4:8). In this instance we are able to acknowledge the plural use of אֱלֹהִים in both occurrences because of the plural adjective (אַדִּירִים, mighty) and the plural participle (הַמַּכִּים, smite). The fact that the Philistines thought of Israel's God in the plural is definitely not surprising, and in some sense is expected (though notice the singular in 6:5). We ought not presume here or elsewhere that the Israelites presented an accurate understanding of their God in the sight of their neighbors.[12]

We may make the following points in conclusion: 1) אֱלֹהִים is a very common noun which offers a multiplicity of interpretations even when the experienced translator knows what to look for. Though he does not present his opinion as a final solution, it is here that Burnett's appeal to simplicity is noteworthy: when encountering this common noun, we should read it as "'deity'—nothing more, and nothing less."[13] The noun appears to be intentionally broad in meaning and is meant to indicate a species similarity of some kind (to be studied below). 2) As a singular noun, אֱלֹהִים was the most common means of identifying, by title, the chief deity of the Hebrew Bible and Israelite religion. 3) Functioning as a plural noun, however, אֱלֹהִים is also used to designate the deities that were expressly not to be worshipped by Israelites. 4) The Hebrew Bible's repeated use of אֱלֹהִים in referring to plural deities presumes their real and independent personal existence. Any argument for the

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[12]Cf. 1 Chr 28:22-5; 2 Chr 32:18-9; 33:15-7; Jer 2:28.

[13]Burnett, *Reassessment*, 24.

non-existence of the gods of the first commandment would need to be made by some other means.

Ancient and Biblical Appeals to Plural *Elohim*

The opening commandment of Yahweh disallowing any other gods before his "face" (Exod 20:4) operates under the presupposition that the gods exist. It will appear, as our study takes shape below, that the original reader of Moses' day could not have taken the אֱלֹהִים of the first commandment to be anything other than the gods of the foreign nations which were spoken of in very real terms. Indeed, Yahweh was asking for the only satisfying and reasonable response to what had just taken place in the Exodus: "And because [Yahweh] loved your fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought you out with his presence, with his great power, out of Egypt" (Deut 4:37). To worship any other god would be a sign of disloyalty—and many other gods were available to them.

Plural *Elohim* in Ancient Near East culture

Pagan cultures used terms in referring to their deities that were remarkably similar to each other and to the Hebrew of the Israelites. The Ugaritic word for deity was '*il* (plural *'ilim*), in Phoenician the deity was referred to as '*l* (plural *'lm*), in Aramaic one spoke of worshipping '*elah,* (plural '*elahin*), and in Akkadian a deity was called *ilu.* Therefore in terms of general discussion about divine beings it appears that the cultures of the ancient Near East used very similar forms and understood each other from this standpoint. Far from obscuring the issue of religion and religious conversation, this allowed the ancient Israelites to conduct free discourse about various deities with many of their neighbors. We should not assume, as a matter of course, that non-Israelites agreed with Israelites when it came to who or what אֱלֹהִים or אֵל was. We have to wonder how much the average Israelite knew about his own אֱלֹהִים when recalling such a horrific incident as recorded in Exod 32:4: "And [Aaron] received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a

molten calf: and they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.'"

It appears the new chosen people believed that the formation of a molten bull would aid worship of plural אֱלֹהִים next to worship of יהוה himself (Exod 32:5). Much like moderns, who often use such terms as "God" or "Allah" or "Gott" without giving thought to the being they are referencing, it appears that for these ancients spread across Syro-Palestine a general term was used for deity regardless of other language barriers. For the Hebrew-speaking person, אֵל / אֱלֹהִים appears to be just that term.

The cultures of the ancient Near East not only believed in plural deities, but they also understood these deities to work with (and even against) each other. These gods even met, so it was believed, to discuss the fate of the cosmos. Though this "divine council" motif differs slightly from region to region and from religion to religion, its basic formulation is consistent across the ancient Near East world. Depictions of such gatherings of divine beings are found in the various literatures of Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Phoenicia, and Israel.

The concept of a divine council of plural אֱלֹהִים also appears in the Old Testament.[14] The most studied aspect of the divine council in both Canaan and Israel is the

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[14]A host of studies have appeared in the past half-century detailing the divine council motif that exists within the Hebrew Bible, especially as it relates and compares to that of the ancient Near East world: H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1944); Frank Moore Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *JNES* 12 (1965); Gerald Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(S)," *ZAW* 76 (1974); Edwin C. Kingsbury, "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *JBL* 83 (1964); Max E. Polley, "Hebrew Prophecy within the Council of Yahweh Examined in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting," in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. Carl C. Evans, William W. Hallo, and John B. White, Pittsburgh Theological Monographs (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980); W. Schmidt, *Königtum Gottes in Ugarit und Israel* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1961); E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 24 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980); David Marron Fleming, "The Divine Council as Type Scene in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Conrad E. L'Heureux, *Rank among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba'al, and the Repha'im*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 21 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979); Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). As will be noted later, however, virtually no attempt has been made to bring this concept into the teachings of the New Testament. I am not at present aware of any writer who has carefully linked the divine council to the writings of Paul, for instance. Since the concept of the council runs throughout the Old Testament as a continuing theme of Yahweh's power and authority, one would

terminology employed by each to designate the assembly itself. The council in the Ugaritic materials is commonly designated by phrases such as *phr 'ilm* (=Akkadian *puhru ilani*), translated as "assembly of the gods" (*KTU* 29.2.7, etc.), *phr bn 'ilm*, meaning "the assembly of the sons of El" (*KTU* 4.3.14, etc.), and *mphrt bn 'ilm*, again translated as "the assembly of the sons of El" (*KTU* 30.3; 32.1.3, 9, 17, 26, 34). The phrase *phr m'd*, "the gathered assembly," describes the council of the gods in *KTU* 2.1.14-31. The most common designation for the assembly of El in the Ugaritic texts is *dr 'il* or *dr bn 'il*, which strongly hints at the use of the Hebrew דּוֹר ("assembly") as found in Pss 14:5, 49:20, 73:15, 84:11, 112:2, Jer 2:31, and Amos 8:14.[15]

The Hebrew Bible employs similar words to denote the same concept. The word מוֹעֵד designates the "mount of assembly" in Isa 14:13, which is reflected in *KTU* 2.1. Though not found in Ugaritic texts, the Hebrew word סוֹד appears to speak of a council setting of plural gods in Ps 89:8, Jer 23:18, and Job 15:8.

Just as the terminology designating the assembly shows a common tradition, the members of the divine assembly in Ugaritic and Hebrew are mentioned in similar terms. The gods at Ras Shamra are commonly called *bn 'il*, "the sons of El." In Mesopotamian mythology, the council was composed of all the major gods and goddesses. Of these gods, fifty were designated as *ilu rabiutu*, "the great/senior gods," and seven were called *ilu eimati*, "gods of the fates," or *musimmu simati*, "determiners of the fates."[16] During these tales the gods were very active in their participation during "court" proceedings.

Turning to the Old Testament, beings which seem to function as an assembly of plural gods are called בְּנֵי אֵלִים, (Pss 29:1, 89:7), בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (Deut 32:8),[17] and בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים

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presume that the New Testament would develop this line of reasoning, or at least speak in a manner consistent with it.

[15]F. J. Neuberg, "An Unrecognized Meaning of Hebrew *Dor*," *JNES* 9 (1950).

[16]Thorkild Jacobsen, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JNES* 2 (1943): 165.

[17]This follows the reading of the LXX and 4QDt.

(Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1). Other indications of plural divine beings that are often considered as part of the council motif are בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן (Ps 82:6), כָּל־אֱלֹהִים (Ps 97:7), and the קְדֹשִׁים (Job 5:1, Deut 33:2-3, etc.).[18] Thus the terminology used to denote the council as well as its membership in both Ugaritic and Hebrew texts show remarkable similarity that cannot be overlooked as inconsequential. Whereas El was considered to be the head in Canaanite mythology, so Yahweh (who has "replaced" the Canaanite El in the language of the Old Testament) is considered the head of the assembly in the Hebrew Bible.

It should be noted, however, that the specific identities of the members of the divine council in Canaanite mythology and the Hebrew Bible remain obscure. In *KTU* 2.1, for example, they are simply designated as *'ilm* ("gods"). The Old Testament never attributes a proper name to one of the gods who appears in a council setting. It thus appears safe to say that determining the difference between plural אֱלֹהִים in general and specific members of a divine council is beyond our textual reach.

In the Ugaritic and Mesopotamian depictions of the heavenly council, the primary reason for their meeting was to pass judgment.[19] This is seen as they make pronouncements for and against other gods, such as when Marduk was proclaimed leader and king,[20] and when they later decide that Kingu must die.[21] The council also passes judgments that relate to the destiny of man, as when the council in Gilgamesh declares that Utnapistim should have eternal life.[22]

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[18]Mullen (*Divine Council*, 119), for instance, reflects the majority of scholarship when he places all the plural gods of the Hebrew Bible into the council of Yahweh without distinction.

[19]Ibid., 226.

[20]*Enuma Elish* 3.130ff. For English translation, see Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 35-36.

[21]*Enuma Elish* 4.119ff.

[22]For text and translation, see W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 191.

There are some scenes within the Hebrew Bible which seem to imply this idea of a "council" of plural אֱלֹהִים as well. In 1 Kgs 22:17-23, the death of Ahab is both proclaimed and put into action though the efforts of one of the spirits that confers with others of his own kind. In Isa 6:1-13, the commissioning of Isaiah is considered to be an action worthy of Yahweh and someone who is presumed to exist with him (cf. 6:3, "Who will go for us?"). As the book of Job opens, the question of the faithfulness of its main character is decreed by Yahweh to the שָׂטָן who is found among other אֱלֹהִים (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). In Dan 7, the subject of the fourth chapter of this study, an elaborate scene is set in the courtroom of Yahweh which includes more than one throne. Therefore the Hebrew Bible to some degree mirrors what we see in the divine council settings of the religious texts of Canaan and Ugarit, reflecting how the ancient Near East world would have thought about the activities of their own gods. The differences between these depictions of "gods in council" will be discussed in our next chapter.

Plural *Elohim* in Biblical Texts

Scanning the Old Testament as a whole, evidence quickly mounts that the average person in the ancient Near East assumed the existence of plural אֱלֹהִים. They were the object of everyday conversation, whether dealing in religious or secular contexts:

Text	Speaker	Phrase
Exod 15:11	Moses	Who is like you among the gods?
Deut 10:17	Moses	Yahweh is god of gods
Deut 3:24	Moses	For what god is there in heaven or earth?
Deut 4:7	Moses	What nation has a god so close to them?
Exod 18:11	Jethro	Yahweh is greater than all the gods
Exod 32:4	Israelites	These are your gods, O Israel
Josh 24:2	Joshua	[Abraham's family] served other gods
Judg 10:6	Writer	Served Baalim and Astaroth, and gods of foreign nations
Judg 11:24	Jephthah	Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you?
Judg 16:23-4	Philistines	Our god has delivered Samson into our hand
1 Sam 4:8	Philistines	Who will deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods?
1 Sam 17:43	Goliath	The Philistine cursed David by his gods
1 Sam 28:13	Endor witch	I see a god coming out of the earth
2 Sam 7:22	David	There is none like you, neither is there any god besides you
1 Chr 16:25	David	[Yahweh] is to be feared above all gods
1 Kgs 12:28	Jeroboam	Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you out of Egypt
1 Kgs 19:2	Jezebel	So let the gods do to me, if I make not . . .
1 Kgs 20:10	Ben-Hadad	The gods do so unto me, if the dust of Samaria . . .
2 Kgs 5:17	Namaan	[I] will [not] sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Yahweh
2 Kgs 17:26	Assyrians	They know not the law of the god of the land
2 Kgs 17:27	Assyrian king	Teach [them] the law of the god of the land

2 Kgs 18:33	Rabshakeh	Have any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of . . . Assyria?
2 Kgs 18:34	Rabshakeh	Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria . . . ?
2 Kgs 18:35	Rabshakeh	Who are they among all the gods of the countries?
2 Chr 2:5	Solomon	For great is our god above all gods
Ps 82:1	Asaph	God stands in the congregation of El; he judges among the gods
Ps 86:8	Psalmist	There is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto your works
Ps 96:4	Psalmist	Yahweh is a great God, and a great king above all gods
Ps 97:7	Psalmist	Worship him, all you gods
Ps 97:9	Psalmist	For you, Yahweh, are most high above all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods
Ps 135:5	Psalmist	For I know that Yahweh is great, and that our Lord is above all gods
Ps 136:2	Psalmist	Oh give thanks unto the god of gods
Ps 138:1	Psalmist	Before the gods will I sing praises unto you
Dan 2:11	Nebuchad.'s magicians	There is no other than can show [the dream] before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh
Dan 2:47	Nebuchad.	Of a truth your god is the god of gods, and the lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets
Dan 3:25	Nebuchad.	The aspect of the fourth [person in the fire] is like a son of the gods

Speaking of plural אֱלֹהִים appears to be part of normal and consistent conversation, noticeable across every boundary in the world of the Old Testament, whether religion, country of origin, or even (among Jews themselves) faithfulness to Yahweh. Using Moses

as a test case, it appears that every speaker in the Old Testament consistently displayed a belief in the existence of plural, independent spirit beings known as אֱלֹהִים. Had he been asked, "Do you believe that other אֱלֹהִים actually exist?" Moses likely would have been surprised—not at the answer, but at the question.

Plural *Elohim* in the speech of Yahweh

The mysterious plural, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26) is difficult to explain unless some kind of deliberation within a divine company is admitted. To this we can add three other traces of divine plurality in the direct speech of Yahweh: "Behold, the man has become like one of us" (Gen 3:22); "Come, let us go down" (Gen 11:7); and "Who will go for us?" (Isa 6:8). Such traces—occurring early and late in the stages of Israelite history—suggest that the common references to "gods" and "sons of the gods" in the Psalms and elsewhere "are not merely literary remnants of a mythological past long since abandoned, but represent a stage when Israel's Yahwism found room for a pantheon in many ways similar to that illustrated in the literature of Ugarit."[23]

Looking at the speech of Yahweh himself, it becomes apparent that the Creator is not averse to speaking of other divine beings. He speaks of them as being very real, very personal, and very dangerous.

Text	Phrase	Comment
Exod 12:12	Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments (cf. Num 33:4)	Here would be an excellent place, it seems, to decry the very existence of Egyptian gods
Exod 20:3	You shall have no other gods before me	Jealousy is difficult to attribute to Yahweh if gods did not exist
Exod 34:14	You shall worship no other god	Yahweh's motivation is again attributed to jealousy

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[23]Brendan Byrne, *"Sons of God"—"Seeds of Abraham": A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 10-11.

Exod 23:13	Make no mention of the name of other gods	This jealousy extends to the very mention of names of competing gods, implying worship of them
Exod 23:24	You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works	Implies independent (and dangerous) personalities for the gods of Canaan
Exod 23:32	You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods	This mirrors Yahweh's covenant-making actions with Israel
Exod 23:33	If you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you	Gods are real—dangerously so— in their ability to ensnare the unsuspecting worshipper
Judg 6:10	You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell	Yahweh's appeal appears directed to the inability—not the non-existence— of the foreign gods
2 Chr 25:15	Why have you sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of your hand?	Much the same, Yahweh's appeal is directed to the unstable character—and not the non-existence—of the foreign gods
Ps 82:6	You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High	A straightforward statement of rank or title that Yahweh seems content to give these beings
Jer 10:11	The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens	A god must exist before it can perish
Jer 10:15	They are vanity, a work of delusion; in the time of their visitation, they shall perish	Their chief problem is their inability to live up to their title; as such they are a lie
Jer 46:25	Behold, I will punish Amon of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with her gods, and her kings; even Pharaoh, and them that trust in him	Again, a god must exist before it can be punished

For all the negativity associated with plural אֱלֹהִים, it is notable that never once does Yahweh describe lesser אֱלֹהִים in terms that expose them as fictional, mythological, or simply non-existent. Yahweh instead recognizes and even authorizes the use of אֱלֹהִים for beings other than himself.

Other Terms that Depict Plural *Elohim*

The "other gods" of the first commandment operate under the cover of a variety of names or titles in the Hebrew Bible. Our purpose here is limited to identifying who these beings are (relating them to "אֱלֹהִים-class" beings) and leaving the question of their role or purpose for the discussion of chapter three.

"Spirit"

Many uses of the word רוּחַ ("spirit," "wind") show that Yahweh can use the forces of impersonal nature toward his own ends: "[Yahweh] lays the beams of his chambers in the waters; [he] makes the clouds his chariot; [he] walks upon the wings of the wind (רוּחַ)" (Ps 104:3). There are many times, however, when רוּחַ appears to be used in the Hebrew Bible for a personal, spiritual being. The following chart is not arguing for such a use each time, but instead offers the reader a quick appreciation of the broad usage of רוּחַ.

Text	Phrase	Comment
Gen 1:2	The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters	Beginning of what is commonly referred to as the "Spirit of אֱלֹהִים/Yahweh"[24]
Num 11:25	Yahweh . . . took the Spirit that was upon [Moses], and put it upon the seventy elders	A personal spirit sent by Yahweh was able to "come upon" (influence?) various individuals in the OT[25]
Num 14:24	[Caleb] had another spirit with him	This may refer to the animate part within the human that causes action and thought, or it may be a separate being that came "into" Caleb[26]

[24]These are apparently synonymous terms (cf. Gen 6:3).

[25]Cf. Num 24:2 (Balaam); Num 27:18 (Joshua); Judg 3:10 (Othniel); Judg 6:34 (Gideon); Judg 11:29 (Jephthah); Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14 (Samson); 1 Sam 10:6 (Saul); 1 Sam 16:13 (David, cf. Ps 51:11); 2 Kgs 2:9, 15 (Elijah/Elisha, possibly); 2 Chr 20:14 (Judahites); Isa 11:2; 42:1 (messiah figure); Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-9 (faithful Israelites).

[26]Cf. Ps 76:13; Dan 6:4.

2 Sam 23:2	The Spirit of Yahweh spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue	As the last words of David, he appears to claim what the prophets would later claim[27]
2 Chr 21:16	Yahweh stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines	May refer to a separate being who influenced the Philistines, or the animating "spiritual" force within the Philistines themselves
2 Chr 36:22/Ezra 1:1	Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation	A reference to either the personal spirit within Cyrus or a separate being[28]
Neh 9:20	[Yahweh] gave [his] good Spirit to instruct them	The Israelites in the wilderness were recipients of Yahweh's spirit, here specified as "good"(as opposed to "evil"?)
Job 4:15	Then a spirit passed before my face; The hair of my flesh stood up	An apparition (in a dream?) to Job causes great fear
Ps 139:7	Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?	Yahweh's spirit is equated to his omnipresent being
Prov 16:2	All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; But Yahweh weighs the spirits	May be a reference to interior motives of a man or (plural) spirits that influence a man's motives and ways
Isa 19:3	The spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards	At least one of these two references to a spirit seems to be an independent being; the context could possibly indicate that both are referring to beings[29]

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[27]Cf. Neh 9:30; Isa 48:16; Ezek 2:2-3; 3:12, 14, 24; Mic 3:8.

[28]Cf. Jer 51:11: "Make sharp the arrows; hold firm the shields: Yahweh has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; because his purpose is against Babylon, to destroy it: for it is the vengeance of Yahweh, the vengeance of his temple."

[29]Cf. Ezek 13:3: "Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"

Isa 30:1	Woe to the rebellious children, saith Yahweh, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my Spirit	Implies that Yahweh's spirit is to be thought of as part of a divine council scene[30]
Isa 37:7	I [Yahweh] will put a spirit in [Sennacherib], and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land	Through the work of an independent spirit the King of Assyria acts in a way that causes his defeat[31]
Isa 63:10	But they rebelled, and grieved his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them	Previous reference to the "angel of his presence" (v. 9) hints that these are the same independent beings
Ezek 1:12 (cf. 1:20-21)	They went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; they turned not when they went	Appear to be independent beings (separate from the four beings also present) which are envisioned to surround the throne of Yahweh.

Probably the most fascinating incident in the Old Testament involving an

independent, personal רוּחַ is found in 1 Kgs 22:19-23.

> And Micaiah said, Therefore hear the word of Yahweh: I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And Yahweh said, Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner; and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Yahweh, and said, I will entice him. And Yahweh said unto him, How? And he said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You shall entice him, and shall prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and Yahweh has spoken evil concerning you.

A meeting of the "host of heaven" is described in some detail in this vision.

The scene almost appears normative in depicting Yahweh's relationship to other spirit

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[30]Cf. Isa 40:13: "Who has directed the Spirit of Yahweh, or being his counselor has taught him?"

[31]Cf. 1 Kgs 22:22.

beings. Ahab and Jehoshaphat, the two rival kings of Israel and Judah, summoned the good prophet Micaiah to challenge the favorable oracle that had been delivered by 400 rival prophets. After being given this vision, Micaiah was able to see why the two oracles did not agree; Yahweh had commissioned an attending spirit (רוּחַ) to deceive Ahab about his own death. But this commissioning was not done before the other attending spirits discussed the matter among themselves;[32] "one said one thing and another said another." Once (it appears) the matter had been resolved within their own counsel, one of the spirits[33] stepped forward to volunteer his idea. Yahweh permitted the spirit to offer both his plan and the reasoning that accompanied it. He would "be a lying spirit," he proposed, to all 400 prophets of Ahab. The spirit's strategy was approved and Yahweh commissioned him to "go forth and do so" with the guarantee that his plan would succeed.

What or who was this being? All we can say for sure is that, in this text, he is noted as a רוּחַ. He is not expressly called an אֱלֹהִים, nor is he cited as a מַלְאָךְ. It appears, however, that the heavenly scene as described by Micaiah closely resembles what is described in Job 1–2, where בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים appear before Yahweh. Therefore it appears safe to speak of Micaiah's vision as an Old Testament example of a council scene (complete with independent, personal, spirit-gods) attending Yahweh.

Other examples of independent, personal spirits not noted in the above chart include the several visitations of an "evil spirit" to two leaders of early Israel. Whereas Micaiah's vision ended with what the spirit said he would do, the stories of Saul (1 Sam 16:14; 23; 18:10; 19:9) and Abimelech (Judg 9:23) witness to the earthly expression of spirit visitation. And in these cases, at least, the result is not good. In summary of our understanding of רוּחַ as used in the Hebrew Bible some summary comments are in order.

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[32]This is most unlike the Ugaritic council, in which the gods sit idly by, not being able to counsel El or give answer to El's questions (*KTU* 16.5.12-13, 16, 19, 22).

[33]It can be admitted that the plural *spirits* is not used, though it appears safe from immediate context that the spirit that stepped forward was among those of his own kind.

The Hebrew רוּחַ may reference the impersonal idea of "wind" or "breath." Used analogously, the idea of wind/breath may be our best indication of how the human spirit was thought of as the life that dwelt "inside" a physical body. When breath was absent the person was considered to not be alive. A רוּחַ may also reference an independent spirit being which could operate in both the celestial world of Yahweh and (when allowed/sent by Yahweh) within the physical world of humans.

In this latter sense a רוּחַ is depicted within the Old Testament as possessing tendencies which are similar to human beings: as 1 Kgs 22 seems to imply, a spirit can participate in a society of other spirits, listening and responding to his fellows; he may offer these ideas to other spirits or even Yahweh; these ideas may be sanctioned (or, one could assume, condemned) by Yahweh. In short, we do not have concrete textual evidence in the Old Testament that precludes the possibility that our familiar society of humankind may be mirrored in the society of spirits.[34]

The manner of the spirit's involvement with either Moses, Ahab, Saul, or Abimelech is not noted nor described; that is, we do not know *how* the spirit influenced either man in either case, though we are expressly told that the control exhibited by the spirit through human agency was convincing. Much like Micaiah's vision, it is conceivable that the spirit's intended mission toward Saul, for instance, was met with a statement by Yahweh on an order of "You shall entice him, and shall prevail also: go forth, and do so" (cf. 1 Kgs 22:22).

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[34]It appears that every interpreter will have to make a judgment call on the degree to which the spiritual world can be likened to our physical world. I do not believe, for instance, that the spirits which "stood" before Yahweh (1 Kgs 22:19) employed nor possessed physical feet and toes. The temptation to reply that they stood upon "spiritual feet" does further harm in that such language appears to be inherently contradictory. A foot as we define it is limited to a physical thing. Though rightful differences of opinion on this matter need not influence the course of this study, I am under the impression, however unsatisfactory, that the term "spirit" in Scripture is best defined in terms of what it is not, such as *not* "flesh and blood" (1 Cor 15:50; Eph 6:12; Luke 24:39; cf. Rom 8:1, 4, 5, 6) or *not* a world "made with hands" (Acts 17:24). Because we read of a fully spiritual God (John 4:23-24) who functions with full personality (cf. John 4:26, etc.), I believe it is consistent to interpret scriptural depictions of the spirit world in the same way as we interpret the "world" of God, taking into account, of course, the differences between infinitude (for God) and finitude (for created spirits).

Following these stories further, it does not appear accidental nor incidental that Yahweh is consistently shown to be in total control of the situation. The spirits, though evidencing distinction in personality and motivation, are never depicted as independent of Yahweh's will in any situation as developed in the Old Testament. Evil spirits and even the Satan figure (mentioned only three times in the Old Testament) are always seen as ultimately working toward and not against the accomplishment of the will of Yahweh (cf. Num 22:22; Job 1:11-12 cf. 42:11). In this sense the "spirit of Yahweh" (Judg 3:10, etc.) is no more subservient to the ultimate will of Yahweh than any spirits that perform their duties on Ahab or Saul.

No personal name is attached to any being in the Hebrew Bible that is identified as a spirit (i.e., a "spirit named Rahab"). Vriezen is correct in his appraisal of why this is the case:

> None of the gods is comparable with [Yahweh] (Ps. 89:6). Among the gods who are admitted to exist there is none *who has a name* and therefore a claim to be mentioned, even 'next to God.' Thus Yahweh, as God of gods, is exalted so far above the other divinities that there can be no question here of a pantheon with its head or even of a council of the gods, in the sense current elsewhere, beyond the borders of Israel, although there too the notion was a familiar one (Ps. 82:1; Job 1f., *et al.*). How it was in fact understood appears from a narrative like that at 1 Kings 22:19: the conference that Yahweh is pictured as holding occurs without so much as a mention, by name, of any of the spirits that surround him (as also in Job 1:6ff.; 2:1ff.). The divine council is there for the greater glorification of Yahweh rather than to signify any limitation of his power. Syncretistic groups could, however, easily tag on to these ideas and import all kinds of figures alongside Yahweh.[35]

At no time within the Old Testament is a spirit said to be a מַלְאָךְ.[36] This should serve as a reminder that מַלְאָךְ is a functional title that can potentially be applied to any personal being, whether physical or spiritual. A מַלְאָךְ is a being that is in the process of

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[35]Th. C. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 36-37.

[36]In the MT the words מַלְאָךְ and רוּחַ occur in the same verse only two times, and in neither case are the terms considered interchangeable (Ps 104:4, "Who makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his ministers" [ASV]; Zech 6:5, "And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four winds of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth"). Beyond this lexical argument I am not aware of any theological reason to equate a מַלְאָךְ to a רוּחַ in the Hebrew Bible.

doing something, not a being that necessarily is something. This clarification will be further described in the excursus at the end of this chapter.

"Host of Heaven"

The name Yahweh occurs 259 times in the Old Testament in the expanded form "Yahweh of Hosts" (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, 1 Sam 1:3, 11; etc.), nineteen additional times as "Yahweh, God of Hosts" (יְהוָה־אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת, 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kgs 19:10), and also in such hymnic combinations as "Yahweh of hosts is his name" (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ, Isa 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; 54:4). Therefore "Yahweh Sabaoth," including its various combinations, is the most frequently occurring epithet of God in the Old Testament.[37] The root צָבָא has meanings both as a verb and a noun, that is, "to conduct war" and "army." The (feminine) plural noun (צְבָאוֹת) is formed as a divine epithet, describing a quality of Yahweh. This appellation is found commonly in Isa 1–39 (fifty-six times) and in the Book of Jeremiah (eighty-two times) and appears to become a stock phrase describing the position and character of the God of Israel.

The identification of the "host" over which Yahweh presides offers several possibilities. Certainly Israel had a physical host of military men (1 Sam 17:45; cf. 2 Sam 5:10) that battled ultimately for their God. The epithet also arises in association to the Ark (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2) which was used in the context of war. Though in no actual war narrative is the phrase "Lord of hosts" employed, Yahweh is depicted as the leader of foreign armies when speaking of coming against his own nation in judgment (Amos 5:27; 6:14; Isa 22:5; cf. 6:3; 1 Kgs 22:19).

The idea of a "heavenly group" may be another rendering of צְבָאוֹת, speaking specifically of personal spiritual beings that share a class likeness to Yahweh. Psalm 89 appears to develop this idea through the use of hymnic parallels: "And the heavens shall

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[37]Cross (*Council of Yahweh*, 274) is representative of many who believe that this phrase originally meant "Yahweh who brings the hosts into existence," in which case it would serve as a strong and intentional reminder of the finite and created nature of the lesser gods.

praise your wonders, O Yahweh; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones

(בִּקְהַל קְדֹשִׁים). For who in the skies can be compared unto Yahweh? Who among the sons

of the mighty (בִּבְנֵי אֵלִים) is like unto Yahweh, A God very terrible in the council of the holy

ones (סוֹד־קְדֹשִׁים), And to be feared above all them that are round about him? O Yahweh

God of hosts (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת), Who is a mighty one, like unto thee, O Yahweh? And your

faithfulness is round about you" (Ps 89:5-8). This text will be explored more fully in

chapter 3 in considering the concept of a heavenly pantheon in the Hebrew Bible.

Though it was common to think of the "hosts of heaven" as speaking of the

celestial planets and stars (Judg 5:20; Gen 2:1; Zeph 1:5), the prohibition that immediately

preceded the second giving of the law appears to use כֹּל צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם in the sense of personal,

spirit beings: "And lest you lift up your eyes unto heaven, and when you see the sun and

the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven (כֹּל צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם), you be drawn away and

worship them, and serve them, which Yahweh your God hath allotted unto all the peoples

under the whole heaven" (Deut 4:19; cf. Deut 17:3, Jer 8:2, 19:13; 2 Kgs 21:2-5; 2 Kgs

23:4-5).

The LXX often translated "Yahweh of hosts" with "Lord , the God of the

powers" (e.g., Ps 89:8 [LXX 88:9], κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων), which signifies an

interesting interpretational move. Because the "hosts" signified "power," the translators

apparently believed this was a fitting way to describe this specialized epithet for Yahweh.

This translation pattern may have come into use as a concrete idea (e.g., "Yahweh, the God

of other created gods") developed into an abstract one (e.g., "Yahweh, the powerful

One").[38] We could note that even in this latter view the concept of plural אֱלֹהִים is not lost

or minimized as much as it is accepted and conceptualized.

Another use of "host" is that of a military retinue, in which case it may be

referring to the divine council scene so common in the OT.[39] The council of gods in

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[38]See Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:145-46.

[39]So Mullen, *Divine Council*, 181.

Canaanite mythology was often pictured in just this way (*KTU* 2.1, 15.2.2-7, 16.5.20-28). The council members were seen as members of a military entourage that accompanied El into battle. Early Hebrew poetry often depicts the Divine Warrior, Yahweh, in the same manner in which El is shown.[40] In the Ugaritic material, however, the divine assembly is never seen actually going out to war in the company of El or Baal. Yahweh's approach to the battle front seems to be kept alive (at least in figurative form) in such a statement of Saul who asks David to "fight the wars of Yahweh" (1 Sam 18:17) and in the title "The Book of the Wars of Yahweh" (Num 21:14).

"Holy ones"

As it was noted above in Ps 89:5-7 that Yahweh's "hosts" are to be thought of as spirit beings which accomplish the will of Yahweh, we also find (twice) in this Psalm another descriptive phrase that appears to be used of the gods: "And the heavens shall praise your wonders, O Yahweh; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones (בִּקְהַל קְדֹשִׁים); a God very terrible in the council of the holy ones (בְּסוֹד־קְדֹשִׁים), and to be feared above all them that are round about him? (Ps 89:5 [MT 6], 7 [MT 8]). This passage vividly reveals an assembly of beings around the throne who are comparatively less than Yahweh though qualitatively comparable to him. They are twice called קְדֹשִׁים, or "holy ones." This Psalm is valuable for its synonymous use of several terms denoting plural אֱלֹהִים, in fact. Their title in v. 6 is given as בְּנֵי אֵלִים, term occurring only twice in biblical literature ("sons of the mighty one," cf. Ps 29:1), will be noted below. These "holy ones"

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[40]For studies of the divine warrior motif, see Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 91-111; Patrick D. Miller Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel,* Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 64-165; Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior,* Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology, eds. Willem A. VanGemeren and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

surround the throne, presenting an excellent case for divine beings that were considered to work with (and not against) Yahweh.[41]

Elsewhere the קְדֹשִׁים are observed to hold a title of some privilege that, though not described in detail, bears notable power or authority (Zech 14:5; Job 15:15 [Qere]; Dan 4:10, 14, 20; cf. Hos 12:1; Prov 9:10; 30:3; Exod 15:11). Though Yahweh is himself the "Holy One" of Israel (Lev 20:26; Isa 6:3; Pss 99:3, 5, 9, etc.), we periodically come face to face with members of a class of spiritual being in the Old Testament who are designated by a similar term, though in the plural.

In this sense these beings are both to be compared to Yahweh and still to be thought of as under his authority. This is presumed in numerous biblical passages where the setting is the council of the gods akin to how the ancient Near East mind would view the council of Ugaritic mythology. As Ps 89:7 noted that Yahweh is uniquely "terrible" and that he is to be feared by his קְדֹשִׁים, so he is greater and more fearful that any created being, no matter how majestic, powerful, or even morally upright. In this sense it will be able to be said that Yahweh is עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים, "above all gods" (Pss 95:3, 96:4, 1 Chr 16:25). In noting further uses of the term קְדֹשִׁים in the Old Testament, one is struck by its general application to the realm of Yahweh, created spirits, and even humans.

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[41]Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 3d ed., AB, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 17 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 313.

Text	Phrase	Comment
Lev 11:44-5	Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy.	Holiness in humans is possible, though it always is reflective of the holiness of Yahweh and his "ownership" of those that follow him.[42]
1 Sam 2:2	There is none holy as Yahweh; For there is none besides thee, Neither is there any rock like our God.	Holiness, though attributed to other beings, is never of the quality or quantity exhibited by Yahweh.[43]
2 Kgs 19:22	Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? . . . even against the Holy One of Israel	As one of the most common epitaphs of God, he shows his unique holiness among other holy beings.
Job 5:1	Call now; is there any that will answer thee? And to which of the holy ones wilt thou turn?	A probable reference to holy beings that are not human, but divine (taking into account 15:15, below)
Job 15:15	Behold, he puts no trust in his holy ones; Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight	The parallel mention of "heavens" appears to place these holy ones in the celestial sphere.
Ps 34:9	Oh fear Yahweh, you his holy ones; For there is no want to them that fear him	The infrequency of the Psalmist's reference to human "holy ones," when combined with the near reference to the "angel of the Lord" (34:7), suggests that this is referring to spiritual beings.
Ps 89:5	And the heavens shall praise your wonders, O Yahweh; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones	A possible case can here be made that (at least some of?) the holy ones are "pro-Yahweh," though. . .

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[42]"[I] have set you apart from the nations, that you should be mine" (Lev 20:26; cf. Num 15:40; 16:5; Deut 7:6; 28:9; Lev 19:2; 20:7).

[43]Cf. 1 Sam 6:20; Isa 1:4; 5:9.

Ps 89:7	A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones, and to be feared above all them that are round about him	. . . these same gods are not treated in friendly terms when compared to Yahweh
Dan 4:8, 9	[Daniel had] the spirit of the holy gods in [him]	Nebuchadnezzar believed that Daniel represented more than just one "holy" god
Dan 4:13	[In Daniel's dream] a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven	Here equated to a "watcher," or a divine being privileged to dwell in Yahweh's presence
Dan 4:17	The sentence is by the decree of the watchers and the demand by the word of the holy ones	Again equated to a "watcher," these beings are in some sense responsible for the decree made by Yahweh against Nebuchadnezzar
Dan 8:13	Then I heard a holy one speak, and another holy one said unto the one who spoke	These two beings both appear to be functioning as good messengers of Yahweh sent to instruct Daniel

"Sons of god/s"

The phrase "sons of the God/gods" is used several times in the Old Testament

to refer to beings of a heavenly, divine nature. The precise phraseology varies somewhat in

the Hebrew: Gen 6:2, 4 and Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 read בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים ("sons of God"); Ps 82:6

reads בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן ("sons of the Most High"); Pss 29:1 and 89:7 read בְּנֵי אֵלִים ("sons of the

Mighty"); Dan 3:25 reads (Aramaic) בַּר־אֱלָהִין ("son of the gods"). In itself, the phrase

need not infer some actual progeny of the gods or of God; it should be taken in the

common Semitic usage of "son" in which the being is thought of in terms of membership

of a class or group.[44] This would mean that a "son of God/god" is a being that belongs to

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[44]So the "sons of the prophets" (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3). The phrase can even be used for inanimate objects, as in Jonah 4:10, where reference is made to a gourd that "came up in a night" (בִּן־לַיְלָה), or to be classified as temporal and not lasting more than a night.

the divine realm or, in the most simple of terms, is itself a "god" or a "deity."[45] In time

these Hebrew בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים will often be translated as Greek ἄγγελοι;[46] but, within the

Hebrew Bible, it appears that we must once again consider the evidence for divine beings in

a similar class with (but in subordination to[47]) Yahweh.

There are several texts in the Old Testament which describe the privilege and

function of these beings. Psalm 82:6 makes the identity of the "sons of God/Most High"

explicitly clear ("I said, 'You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High'"

[בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם]);[48] they are, in the estimation of the speaker (understood to be Yahweh,

their creator and judge, v. 7), אֱלֹהִים.[49] Yet this poem stands as the most vivid description of

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[45]Byrne, *Sons of God*, 10; Cooke, *Son(s) of the God(s)*, 24. Byrne further proposes, in view that the "son" element in the title seems to designate belonging to a class, that it is best to use "son of the gods" (i.e., class of being that reflects others in the same class) rather than "son of God" if one wants to honor the original intention of the phrase. But, to be clear once again, Byrne is happiest to translate this phrase as "deity," leaving out any idea of progeny or familial relationships.

[46]Philip S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6," *JJS* 23 (1972): 60-71; note the LXX of Job 1:6 and 2:1 (οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ) and 38:7, as well as Dan 3:25 (ἀγγέλου θεοῦ). See also, in extra-biblical sources, *Jub* 5:1ff; *1 Enoch* 6-7; Philo, *Gig.* 6ff; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.73; Targum to Pss 29:1; 82:6; 89:7 and to Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7.

[47]Cooke argues strongly for species similarity in the use of "son" but also holds that its usage may combine a secondary idea of subordination along with the primary idea of association. Cooke, *Son(s) of the God(s)*, 24.

[48]While Jesus' use of this Psalm (John 10:33-36) cannot be used to determine the original meaning of Ps 82, his appeal to this passage needs to be considered. I agree with Anthony Hanson ("John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII," *NTS* 11 [1965]: 160) that, in the context of John's rehearsal of Jesus' citation of this passage, Jesus was aggressively confronting his enemies with evidence that he should be considered God, or the son of God. Just how Jesus used Psalm 82 remains the question.
    J. H. Neyrey ("'I Said: You Are Gods': Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *JBL* 108 [1989]: 647-63) reflects the opinion of James Ackerman ("The Rabbinic Interpretation of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," *HTR* 59 [1966]:186-91) that the meaning of John 10 should be based on the belief that the אֱלֹהִים of Psalm 82 were human judges in the land of Israel. This idea is strongly reflected in later rabbinic tradition (e.g., b. Ber. 6a; Midr. Ps. 82 [see W. G. Braude, *The Midrash on the Psalms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 59-60]. A related view would be to say that the אֱלֹהִים of Ps 82 were the Israelites at Sinai after they had received the law ("The idea was that the mere reception of the Law raised Israel to the status of gods" [Hanson, "John's Citation," 160]; so also the opinion of C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 384-85). I maintain, however, that these writers are not seriously considering whether plural (spirit) אֱלֹהִים are the subjects of Yahweh's condemnation in Ps 82. Neyrey ("You Are Gods," 653), for instance, spends virtually no time with Ps 82 before defending the assertion that "If Scripture was not in error calling mortals 'gods,' (Ps. 82:6), then neither is there error in calling the one whom God consecrated and sent into the world 'the Son of God' (10:35-36). Hanson ("John's Citation," 160) never even considers the possibility of spiritual אֱלֹהִים in Ps 82 before moving to his discussion of John 10.
    J. A. Emerton ("Some New Testament Notes," *JTS* 11 [1960]: 329-32) had earlier argued that Jesus' use of Ps 82 could be based on the idea that these אֱלֹהִים were "superhuman beings to whom the nations were allotted (Deut 4:19)." He believed that these "angels" (ibid., 330), however, were not the basis

coming judgment against these beings in the Hebrew Bible. Yahweh's position is noted in the midst of the אֱלֹהִים in v. 1, which remains our best clue as to the identity of the "sons" of v. 6. This corresponds exactly to the other Israelite depictions of the position of Yahweh in council scenes (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6:1-2; Pss 29; 89:6-9; Job 1–2). Yahweh is clearly the central אֱלֹהִים in the assembly, having taken his place as judge and leader.[50] As we shall see below, Yahweh's pronouncements (unlike those of other gods) are always considered right and proper; he honors the pure in heart, judging in defense of the oppressed and poor (e.g., Pss 9:8-9; 74:21; 76:10; 96:10, 13; 98:9) and the helpless widow and orphan (e.g., Pss 10:14, 18; 68:8; 146:9). But this means he also holds the right to be the judge of the nations

of Jesus' use of the psalm. He concludes that Jesus "does not find an Old Testament text to prove directly that men can be called god. He goes back to fundamental principles and argues, more generally, that the word 'god' can, in certain circumstances, be applied to beings other than God himself, to whom he has committed authority" (ibid.). It is clear in reading Emerton's larger argument that these "beings other than God" are angels and not the אֱלֹהִים of the first commandment.

In keeping with the larger theme of this study, I believe that Jesus referred to the plural (spiritual) אֱלֹהִים of Ps 82 to logically argue for his right to claim deity. When Jesus began, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"'? (John 10:34-37) he immediately disarmed any claim of blasphemy against him. A rough paraphrase of 10:34-36 could have been understood to mean: "Think about it; Yahweh talked to plural gods in the Old Testament [v. 34], even calling them by such a title. How can I be blaspheming Yahweh if I claim to be bear a title which even *he said existed*—and gave to beings [v. 35] which are not sanctified as I am [v. 36] and which were not sent into the world as I am [v. 36]?" Jesus' claim to deity would be intact, therefore, and even be strengthened because it could be based upon a specific Old Testament text which could not be refuted by a careful Jew (10:35).

[49]Because אֱלֹהִים itself does not carry a simple definition, three major views have surfaced in consideration of who these "sons of the Most High" are in this Psalm: 1) they are Israelite rulers and judges; 2) they are the rulers and judges of the nations; and 3) they are heavenly beings who are found in the presence of Yahweh. For a full overview of these positions, see James S. Ackerman, "An Exegetical Study of Psalm 82" (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 1966), 1-78, and H.-W. Jüngling, *Der Tod der Götter* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969), 11-37. Present scholarship appears committed to the third option. Despite the problems or uncertainties involved, the setting of the Psalm is clearly that of the divine council, which moves most commentators to this view. See Lowell K. Handy, "Sounds, Words, and Meanings in Psalm 82," *JSOT* 47 (1990): 90, n. 9; C. H. Gordon further argues that humans are never called "gods" in the Old Testament: C. H. Gordon, "*'Lhym'* in Its Reputed Meaning of *Rulers, Judges*," *JBL* 54 (1935); for examples of support for the two previous views, see Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 167; Charles A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1907), 215; A. T. Hanson, "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII," *NTS* 11 (1965): 158-61; J. H. Neyrey, "'I Said: You Are Gods': Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *JBL* 108 (1989): 647-63.

[50]For discussion on the importance of terminology related to "standing" in the council, see Cross, ""Council of Yahweh," 274, n. 3; Jacobsen, "Democracy," 401, n. 24.

and their gods (Pss 75:5-9; 76:8-10). Our discussion concerning the judgment of the gods will be developed further in chapter 3.

Job 1:6 offers an interesting scene in which Yahweh is presented as the king of the gods while holding session in their presence: "Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) came to present themselves before Yahweh, that Satan also came among them" (cf. 2:1). The gods here "station themselves" (לְהִתְיַצֵּב עַל־יְהוָה), as courtiers before the king. In Akkadian the term *manzaz pani* ("one who stands before [the king]") is the designation of a royal official.[51] The satan figure appears in a clear-cut role as one of the members of the council awaiting his place in the proceedings. It is important to this council scene, when looking back upon it from the end of the book (42:11), that the satan figure is never mentioned again after 2:7. His role is that of subservience to Yahweh's will. Janzen is content to call him "the eyes and ears of the monarch,"[52] with Andersen adding "the terrible Satan is only another of the sons of God" who was found among them and partnered in their cause under Yahweh's kingship.[53]

The larger context of Job 38:7 ("When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God [בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים] shouted for joy") is the creation of the world, which gives rise to the likely meaning that this brief statement is the celebration of the heavenly court at the completion of the earth's construction.[54] It recalls the exaltation of wisdom over the inhabited earth which Yahweh created with her guidance (Prov 8:30-1). The parallelism to the stars is not due to astral mythology as much as the suspected abode of the gods (cf. Gen 2:1).

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[51]So Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1973), 9.

[52]J. Gerald Janzen, *Job*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr. (Atlanta: Knox, 1985), 39.

[53]Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. Donald J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 82.

[54]Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 537.

Psalm 29 sounds very similar to other poems written in the ancient Near East which speak of a god defeating a foe and thereby acquiring dominion. Verses 1-2 picture Yahweh being installed in his new position while being lauded by a chorus of voices: "Ascribe unto Yahweh, O ye sons of the mighty (בְּנֵי אֵלִים), ascribe unto Yahweh glory and strength; ascribe unto Yahweh the glory due unto his name; worship Yahweh in holy array." Most commentators are content to regard this hymn as of the same order as its cultural counterparts and as being somewhat the typical "hymn of laudation"—though now it is used to denote the power and position of Yahweh.[55]

To say this song was merely "borrowed" is not necessary, though it may indeed have been; either way, it evidenced the desire to ascribe to Yahweh what neighboring nations ascribed to lesser deities. For the Israelite it was Yahweh, not El, that was king within the heavenly realm. What better way, in fact, to praise one's God than to give him the glory which had previously been attributed to another? In this case it appears the אֱלֹהִים surrounding Yahweh's own throne are invited to extol the only true power in the universe and thereby clarify the position of Yahweh both in heaven and on earth. The vivid description of Yahweh's prowess in storm and tempest (vv. 3-9) should probably be regarded as the actual words which the lesser gods are invited to recite—and not merely the words of the poet.

We have noted Ps 89:6-7 earlier as definitive evidence that a host of beings are found to be sharing the intimate presence of Yahweh and that their chief function is to accomplish the will of their Creator ("For who in the skies can be compared unto Yahweh?

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[55]Frank Moore Cross, "Notes on a Canaanite Psalm in the Old Testament," *BASOR* 117 (1950): 21; Theodor H. Gaster, "Psalm 29," *JQR* 37 (1946-7): 62. It is now commonly recognized that the Babylonian poem *Enuma Elish*—the so-called "Epic of Creation"—is really the cult-myth of the New Year Festival, as part of the ceremonies of which it was recited (A. Pallis, "The Babylonian Akitu Festival" [1926], 221ff, 249-306). The sixth tablet of the poem relates how, following his victory over the monster Tiamat, the god Marduk was acclaimed king of the divine hosts and how he received the adoration of his subjects. Likewise, in Hittite myth, the annual Puruli festival held in the spring detailed with the triumph of the storm god (aided by the mortal hero, Hupasiyas) over a dragon (James B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950], 125ff.). Once again, as with Marduk earlier, the god was conducted ceremoniously to his throne and there enthroned.

Who among the sons of the mighty [בְּנֵי אֵלִים] is like unto Yahweh, a God very terrible in the council of the holy ones, And to be feared above all them that are round about him?"). The title בְּבְנֵי אֵלִים may be translated as "sons of the mighty" or "sons of god," in either case denoting their class similarity to Yahweh. They are, in short, deities. But, to underscore the purpose of the Psalm, their status as deity should in no way confuse the issue of who possesses true or real might. These "sons of the mighty" are not יִדְמֶה לַיהוָה ("like Yahweh") in that they are not נַעֲרָץ ("terrible") nor to be נוֹרָא ("feared"). They are, from beginning to end, incomparable to Yahweh.

Daniel 3:25 is a noteworthy text, not only for its interesting storyline, but in consideration of the speaker. "[Nebuchadnezzar] answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of god (לְבַר־אֱלָהִין)." We could assume that Nebuchadnezzar had not taken a course in Israelite religion, nor had he cared to develop his theology within the creedal boundaries of an intentional Israelite monotheism. But his frantic admission that a "son of the gods" was present in the furnace with three humans (who by his own admission served "the most high god" [3:26]) offers privileged insight to this king's theology and cosmology. In his opinion the god of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had "sent" (שְׁלַח, 3:28)[56] a divine being—in this case a בַּר־אֱלָהִין— to spare their lives. In being sent, this אֱלֹהִים-class being was functioning as a מַלְאָךְ. It is reasonable to assume that if this אֱלֹהִים had not been sent he would not have been called a מַלְאָךְ.[57]

Much attention has been given to the identity of the sons of God in Genesis 6. The story is one of the most intriguing in the Hebrew Bible: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that

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[56]Cf. the storylines of other divine council settings (e.g., 1 Kgs 22, Job 1–2, Isa 6) in which a being is commissioned and sent by Yahweh (also cf. the use of "sent" in such texts as Dan 6:22; 1 Chr 21:15, 27; 2 Chr 32:21).

[57]"The primary function of a *malak* is as the herald, the messenger who delivers the decree of Yahweh" (Mullen, *Divine Council*, 199).

the sons of God (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took

them wives of all that they chose" (6:1-2; cf. v.4). We have saved this text for last when

trying to defend the deity status of the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament because, for the

purposes of this study, nothing would be lost if we were to discover that the sons of God in

this episode were human beings. In one sense this text is not important to our study. It may

prove to be an interesting text, but it is not a pivotal one. Add to this that the main argument

for finding divine beings in Gen 6 usually revolves around how the phrase בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים is

used elsewhere in the Old Testament—and it will immediately appear as if we are presup-

posing what we are trying to prove. It goes without saying, in other words, that a study such

as this will lean in favor of finding divine beings in Gen 6 precisely because it has so

fiercely fought for the divine status of these beings elsewhere. That being said, three main

interpretations have surfaced in the literature regarding the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים of Gen 6:1-4.

One, these are the Sethites (Gen 5:1, 3), an interpretation which would then find

the "daughters of men" to be those of the Cainite line.[58] My main objection to this view

has to do with the absence of the phrase "sons of God" in connection to a collective term

for the Sethites, whether in these chapters or elsewhere.

Two, these are dynastic rulers who, as oriental despots, established royal harems

by force or practiced indiscriminate rape. A sustainable objection to this view is the rare (if

ever) use of בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים for a human king in the ancient Near East.[59]

Three, these are heavenly beings (anachronistically given the name "angels" by

most commentators) who came to earth and cohabited with earthly women. In favor of this

view is the consistent use of the term בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים for the heavenly court that surrounds

Yahweh (see above). Its principal objections center on the question of whether divine beings

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[58]For a history and defense of this view, see Alexander, "Targummim," 60-71, and L. R. Wickham, "The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men: Genesis VI 2 in Early Christian Exegesis," in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. James Barr (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 135-47.

[59]See David J. A. Clines, "The Significance of the 'Sons of God' Episode in the Context of 'Primeval History'," *JSOT* 13 (1979): 34.

can in fact procreate (cf. Matt 22:30) and why God would punish mankind for the sin of

divine beings. Both objections, it will be argued in chapter three, do not withstand further

clarification, especially as one examines Old Testament cosmology more closely.

It appears that the majority of scholarly opinion supports this last identification,

though there is remaining disagreement concerning just what kind of divine being is in view.

The principal arguments for this view follow both a textual and theological path.

First, it appears we must acknowledge that, from Canaanite texts discovered at

Ras Shamra, the concept of being a "son of God" was a regular means of describing the

members of the pagan pantheon. This need not argue, as many have done, for the idea that

the Hebrew Bible adopted and adapted the entire Gen 6 story from an earlier mythology.[60]

It may just as strongly argue that belief in a pantheon-of-sorts was shared by the biblical

writer. Our earlier appeals (from Psalm 29, for example) stand on this point.

Second, the phrase בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים, as has been argued in this study, speaks of divine

beings in many other Old Testament texts. It is not necessary to repeat this argument here.

Third, the contrast between "sons of God" and "daughters of men" in 6:2

suggests, through the use of the generic term אָדָם in both verses 1 and 2, the difference

between those who were not human and those who were.[61] As such it would be more

natural to read the "daughters" of both verses as referring to the same group: women born

to all men without distinction.

Fourth, the notion of sexual relations between gods and humans appears

frequently in the mythological texts of the ancient Near East.[62] That is, mythologies are not

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[60]E.g., Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament: A Comparative Study with Chapters from Sir James G. Frazer's* Folklore in the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 79; Byrne, *Sons of God*, 11; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 372.

[61]Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 44-45.

[62]See *ANET*, 266; Walter Beyerlin, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 158; J. C. L. Gibson, ed., *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1978), 123-27.

the cause for concern here and may even testify to the reality of the story. It would be conceptually possible for humanity to keep alive this original story of divine involvement in the affairs of humanity, in the end keeping it as history on some levels and spinning it into mythology on others.

Fifth, the earliest interpretations of this episode heavily favor viewing these בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים as divine beings. *First Enoch* 6–11 (cf. 64:1-2; 69:1-15; 85–88; 106:13-17) is an elaborate midrash on Gen 6:1-4, and it set the tone for the next three centuries by giving its view of the coming of the gods to earth.[63] Thus such books as *Jubilees*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 2 Enoch, 2 Baruch*, and the works of Josephus and Philo carry along this interpretation as well.[64] A strong hint of this view is found at Qumran.[65] The church fathers nearly unanimously favored this interpretation as well, up to the period of Augustine.[66]

I will allow the literature to speak for itself in defense of other views of the identity of the בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים.[67] I agree with Van Gemeren and Newman, however, that the sweetest draw to any position other than the divine being view is simply that it avoids the divine being view.[68] In simplest terms, it sounds just plain weird. Page admits, even after espousing the divine being view along with "an evangelical commitment to the truthfulness

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[63]See Paul D. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977); G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977); C. Molenberg, "A Study of the Roles of Shemihaza and Asael in Enoch 6–11," *JJS* 35 (1984).

[64]Alexander, *Targummim*, 60-71.

[65]CD 2:17-27; 1QapGen 2.

[66]Robert C. Newman, "The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4," *GTJ* 5 (1984).

[67]John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 243-49; L. Eslinger, "A Contextual Identification of the *Bene Ha Elohim* and *Benoth Ha Adam* in Genesis 6:1-4," *JSOT* 13 (1979); A. R. Millard, "A New Babylonian 'Genesis' Story," *TynBul* 18 (1967); L. Birney, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 6:1-4," *JETS* 13 (1970); Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 80.

[68]Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?" *WTJ* 43 (1981): 320; Newman, "Ancient Exegesis," 35.

of Scripture" that "it is difficult to accept that angels actually intermarried with human women," and that he understands why modern writers often "have difficulty believing that such an unusual event really happened."[69]

In conclusion, the phrase "son/s of the God/gods" is used several times in the Old Testament to denote divine beings who enjoy direct contact and relationship with Yahweh. Yahweh's relationship to "sons of God" is never described as literal paternity, as the "son" title remains one of classification only. That being said, the Hebrew text openly describes beings who are to be classified with Yahweh in some real and meaningful sense. They are *like* him, or in a similar class with him. We have used the phrase "species equality" to describe this likeness.

There yet remains a firm distinction between the sons of God and Yahweh himself. Only one being among the others is to be considered "the Most High." Whatever species equality is shared between the creator-god and the created gods, they do not share personal equality. This distinction can also be noted between the sons of God on the one hand and the "sons of men" on the other.[70] This is not to say, however, that sonship to God is never used to describe a human's relationship to God.[71] In such instances a similar usage of *classification* still holds, as in ancient Near Eastern people describing themselves as "belonging" to their god (cf. Num 21:29; Deut 8:5) and thus being recognized as children (cf. Exod 4:22).

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[69]Page, *Powers of Evil*, 51.

[70]Byrne (13, 42, 62, 63) argues strongly, especially in light of Ps 82:6-7 and Ezek 28:1-10, that the most meaningful and consistent difference between "sons of men" (i.e., mankind) and the "sons of the gods" deals with mortality, or death above and beyond the physical sense. "In short, it may be said that around sonship of God there hovers the idea of immunity from death. This immunity does not preclude suffering, or even physical death; but it involves an ultimate destiny to preservation, to life with God, which human oppressors are compelled to recognize and which even spiritual powers must respect. God's 'sons' are those who enjoy or are destined to enjoy eternal life with him" (63).

[71]"Although directly indicating a relationship between the individual and the deity, they seem to rest on the idea of belonging to a tribe or clan of which the god is the father. The relatively few traces of this idea which are to be found in the Old Testament show that it was not one which Israel found particularly congenial" (ibid., 13).

It will be noted below that the use of the term "son(s) of (the) god(s)" with reference to heavenly beings will continue into the intertestamental period. The Greek language, however, will be increasingly content, when appealing to an earlier Hebrew text, to use the term ἄγγελος for both the entire phrase "son of god" and the single word "son."[72] Thus, coming into the New Testament, the English word "angel" will usually have a broader meaning than the Hebrew מַלְאָךְ.

Conclusion: Monotheism as a Means of Comparison

With all that has been said above it becomes obvious that the writers of the Old Testament witnessed to a religion which demanded Israel's exclusive devotion to Yahweh. Yet we are also left to affirm the face value of Moses' statement, "Who is like thee among the gods?" (Exod 15:11). These are not contradictory emphases. The expected and required answer to Moses' question was that no other god could bear up under comparison to Yahweh, and that none should even be included in the comparison. But other gods exist, that is clear. "Otherwise there can be no comparison to demonstrate the incomparability of Yahweh."[73]

Monotheism is regularly used to describe a religion in which the adherents express belief in the existence and veneration of only one god.[74] Current scholarly opinion

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[72]E.g., *1 En* 6:2; 13:8; 14:3; Jos. *Ant* 1.73; Philo *Gig* 6ff. "One must conclude that in the Jewish milieu into which Christianity came to birth the use of the phrase 'sons of God (the gods)' to refer to angels would have been in many circles fully acceptable" (ibid., 23).

[73]David Noel Freedman, "'Who Is Like Thee among the Gods?' the Religion of Early Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 328.

[74]The relationship of monotheism to a broader reading of the Old Testament has largely been ignored. Most treatments, instead, view the development of what J. Sanders called "the canon's tendency to monotheize" as an aspect of evolutionary Israelite history and have kept the discussion from influencing more theological issues (James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. G. Coats and B. Long [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 40). Note how the importance of monotheism is downplayed and sometimes even avoided in such works as H. G. Reventlow, *Problems in Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); and Ronald Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (Atlanta: Knox, 1978). Von Rad concurs with "Monotheism as such was not a thing in which Israel of herself would have taken any particular interest—she did not measure herself by it or make it a touchstone, as she did with the first commandment" Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 211.

disputes that early Israel either was taught or believed in monotheism as generally defined,[75] but rather (and the range of belief on this is considerable) that it became monotheistic at some point in practice and theory.[76] A developmental or evolutionary view of Israelite religion generally believes that Israel was oriented toward polytheism until the end of the monarchy, meaning that Yahweh was regarded and worshipped as a national deity.[77] In this view, represented by Albright, the Mosaic period offered an initial impulse toward monotheism in Israel, though it did not directly teach it as such.[78] Pfeiffer believed monotheism is traceable only back to the sixth century, where it is visible in later Isaiah.[79] Wellhausen was the most prominent spokesperson for the view that Israelite monotheism developed in the eighth century, particularly in the work of the prophetic voices of that period.[80]

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[75]"It is highly doubtful whether Israel's faith in the Mosaic period should be called monotheistic" (Bernard W. Anderson, "God, OT Views Of," in *IDB* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962], 2:427); agreeing with this assessment is F.-L. Hossfeld, "Einheit und Einzigkeit Gottes im Frühen Jahwismus," in *Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinen Gott*, ed. M. Böhenke and H. Heinz, Elemente Einer Trinitarischen Theologie: Festschrift zum 65 Geburtstag von Wilhelm Breuning (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1985) and F. Stolz, "Monotheismus in Israel," in *Monotheismus in alten Israel und seiner Umwelt*, ed. O. Keel (Fribourg: Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1980). It should be noted that there remains a lively problem of finding a suitable definition of monotheism to which scholars can agree.

[76]Vriezen's view is indicative of many: "The absolute character of [an Israelite's pre-monarchial relationship to Yahweh] put out of court all foreign gods and forms of religion, except for those given by Yahweh, and entails that Yahweh exclusively is the God of Israel and of the individual Israelite; but it has not yet come to mean that he is God 'pure and simple' or is acknowledged as 'God alone,' in an absolute and universal sense" (Vriezen, *Religion*, 81). This, for Vriezen and many others, will come during the period of the latter prophets.

[77]Tigay figures that of the 592 known persons between the eighth and sixth centuries B. C., 94.1 percent of those who names bore a theophoric element were Yahwistic, while only 5.9 percent contained a pagan feature. While one would hope that this figure signified the serious worship of Yahweh from family to family, it likely only signifies a nationalistic fervor within an otherwise polytheistic world (Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 31 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986]).

[78]Albright, *Stone Age*, 27.

[79]R. H. Pfeiffer, *Religion in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 123.

[80]Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel. With a Reprint of the Article "Israel" from the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh: Black, 1885), 57.

The poetry reflected in Isaiah 40–55, for instance, may reflect what one would have expected for someone who believed that Yahweh was the only God of the cosmos. As the nation of Israel faced the crisis of impending desolation, Smith believes that there arose a "newly important element in the situation: the demand that all Israel worship Yahweh and Yahweh alone."[81] Over time, this Yahweh-alone party became in effect a new kind of religion wherein the people "united essentially by its agreement to worship Yahweh alone, united by its contempt for all other gods, a contempt soon expressed as denial of their existence."[82] Smith is not alone in viewing Israel's trend toward monotheism through the lens of evolution,[83] moving from one (even sectarian) small group through Israel as a whole, finally evidencing itself in the canonical writings of the later prophets.

I. P. Culianu proposes that coming out of the intertestamental period Yahweh and his heavenly host were understood by what he calls Jewish ditheism.[84] It allowed for the binitarian worship of both Yahweh and his "lieutenant," who was later (mistakenly, in Culianu's mind) credited with the creation of the world in Gnostic thought. This "lieutenant" was considered the chief proprietor of the gods assigned to the nations, receiving the title, "Prince of the World." Because of this being's association with the evil empire of

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[81]Mark Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 23.

[82]Ibid., 56.

[83]Lang builds on this approach by speaking of the coming of a Yahweh-alone group as a "chain of revolutions" (B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology* [Sheffield: Almond, 1983], 56). Vriezen offers this possibility: ". . . The unity, the majesty, the matchlessness of Yahweh [found] such emphatic expression that even these last, lingering remembrances of extra-biblical notions cease[d] to exist. Besides all this, even in the other forms of representation, God in his oneness, his uniqueness, is so completely *other* in character, in his mode of being-the-God-of-Israel, his all-controlling, all-governing relationship to this nation, his moral and supernal qualities, his faculties standing over and above the creation, his absolute power and holiness, that for the faithful of Israel nothing in the world offers to compare with him. That is why one is forced to say that monotheism in Israel is qualitatively and essentially something different in kind from monarchism, and even from the patheizing monarchism of the ancient East" (Vriezen, *Religion*, 37).

[84]Joan P. Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of Gnostic Dualism," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religion*, ed. R. Van Den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 91.

Rome, however, the "Prince" became identified as the *evil* creator of the world, which set the stage for the infamous Gnostic demiurge.

It is fair, then, to question the use of the term *monotheism* when describing Israel's earliest religion. The repeated use of אֵל, אֱלוֹהַ, and אֱלֹהִים reveal that Israel's God shared a very general title with other pagan deities. Admittedly this constituted, for Israel, "hardly monotheism in any philosophical or strictly rational sense of the term,"[85] yet it honestly described their beliefs. Israel believed their God created and controlled the universe. To make this clear the biblical writers did not attempt to dismiss the existence or reality of rival gods as much as they attached descriptive phrases to the noun אֱלֹהִים. These phrases then served as titles by which God's people came to know him in his unique character and abilities. It was their way of saying, *"Our god is the god which . . . ,"* leaving no room for the worship of rival deities. This reflects what Rowley recommended: "One's religion is to be tested by the character, not merely the number of the gods."[86]

The concern for "one Yahweh" (Deut 6:4) led to the practical necessity for only one legitimate cultic site for his worship (Deut 12). אֶחָד in Deut 6:4 is to be translated and understood as "one" in the sense of unity or singularity of worship form, and not as stressing the existence of one God.[87] One could easily understand the need to achieve cultic purity through cultic unity. The idea was that through the requirement of worship in only one legitimate cultic site Israel would recognize that it was bound and obligated to Yahweh alone. It would no longer be said, as horrible as it sounds, "for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah" (Jer 2:28).

If we believe in the existence of more than one אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament, are we prevented from even employing the term *monotheism* in describing Israel's religion? It

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[85]Freedman, "Who Is Like Thee?" 328.

[86]H. H. Rowley, *From Moses to Qumran: Studies in the Old Testament* (New York: Association, 1963), 39.

[87]Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:114.

appears that it all comes down to how one defines the important terms at hand. *Polytheism* is usually described as a religion in which adherents believe in the existence of and venerate a variety of important deities.[88] By this definition ancient Sumerian, American Indian, and Hindu religions would be considered polytheistic—but not Israel, for obvious reasons.

Henotheism is a more complex term, often to be confused with monolatry. Albright's description, though dated, is still often used: "henotheism is the belief in or worship of one god without denying the existence of others."[89] *Monolatry* is typically defined in a very similar manner. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines monolatry as "the worship of one god where other gods may be supposed to exist."[90] Both terms seem to be used in current scholarship to mean that one main deity is venerated but the existence of other deities is not denied. In sum, it does not seem to make a great deal of difference which term is used.[91]

It thus appears we need to standardize a new term in defining a theology proper of the Old Testament. The case will be made in the next chapter that a faithful Israelite, if asked, could speak of both one god *and* many. It was a matter of emphasis. It was true, he could assert, that one god among the many commanded sole worship; but (and he would draw emphasis here) this one god was so convincing in demonstrating his desert of worship that it had become almost impossible to continue to think of the other gods as deserving the title אֱלֹהִים. He could find himself thinking, in a very real way, that there is only one אֱלֹהִים. Yahweh was עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים, "above all gods" (Pss 95:3, 96:4, 1 Chr 16:25). He stood apart,

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[88]David L. Petersen, "Israel and Monotheism: The Unfinished Agenda," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 97.

[89]Albright, *Stone Age*, 192.

[90]Lang (35) believes monotheism is best identified in the writings of Deutero-Isaiah, which only comes after a time of "temporary monolatry," in which God is appealed to in times of crisis. After the crisis passed, God was continued to be worshipped beyond the actual crisis situation. Moreover, since Yahweh was an unusual god in the ancient Near East in that he had no kin, no spouse, and no parent, Lang is able to turn out the helpful phrase "The lonely Yahweh becomes the only Yahweh" (20).

[91]Petersen, "Israel and Monotheism," 98.

greater, and more feared than all other divine beings. Having said that, however, one had to admit that Yahweh was a unique אֱלֹהִים among other, real אֱלֹהִים.[92] In looking for a title that could handle this sort of theology proper it appears we need to recommend a monotheism-of-sorts that is built on the careful principle of contrariety, where something can be said to both be and not be. This brand of monotheism must be able to admit to the biblical evidence of plural אֱלֹהִים while honoring their punished role in the plan of the Creator, the one true אֱלֹהִים. *Comparable monotheism* in the end adequately describes an Israelite religion that took the first commandment seriously, spanning across both the Jewish and the Christian faiths. Just how Yahweh compared to the other gods is the topic of our next chapter.

Exodcursus: Common Objections to the Exodistence of Plural *Elohim*

Is Yahweh said to be the "only God"?

We have stated previously that no careful argument exists in the Hebrew Bible for the non-existence of the gods of the first commandment. Taking this into account, there are still some texts which sound as though Yahweh exists alone, or without any hint of competition with other אֱלֹהִים. Later Isaiah is representative of some of the kinds of statements we see scattered across the entire Old Testament: "There is no God else besides me" (אֵין־עוֹד אֱלֹהִים מִבַּלְעָדָי, Isa 45:21); "I am God and there is none else" (אֲנִי־אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד, Isa 45:22); "I am Yahweh, and there is none else" (אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד, Isa 45:6). Do texts such as these teach, as Arnold believes, that "all the rest [of the gods of the Old Testament] are phonies"?[93]

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[92]For the scholar dedicated to an evolutionary view of Israelite religion, he has no real answer to the distinction between Israel's Yahweh and all the gods that came before him. "Yahweh the redeemer of a new people from bondage in Egypt is clearly new. So also is a high God without a consort, offspring, or heirs. Equally astonishing is the absence, even more the absolute prohibition, of images of the deity" (Freedman, 329). In the end Freedman attributes such religious and cultic divergence to Moses.

[93]Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 56.

In considering the meaning of these phrases it is necessary to follow Isaiah's larger context. The prophet's appeal to the nation of Israel appears desperate—possibly beyond that of any other extended discussion in the Old Testament—in that Yahweh's glory has been under attack for several generations of unfaithful Israelites (cf. 42:8, "my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images"). Their claims of Yahweh's incompetence had gone on long enough, and we could expect Yahweh's response needed to be swift and sharp.

Thus it is in context of the incomparability of Yahweh to the created gods that Israel's prophets were found to mock the foreign deities as לֹא אֱלֹהִים ("no gods," Hos 8:6). Yahweh himself could say, "there is 'no god *with* me'" (אֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי אֲנִי, Deut 32:39) as he was attempting to help the supplicant admit "there is no god *like* you" (אֵין־כָּמוֹךָ אֱלֹהִים, 1 Kgs 8:23). The comparison, in the end, demonstrated incomparability. Once it was determined who the real God was—the one who created all the others and who ruled over them—this kind of language was never far away. The faithful Israelite could live among the many gods of a foreign territory and still acknowledge, "there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם־בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, 2 Kgs 5:15).

Any contention regarding the existence of plural אֱלֹהִים seems to be eased when it is recognized that these beings have been afforded a title which, in comparison to the Creator, they do not deserve. In this sense they are said to be "no" gods. This play on words resembles what Hosea said about very real people who had lost a similar title: "And Yahweh said, Call his name Lo-ammi; for you are not my people [לֹא עַמִּי], and I will not be your God" (Hos 1:9). They were God's people in one sense, but were not in another; the writer was able to make his case by means of emphasis (cf. Hos 1:10). The essence of comparable monotheism, then, is the ability to speak of both the strength of these spirit creatures (אֱלֹהִים or strong ones) as well as their lack of strength in light of their status below that of their Creator and sustainer. Compared to him they are not gods.[94]

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[94]Phrases that would defend an exclusivistic monotheism are therefore often found in context of a comparison to Yahweh: Deut 32:39: See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill,

Are the gods to be understood as angels?

We will reserve our longer reply to this question for chapter 5, where it will be argued that the Greek word ἄγγελος generally subsumed the Hebrew title אֱלֹהִים. Regarding the Old Testament, it will also be argued in chapter 5 that the terms אֱלֹהִים and מַלְאָךְ functioned separately. While the former word described the nature of a being (ie, "strong one") the latter word described the functional purpose of a being (i.e., a messenger) irrespective of specific virtues or limitations. This distinction in meaning was noted in scholarly literature over half a century ago.[95] In the Hebrew Bible a מַלְאָךְ may be an אֱלֹהִים (e.g., Gen 28:12; 35:7; also cf. Judg 13:21-22) and an אֱלֹהִים may function as a מַלְאָךְ (Dan 3:25, 28); but this is not to say that the terms are interchangeable. As we will notice in our next chapter, both the Ugaritic and biblical heirarchies functioned within the larger confines of אֱלֹהִים-class beings. Even "messengers" were to be considered divine, with no less status than an אֱלֹהִים.

It is commonplace, however, for modern interpreters to think backwards, or place the title "angel" upon beings which were, in the Old Testament, designated as אֱלֹהִים or אֱלֹהִים-class beings. Yet if an interpreter is willing to think of an אֱלֹהִים as an "angel," it stands to reason that he would be willing to identify the angel as an אֱלֹהִים. This is an honest trade, one would think. But interpreters are not so willing. As we noted at the beginning of this study, Paul's powers are commonly regarded by modern interpreters as "angels" or

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and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; And there is none that can deliver out of my hand; Judg 10:13, 14: Yet you have forsaken me, and served other gods: therefore I will save you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress; 2 Kgs 19:15: And Hezekiah prayed before Yahweh, and said, O Yahweh, the God of Israel, that sits above the cherubim, you are the God, even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth; 19:19: Now therefore, O Yahweh our God, save us, I beseech you, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, Yahweh are God alone; Ps 97:9: For you, Yahweh, are most high above all the earth: you are exalted far above all gods; Jer 2:28: But where are your gods that you have made? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble: for according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah; Jer 10:5: They are like a palm-tree, of turned work, and do not speak: they must be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.

[95]"We may call [אֱלֹהִים] angels, but that term only describes or defines their activity or function, whereas their classification is the same as that of Yahweh: they belong to the category of *elohim*, as contrasted with earthlings, who belong to the class called *adam*" (Freedman, "'Who Is Like Thee?'" 328; this theme is repeated by Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 158-59).

"angelic beings" while making no concerted effort to identify them with the first commandment. Yet that is precisely what the logic calls for if they are to make this association. We conclude, then, that the created gods are not angels since the developed meaning of the English "angel" was not available to the writers of the Old Testament.

<p align="center">Are the gods to be understood as demons?</p>

In the Old Testament's portrayal of hostile evil powers, there is a severe lack of interest in demons. The usual explanation for this relationship of the Hebrew Bible to demonology is that the speculation regarding evil spirits came to bloom only under the influence of foreign ideas, especially under the impact of the Persian dualistic systems of Zoroastrianism and Zurvanism.[96] A belief in evil spirits was widespread in the Old Testament to be sure, as numerous warnings prohibit participation with such beings and their prophetic voices (Deut 13:5; Jer 29:8-9). Yet demons themselves are rarely mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in comparison to other contemporary religions, and even then the figure of Satan is handled only marginally.

The beings known in the Old Testament as "demons" are notoriously hard to define.[97] Paige believes the LXX used δαιμόνιον to designate heathen gods, as "an epithet of contempt."[98] Hack believes it carried no specific meaning of "evil" as much as it simply meant "god."[99] When Trevor Ling enumerated the references or allusions to the

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[96]Hyunju Bae, "The Symbolism of Evil Power in 1 and 2 Corinthians: Power, Wisdom, and Community" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2001), 1-2.

[97]"The original Greek meaning of *daimon* is, broadly speaking, the special manifestation of supernatural power and not necesarily carrying the connotation of evil" (Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 26, n. 42).

[98]Paige, "Demons and Exorcism," 209-10.

[99]Speaking of the classical Greek world which gave way to the LXX, Hack found that "*Daimon*, though often equated with θεός, is often used as the equivalent of 'divine power,' or 'fate,' or 'fortune'" (Roy Kenneth Hack, *Gods in Greek Philosophy to the Time of Socrates* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931], 9). Hack also noted that "Such men [whose power was above the normal human level] were called heroes, a name which in Greek is the regular technical designation of a status which is intermediate between that of an ordinary man and that of a god" (ibid., 16.). Thus the Homeric world did not include gods and angels, but gods and heroes (Walter Friedrich Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, trans. Moses Hadas [New York: Octagon, 1978], 104). See also W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon, 1950), 111.

hostile evil powers in the Hebrew scripture (which were originally E. Langton's findings), he listed demons (שֵׁדִים) as only one of several beings that qualified for admission.[100] It was not long in coming that demons were thought of as fallen supernatural beings who caused physical harm in all sorts of ways. They "tempted people to idolatry, witchcraft, war, and other things which would keep them far from God."[101] These especially ruled over the forces of nature—or so it was thought—and were assumed to live in the heavens.

In the New International Version (Old Testament) the word "demon" only occurs in Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37, where it translates the Hebrew plural שֵׁדִים. The derivation of this term is uncertain, though it may likely come from a root that means "rule."[102] If this is the case, it appears that we are back to the approximate setting of Deuteronomy 32:8-9 (only eight verses away), in which the world was apportioned out to ruling spirits (i.e., בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים, LXX reading).[103]

Thus we have no biblical evidence to say that שֵׁדִים are anything less than אֱלֹהִים-class beings of the Old Testament. To call a שֵׁד a "demon" appears to be the same problem we face in calling an ἄγγελος an "angel;" we necessarily import traditional meaning into the term which the biblical writer could not have known. The common and traditional notion

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Significance of Greek Religion, trans. Moses Hadas [New York: Octagon, 1978], 104). See also W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon, 1950), 111.

[100]In trying to understand what Ling understood a "demon" to be, his list offers very little help since it appeals to the word several times within definitions of other beings. His list of evil spiritual beings includes: 1) the *seraphim*; 2) the *ser'irim* ("demons portrayed as hairy beings") in Lev 17:7; 3) the list of creatures ("goat demons") mentioned in Isa 13:21ff. and 34:14; 4) *Azazel* (Lev 16:8ff.); 5) *Lilith* in Isa 13:21 cf. 34:14; 6) *Deber* (the pestilence) and *keteb* (the destruction) in Ps 91:5; 7) *Alukah* in Prov 30:15, which Langton considers "a vampire-like female demon of the *Lilith* type;" 8) the *shedim* ("demons") in Deut 32:17 and in Ps 106:37; 9) Satan (Trevor Ling, *The Significance of Satan: New Testament Demonology and Its Contemporary Relevance* [London: SPCK, 1961], 3).

[101]Paige, *Demons and Excorcism*, 210.

[102]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 994; Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture, 1952), 59.

[103]"The world was earlier thought of as being administered through gods (in Jewish thought, Deut 32:8) and by subordinate gods, or 'demons' (in Gentile thought)." Berkhof, *Powers*, 74.

of demons being "fallen angels" is unwarranted, therefore, at least from a biblical perspective. They may be much "more" than that. Thus our appeal here is to not downplay the role of the Old Testament שֵׁדִים by passing them off as "mere" demons—all the while not knowing exactly what these beings are.[104] In the end it may be that the created gods of the Old Testament are שֵׁדִים, or that שֵׁדִים are a type of Old Testament god. Until we know more, we would do well to not import any traditional meaning into שֵׁדִים.

Are the gods to be understood as idols?

Closely connected with the first commandment, which speaks of Israel's requirement of spiritual faithfulness to Yahweh, is second commandment that disallowed images (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). This prohibition's importance is signified by its repetition at various points in the written law (Exod 34:17; 20:23; 23:23f.; Lev 19:4; 26:1; Deut 4:16-25; 27:15). Disallowing images "in the form of any figure" (Deut 4:16) included those of Yahweh, of course, though this is never directly stated. It appears Israel did not struggle with idolotrous representations of Yahweh at any time in their history.[105] But their fascination with idols of foreign gods is well-preserved in the bibical record.

A fair question to ask is, "What would cause a thinking person to bow down to a piece of wood?" It seems almost inconceivable that anyone would commit the folly of

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[104]Page (*Powers of Evil*, 68) is representative of the reasoning that often entails the identification of demons in the Old Testament: "The demons of Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 106 are not explicitly identified as fallen angels, and the relationship between fallen angels and demons has been conceived in various ways. It is noteworthy, however, that the application of the label demons to heathen gods is in line with the concept of patron angels. It is especially interesting that the foundational text for the concept of patron angels is Deuteronomy 32:8 in the Song of Moses, where we also find the first occurrence of sed (v. 17)." This reasoning is suffocatingly circular: 1) demons are patron angels because 2) patron angels do the work of demons; 3) demons are therefore not gods because 4) the demons are patron angels. 5) The patron angels are evil, so they must be fallen angels. 6) Demons are therefore not gods but fallen patron angels. This argument is repeated in Arnold (*Powers of Darkness*, 56) even after he admits some twenty pages before that "In the classical era before the New Testament age, the word *daimon* had been used for the gods" (*Powers of Darkness*, 23). Unger, too, admits the difficulty in equating demons to the fallen angel concept but decides to do it anyway (*Demons in the World Today*, 23).

[105]No idols of Yahweh have ever been found, nor do we have any information recommending that an idol of Yahweh was ever placed in the Jerusalem temple. The inscription on a jar which likely reads "Yahweh and his Asherah" found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (50 km north of Kadesh) is indicative of religious synchretism, of course, though this would not constitute a Yahweh idol as such (see Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:110).

cutting an idol out of a tree and then, as Isaiah jests, using the leftover bits of wood for domestic purposes: "He burns part of it in the fire; with part of it he eats meat; he roasts meat, and is satisfied; yea, he warms himself, and says, 'Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire.' And the with the residue he makes a god, even his graven image; he falls down unto it and worships, and prays unto it, and says, 'Deliver me; for you are my god'" (Isa 44:16-17).

It appears that Isaiah is able to approach this situation much the way Paul will handle a similar case later in the city of Corinth (1 Cor 8:4-7). He could, on the one hand, cut through such idolic representations of deity as just a lot of hocus-pocus; the god is no better than wood which is thrown away. But, as in the case of Paul, an idol remained a potential religious threat; otherwise there would be no such warning. So while no god existed within an idol, as both Isaiah and Paul understood, the idol represented an actual god and its close spiritual relation of the god to the worshipper. There was indeed something that went "with" or beyond the idol.

In the Old Testament there are clear indications that an idolic representation of a deity went so far as to make it appear as though the idol was the deity (Gen 31:30, 32; 35:2, 4: "And now, though you need to go, because you sorely long after your father's house, yet why have you *stolen my gods*?" Exod 20:23: "You shall not *make other gods with me*; gods of silver, or gods of gold, you shall not make unto you"). At other times, however, we find compelling evidence to show that, to the ancients, gods and cult statues were two quite separate things[106] (Deut 7:25: The *graven images of their gods* [פְּסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם] you shall burn with fire"). Which was it? Was the idol a god or merely a represention of a god?

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[106]Each of the major deities of the ancient Near East (such as Marduk, Shamash, and Ishtar) had temples in several Mesopotamian cities, each with a cult statue of the deity. Thus one could speak of one deity with his or her many statues. In similar terms, an ancient could speak of a heavenly body—the sun, for instance—as a god, or as an object devoid of divine spirit. For example, the Old Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic distinguishes carefully between Shamash, the god, who is written *Samsu* and is given determinitive for deity, and the sun, the word for which is written *samsum* with final *m* of mimation and is not given the divine determinative (see Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 22).

According to Thorkild Jacobsen, the ancient idol worshipper was able to combine these two strands of thought into one, an approach preserved both in modern Roman Catholic theology and ancient monistic philosophy.[107] Jacobsen recommends on both biblical and extrabiblical accounts that the image represented a favor granted by the god, that it was a sign of a benign and friendly attitude on his part toward the community in which it stood.[108] The idol seemed to be considered a theophany, where a god was allowed to be found and approached.[109] When this god became angry and denied his presence to a community, he let the cult statue of him be lost or transferred elsewhere. In this sense the modern term *transubstantiation* appears fitting, even for Jacobsen, in describing the purely mystical unity that formed between god and idol; the statue mystically became what it represented (the god) without, in any way, limiting the god who all the while remained transcendent. In so "becoming the god" the statue ceased to be merely wood, metal, or stone, and even ceased to be the work of human hands. The idol could still be destroyed, however, without the god being annhilated in any way. Preus agrees with the opinion that "deity dwelt at the time of manifestation within the idol. It was here that the divine aura took possession of a body."[110] The danger appeared obvious, then, to the prophets of Israel: a

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[107]Ibid., 19-23. In determining what is real or unreal, Jacobsen argues, our western practice focuses on the main criteria of coherence. A dream, for instance, may be extemely vivid and the experience may seem very real; if we awake to find that the dream stands in no causal connection with the stream of experience before we went to sleep, however, we dismiss it as unreal. "For the ancients there was no such dismissal. They may have distinguished between being awake and that of being in a dream, but to them the diffference was not a matter of reality as much as degrees of reality" (ibid., 19). Both kinds of experiences were real, but not in the same degree, or with the same kind of staying power. With this philosophical background understood, Jacobsen argues, "There is thus no alternative to the conclusion that the god [such as Shamash] was thought of as in some manner transcendent, not to be equated—as we use the word—with any of the cult furnishings, the sun disk, or the cult statue, nor with the visible sun itself. He was a power above them and beyond them" (ibid., 22).

[108]Ibid., 22. This would make the prophetic argument against idols particularly compelling in that no favor nor any help would be coming from a god that has found disfavor in the eyes of Yahweh (Ps 146:3: "Put not your trust in princes, Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help").

[109]"The god—or rather the specific form of him that was represented in this particular image—was born in heaven, not on earth. In the birth the craftsmen-gods that form an embryo in the womb gave it form. When born in heaven it consented to descend and to 'participate' (in L. Levy-Bruhl's sense) in the image, thus transubstantiating it. The image as such remains a promise, a potential, and an incentive to a theophany, to a divine presence, no more" (ibid., 29).

personal relationship with an idol paralleled a personal relationship with the deity itself. One would even begin to identify the god with the idol.

Hence the Old Testament polemic against idolatry found its meaning in something more than fear of association with inanimate objects. Spiritual gods were very real and had found their way into the hearts and minds of Yahweh's people through their association with pieces of stone and wood and metal. Yet it was this very association which made the polemic so inviting to the Jew who understood the nature of his own God. "For all the gods of the peoples are idols; but Yahweh made the heavens" (1 Chr 16:26). If one thought about it long enough, the scene became almost comical: the foreigner made his god while Yahweh made them both.

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[110]Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:156.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF PLURAL *ELOHIM* OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

For its part, atheism did not appear to be a theoretical or practical alternative for people of the ancient Near East. To hear Jewish literature tell it, the existence of God was contested only by the fool who willfully misused practical reasoning (Ps 10:4; 14:1; Job 2:10). It was the character (and not the existence) of God which was often under fire, as there were some who thought he was powerless to do either good or evil—and therefore guilty of doing nothing at all (Zeph 1:12; Jer 5:12; Prov 19:3). It is in reply to this line of reasoning that we often find the biblical writer appealing to the inherent distinctions between Yahweh and created אֱלֹהִים. In short, the existence of Yahweh and the gods does not appear to draw theological reflection as much as discussions about their character. It is to these reflections of character that we now turn.

We noted in the previous chapter that Canaanite, Phoenician, and early Hebrew sources reveal a similarity in the constitution and function of plural gods. But these depictions of heavenly hierarchies ("pantheons") are by no means exact. Current scholarship is content to assume that wholesale borrowing took place between these ancient cultures, even down to the number and relationship of the ranks or tiers of beings involved.[1] It will be seen that such a view is unfounded, however, since it will require naturalistic assumptions for the

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[1]Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). For a summary version of this idea, see Lowell K. Handy, "Dissenting Deities or Obedient Angels: Divine Hierarchies in Ugarit and the Bible," *BR* 35 (1990): 19-26; for fuller description, see idem, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 65-167.

formation of Israel's religion, theological emendations of the text, and at times circularity of

reasoning.[2]

In the non-biblical sources, the divine council was composed of both major and

minor deities who met to decree the fate of both gods and humans. Their general function

was to aid the high God in warfare, carry out his decrees, to act as his heralds, and to honor

and adore him. It appears that they usually did not have the power to speak for themselves

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[2]Lowell K. Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana Vikander Edelman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 29. Consider, for instance, the very title of this article. Handy argues that Josiah's reforms, among others, must have become "part of the royally patronized religion of Jerusalem" (ibid., 29, n. 6), meaning that this is what the townsfolk would have taken back to their individual villages. But Handy never presents a strong argument for finding a tiered system of heavenly beings in the Hebrew Bible. The commonly held view, for instance, that "messengers" within the Ugaritic hierarchy are akin to what we would take as מַלְאָכִים in the Hebrew Bible, comes with this circular argument attached: "Unlike the Ugaritic messengers, it might be noted, the biblical messengers were sent on various errands in addition to delivering messages for the higher authority, but as with the Ugaritic messengers, they acted only as extensions of Yahweh in whatever activity in which they engaged, as good human messengers act only as an extension of the person who sends them. The relatively late notion of 'fallen angels' is a theological development from a period well after the nation of Judah and probably would have been absurd to the Judahite populace. The texts in the Hebrew Bible that had been used and occasionally still are used to show [the] existence of disobedient angels are in fact passages about gods of the higher three levels; the notion that בְּנֵי אֵלִים or אֱלֹהִים means angels is a position espoused within the later traditions of Judaism and Christianity but most certainly does not reflect the reality of the texts as they appear. Gen. 6:1-4 does not have a single reference to the מַלְאָכִים but contains information about deities as they were understood to have existed before the flood. Psalm 82 deals solely with the deities of the higher orders and conforms to the understanding of those deities; it makes no comment about the lowly angels. In the cult of Judah, the מַלְאָכִים clearly behaved in the same servile manner as the *malakim* in the Ugaritic narratives. The possibility exists that in Judahite theology there were messengers sent by deities of unsavory character, who, in obeying orders from their superiors, would have done evil things, but their status as mere pawns to other deities would have remained the same. They would have been comparable to the messengers of Yam in the Baal myths of Ugarit" (ibid., 37-38).

Looking well ahead, we will find that the pantheon of intertestamental literature is rather elaborate compared to that of the Hebrew Bible. The same case could be made for the Ugaritic pantheon which likely predates the Hebrew Bible. In both instances, the non-biblical pantheons developed their idea of "messenger" gods which were to be considered (the Hebrew equivalent of) אֱלֹהִים-class beings. In other words, cultures that both pre- and post-dated the Hebrew Bible considered their "angels" to be "gods."

For example, Handy (ibid., 35) finds that the lowest tiered gods (*'ilm*) at Ugarit were "the slaves of the divine realm, the messengers," or the *ml'km*. That is, the messengers were gods, though functioning in subordinate rank within their own classification. Yet they were, to be specific, *'ilm* or "deities." Thus these *ml'km* were still to be classified as *'ilm*, as Alomia also recommends (K. M. Alomia, "Lesser Gods of the Ancient near East and Some Comparisons with Heavenly Beings of the Old Testament" [Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1987], 237), but "were not allowed any personal volition; they simply took orders, delivered messages, and behaved themselves" (Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," 36). In short, Smith argues (Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Text* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001], 6) that these beings received the designation *'ilm* because the vocabulary for divinity can be used generally to mark off a being that is not the same as a human and thus above humanity. The only beings which existed above men were "gods," the *'ilm*. In the Hebrew Bible this god-or-man language is reflected by such phrases as "for I am God and not man," [אֵל אָנֹכִי וְלֹא־אִישׁ] Hos 11:9; "[the Egyptians are] man and not God," [אָדָם וְלֹא־אֵל] Isa 31:3; "you are a man and not God," [אָדָם וְלֹא־אֵל] Ezek 28:2, 9; cf. Judg 9:9, 13; 1 Sam 15:29; Job 9:32.

outside the council. Yahweh is never mentioned in any of these non-biblical sources, though it is true that some Psalms include material that attributes to Yahweh what was commonly ascribed to El (29:10; 68:5, 34).[3] However, Yahweh is consistently shown in the biblical materials to exert judgment on and ultimately condemn the other gods (Ps 82; Exod 12:12). He never ascended to the throne nor shows signs of being deposed. This will be the first of several depictions of a canonical pantheon which distances itself from any hierarchy outside the biblical record.

An evolutionary view of Israelite religion assumes that both theoretical and functional monotheism developed over a period of time. In this sense Israel slowly moved away from a belief in "fighting gods" toward a desire to find unity among the beings of the divine world. It would simply be a matter of time, so it is believed, before the chief deity would come to bear every divine name and likewise every divine attribute. A Babylonian text offers this possibility, as the poet conceives of his chief god (Ninurta) as embracing all the gods in that the body parts of his god are actually those of others: "His eyes are Enlil and Ninlil, the iris of his eyes is Sin, Anu and Antu are his lips, his teeth are the divine heptad."[4]

It would be logical to envision, then, without the aid of prophetic revelation, that ancient religions (such as Israel's) developed as they integrated a collection of many gods into a systematized view of an all-embracing and unique godhead. This would hardly lead one to conceive of an evolutionary development of what we wish to identify as "monotheism." But this is where scholarship has arrived on this question.[5]

The question to be answered in this chapter can be stated in this way: Do the expressions "Yahweh, God of gods and Lord of lords" (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2), "O sons of gods, give glory to Yawheh" (Ps 29:1), and "God stands in the council of the gods, he

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[3]Horst Dietrich Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, vol. 1, OTL, ed. G. Ernest Wright (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox, 1992), 112.

[4]Bruno Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, vol. 2, Kulturgeschichtliche Bibliothek (Heidelberg:Winter, 1920-25), 48.

[5]Th. C. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 35-36; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 10-12.

judges among the gods" (Ps 82:1) demonstrate a monotheism that also included a pantheon? It appears that the notion of plurality in Israel's divine realm continued to be preserved throughout all periods of Israel's history. Yet this plurality is dominated by the one God of Israel, Yahweh, in a manner quite different from anything to be found elsewhere. By way of review and preview this chapter will demonstrate the following points.

First, monotheism should be conceived through the lens of comparison, or be stated in such a way that more than one divine being can exist. Our earlier explanation of אֱלֹהִים in both its singular and plural forms has made this necessary. Second, in the canonical record no gods are described as abiding "with Yahweh," so to speak. At all times and in all texts plural אֱלֹהִים (including the satan figure) function in subservience to Yahweh. Third, the Hebrew Bible's concept of a pantheon is qualitatively different than that of the literature of other ancient cultures. Yahweh was never considered one of a common species, for instance. Four, the concept of Israel's pantheon was, for the most part, accessible to Israel's pagan neighbors. As such it would have served as a strong corrective to what pagans believed, and it appears they were held responsible to this information as it was given to them. Five, the council scenes of the Hebrew Bible (especially those that relate narrative) are designed to emphasize Yahweh's sovereignty, not his lack of control within the plural godhead.

A Pattern of a Pantheon at Ugarit

Without question the most important sources of information on the gods, cult, culture, and religion of ancient Syria-Palestine are the numerous tablets found at Ras Shamra.[6] These texts, however, are notoriously incomplete. We are not certain, for instance, whether the mythological narratives were meant to form a complete, systematized cycle. It is just as feasible that the surviving mythical scenes which tell independent stories were meant

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[6]For further discussion, see M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits: Teil 1, Transkription*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament, ed. Kurt Bergerhof, Manfried Dietrich, and Oswald Loretz, vol. 24 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1976).

to do just that—tell distinct stories that did not function as a single mythological cycle.[7] In terms of the date of these materials, it is probable that the fragments of the religious lore of the Baal cult in Ugarit were composed around the fourteenth century B.C. Realizing that the copies of the narratives found at Ras Shamra were not likely the original editions,[8] we immediately realize that we are dealing with material that easily predates the writing of most if not all of the Hebrew Bible. It would therefore be helpful to understand the basic arrangement of the Ugaritic pantheon before proceeding into the Old Testament.

The Canaanite deity El, whom the Israelites encountered for the first time as they entered the land of Canaan under Joshua, appears to be the high god of the Canaanite pantheon. He was actively worshipped in Syria and Palestine as far back (as we can tell) as the Patriarchal period.[9] Scholarship is not in agreement, however, concerning the character of El as described in Ugaritic texts. His role as head of the pantheon has been questioned by A. Kapelrud,[10] U. Cassuto,[11] and M. Pope.[12] The basic contention of these writers is

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[7]Handy, *Host*, 21. Yet another problem to consider is the diversity of beliefs that may have existed for these gods. It is a well-established fact about religious traditions that they change through time and thought and cult (ibid., 8). What we consider to be a belief system may well be a belief system of a certain time and place within Syria-Palestine that did not exist for very long nor outside of one small location. The Syro-Palestinian world is insufficiently well-known, both historically and geographically— so much so that an evolutionary schema of pagan religious thought is impossible to reconstruct. We meet Baal, for instance, at the moment we read about him in the texts, none of which constitute a complete story; we are never provided a systematic description of him or his counterparts.

[8]Handy, *Host*, 22.

[9]Numerous studies from noted scholars such as Otto Eissfeldt (*Ras Shamra und Sanchunjaton* [Halle: Niemeyer, 1939]); idem, "El and Yahweh," *JSS* 1 (1956): 25-37; William Foxwell Albright (*From Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2d ed., Doubleday Anchor Books [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957]); idem, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, 1968); Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), and idem, "The 'Olden Gods' in Ancient near Eastern Creation Myths," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) have provided a good indication of the kind of religion and cult that confronted early biblical characters as they dealt with their pagan neighbors.

[10]Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1952), 64-93.

[11]Umberto Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath: Canaanite Epics of the Patriarchal Age* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971), 55-57, 59, 67.

that El was eventually deposed by the younger and more vigorous Baal. Others, such as E. Theodore Mullen,[13] are not convinced that the stories of conflict depict an El that has lost ultimate supremacy over the gods.

While the life and deeds of Baal constitute the primary subject of most of the mythic cycles in the texts from Ugarit, it is El who is accorded the most laudatory epithets.[14] He is viewed as the creator of the heaven and earth in Ugaritic mythology, being called "creator of created things" (*KTU* 4.2.11; 4.3.32; 6.3.5, 11; 17.1.25) and the "father of the gods" (*KTU* 32.1.2, 16, 25, 33). As his sons, the gods below him are collectively designated as "the son(s) of El" (*KTU* 5.1.13; 32.1.2, 17, 26, 34; 17.6.28-9, etc.). He fathered at least two of his sons, "Dawn" and "Dusk," by his two young wives (*KTU* 23.31-64). El's chief consort was 'Atirat, who both shared in the creation activity and was called "Progenitress of the gods" (*KTU* 4.1.23). This brings to mind Albright's suggestion—based squarely on an evolutionary view of Israelite history—that early popular Hebrew religion may have consisted of a triad of deities: a father, mother, and son figure not unlike other early Semitic pantheons.[15] In all, El was regarded in Canaanite mythology as the head of a pantheon of gods and was viewed as the creator of heaven and earth.

According to popular theory the god Baal ("lord, master") was a deity who entered Canaanite culture from outside the area, replacing El who had earlier been considered the chief god of the pantheon.[16] Baal was commonly called "the son of Dagnu" (*KTU* 2.1.19, 35, 37; 5.6.23-24; 6.1.6; 10.3.13, etc.) but he was also considered

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[12]Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 29-32, 94-104.

[13]E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 24 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980), 4.

[14]Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 25-54; John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan*, 2d ed., Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 155-63; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 15-20.

[15]Albright, *Stone Age*, 173 (note 44), 246-47.

[16]Kapelrud, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, 92-3; Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 102.

the son of El and sister of 'Anat. The exact nature of Baal's genealogy is not as clear,

however, within the many texts which speak of Baal and his exploits.[17] Problems with

understanding the god Baal go far beyond mere interpretation of the data; some evidence

has been interpreted to suggest that the narratives may have gone through several previous

variants before they appeared in the texts which were excavated.[18] Even if this is not the

specific case, we should not assume that all the myths and legends discovered were

composed at the same time or even in the same place.

Instead of finding an argument against the Canaanite El's existence in the

Hebrew Bible—and *for* Yahweh's existence—one never finds any argument against the

existence of El at all. For Moses, El was Yahweh; when one spoke of Yahweh, he was, as far

as Moses was concerned, speaking of El.[19] Just when Yahweh began to be called by this

particular name is not as clear as one would expect. Two texts come to our attention in this

matter: Gen 4:26, "Then men began to call upon the name of Yahweh," and Exod 6:3: "I

appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty (אֵל שַׁדָּי); but by my

name Yahweh I was not known to them." Taking the latter text at face value, it appears that

Moses attributes Yahweh worship to the Sethites even though that name (יהוה) may not have

been familiar to them on a wide scale. They worshipped the creator God, so thought Moses,

and thus they worshipped Yahweh. El had come to be used throughout the ancient world as

a proper noun (the chief god of the pantheon) and as a general term for any god or class of

divine beings. Thus, in a given nation, the principal god would be called by his own name

but also by the term El.[20] For those who worshipped Yahweh, he had been the chief god of

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[17]Mullen, *Divine Council*, 12-109.

[18]Cassuto, *Anath*, 16.

[19]Note the small but noticeable difference between this replacement idea and Mullen's thesis (which is reflected in many other writers): "The most striking similarity between the council in Ugaritic and in early Hebrew literature is the role played by the high god—'El in the Ugaritic texts and Yahweh in the Old Testament. Both are depicted as creator, king, and absolute ruler of the gods" (Mullen, *Divine Council*, 4).

the pantheon all along; El was Yahweh and Yahweh was El. In this understanding, of course, greater emphasis is placed on the factors that made Yahweh unique, while the El factors are brought into conformity with them.

The Hebrew Bible, of course, taught that Yahweh could not be compromised with another deity. The differences and divergences were so great that it would be impossible to merge or equate the Most High God (Gen 14:18, 19, 20, 22; Ps. 78:56; Dan 3:26; 5:18, 21; cf. Mark 5:7; Acts 16:17; Heb 7:1) with any other presumed spiritual power. The alternative is well-put by Elijah to all Israel at Mt. Carmel where he insists that a choice must be made: either Yahweh or Baal (1 Kgs 18:29). Only one could be God of Israel, not both.

A Description of the Pantheon in Israel

Yahweh, the Most High God

According to the Old Testament only one אֱלֹהִים created the universe (Gen 1:1). This opening statement is not incidental, as creative ability will be the principal means of making distinction between Yahweh and all created gods. "Creator" even becomes part of Yahweh's title (Is 40:28: "The everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not" cf. Isa 45:18). Yahweh is often extolled among the אֱלֹהִים for the very reason of the creative ability which they did not possess (2 Kgs 19:15: "Hezekiah prayed before Yahweh, and said, 'O Yahweh, the God of Israel, that sits above the cherubim, you are the God [הָאֱלֹהִים], even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth'"). As a matter of due course, Yahweh could create and the other gods could not.[21] This meant that before Yahweh existed there was nothing which could have existed, including any god (Isa 43:10: "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me"). In comparison to this kind of power all other supposed powers of the

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[20]David Noel Freedman, "'Who Is Like Thee among the Gods?' the Religion of Early Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 330.

[21]Mullen, *Divine Council*, 279.

universe appear as inanimate idols (1 Chr 16:26: "For all the gods of the peoples are idols: But Yahweh made the heavens" cf. Ps 96:5). Creative ability—or its lack thereof—may even be a way of describing which god is in view of the author (Jer 10:11: "Thus shall you say unto them, 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth'" Jer 10:16: "The portion of Jacob is not like these [gods]; for he is the former of all things"). As creation was more than a simple presentation of brute force (Jer 10:12: "He has made the earth by his power, he has established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding has he stretched out the heavens"), so one אֱלֹהִים (Yahweh) could easily distance himself from other אֱלֹהִים.

The meaning of Yahweh remains quite contested, as the Old Testament is reticent to provide a background to its meaning.[22] When asked his name in Exod 3:13, the narrative hints that there may have been a slight rebuff in Yahweh's tone ("Why do you ask my name?"). However pronounced, the name יהוה no doubt produced the sound in the Israelite ear which resembled *haya/hawa*; this being the case, it is easy to envision an inference of this name being "The One who is, the one who truly exists." The Hebrew היה does mean "to abide, remain, or continue,"[23] or simply "to be,"[24] and this may have been the point of the divine name being revealed at this point in Hebrew history. Yahweh would thus be present (Exod 3:12) and actively involved with his people during the harrowing escape from Egypt.

Mullen (with Cross) believes the name יהוה is to be taken as a causative imper-

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[22]The Old Testament attempts within the 6828 occurrences of this name to provide an explanation only once (Exod 3:13f.).

[23]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 226.

[24]Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann J. Stamm, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 243-44.

fect of the verb היה, "to be," usable as a verb attached to an object such as "hosts" in

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת.[25] In this sense the phrase could stand for "He who creates the heavenly

beings," which would be a direct statement of Yahweh's supremacy over the gods. The

well-used phrase "the living God" appears to function as a means of showing Yahweh's

ability to give life to other beings beyond merely pointing to his existence. The Hebrew is

variously phrased:

> Deut 5:26: "For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God (אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים) speaking out of the midst of the fire?" (cf. Jer 23:36)
>
> Josh 3:10: "Hereby you shall know that the living God (אֵל חַי) is among you" (cf. Job 27:2; Ps 84:2; Hos 1:10)
>
> 1 Sam 25:34: "As Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives" (חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי) (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1, 12; 18:10)
>
> 2 Sam 2:27: "As God lives" (חַי הָאֱלֹהִים)
>
> 2 Sam 14:11: "As Yahweh lives" (חַי־יְהוָה) (cf. 2 Kgs 5:20; 2 Chr. 18:13; Ps 18:46)
>
> 2 Kgs 19:4: "Rabshakeh sent to defy the living God" (אֱלֹהִים חַי) (cf. Isa 37:4, 17)
>
> Ps 42:2: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (אלֹהִים אֵל חָי)
>
> Zeph 2:9: "Therefore as I live, says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel"
> (חַי־אָנִי נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)

We note in this last phrase that "hosts" of beings exist while Yahweh claims to

uniquely "live." Indeed, to call God the "living god" is not to say there are such things as

"dead אֱלֹהִים" scattered about. At no time, in fact, does that description of "dead" apply to

any אֱלֹהִים in the Hebrew Bible.[26] His life appears to be a characteristic that inheres within

Yahweh himself, one that he does not share with others; they do not possess life *as he does*.

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[25]Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 70; Mullen, *Divine Council*, 187.

[26]At times idols are referred to as lifeless, or lacking the ability to respond to human need (e.g., 2 Kgs 19:18; see pp. 70–73 of this study). Smith (*Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 152) notes that, while the term "dead" is never used for competing אֱלֹהִים in the Hebrew Bible, Ps 82 comes close in claiming "the language of divine death." We can assume, he maintains, that the gods must have been alive in order for them to be brought to death. He properly sees this type of language (reflected here and elsewhere in such phrases as "alone" [Deut 4:35; 2 Kgs 19:15, 19; Neh 9:6; Ps 86:10], "except you" [2 Sam 7:22], "they are not [gods]" [Deut 4:39; 1 Sam 2:2; Jer 16:19, 20], and "nothings" [Ps 96:5]) as "rhetorical, designed as much to persuade and reinforce as it is to assert" (ibid.).

Yahweh's life was permanent and unassailable, unlike that of any of the gods.[27] They were subject to creation, and as such were contingent creatures whose proper response could only be worship of their Creator.

Psalm 82:6-7 bears the promise, "I said, 'You are gods, sons of the Most High all of you; *nevertheless*, you shall die like men and fall like any prince.'" Yahweh here claims that a common presupposition should never have been claimed for gods in the ancient Near East—that sharing in the divine nature implied immunity from death.[28] The contrast between the two statements ("you are gods . . . you shall die") is purposefully suggestive that death was not expected for the gods but just as certainly on its way. Thus the primary focus in beginning any conversation about the uniqueness of Yahweh would have been the question of "Who created whom?" A second question would concern sovereignty, or "Who controls whom?" God is not dispassionate about his creation, nor is here merely observing their actions. The gods, by comparison, are found to be listless and inactive.

Yahweh's power was not local (Jer 10:7: "Who should not fear you, O King of the nations?") nor was it temporal (Exod 15:18: "Yahweh shall reign for ever and ever"). It took precedence over all positions of heavenly authority (Deut 10:17: "He is God of gods") and earthly authority (2 Kgs 19:15: "You are the God, even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth"). When it came to describing Yahweh's power, his own followers had to step back in awe compared to what they had seen through the efforts of pagan gods (Exod 15:11: "Who is like you . . . doing wonders?" Deut 3:24: "What God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to your works, and according to your mighty

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[27]The final two tablets of the Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.5—1.6) seem to provide evidence for Baal as a "dying and rising god." As Smith (ibid., 107) concedes: "Although the myth does not perserve an account of Baal's death or return to life, there is little doubt that these events transpire in some portion of the lost narrative." Yahweh is often presented in contrast to this theme, of course, in such turns of phrase as "Therefore as I live, says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab will be like Sodom" (Zeph 2:9).

[28]Brendan Byrne, *"Sons of God"—"Seeds of Abraham": A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 11. In Gen 6:1-4, the hint comes that it is not God's will that man, who is flesh and blood, should live forever, or even for a very long time (i.e., 120 years). So a limit is imposed. This may have served as a hint that the gods themselves, who took part in this account, were not independent nor immune from death.

acts?" Ps 86:8: "There is none like unto you among the gods, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto your works"). God admitted himself that he possessed and used the kind of power that acted without regard for others' opinion (Deut 32:39: "See now that I, even I, am he, And there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal"). It acted upon human will as easily as it acted upon the elements of nature (2 Chr 25:20: "But Amaziah would not hear; for it was of God" cf. 1 Kgs 14:7, 11; 18:24), and at all times it had the power to act upon the will of other gods (1 Sam 6:5: "You shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land"). To place Yahweh and other gods side-by-side in power was tantamount to blasphemy and certain to incur the greater God's wrath (1 Kgs 20:28: "Thus says Yahweh, 'Because the Syrians have said, "Yahweh is a God of the hills, but he is not a God of the valleys;" therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am Yahweh'").

The challenge between Elijah and the prophets of Baal was not to see which God existed, but to see which being demonstrated the power suggestive of his title. Both were presumed to exist, but only one was found to be active and independent of the other. The showdown was carefully predicated on the abilities of the two Gods in question: "And you call on the name of your God, and I will call on the name of Yahweh; and the God that *answers* by fire, let him be God." And all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken" (1 Kgs 18:24). We are led to presume in this account that the prophets of Baal found the gamble "well spoken" (טוֹב הַדָּבָר) because they had full faith in the power of their god (cf. Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). The offer from Elijah was not asking whether their god had power, however; it was asking which god had power over the other. If both gods had brought fire, both would qualify for their title.

Later, Joash faced much the same situation as Elijah ("And Joash said unto all that stood against him, 'Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? He that will contend for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning: if *he be a god, let him*

contend for himself, because one has broken down his altar'" Judg 6:31). Baal had relative power, but his dependency upon Yahweh kept Baal's dependency in perspective. When a god has to "contend for himself" in the face of possible weakness, it is a direct insult to his relative claim to deity. Yahweh is the only being that actually can contend for himself; delegated power is never satisfactory for a true אֱלֹהִים, and once again only Yahweh passes this test (cf. 1 Kgs 9:9; 2 Kgs 1:6; Isa 41:23-4; Jer 10:5; Dan. 3:29).

The comparative power which Yahweh demonstrated created gods never prevented accessibility toward his own people. He desired community and made it possible, especially in revealing his name just prior to the Exodus account. "For the sake of your name" was often uttered either in a prayer for divine help or when Yahweh was confessed as a savior (Pss 23:2; 25:22; 143:11; Jer 14:7; Isa 48:9). And a savior this God was, especially in comparison to what other gods did for their people. The Israelites are often heard in the biblical record comparing their God's ultimate kindness with that of foreign deities (e.g., "O Yahweh, the God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above, or on earth beneath; who keeps covenant and lovingkindness with your servants," 1 Kgs 8:23; cf. Deut 4:7; Ps 145:17, 19; Isa 40:29-31).

With this passionate and even responsive relationship came the wonder and reality of pain, however. One of the results of Yahweh's demand for exclusivity among rival deities was the fact that Israel's faith "would necessarily have to associate negative experiences with its only God."[29] Evil could no longer be attributed to other gods or to any unnamed or unknown evil spiritual powers, but ultimately had to be the will of Yahweh himself since he was the only active God (Exod 4:11; 5:22; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 6:33; Job 2:10; Amos 3:6; Isa 45:7). Yahweh could even be said to incite people to sin according to his larger purposes (2 Sam 24:1; Job 2:3). In one example dear to the Jewish mind, Yahweh made the Pharaoh obstinate in order to accomplish the Exodus (Exod 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,

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[29]Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:107.

20, 27; 11:10), which may have foreshadowed how he would also harden the hearts of the prophet's hearers to accomplish the exile (Isa 6:9f.).

This is why, in general, the reality of evil did not seem to be a philosophical problem for the prophetic voices of the Old Testament. It was this unique world view—that both evil and good could come from the same God (cf. Job 2:10)—that was to set Israel apart from its neighbors and offer them a consistent means of interpreting the events of their existence, whether good or bad ("If evil come upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before you, for your name is in this house, and cry unto you in our affliction, and *you will hear and save,*" 2 Chr 20:9).

The other gods of the nations, however, were not at all considered "good" neither to themselves nor to their people. Even the mythological gods of the Ugaritic council were not infrequently hostile to one another, and even when the various deities did work together, their cooperation left much to be desired. As Vriezen aptly put it, one gets the feeling that "there is always uncertainty what they are up to."[30] It was not uncommon for the gods to be at loggerheads in Ugaritic mythology.[31]

The goodness of Yahweh, therefore, was often set against the comparative wickedness of pagan deities. One would suspect that these gods would have attempted to bless their subjects in a way that mirrored that of Yahweh. It is very apparent, however, that such was not the case. Yahweh even predicted that these pagan gods would not live up to their promises, and would even fail their followers (Deut 32:37). Their track record was dismal to say the least (2 Chr 25:15). David knew that worship toward the wrong god, however inviting at the start, always ended in pain (Ps 16:4). Jeremiah was reminded by Yahweh that the inhabitants of Judah would "go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble" (Jer 11:12). It would

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[30]Vriezen, *Religion*, 35.

[31]See Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 54-80.

be the hallmark of these gods to flee the scene of their own troubles, indicative of their cruelty even above that of their own inability.

The language of the Hebrew Bible is therefore consistent in placing Yahweh among and ultimately over created deities. One does not have to search far, however, to find that this official pronouncement from Israel's prophets did not solve the temptation to downgrade Yahweh into just another deity in competition with others. The hints of popular religion (cf. Num 25; 1 Kgs 18; Jer 2; Ezek 8) and the fuller Old Testament record illustrate the likelihood that Yahweh was originally worshipped in a way that was not at all uniform. A kind of "poly-Yahwism" is therefore likely, akin to the poly-Baalism that existed in different sanctuaries scattered across the land of Canaan. Yahweh's concern that his name be honored "in every place where I cause my name to be remembered" (Exod 20:24) reflects the concern that Israel's God would be viewed differently by different people, even within Israel. Given time, this apparently happened (Jer 2:28: "For according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah").

Loyal אֱלֹהִים

In Canaanite mythology, El's retinue was composed of gods who were named and fashioned after him.[32] As such the gods that surrounded the chief god El were not considered evil, and in some cases he leaned upon them for (what seemed to be) helpful advice and cooperative effort. In *KTU* 16.5.1-28, the assembly has been convened for the express purpose of healing the ailing Kirta. The gift of life, in the human and divine realm, belonged to the god El alone. Sitting at the head of the assembly, however, El addressed a question to them (repeated four times in rhetorical formula).

> "Who among the gods will cast out the illness,
> Will drive out the sickness?"
> No one among the gods answered him.
> (*KTU* 16.5.10-13, 14-16, 17-19, 20-22)

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[32]See Mullen, *Divine Council*, 185.

Mullen finds that this scene is unique in Canaanite mythology in that it is the only one in which El is seen addressing the members of his council.[33] This pattern of "courtroom exchange" may provide a template of sorts for loyal אֱלֹהִים in the Hebrew Scriptures, or those who function with Yahweh and for his greater purposes. Though coming from the mouth of a foreign king, Nebuchadnezzar's statement may be helpful in how he thought of a group of complementary divine beings: "But at the last came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods" (Dan 4:8; cf. 4:9, 18; 5:11, 14).

The Hebrew Bible quickly brings out the sound of divine plurality in the sixth day of creation. The plan to "make man in our image" (Gen 1:26) suggests that God was proposing to create humankind in the hearing of others.[34] Only one God created, as we noted earlier, though that same God now seems to have made his plans known to other beings present with him. In consideration of Job 38:6-7 ("Upon what were the foundations fastened? Or who laid the cornerstone of [the earth], when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God [כָּל־בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים] shouted for joy?") it further appears that this plurality of אֱלֹהִים-class spirits praised the act of creation. It may be that the joy of "all" of the sons of God signifies that the אֱלֹהִים were, as a group, uniformly happy with the status of the original creation.

There are three other texts in the Hebrew Bible which are conspicuous in their mention of the word "us" in relation to Yahweh. In each case it further appears that the addressees are to be understood as helpful or complementary to the purposes of Yahweh.

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[33]Ibid., 183.

[34]Claus Westermann (*Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984)], 144-45) summarizes the explanations of this plurality in four ways: 1) this is a reference to the Trinity, or the three persons known in the New Testament as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; 2) this is a reference to God and a group of "angels;" 3) this is a use of the plural in effort to avoid the idea of an immediate resemblance of humans to God; and 4) this is a case of deliberation on God's part, speaking to himself as he thinks of creating man in his own image. We will argue for a fifth possibility, that of God speaking to a host of אֱלֹהִים. It appears to be special pleading to argue for a New Testament concept of a trinitarian godhead at this point in the process of biblical revelation (cf. Acts 19:2). The divine council motif better answers the question of why the plural pronoun is used in limited cases.

Gen 3:22:
And Yahweh God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

Gen 11:7:
"Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

Isa 6:8:
And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I, send me."

These passages are difficult to interpret because their contexts are quite limited. We have no necessary reason to think that God would be talking to others in any of these cases, and yet the glaring "us" appears each time. The scene as developed within Isaiah 6, however, affords us some clarity. A group of שְׂרָפִים appears in Isaiah's vision, attending to the יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת.[35] These spirit beings (who are seen taking their position of waiting upon Yahweh as his attendants) were instrumental in sending Isaiah to minister to the heathen Israelites. By all accounts Yahweh's appeal seems to fall on friendly ears within this scene; we are not told, however, if this is the same group which constituted the earlier "us" texts in Genesis.

Other texts seem to be in keeping with this theme of loyal אֱלֹהִים attending to the desires of Yahweh. In Deut 33:2-3 a numerous host of "mighty ones" and "holy ones" are said to be part of the contingent that assisted Yahweh in the giving of the law.[36] Psalm 89:5 speaks of Yahweh's faithfulness being hailed by "the assembly of the holy ones."[37]

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[35]This is the lone occurrence of שְׂרָפִים in the Hebrew Bible. It is possible that they may be identified lexically with the poisonous serpents of Num 21:6 (הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים; cf. Isa 14:29; 30:6). Yet the fact that they appear in this vision with wings, countenances, feet, hands, and voices may speak more to their personal nature than to their possible serpent-like qualities. All we can say with certainty is that, once again, the throne room of Yahweh is not a solitary place for the Most High God.

[36]While we cannot prove the identity of these beings in Moses' poem, this would be our strongest Old Testament indication of spirits which attended the giving of the law. The New Testament assumes that such was the case (Acts 7:35, 53; Gal 3:19), which recommends the meaning of spiritual "mighty ones" and "holy ones" in this passage.

[37]See pp. 47–50 of this study for evidence which points to the identification of these beings as אֱלֹהִים-class beings.

We have previously noted the drawn-out scene of 1 Kings 22, in which a group of attendant spirits consult among themselves to accomplish a higher good through one of its member's lies.[38]

It appears, then, that a pantheon-of-sorts is to be found within the Hebrew Bible, beginning with a host of אֱלֹהִים-class beings who behave in coordination with Yahweh. We are told very little beyond this, whether their number, their ability to displease their God,[39] their relationship to each other, or their range of capacity. But their presence around Yahweh's "throne" appears sure.

Disloyal אֱלֹהִים

Psalm 82 stands as a stark call to reality, however, that all is not well with the gods in the sight of their maker. We will find in this passage that the gods are told about their coming judgment, though we are not aware of how many will be found guilty of the charges leveled against them. Thus we discover in this Psalm that an Old Testament assembly of divine beings must include a certain number of אֱלֹהִים which find themselves as objects of divine wrath.

As we will notice in chapter five of our study, Jewish tradition quickly moves to the story of Genesis 6:1-4 when speaking of spiritual rebellion in the heavens. In the Old

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[38]This general use of "spirit" as a virtuous member of God's council may provide the context for other situations in which an unspecified spirit does the work of Yahweh: Num 11:17: "And I [Yahweh] will come down and talk with you there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon you, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you bear it not thyself alone;" Num 11:25: "And Yahweh came down in the cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more;" Num 11:26: "But there remained two men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but had not gone out unto the tent; and they prophesied in the camp."

It is further possible that references to "evil spirits" (as those that came upon Abimelech and Saul, Judg 9; 1 Sam 16; 18; 19) were obedient spirits that were cited as "evil" for the temporal purpose given to them (cp. Isa 45:7).

[39]Eliphaz (not considered a reliable source of revelation by Yahweh himself, Job 42:7) did make the comparison between God's holiness and man's wickedness by bringing these spirits into view: "Behold, [Yahweh] puts no trust in his holy ones; Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much less one that is abominable and corrupt, A man that drinks iniquity like water!" (Job 15:15-6). The tongue-in-cheek nature of this statement probably should serve as a reminder of the exemplary reputation of these spirits in the eyes of Eliphaz and his contemporaries.

Testament itself, this story appears negligible in its effect upon mankind; yet it offers a proper place to begin since it appears so early in the canon and becomes such an established part of Jewish lore.

We have previously proposed in chapter 2 that the בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים of Genesis 6 were divine beings which involved themselves with women of earth. The mission of these gods is not clear; they appear to act as more or less independent agents. They "took wives" from among earthly females, and the offspring of these cohabitations were the "mighty men that were of old, the famous men" (6:4). The sinfulness of the situation is clearly implied while it is not explicitly stated; while the text strongly hints that the gods are at fault, it is possible that mankind was to bear the ultimate burden (and thus, the ultimate fault) of the affair.[40]

Furthermore, the intercourse of these "sons of God" with females is not envisaged by Moses as occurring over only one period of time. The imperfect verb in verse 4 should probably be translated as a frequentive, as if to say "whenever the sons of God went in (יָבֹאוּ) unto the daughters of men."[41] If this is the case, the biblical writer apparently viewed this occasion as indicative of what could happen at a later time.

A further link between Genesis 6:1-4 and the surrounding material lies in the concept of the possession of a "name."[42] The נְפִלִים, here identified as "men of renown" (lit., "men of name"), were successful in their striving for a reputation that could be brought about in a permanent memorial of one's descendants. Earlier Cain was depicted with the same dynastic ambition, attempting to perpetuate his family line by naming his city after his son Enoch (4:17).[43] Similarly the builders of Babel set about building their city and tower with the explicit purpose of make a "name" for themselves (11:4).

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[40]So J. L. Cunchillos Ylarri, "Los Bene Ha'elohim en Gen 6,1-4," *EstBib* 28 (1969): 17.

[41]So the LXX: ὡς ἂν εἰσεπορεύοντο; see David J. A. Clines, "The Significance of the 'Sons of God' Episode in the Context of 'Primeval History'," *JSOT* 13 (1979): 44.

[42]See ibid., 37-38.

[43]Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961), 230.

The reason for the coming of these divine beings to earth may be hinted at in the opening line of the story: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair" (6:1-2). Mankind had been told to fill the earth, of course, as one of its few duties (1:28). After the flood, the first divine command to surviving humanity is again to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (9:1). The inclusion of the adverbial phrase"when men began to multiply on the face of the ground" thus seems to establish a temporal relationship between the physical multiplication of mankind and the involvement of the בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים. We are unfortunately given few other details. But the flood, not long in coming, appears to settle the score in favor of Yahweh.

Did the gods ever come to earth again, as hinted at in 6:4 ("and also after that, whenever the sons of God went in unto the daughters of men")? We do not sense a strong tradition for this in the biblical text, other than mere traces. Some phrases hint at the possibility of physical involvement ("for what god is there in heaven *or in earth*, that can do according to your works," Deut 3:24; "I see a god coming up *out of the earth*,"[44] 1 Sam 28:13; "the gods, *whose dwelling is not with flesh*,"[45] Dan 2:11; "the *aspect of the fourth is like* a son of the gods," Dan 3:25; cf. 1 Cor 8:5), but it appears that Genesis 6 may stand alone in the biblical text in its clear description of אֱלֹהִים coming to earth.

The story is over as quickly as it begins, at least in this narrative. But the biblical text will not cease to warn the Israelites of more dire consequences to follow if involvement with these אֱלֹהִים were to happen again. In Exodus 20 the first of ten commandments stands in bold relief against the background of this presumption, and its prime billing may be indicative of the danger at hand. The consequences of pursuing after אֱלֹהִים who appear to

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[44]I.e., this comment by the witch seems to presume some kind of previous knowledge of what an אֱלֹהִים would have looked like, whether in terms of personal experience or traditional inference. We have the right, in other words, to wonder why she thought it was an אֱלֹהִים by its appearance.

[45]Taken to mean, in "the regular course of events," that is, the gods were not thought of as dwelling on the earth, but in the heavens. But the very issuance of this statement is to imply that gods, when and if they come, are not *normally* here in fleshly form.

be hostile to Yahweh's purposes invited swift and certain punishment. The temptation to fellowship with these gods was promised to be strong and varied in appearance; Israelites were not to "serve" these foreign gods, were not to "pray" to them, and were not to "follow after" them since they did not "know" them.[46]

What could these beings do to their subjects? How could they share a relationship with humans, since, after all, they were created "above" humanity (Ps 8:5)? It appears that, having shared their image with mankind (Gen 1:26) in the creation,[47] the gods are allowed some degree of intimacy with mankind, as the following chart displays.

Text	Phrase	Activity	Comment
Exod 23:24	You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works	Can be worshipped, served, and followed by human subjects	In a recurring theme, the reason for not placing other gods above Yahweh appears to be the strong human temptation of bowing to, serving, and following these gods.[48]
Exod 23:32	You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods	Can be brought into covenant	The gods of Canaan may have demanded a two-way relationship with their followers, much as Yahweh did.[49]

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[46]Preus (*Old Testament Theology*, 1:148) argues that this lack of "knowledge" of the foreign gods was due to their lack of having a common history with them. It may have been more than that. Israel's lack of knowledge of foreign deities would have also involved not being aware of what these deities would do to their subjects if and when they are served, as this chapter will describe.

[47]"The plural construction *(Let us . . .)* most likely reflects a setting in the divine council (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-22; Isa., ch. 6; Job chs 1–2). God the king announces the proposed course of action to His cabinet of subordinate deities, though He alone retains the power of decision." Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, ed., *The Jewish Study Bible*, Tanakh translation, Jewish Publication Society (Oxford: University Press, 2004), note on Gen 1:26.

[48]Cf. Exod 34:14; Dan. 11:38: "But in his place shall [the king] honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things."

[49]Cf. 1 Kgs 19:2: Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." 1 Kgs 20:10: And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, "The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me."

Exod 34:15-16	Lest you play the harlot after their gods, and sacrifice unto their gods	Allowed cruel sacrifice	They seem to demand sacrifice that pays a terrible price upon human life and health.[50]
Exod 23:33	If you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you	Captivate human followers to their ultimate hurt	In being served or followed, they cause their supplicants to be "ensnared."[51]
Deut 12:30	Do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods?'	Accept various forms of worship	The gods were presumed to be distinct beings, allowing different peoples and cultures to serve them in unique ways.[52]
Deut 11:16	Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods	Can deceive humans	It is presumed that the gods are winsome either in character or reputation; in this sense they will be identified as deceptive.[53]

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[50]Cf. Deut 12:31: You shall not do so unto Yahweh your God: for every abomination to Yahweh, *which he hates,* have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods; 1 Kgs 18:28: And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them; 2 Kgs 17:31: And the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burnt their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim; Jer 19:4: Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents.

[51]Cf. Judg 2:3: Therefore I also said, "I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you;" Jer 7:6: If you oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt; 11:12: Then shall the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem go and cry unto the gods unto which they offer incense: but they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble.

[52]Cf. Judg 3:6; 2 Kgs 17:27: Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Carry over there one of the priests whom you brought from there; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the law of the god of the land;" 2 Kgs 17:29: Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities where they dwelt.

[53]Cf. Deut 30:17: But if your heart turn away, and you wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; Jer 10:8: But they are together brutish and foolish: the instruction of idols! it is but a stock; 1 Kgs 11:2: Of the nations concerning which Yahweh said unto the children of Israel, "You shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods," Solomon held to these in love.

Deut 13:1-2	If a prophet gives you a sign [which] comes to pass	May appear to perceive the future	The gods (and their prophets) are presumed to be able to tell the future to some degree—at least enough to deceive a crowd.[54]
2 Kgs 3:27	Then he took his eldest son and offered him for a burnt-offering [to Molech, god of Moab] upon the wall. And there was great wrath against Israel	Can help their human subjects	Sacrificing to other gods "works," or is described as causative of blessing for those who do it.
Ps 97:7	Let all them be put to shame that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: Worship [Yahweh], all you gods	Ought to worship Yahweh, though they do not	As humans are able to do, so the gods can worship Yahweh; they also have the apparent ability to turn human worship that is due Yahweh to themselves.
Dan 6:7	Whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of you, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions	Can be prayed to	The gods are assumed to answer petitionary prayer, a belief that probably could not have continued had there not been periodic answers to prayer.[55]
Dan 11:39	And [the king] shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god	May work against other divine beings[56]	This leader is assisted by a god who is not the god of his fathers (11:38). It appears that this man's god will be offending other gods in his attempt to win military victory.

That the other nations have their own gods and that a foreign land required

service to other gods was a widely accepted view in the Old Testament and even much later.

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[54]Cf. Deut 18:20, in which the false prophet, no matter how correct his judgment may turn out to be, represented a foreign god and was to die.

[55]Cf. 2 Kgs 1:2: And [Ahaziah] sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this sickness; 1 Kgs 18:27: And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or maybe he sleeps and must be awakened."

[56]Cf. Dan 10:13: But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. And I remained there with the kings of Persia.

It was also generally believed that the gods of the peoples were responsible for the earthly disorders and wars that afflicted each nation. It stands to reason, then, that national gods would assist their peoples in threat of war, and would experience the same destiny as their human warriors.[57]

This kind of thinking also lines the pages of the Old Testament.[58] When the non-Israelite Naaman took a load of earth home with him from Israel to Syria, he did so under the supposition that he was not able, under otherwise normal circumstances, to offer sacrifice to Israel's God in Damascus (2 Kings 5:17).[59] Does this mean that the gods "ruled" over foreign nations? If they did, what role did Yahweh play in this? Consider, at face value, several texts before we investigate two passages more closely.

> Judg 11:24:
> "Will you not possess that which Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whoever Yahweh our God has dispossessed from before us, them will we possess."

> Ruth 1:15:
> And she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return after your sister-in-law."

> 1 Sam 26:19:
> . . . "[F]or they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Yahweh, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'"

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[57]According to *Mekilta* in Exod 15:1, the god of Egypt, when his people were destroyed in the Yam Suph, fled to Egypt for his own safely.

[58]Handy (*Host*, 3-5) is representative of many scholars who believe that the assembly of divine beings as described in the Hebrew Bible basically mirrored the governmental system of Syria-Palestine (the city-state). It is thought that this physical structure of authority set the groundwork for how these people understood the spiritual world above them. Thus what they experienced socially gave way to what they sought to describe religiously.

[59]There has been recent interest in what has come to be called "spiritual mapping" (J. Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God* [Lake Mary: Creation House, 1989], 137; G. Otis Jr., *The Last of the Giants* [Tarrytown, NY: Chosen, 1991], 84-102) which attempts to identify regions that appear to be centers of evil influence with the intention of praying that the power of the demonic forces in those areas will be broken (see Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 65). While it is apparent that this movement is cognizant of the territoriality of spiritual beings (much as the Old Testament seems to have argued for), current emphasis in discovering the names of territorial spirits and "neutralizing the command posts of the enemy" (Otis, 93) appears to exhibit an uncritical and even presumptive understanding of the work of the gods in our day. For a helpful critique of spiritual mapping see Gary Breshears, "The Body of Christ: Prophet, Priest, or King?" *JETS* 37 (1994): 13-16.

Deut 4:7:
"For what great nation is there, that has a god so nigh unto them, as Yahweh our God is whenever we call upon him?"

2 Sam 7:23-4:
"And what one nation in the earth is like your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem unto himself for a people, and to make him a name, and to do great things for you, and terrible things for your land, before your people, whom you redeemed to you out of Egypt, from the nations and their gods? And you did establish to yourself your people Israel to be a people unto you for ever; and you, Yahweh, became their God."

Mic 4:5:
"For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God for ever and ever."

These passages bespeak a people and time that *did believe that the gods controlled foreign nations.* Considering the texts above, Jephthah appears to believe that land goes with the god who grants military victory; Naaman believes that the worship of one's god in a foreign land was possible, but difficult—since one was literally in the land of an opposing spiritual force; in being pursued by Saul, David was forced to leave the borders of the "inheritance of Yahweh," which clearly was believed to mean physical property; Micah seems to admit, when it comes to serving one's god, "We do it our way, and they do it their way." The difference, said with no little glee on the part of this prophet, was the permanency of his God in the face of the instability of the other gods and their nations.

An important passage in the Hebrew Bible which presents a "gods of the nations" view is Deut 32:8-9. This text has been considered extremely problematic for reasons of its authenticity, date, and text critical issues. It is also a part of one of the most impressive poems of the Hebrew Bible, for reasons of its placement and theology.

Deut 32:8-9 MT:
בְּהַנְחֵל עֶלְיוֹן גּוֹיִם בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם יַצֵּב גְּבֻלֹת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי חֵלֶק יְהֹוָה עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נַחֲלָתוֹ

Deut 32:8-9 LXX:
ὅτε διεμέριζεν ὁ ὕψιστος ἔθνη ὡς διέσπειρεν υἱοὺς Αδαμ ἔστησεν ὅρια ἐθνῶν κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ. καὶ ἐγενήθη μερὶς κυρίου λαὸς αὐτοῦ Ιακωβ σχοίνισμα κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ Ισραηλ.

Deut 32:8-9 ASV:
When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, When he separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For Yahweh's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

Our immediate concern is verse 8b. The contrast between MT and LXX is apparent, with the ASV following MT: "according to the number of the children of Israel." The context is the "separating of the sons of men," which most commentators agree to be retrospective to the division of the world into languages in Gen 10-11.

Controversy over this text centers over 8b's בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("children of Israel"), which is found in the MT,[60] and also in the Samaritan Pentateuch.[61] When a Qumran fragment of the text of Deut 32:8 was found which read בני אל ("sons of God"),[62] interest revived in later versions of this text. The majority of witnesses to the LXX[63] read ἀγγέλων θεοῦ ("angels of God") in its place, a translational move that appears to be more interpretive than textual.[64] It yet appears that the LXX reading is to be preferred on both textual and theological grounds since this Greek rendering would presuppose a Hebrew text of either אלהים or בני אלהים.[65] This is precisely what we find at Qumran, in fact, as 4QDt

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[60]As reflected in K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969).

[61]A. von Gall, ed., *Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1918).

[62]P. W. Skehan, "A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses' (Deut. 32) from Qumran," *BASOR* 136 (1954): 12. Several revisions of the LXX, a manuscript of Aquila (Codex X), Symmachus (Codex X), and Theodotion also witness to this reading; see Fridericus Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum Tomus I: Prolegomena, Genesis-Esther* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1964), 320.

[63]See Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 269.

[64]John William Wevers, ed., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Göttingensis Editum*, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 347; idem, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 513.

[65]Mullen, *Divine Council*, 202. Theodor H. Gaster (*Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 405) recommends that the traditional Hebrew text made this change "in an evident attempt to palliate the pagan reference" to בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים. Though see, for rebuttal, David E. Stevens, "Does Deuteronomy 32:8 Refer to 'Sons of God' or 'Sons of Israel'?," *BSac* 154 (1997): 131-41; for a rebuttal to Stevens, see Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God." *BSac* 158 (2001): 52-74.

reads בני האלהים in Gen 6:2.[66] This reading is also found in one (conflated) manuscript of Aquila.[67] In Jewish tradition this story appeals directly to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10–11,[68] where the family of Abraham was chosen by Yahweh while the foreign nations were given to pagan gods.[69]

If the reading בְּנֵי־אֱלֹהִים is accepted, it reflects poetically what had been commanded previously in the same book. The Israelites had been explicitly prohibited from worshipping the host of heaven: "And lest you lift up your eyes unto heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them, and serve them, which Yahweh your God has allotted unto all the peoples under the whole heaven" (Deut 4:19). Later in the same book the predictable failure of the Jews to remain loyal to Yahweh evoked Moses' fear that ". . . men shall say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods that they knew not, and that he had not given unto them'" (29:25-6). This theme would become the stuff of Israelite and Jewish religious discussion for many years to come. It is specifically reflected in Jewish apocalyptic material ("For every nation he appointed a ruler; but Israel is the Lord's portion," *Sir* 17:17; cf. *Jub* 15:31-32; *1 En* 10:9; 12:2, 4; 14:3; 15:2-3).[70]

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[66]See P. W. Skehan, "Qumran and the Present State of Old Testament Text Studies," *JBL* 78 (1959): 21, and Skehan, "Song of Moses," 12-13.

[67]Wevers, *Göttingen LXX*, 347; Field, *Genesis-Esther*, 320.

[68]This tradition is particularly rich and univocal across most all strands of Judaism (*Sir* 24:12; *Jub* 15:31ff.; *bSukka* 29a).

[69]Jewish tradition has placed the number of pagan nations at seventy. According to rabbinic sources, this number would derive from the nations listed in Gen 10 as created by the Babel incident in Gen 11 (cf. *Targum Ps.-Yonathan* in Gen 11:8; Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 18:4; *hTestNaphth.* 8). At other times this number is seventy-two, which apparently derives from the Babylonian calendar (Ps.-Clem *Rec.* 2:42).

[70]Eissfeldt ("El and Yahweh," 28-30) argues unconvincingly that El's place of initial prominence in the song of Moses (Deut 32:8) signifies his supremacy over Yahweh, resulting in the latter's place over the nation Israel. It is common for the biblical text, as argued above, to see El as Yahweh and vice versa (cf. Ps 18:14=2 Sam 22:14; Gen 14:22; Ps 47:3, etc.). Albright ("Some Remarks on the Song

In light of the above evidence, in which a consistent thread runs through the biblical and non-biblical material, it appears safe to suggest that a group of אֱלֹהִים were given rule of foreign nations.[71] These nations continually spoke of "their אֱלֹהִים," and Israel, in turn, spoke of "Yahweh, our אֱלֹהִים." It further appears safe to find that these אֱלֹהִים are adversarial to the people of Yahweh and thus Yahweh himself.

Therefore a pantheon-of-sorts can be fashioned from the Hebrew Bible, though our knowledge of it is limited beyond a few basic assurances. We find that plural אֱלֹהִים compose two general groups of spirit beings: those who are found to be loyal to the cause of Yahweh, and those who have not been found so loyal. It is the latter group, to be sure, that is harder to identify in the text. There are no specific terms which apply to "wicked אֱלֹהִים,"[72] as it were, though they are never called "holy ones" from what we can tell. Their title (אֱלֹהִים) is shared with good spirits (Ps 89:5-7; cf. Gen 6:1-4; etc.) but their activity is not. This assembly of divine beings is necessary to appreciate in light of Ps 82, wherein Yahweh is said to "judge among the אֱלֹהִים." Before we leave this chapter we also need to observe the predicted end of these gods as they apparently failed to live up to the expectations of their Creator. This theme will be of particular interest for how Paul describes the fate of New Testament powers.

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of Moses in Deuteronomy XXXII," *VT* 9 [1959]: 343) muses, "This is another example of parallelism carried over groups of verses."

[71]The same idea held sway in non-Jewish literature, it seems, as the notion that the earth was primevally parceled out among the gods finds a parallel in the Babylonian Epic of Creation. After his victory over the monster Tiamat and his installation as their king, Marduk is said to have divided the six hundred gods into equal celestial and terrestrial companies, or to have allotted them their several "portions," and to have determined thereby to watch over "the ways of the earth" (*Enuma Elish*, 6.39-46)

[72]The Tanakh translates the second occurrence of אֱלֹהִים in Gen 3:5 as "divine beings," following the lead of the King James Version ("gods"). This translation would hint that disloyal אֱלֹהִים-class beings may not have to be thought of as totally diabolical, but rather as "fallen," or able to play the moral game ("knowledge of good and evil," cf. 3:22). It may be that the description "antagonistic אֱלֹהִים" is a more precise way of describing their character than simply "evil." They operate against the greater purposes of Yahweh, and in doing so they may not need to always act in an initially "wicked" or hurtful way (cf. 2 Cor 11:14).

The Destiny of the Pantheon in the Future

The Judgment between the אֱלֹהִים

Turning to the canonical text of the Old Testament, it is not made clear how the gods either viewed their responsibility of nation-rule, nor how well they initially handled their duties. The biblical picture will begin to clear, however, as Yahweh will make threats of judgment upon these gods. It is to these threats—or prediction of destruction, really—to which we now turn.

Yahweh was known to his people as a "jealous" God, at times applying a term to himself ("Yahweh your God is a devouring fire, a jealous [קַנָּא] God," Deut 4:24) which could apply to a husband's honorably selfish desire for his own wife (e.g., Num 5:14). The concept of Yahweh's love for Israel as that of a husband for a bride (cf. Hos 3:1) thus reflected the way Yahweh dealt with people since the Exodus (Exod 20:5).[73] Because Yahweh saw his people as his own inheritance, the prohibition against the worship of foreign gods and the images which represented them was tied directly to his jealousy (Josh 24:19, 23; cf. Deut 32:16; 1 Kgs 14:22f.). Israel's history had begun with and under Yahweh's leadership and the obligation to remain faithful to this God was therefore not something to be lightly regarded.

The jealousy to which Yahweh admitted in the second of the ten commandments (Deut 5:9) appears to function as the background for several references to Yahweh being hostile to foreign gods and their images (cf. Deut 7:21-25). Used as a participle, the verb יָרֵא was used to describe Israel's God ("Yahweh your God is in the midst of you, a great God and *fearsome*," Deut 7:21; cf. Neh 1:5; 4:14; 9:32; Ps 47:2), as a reminder of what made him different from the other gods ("For Yahweh your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty, and fearsome, who regards not persons, nor takes reward," Deut 10:17), and especially how he would treat his enemies, whether physical or

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[73]"Zeal and holiness are in fact only differently shaded expressions of one and the same characteristic of Jahweh," Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 205.

spiritual ("He will cut off the spirit of princes: He is fearsome to the kings of the earth," Ps 76:12; cf. Ps 89:7; Zeph 2:11).

Thus, while every other nation walked in the ways of its god, the goal for Israel was to "walk in the name of Yahweh, our God, always and ever" (Mic 4:5). Any leader or prophet who called an Israelite to follow pagan deities was to be killed (Deut 13:2-6; cf. Exod 22:20). It is in this sense, then, that Yahweh was to be considered both jealous and terrible. Such a strong and forthright punishment of apostasy is unique in the history of religion.[74] Yahweh was terrible and to be feared while foreign gods were not.[75]

Yahweh's jealousy was expressed most clearly in the exile. It would be a case where Israel would get their wish, as it were, in being punished by being given to the service of other gods (Jer 5:19; cf. Deut 4:28; 28:64; Jer 16:13). Thus the first two commandments revealed a very practical warning (Exod 20:3-6: "For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God") which, in the end, was not honored by those who first received them. The God of Israel was experienced by the early Israelites but never finally conceived of as the greatest power in the universe.

The jealousy which Yahweh felt for his people could easily be expressed in this God's likeness to a warrior who fought for his own people—and thus against the foreigner.

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[74]Pharaoh Akhenaton's requirement for the exclusive worship of the sun god Aton was atypical for Egypt and there is no evidence that this legislation had direct bearing on Israel's faith (Preus, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:105).

[75]The anger which Yahweh expresses against foreign deity worship is clearly the strongest emotion disclosed in the Old Testament for the High God: Exod 22:20: He that sacrifices unto any god, save unto Yahweh only, shall be utterly destroyed; 23:13: And in all things that I have said unto you take you heed: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of your mouth; Deut 7:4: For he will turn away your son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you, and he will destroy quickly; 7:25: The graven images of their gods shall you burn with fire: you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto you, lest you be snared by them; for it is an abomination to Yahweh your God; 12:2, 3: You shall surely destroy all the places wherein the nations that you shall dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree; 18:20: But the prophet, that shall speak a word presumptuously in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die; 32:16: They moved him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger; 2 Kgs 22:17: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched.

Yahweh was often considered a God who was willing to go to war,[76] insofar as the gift of land was possible only through the military action of Yahweh. It is not a surprise, then, to hear about a book called a "Book of the Wars of Yahweh" (Num 21:14) discussed in close chronological proximity to narratives about the Exodus. In this light the oracles against the nations are really oracles directed against the gods of the nations because they are operating under the sphere of Yahweh's power in that they are in this world that he created. These may be the presumed "helpers" found in such a prediction as, "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and when Yahweh shall stretch out his hand, both *he that helps shall stumble*, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together" (Isa 31:3; cf. v. 7).

Thus punishment appears on the horizon for the gods. Because we are never expressly told of a revolt of any אֱלֹהִים in the Hebrew Bible, we are left to wonder the origin of evil within the ranks of these אֱלֹהִים.[77] Even if a rebellion of the gods had taken place

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[76]See Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). This warrior language at times mentions the gods of the nations in close context: Exod 12:12: For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Yahweh (Cf. Num 33:4); 2 Chr 32:21: And Yahweh sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth from his own bowels slew him there with the sword; Ps 96:4: For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods; 97:9: For you, Yahweh, are most high above all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods; Jer 10:10-11, 15: But Yahweh is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting King: at his wrath the earth trembles, and the nations are not able to abide his indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens. They are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of their visitation they shall perish; 46:25: Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, says: Behold, I will punish Amon of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with her gods, and her kings; even Pharaoh, and them that trust in him; Zeph 2:11: Yahweh will be terrible unto them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations.

[77]Extra-biblical writings, however, commonly speak of the gods revolting against the high God and being expelled from heaven, usually tying this concept to the story of the נְפִלִים ("fallen ones") of Gen 6:1-4 (*1 En* 6:7; 8:3-4; 69:2; etc.).

Did one of the gods rebel against the high God? I will follow current scholarship which is generally uneasy in equating the שָׂטָן of biblical usage with the stories of the revolts of הֵילֵל בֶּן־שָׁחַר ("shining one, son of dawn") in Isa 14 and the king of Tyre in Ezek 28 (see Page, *Powers of Evil*, 37-42). In the chance that the case could be made to find a description of Satan's fall in these texts, it is interesting that Yahweh's judgment (repeated in both instances) finds the judged being to be a "man" as opposed to a god (Isa 14:16; Ezek 28:2, 9). A hint is not long in coming why Yahweh can make this accusation: "But you are man, and not God, *in the hand of him that wounds*." The judgment appears to be one of

prior to Ps 82, it is not the stated reason for the judgment meted out to the gods in this text: "How long will you judge unjustly, And respect the persons of the wicked? Judge the poor and fatherless: Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the poor and needy: Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked" (vv. 2-4). They are condemned for their miscarriage of justice, not their rebellion, original or otherwise. A cursory read over the psalm presents gods who are still in their created position but who have, in that position, failed in their task to maintain justice and terrestrial order. Their role of guardian had disappointed.

It was the task of God's created divine beings to administer justice rightly. He expected their leadership to evidence true justice and morality and love—much like their creator would do. Yahweh's portion was Israel, a nation that was chosen in spite of other nations because they simply were loved (Deut. 7:7-8). The same could never be said of the gods. Their failure to govern properly, especially in regard to the dispensation of true justice, constituted reason for removal and ultimate condemnation. The final judgment, unfortunately for the human followers of the gods, treats the celestial and terrestrial elements much the same (Isa 24:21-22; cf. Matt 25:41).

<div align="center">The Destruction of the אֱלֹהִים</div>

The penalty faced by the gods in Ps 82 finds its climax in verse 7, where, after having been stripped of their divine status, they are condemned to death. This stands as the ultimate destruction of the gods, said to be administered in the future: "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High.' Nevertheless you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" (Ps 82:6-7). Thus Yahweh is shown to be, in the end, the proximate and ultimate judge of divine beings. They owe to him their allegiance as well as their proper treatment of their human subjects. Their penalty is to "die" (מוּת), which was not the

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comparison. While on the one hand the being in Ezekiel is admitted to have been created to be מִמְשַׁח הַסּוֹכֵךְ אַתְּ־כְּרוּב ("the anointed cherub that covered") he is not a god in comparison to the God he was trying to overcome. Twice he is reminded that he was created (28:13, 15); once he is reminded that Yahweh established him in his position (28:14). He is finally reminded who will destroy him (28:16). And a destroyed god is really no god at all (see Mullen, *Divine Council*, 238).

expected fate of a god.[78] In an ironic sense Yahweh himself noted that they were only

"said" (אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי) to have been gods. In a very real sense their inability to carry out their

function proved them to be unworthy of the title אֱלֹהִים.[79] Their judgment seems to have

been based on their failure to perform up to Yahweh's expected standards. Their day-to-day

miscarriage of justice revealed that their created status was not enough for them to merit

reward, nor the eternal life which they expected.

The desctruction of the gods is described most vividly in the writings of Isaiah

and Jeremiah, as the prophets looked through the exile and to the reward coming to faithful

Israelites. In a passage reminiscent of Ps 82, Isaiah spoke of the destiny of specific nations

such as Egypt (19:1) and Tyre (23:1), and then related to a time when "Yahweh makes the

earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabi-

tants of it" (Isa 24:1). In the context of such universal judgment Isaiah later declares: "It

shall come to pass in that day, that Yahweh will punish the host of the high ones on high

[צְבָא הַמָּרוֹם בַּמָּרוֹם], and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isa 24:21). Jeremiah sees

the scene unfolding in much the same way, though with a word of encouragement spoken to

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[78]See Byrne, *Sons of God*, 63-64. *First Enoch* 69:11 reveals the hope of what was considered the angelic immunity from death: "For men were created exactly like the angels, to the intent that they should continue pure and righteous, and death, which destroys everything, could not have taken hold of them." Likewise *2 Baruch* 51: (3) "Also (as for) the glory of those who have now been justified in my law, . . . then their splendor shall be glorified in changes and the form of their faces shall be turned into the light of their beauty, that they may be able to acquire and receive the world which does not die, which is then promised to them. . . (5) . . . they shall . . . be transformed . . .into the splendor of angels . . . (9) . . . time shall no longer age them. (10) For in the heights of that world shall they dwell. And they shall be made like the angels, and be made equal to the stars [which do not die]. And they shall be changed into every form they desire from beauty into loveliness and from light into the splendor of glory . . . (12) Moreover, there shall then be excellency in the righteous surpassing that in the angels."

[79]Psalm 82 provides the unwitting link for many readers of the Old Testament that long to view Satan as a fallen angel. The logic appears to run like this: The condemnatory tone of Ps 82 against evil spirits sounds like two other Old Testament texts that include a Satan (Job 1-2; Zech 3:1-2). In all three texts, plural אֱלֹהִים-class beings appear before Yahweh. In Job, these beings are called בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים with Satan being found among them. In Ps 82, these beings are called בְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם (though Satan is not present). In Zechariah, Satan is rebuked in tones reminiscent of Ps 82. Thus, though none of these texts describe Satan as belonging to a company of fallen spirit beings, the similarities between these texts "provide a basis for associating Satan with other celestial beings who have rebelled against their Creator" (Page, *Powers of Evil*, 59). Page is representative of most others, then, in making the move from "celestial being" to "angel" as an assumption. In reply, it appears the silence of Scripture must be respected when it comes to both the relationship of Satan to מַלְאָכִים (cf. Matt. 25:41) and his relationship to a point-in-time "falling."

Yahweh's faithful. "Thus shall you say unto them, 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens. [The gods] are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. The portion of Jacob is not like these; for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance: Yahweh of hosts is his name'" (Jer 10:11, 15, 16).

Though we are not told in Isa 24:21 exactly the crime the "host of heaven" committed, we can safely assume that the context of Isaiah's earlier condemnation of the nations applies (chaps. 13–23). What is very clear, of course, is the right and privilege of Yahweh to execute his will against both humans and the gods that rule over them.[80] With his decree the very foundations of the earth will tremble (24:18; cf. Ps 82:5). In the end, Yahweh's rule over his own created beings ends with their demise by his hand.

Exodcursus: The Role of the Satan Figure

The title "Satan" is not central to Old Testament theology. Most commentators agree that the שָׂטָן figure is not described in the Old Testament dualistically, or in the sense that he operates outside the ultimate will of Yahweh. In the Hebrew Bible, in fact, Satan functions primarily as a judicial adversary accomplishing (and not denying) God's requests, functioning with God's permission (Job 1, 2; Zech 3:1; 2 Chr 21:1).[81]

Peggy Day's 1988 monograph, entitled (curiously enough) *An Adversary in Heaven: 'Satan' in the Hebrew Bible,* adequately demonstrated that the שָׂטָן mentioned in its

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[80]Many commentators stay away from the term "gods" in Isa 24:21 (which would be the most natural understanding of "host of the high ones on high") and choose to use terms such as "angels," "angelic beings," "fallen angels," or "supernatural forces." See G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I–XXVII,* International Critical Commentary on the Old Testament (Edinburgh: Clark, 1912), 422; Ronald Clements, *Isaiah 1–39,* New Century Bible, ed. Ronald E. Clements (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1980), 205-6; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39,* New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 454; John Goldingay, *Isaiah,* New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series, ed. Robert L. Hubbard Jr. and Robert K. Johnston, vol. 13 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 141. The rabbinic tradition carries the interpretation of patron angels; see E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs,* trans. I. Abrahams (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 138.

[81]Peggy Lynne Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: 'Satan' in the Hebrew Bible,* Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 43 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 8.

four principal passages of the Hebrew Bible should not be considered evil or malicious to the purposes of Yahweh. Her essay sought to disentangle שָׂטָן from later, developed notions of Satan, resolving to show that there is "no Satan in the Hebrew Bible."[82] Her conclusions influence our view of a pantheon in the Hebrew Bible in several ways.

First, Day believes there is "absolutely no evidence" to indicate that שָׂטָן in the Old Testament should be translated as a proper name.[83] Rather, she believes, the evidence clearly points to the שָׂטָן being an unnamed member of the celestial assembly. This would be consistent with what we have witnessed in our study, having found no named members of the divine pantheon of the Old Testament. This signals the distinction of a biblical pantheon from that of the mythological texts of ancient Syro-Phonecia (which had many named members) and strengthens an appreciation of its depiction of a supreme Yahweh over his created host.

Second, there may be more than one שָׂטָן. Just as there is more than one earthly שָׂטָן influencing human affairs (e.g., 1 Sam 29:4; 2 Sam 19:22; 1 Kgs 5:4, 11; Ps 109:4), so there is possibly more than one celestial being that conducts similar business. The שָׂטָן who raises objections concerning Joshua's suitability for the high priesthood (Zech 3:1-7) need not be the same being who questions Job's motives for remaining loyal to Yahweh (Job 1– 2) since in both instances the being is referred to by title and not by proper name.[84] This again would be consistent with a biblical hierarchy of celestial beings which includes numerous antagonists to Yahweh. There is no indication within the text of the Hebrew Bible that points to a solitary leader of disloyal אֱלֹהִים.[85]

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[82]Ibid., 5.

[83]Ibid., 6; so also Mullen, *Divine Council*, 275.

[84]A. Leo Oppenheim ("The Eyes of the Lord," *JAOS* 88 [1968]: 176) goes so far as to suggest that there is no single interpretation of the noun שָׂטָן that fits all nine of the contexts in which it is found in the Hebrew Bible.

[85]Mullen (*Divine Council*, 276) proposes that, with the role of a שָׂטָן recognized within the divine council, the other members of the divine assembly "developed specialized functions." In Dan 10:15, 21 and 12:1 Michael is named, as is Gabriel in Dan 8:16 and 9:21, with both beings carrying out certain

Third, Day follows the lead of N. H. Tur-Sinai in believing that the celestial שָׂטָן could easily have been patterned after a human court official whose duty it was to patrol his overlord's empire and report any untoward behavior.[86] This sounds suspiciously like the שָׂטָן of Job 1, a scene which also may picture a divine council in action.

Fourth a שָׂטָן figure is, at least at one important juncture, equated to the angel of Yahweh (Num 22:22): "And God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of Yahweh placed himself in the way as an adversary against him (מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה בַּדֶּרֶךְ לְשָׂטָן)." This closely resembles the anger that Yahweh demonstrated in 1 Kgs 11:9-14 when an adversary was raised up to challenge King Solomon, who had lost divine favor. In both cases the שָׂטָן is a vehicle of divine judgment. In Balaam's case the שָׂטָן / מַלְאָךְ is performing in what appears to be a dual role: both in posing a physical threat to Balaam and in informing the wicked prophet of the precise reason for God's anger. This may also provide the key to understanding the role of the Satan and Yahweh's own actions in 1 Chron 21:1 and 2 Sam 24:1; the שָׂטָן is merely acting out Yahweh's wishes.[87]

Fifth, it is generally acknowledged, says Day, that there was no office of public prosecutor in ancient Israel.[88] This being the case, the litigants themselves could bring their case before the assembly (Deut 25:1), or witnesses could bring a case to trial (1 Kgs 21:13). From a text such as 2 Sam 19:21-22 it also appears that, on a human level, any member of the royal court was able to assume the role of accuser. To quote Day in full:

> It seems, therefore, that Job 1-2 and Zechariah 3 present us with a choice. We can affirm that the definite article indicates that the divine assembly had acquired the

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responsibilities in the plan of Yahweh. In *1 En* 99:3 (cf. *T. Levi* 3:5; *T. Dan* 6:2) some divine beings have become mediators. At Qumran, the "Prince of Light" or "Spirit of Truth" is appointed as a helper to the "children of light" (1QM 13:10). *First Enoch* even divides various ruling spirits into ranks (four in 9:1, and seven in 20:1-8).

[86]N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), 42.

[87]Francis X. Gokey, "The Terminology for the Devil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University, 1961), 1-2.

[88]Day, *Adversary in Heaven*, 38.

post of accuser, although we can adduce from certain parallels either from terrestrial judicial terminology or from Canaanite or Mesopotamian mythology. If we adopt this stance, 2 Chr 21:1 indicates that although a post (or posts) of celestial accuser may have been generated, it was still possible for other members of the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים to play the role of accuser. The other alternative is to understand the definite article to mean "a certain one." Thus it is a certain unspecified accuser who finds fault with Job's piety, and a certain accuser (not necessarily the same one) who challenges the choice of Joshua to be high priest.[89]

Conclusion

To this point in our study we have identified a society of plural אֱלֹהִים in the Hebrew Scriptures who are vital to the story of history as Yahweh presides over the created world and its personal creatures. By way of review, and in preparation for meeting these אֱלֹהִים in the book of Daniel, several points in conclusion can be offered.

One, extra-biblical depictions of a pantheon of spirit beings need not serve as a final pattern for determining such a pantheon as developed within the Hebrew Bible. Similarities need not prove absolute likeness, though it can be expected that elements of similarity will occur. Two, that being said, the Hebrew Scriptures do present us with a host of plural אֱלֹהִים who, in spite of shared title, seem to divide into two general groups as determined by their loyalty to Yahweh. These two "sides" are not carefully developed by any biblical writer, and the origin of this division is never identified. Three, the common notion of "the gods of the nations"[90] within the Old Testament and extra-biblical literature textually and thematically can be linked most clearly to Deut 32:8-9, which summarizes Yahweh's apportionment of the nations to these gods. We are told little about the means of rule that these gods employ. Four, an unknown number of אֱלֹהִים, presumably identified as among[91] those who are given to the nations, are predicted to "die" in apparent punishment for their misuse of authority.

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[89]Ibid., 43.

[90]Contrary to how it is commonly expressed in current literature, no "angels" (better, מַלְאָכִים) are said to be involved with the nations of the world in this capacity.

In sum, then, we have been introduced to a host of unnamed antagonistic spirit beings who are given temporary authority in the world before being stripped of that rule and condemned to punishment. Our curiosities are raised in wondering if we are to ever meet these beings again, especially in the New Testament. But before our study departs the Old Testament, we will visit the book of Daniel—which has purposely been avoided to this point—and observe what most commentators believe to be the clearest depiction of the divine council in the Hebrew Bible.

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[91] The fact that Yahweh judges "among" the אֱלֹהִים (Ps 82:1) gives rise to my choice of words here. It appears necessary to repeat his ambiguity.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF PLURAL *ELOHIM* IN DANIEL 7

We have seen that Isrealite monotheism was, as Collins recommends, "not as clear cut and simple as generally believed."[1] The Hebrew Bible has given indication to a plurality of beings that are so closely associated with Yahweh as to be classified as אֱלֹהִים. Since one of the last books of the Hebrew canon presents us with just such a picture, it is worth careful study in anticipation of what it can add to our New Testament understanding of what Paul will call "principalities and powers."

Daniel 7 is a critical chapter in the larger development of this book, both in terms of its structure as well as its theological message. Whereas the earlier chapters focused on the exploits of human heroes, the latter part of the book beginning with this chapter will focus on the destiny of the world at large and the final division between good and evil. Furthermore, Dan 7 reveals a Yahweh (appearing by the title "Ancient of Days" in vv. 9, 13, 22 and "Most High" in vv. 18, 22, 25) who is not depicted as the lone heavenly authority; there is more than one throne in heaven. Other beings appear to be working "with" Yahweh, exerting some kind of administrative power. Segal has noted that this scene expressed divine plurality so explicitly that discussion of Dan 7 had to be suppressed by later rabbis.[2]

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[1]John J. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," in *Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One: Symposium at the Smithsonian Institution, October 19, 1996, Sponsored by the Resident Associate Program*, ed. Hershel Shanks and Jack Meinhardt (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1997), 82.

[2]Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 148-49.

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In this chapter we will identify the setting and participants of the vision in an attempt to understand what the vision accomplishes. We will begin by drawing upon background material presented in our previous two chapters, noting that the "divine council" scene is familiar to the religious literature of the ancient Near East. We will then turn our attention to the human-like being that approaches this council, determining his identification and role in the proceedings. Noting that the interpretation of the vision involves all the participants in the courtroom, we will then link the "Son of Man" figure to the divine council and determine the fate of parties in Dan 7.

Our study has chosen to spend an entire chapter examining Dan 7 for several reasons. First, the need to appeal to Dan 7 in the search for the identity of Paul's powers has been voiced by several recent writers.[3] Second, as a late book in the canon, it is helpful to hear how the later writers of the Old Testament understood the concept of a plurality of אֱלֹהִים. We will find that the Old Testament, by and large, continued to define monotheism with this plurality in mind. Third, the courtroom scene of Dan 7, as well as the outcome of the vision, will figure predominantly both in New Testament soteriology and Paul's identification of spiritual powers antithetical to the purposes of God. Fourth, this chapter specifically develops our understanding of the division that exists within the larger group

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[3]"My own view is that insufficient attention has been paid to the terminology of the Book of Daniel (esp. chap. 7), and that it provides a basis for much of the New Testament, and in particular Pauline, teaching on the principalities and powers" (Peter T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context*, ed. D. A. Carson [Exeter: Paternoster, 1984], 131). He continues: "[W]e have already noted that a major weakness of many studies on this Pauline theme has been the limited nature of their investigation. I refer to the wider framework of the holy war tradition in Scripture, from Old Testament to New, with the prophetic tradition and the ministry of Jesus. In short, the Pauline powers are not studied within an integrated biblical theology in which the ultimate purposes of God for his creation are expounded. The victory of Christ over Satan and his minions can properly be understood within those revealed purposes of God, and at the same time the ongoing responsibilities of Christian people *vis-a-vis* the powers can be discerned. Questions as to whether the Christian has any political responsibilities can then be answered in the light of this integrated biblical theology rather than through some slick identification of the powers with political structures. Mouw and to a lesser extent Wilder have indicated an awareness of this need, but neither has developed the point nor effectively checked his own pre-understanding in the light of it" (ibid., 133). In the end, O'Brien finds that the powers spoken of by Paul are "personal, supernatural intelligences, emissaries of the god of this world" (ibid., 146), but falls short of actually identifying them with the gods of the Old Testament. See also Daniel G. Reid, "Principalities and Powers," in *DPL*, 747; Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mysterion: Meaning and Content*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series, ed. Birger Gerhardsson, vol. 8 (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1977), 124-26.

entitled אֱלֹהִים in such a passage as Ps 82. Fifth, consistent with previous divine council scenes, it will be found that specific names of courtroom participants are not used and that implied titles or positions of authority (i.e, "rule") are employed instead. Sixth and finally, these titles of authority will be later reflected in Paul's terminology when he spoke of the hosts of wickedness (Eph 6:12) which are defeated through the death of Jesus Christ (cf. Col 2:15).

The Setting of the Vision of Daniel 7

In Dan 7, we have moved back to the time of Belshazzar's first year (550–49 B.C.[4]). In a dream he sees a turbulent, chaotic sea with water moving in all directions. The vision of a crashing sea would evoke horror and an anticipation of evil, even within the world view of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Jer 5:22). Out of the sea four beasts[5] arise, symbolizing horror and revulsion not only in appearance but in meaning. This fourfold pattern "simply informs us that evil kingdoms will succeed one another (at least seemingly) until the end of time. The people of God must recognize that this is God's plan and prepare for persecution."[6] The fourth kingdom is the most enigmatic of all, being described as "different from all the former beasts" (v. 7).

Is Daniel's text merely a reworking of an older Ugaritic myth, such as Baal's defeat of Yam?[7] While it is commonly thought so,[8] the two stories are not identical and in

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[4]John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. John D. W. Watts, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 139.

[5]The use of beasts to symbolize Gentile nations occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament (Jer 4:7; 5:6; Ezek 29:3ff.; Pss 68:31; 80:14). Because our concern here is not to specifically identify the beasts by their historical counterparts (i.e., Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece [Maurice Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 19ff.; H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935), 67-160] vs. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome [Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 275-94]), our attention will instead be drawn to the relation of the fourth beast to what comes after it.

[6]Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 184.

[7]The Ugaritic Baal cycle describes a very similar scene (*KTU* 1:3ff), in which El's courtroom hears a demand made by the god of the sea, Yam, that Baal be delivered to him. El is ready to do this, but

some respects offer the reader two conflicting versions of what is admittedly a similar

storyline. First, Daniel speaks of *four* beasts that arise from the sea, which is a signal to the

reader that Daniel is attempting to be more specific in his portrayal of historical events.

Secondly, the Danielic tradition is less combative and more judicial; as with the case of Yam

in the Canaanite myth, Daniel's version does not defeat any of the beasts in combat. Rather,

these beasts are disposed of by means of judgment coming from the throne of Yahweh.

This is consistent with other versions of the divine courtroom in the Hebrew Bible, which

assembles for decision-making instead of war (Job 1–2; 1 Kgs 22:18-22; Isa 6:1-5).

Thirdly, there is no reason to deny that Daniel sees his vision in similar terms to Canaanite

myth, as this merely suggests that both traditions are dealing with similar story lines

available to them from the dawn of human history. Even Collins admits that it is highly

unlikely that Daniel (written in the second century B. C. by his account) would be

borrowing a stock mythological tradition from a Canaanite myth as old as the Baal cycle

(fourteenth century B.C.). It does not violate the accuracy of Daniel's vision to have points

of similarity with other stories of the past, whether fictional or otherwise. We may be

content to surmise that Daniel had access to these traditions, but we need not argue that he

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Baal goes out and fights Yam, overcomes him, and proclaims his kingship. Instead of returning to El's court, however, he goes to his home in the north and sends to El a message, requesting permission to build a palace. The *Akkadian Creation Epic* in some respects has closer affinities to Daniel's vision, in that the assembly of the gods is convened to determine what shall be done in face of the threat of Tiamat to attack them; Marduk, the storm god, is asked to be their champion, and he assents, providing that the gods agree to make him supreme among them. In the Hittite myth *The Song of Ullukumis*, we again read of an assembly of the gods, called in face of danger from the powerful sea god, and of the deliverance wrought by the storm god. Unfortunately, the outcome of the story is lost to us through the fragmentary condition of the tablet.

[8]It appears to be a forgone conclusion among critical scholarship that Daniel developed his vision through Iranian, Babylonian, or Canaanite sources (e.g., John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermenia, ed. Frank Moore Cross [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 286-91; Aage Bentzen, *Daniel*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. Otto Eissfeldt, vol. 19 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1952], 48-49). Yet, as Collins advises (*Daniel*, 291), we can narrow down the possibilities, at least to Canaanites sources: "[N]o other material now extant provides as good an explanation of the configuration of imagery in Daniel's dream." So Collins concludes (*Daniel*, 289), "No one suggests that the author of Daniel knew the Ugaritic texts directly or tried to reproduce the Baal cycle fully . . . . Daniel 7 is not simply a reproduction of an older source, Canaanite or other. It is a new composition, which is not restricted to a single source for its imagery." Indeed, it would appear from the outset that a pious Jew would resist the mere copying of pagan material for inclusion in a composition that was meant to encourage his troubled countrymen. In the end, such a ploy would probably do more harm than good.

merely borrowed them.[9] His *Sitz-im-Leben* was certainly that of Canaan from boyhood, and thus one could expect similarity in some (and maybe even many) parts of his visionary material.[10] Furthermore, many of the motifs that are commonly thought of as stock material for Canaanite thinking are no less present in Israelite religion.[11] As Carrell reminds us, "visions may appear similar to different people who live in similar cultures because they cannot but help draw upon what is already known."[12] Thinking ahead to John and the Apocalypse, for instance, we could assume "that when John wrote down what he 'saw' he attempted to describe it in a way which conformed to familiar visionary tradition."[13] Thus, in Daniel's case, we may rightly believe that this vision was extraordinary and unique and yet conformed to some kind of visionary convention.[14]

Verse 9 is an abrupt transition from the dream of a seacoast to that of a courtroom, with beings that are now described in very human-like terms. The throne room scene is familiar to 1 Kgs 22, Isa 6, Ezek 1, and possibly Ps 82 (cf. *1 En* 14:18-22; 40:1; 60:1-2; 71; 91:15-16; Rev 4–5), yet includes some details never seen to this point in the Hebrew canon.

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[9]In speaking of the possibility that Daniel merely quoted the Baal myth as the substantive source for his own vision, Mosca rightly muses, "I seriously doubt that the impeccably orthodox Jewish author of Daniel 7 would turn to such a source for inspiration" (Paul G. Mosca, "Ugarit and Daniel 7: A Missing Link," *Bib* 67 (1986): 499). In his article Mosca lists no fewer than sixteen reasons to believe that Daniel did not merely borrow from Canaanite mythology.

[10]J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," *JTS* 9 (1958): 240-42.

[11]Mosca, "Ugarit and Daniel 7," 516-17.

[12]Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monographs, ed. Richard Bauckham, vol. 95 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 17.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Hartman summarizes the general prophetic ministry in much the same way: "[W]hatever experiences a prophet may have, when he writes down what he wishes to communicate of what he has experienced, he expresses himself in words which are coloured by the tradition of which he is a representative" (Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par.*, trans. Neil Tomkinson, Coneictanea Biblica: New Testament, ed. Birger Gerhardsson, vol. 1 [Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells, 1966], 106).

The Throne Room Scene

Dan 7:9:
I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire.

Daniel seems to imply (mainly with the help of v.10 and its use of the verb יְתִב)

that the plural thrones in this vision are occupied by some kind of being. The divine

judgment that awaits this fourth beast and its leadership is the apparent reason for the

convening of this "courtroom" of thrones. The scene is remarkable in its clarity, with one

main throne being surrounded by these other plural thrones.

The question of who occupies these thrones led R. Akiba to explain them later

as "One for [Yahweh], one for David."[15] Other rabbinic passages insist that this text did

not imply two powers in heaven but rather spoke of two aspects of the same God.[16]

Evidence is stronger, considering the period from which Daniel wrote, that we are once

again dealing with the divine council motif.[17] These thrones appear to be occupied by

personal spirits[18] who are aligned with the purposes of Yahweh.[19] They themselves bear

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[15]b. Hag. 14a; b. Sanh. 38b. See Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of Man Seated at God's Right Hand and the Debate over Jesus' 'Blasphemy'," in Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ, Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1994), 181-91. Bock (189-90) finds the blasphemy for which Jesus is charged to be his claim of fulfilling Daniel 7:13, taking the seat (throne) that Rabbi Aqiba thought to be saved for David.

[16]Segal, Two Powers, 30-36.

[17]So Collins, Daniel, 301; so also Morton Smith, "Ascent to the Heavens and Deification in 4QMᵃ," in Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin, ed. L. H. Schiffman, JSPSup, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 8 (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1990), 181-88.

[18]I purposely avoid using the term "angelic" here (as in "angelic associate judges who constitute the celestial court," Louis F. Hartman, The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary on Chapters 1–9, AB, ed. William F. Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 23 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978], 217) for purposes to be made clear in chapter 5.

[19]Most commentators use the term "angel" somewhere within their description of this scene, though מַלְאָךְ never appears in the entirety of Dan 7. Charles offers better identification with "the heavenly powers, the assessors of the Judge," (R. H. Charles, The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Revised Version with Notes, Index and Map, New Century Bible, ed. Walter F. Adeney [New York: Henry Frowde, n.d.], 75).

authoritative rule[20] which is to be used in bringing judgment upon others (7:26). This assembly has been called to consider the misdeeds of an offender; in this case, as it appears, several offenders (cf. 7:8, 12). Since vv. 13-14 will narrate the bestowal of sovereignty over earth to another, whoever has been judged possessed this authority up to this point and will be deprived of it. Their future actions in this chapter will be determinative in bringing the governments of the world under the Son of Man's final authority (7:26-27; cf. 7:14).

The Ancient of Days figure has been variously interpreted. Yarbro Collins, for example, proposes that the Ancient of Days was "a distinguishable manifestation of God as a high angel."[21] Most interpreters have held that the Ancient of Days was Yahweh.[22] Multiple references to Yahweh coming in judgment, for example (Ps 96:13; Isa 13:22; Ezek 7:3), seem to make this convincingly clear.[23] His description is aptly that of an old man; he exudes longevity, pre-existence, and wisdom, and this is clearly one of the ways to describe the creator of all existing things (cf. Ps 93:2, "Your throne is established of old: you are from everlasting").[24]

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[20]In the LXX, "throne" (θρόνος) is used 123 times of kings and dynasties, emphasizing the continuity and legitimacy of royal office (Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, vol. 1, The Powers [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 18). Thus "throne" indicates not so much the actual seat but "a symbol of government . . . which transcends the present occupant of the throne" (Otto Schmitz, "θρόνος," *TDNT* 3:160). In the Old Testament, כִּסֵּא is often translated as "throne" (e.g., 1 Kgs 1:13) though it may stand for the authority of a king (2 Sam 14:9) or a place of high honor (1 Kgs 2:19). It is nearly always used to emphasize the authority of the one sitting upon the seat itself (e.g., "Yahweh is in his holy temple; Yahweh, his throne is in heaven," Ps 11:4).

[21]Adela Yarbro Collins, "The 'Son of Man' Tradition in the Book of Revelation," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 557.

[22]Casey, *Son of Man*, 23; Emerton, "Son of Man," 239; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 165.

[23]It should be admitted, however, that the name יהוה never occurs in Dan 7. Gaebelein believed the Ancient of Days to be Jesus, though only through the familiarity of the scene recounted in Rev 1:12-14 (A. C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel: A Key to the Visions and Prophecies of the Book of Daniel* [New York: Our Hope, 1911], 77). In a move most curious, however, Gaebelein also finds the Son of Man to be Jesus as well, thus making a case for his view of exclusive monotheism: "He who is the Ancient of Days, the Eternal Son of God, the Mighty God, Jehovah, is also Son of Man" (ibid., 78).

[24]For further discussion concerning this stage in Israelite religion where Yahweh had been "ensconced as the 'High God' of the cosmos," see Casey, *Son of Man*, 23.

Dan 7:10:
A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

The "fiery stream" surrounding these thrones compares favorably with throne room visions both in the Hebrew Bible (Ezek 1:15ff.) and later Jewish literature.[25] The fact that some beings ministered (יְשַׁמְּשׁוּנֵּהּ) to the Ancient of Days while still others stood (יְקוּמוּן) before him may demonstrate that roles of some kind exist in the heavenly realm, though we cannot be sure.[26] No names or titles are assigned to these beings. Much like Job's prologue, in which בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים "present themselves" before Yahweh (1:6; 2:1), this picture appears to be similar. These seem to be אֱלֹהִים-class beings which are about to bring a judgment or a decree (cf. Dan 4:17).

The meaning of דִּינָא יְתִב appears to be "the court sat."[27] That fact that the "books were opened" adds solemnity to the occasion, indicating that what will be decided

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[25]A comparison of this vision to that of *1 En* 14:18-22 is worthy of mention: "And I observed and saw inside it a lofty throne—its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun; an (I heard?) the voice of the cherubim; and from beneath the throne were issuing streams of flaming fire. It was difficult to look at it. And the Great Glory was sitting on it—as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow. None of the angels was able to come in and see the face of the Excellent and the Glorious One; and no one of the flesh can see him—the flaming fire was round about him, and a great fire stood before him. No one could come near unto him from among those that surrounded the tens of millions (that stood) before him. He needed no council, but the most holy ones who are near to him neither go far away at night nor move away from him. Until then I was prostrate on my face covered and trembling. And the Lord called me with his own mouth and said to me, 'Come near to me, Enoch, and to my holy Word.' And he lifted me up and brought me near to the gate, but I continued to look down with my face" (trans. by E. Isaac, "1 [Ethiopic Apocalypse of] Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 21).

It is important to note that while the throne room visions bear many parallels (fiery river, wheels, etc.), they are not duplicates. Cherubim are found in Enoch's vision, but not in Daniel's. Daniel was certainly amazed at the beauty of his vision, though he never comments that he was unable to "see" or look at the throne. Most interestingly, Enoch portrays the excellency of the "Glorious One" in terms which required that no beings—human or otherwise—were "able to come in" to his presence. Daniel, on the other hand, makes no such comment. It appears that God has become more unapproachable in Enoch's opinion than Daniel's, as he even makes the comment, "he needed no council." Enoch is inconsistent in deciding what the spirits do; they cannot approach God yet "neither go far away," perhaps insinuating that their terror did not excuse them from service.

In effect, this will hint at what happens in the intertestamental literature to be evaluated in chapter 5. God becomes "more glorious" while his throne room attendees become less glorious.

[26]Neither do the numbers ("thousands") tell us much (Ps 68:17, The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary).

can only come after careful and thoughtful deliberation. Yet this is not the first indication of

a heavenly courtroom decision in Daniel. An earlier example of a group of spirits making an

authoritative judgment is recorded in Dan 4:17: "The sentence is by the decree of the

watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones" (עִירִין פִּתְגָמָא וּמֵאמַר קַדִּישִׁין שְׁאֵלְתָּא

בִּגְזֵרַת). In this account Nebuchaddnezzar had been "driven from men" (4:25) for his failure

to acknowledge the ultimate sovereignty of the Most High God. This decree as coming

from the "watchers"[28] and "holy ones" was given on behalf of this high God, as it was

done "to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of

men, and gives it to whomever he will" (4:17). The sovereignty of Yahweh is made even

more explicit by the later admission that the decree which came from the watchers/holy ones

was, in effect, "the decree of the Most High" (4:24). This is consistent with the court

scenes in the rest of the Old Testament (1 Kgs 22; Isa 6; Ps 82; Job 1–2) which depict

Yahweh as ultimately in control or all decisions that come from the proceedings.

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[27]This language of a seated court is important, finds Mullen (*Divine Council*, 120), in establishing this as a divine council scene familiar to the reader of the ancient Near East. See also Casey, *Son of Man*, 23. The interplay between the expected word for a divine "council" (סוֹד; e.g., "council of the holy ones," Ps 89:7 [MT 8]) and the use of divine "court" (דִּין; KJV "judgment") in 7:10 is regarded as incidental at this point by most interpreters (Collins, *Daniel*, 303; E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 24 [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980], 117). Contrary to the view that the plurality of thrones is merely "incidental" to the meaning of the text (so James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: Clark, 1927], 296), recent scholarship is nearly unanimous in recognizing Dan 7 as a divine council scene (Mullen, *Divine Council*, 120-8; Christopher Rowland, "The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 10 [1979]: 137-54; Matthew Black, "The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the 'Son of Man:' a Study in Tradition-History," in *Jews, Greeks, and Christians: Religious Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs [Leiden: Brill, 1976], 57-73; Collins, *Daniel*, 300, 303).

[28]This is the only chapter in the Hebrew Bible where the noun עִיר appears to be a heavenly being (for discussion, see John J. Collins, "Watcher," in *DDD*, 893). Its meaning appears to be close to that of the "holy ones" (קַדִּישִׁין) due to the parallelism of the two words in Dan 4:13. The Old Greek here translates עִיר as ἄγγελος (clearly interpretive), while Aquila and Symmachus retain the more faithful ἐγρήορος, meaning wakeful one or watcher. The "watchers" are widely attested in Jewish literature of the Second Temple Period, most famously in the "Book of the Watchers" (*1 En* 1–36). In this text they are depicted as the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים of Gen 6:2-4, coming to earth in effort to cause disturbance for man and God. From a canonical point of view we must admit that we do not know the precise meaning of עִיר as it pertains to a heavenly hierarchy.

Dan 7:11-12:
I beheld at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion (τῆς ἐξουσίας αὐτῶν, LXX; ἡ ἀρχὴ, Theodotion) was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

The judgment of the court was immediate; the fourth beast of v. 8 was destroyed, as well as, we can assume, the little horn which led it. *First Enoch* 90:24-27 describes the fate of the stars (cp. Deut 4:19; 17:3; Jer 19:13), shepherds (cp. Zech 11:17; 13:7) and blind sheep as being thrown into an abyss of fire, which is now given as the fate of the fourth beast.[29] The other three kingdoms are treated differently, however; while they are relegated to oblivion under service to the High God, they are clearly allowed to function in some kind of reduced capacity. They may even be viewed as a means to an end, as it appears that their "lives were prolonged" for a specific reason not available in the vision. In comparing the appearances of the first three beasts to that of the fourth (vv. 4-7), in fact, their descriptions are not necessarily condemnatory, except for the fact that they are depicted as beasts. It is their sovereignty that is on the line, not their rule. Their ἐξουσίας (LXX) or ἀρχή (Theodotion) was taken away, only to be given to another (v. 14). The destruction of the fourth beast, however, is essentially important to the vision, as it is only until his passing off the scene that another figure will come into the courtroom.

The Son of Man

Dan 7:13-14:
I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him rule (ἀρχὴ, Theod.), authority (ἐξουσία, LXX), and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his authority is an everlasting authority (ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, Theod., LXX), which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

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[29]See also *1 En* 10:6; 18:11; 21:7-10; 1QS 2:8; 4:13; CD 2:5. Collins notes that the concept of "hell" is a developing one over both Christian testaments, with a progression from Topheth, or Gehenna, where human sacrifice was offered by burning children (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 7:31; 32:35) to the idea that sinners will be punished there by burning (Isa 30:33; cf. Isa 66:24) to the notion of Gehenna as a place of future and eternal punishment for the wicked and unbelieving (Matt 5:22; *Sib Or* 1:103; 2:292; cf. *1 En* 27:2; 54:1-2). See Collins, *Daniel*, 304.

A full introductory formula to this verse signals an important moment in the vision, though no change of scenery is presented. A man-like figure comes into the courtroom while coming with the clouds,[30] and approaches the Most High God through the aid of the beings (קָדָמוֹהִי הַקְרְבוּהִי "they brought him") who surrounded the throne. Immediately the man-like being on the clouds was given "everlasting dominion."[31]

The term "like a son of man" (בַּר אֱנָשׁ) is familiar from several Old Testament contexts, most commonly denoting a normal human being (Ezek 2:6, 8; 3:25; etc.). In Ps 8 ("What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him?" v. 4) it suggests humanity as both weak and unimpressive—a common connotation for the phrase—yet endowed with glory, honor, and authority in relation to all other creatures except the lesser gods ("For you have made him a little lower than אֱלֹהִים, and crowned him with glory and honor" v. 5). The juxtaposition of characters in this scene gives the reader the impression that a human being is out of place in this divine assembly (cf. Num 23:19 1 Sam 15:29; Job 9:32). But such is not the case. The human is allowed both his position in the throne room and the coming bequest of high favor.

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[30]Central to the argument for those who see a mythological background for the "one like the son of man" is the observation that an entrance with clouds normally denotes divine status in ancient Israel (ibid., 290). The parallels to the Old Testament are fairly substantive. In Deut 33:26 it is Yahweh who "rides the heavens to your help, the clouds in his majesty." In Ps 104:3 it is Yahweh who "makes the clouds your chariot, who rides on the wings of the wind," and in Ps 68:5 Yahweh is hailed as the "rider on the clouds." Yet the being who approaches Yahweh on the clouds in 7:13 is clearly in subordination to Yahweh. We have two beings who are being treated on similar terms. Collins (ibid., 290) is quick to add on this point, "We have no precedent in the biblical tradition."

But while this "bifurcation of divine status" may not be true in biblical tradition, it is a part of Canaanite mythology. Baal appears in subordination to El in *KTU* 2.1.21, and is found riding on the clouds. El is, moreover, consistently described as "the father of years" (*KTU* 1.3.24; 4.4.24; 6.1.36; 17.9.49). For further discussion, see Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 16; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 161.

We recall from our study above that El is attended by a divine council of the "sons of the holy one" (*KTU* 2.1.21). For discussion, see Mullen, *Divine Council*, 120-28. The phrase is disputed, as Marvin H. Pope (*El in the Ugaritic Texts*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., vol. 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1955], 33) reads this as "father of exalted ones." It is clear that Daniel and the Canaanite tradition have a picture which appears similar; a (presumably) younger being is approaching an older god while using the clouds as his means of transportation.

[31]In the Ugaritic myth, Baal is told that he will "take your everlasting kingdom, your dominion for ever and ever," and after the battle the proclamation is made "Yam is dead! Baal shall be king!"(*KTU* 2.4.10; 2.4.32)

The identification of this now-titled "Son of Man" has caused considerable

debate.[32] The fact that Daniel saw this being coming "with the clouds of heaven" bespeaks

his heavenly origin to be sure,[33] and may signal much more in light of such phraseology in

the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature. It appears safe to assume that divinity

is in view here, or the purposeful mixing of humanity and divinity. But the man is not

immediately enthroned; despite the accolades placed upon him, he remains unglorified as

yet.[34] He is also not to be confused with the heavenly beings who constitute the court, or

those who sit on the thrones. It is implied, however, that the allegiance of those seated on the

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[32]The three main positions taken in modern literature could be summarized as 1) a human being, whether Daniel himself, Enoch, or a coming messiah figure; 2) a collective symbol, usually referring to the saints of the Most High referenced later within Dan 7; or 3) a heavenly being, whether a specific angel or otherwise. For discussion on these options, see below, notes 36–39.

[33]"The act of coming on the clouds suggests a theophany of Yahweh himself. If Daniel vii.13 does not refer to a divine being, then it is the only exception out of about seventy passages in the Old Testament" (Emerton, "Son of Man," 231-32).

[34]Collins (*Daniel*, 301) believes that it is reasonable to assume that this figure is enthroned within the narrative. It appears best to follow the flow of the story more discretely, on the other hand, and notice that he is not yet enthroned nor given the actual kingdoms offered to him. His enthronement is neither described nor accomplished in the text. This distinction appears to be important because with it we can sense the difference between three groups of literature (Daniel, *Enoch*, New Testament) which speak of the Son of Man. In the *Similitudes of Enoch* (45:3; 62:3, 5) the Son of Man figure is seated on his throne of glory. In Matt 19:28, Jesus notes that his actual enthronement had not yet happened ("in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory. . . ."). Therefore Jesus seems to appeal to Daniel's use of the title/position and not that of Enoch.

During the last four decades, there has been a lengthy linguistic discussion on the meaning of "Son of Man" as it relates to the New Testament. For general bibliography on the New Testament identification of the Son of Man see Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); John R. Donahue, "Recent Studies on the Origin of 'Son of Man' in the Gospels," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 484-98; William O. Walker, "The Son of Man: Recent Developments," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 584-607; Thomas B. Slater, "One Like a Son of Man in First-Century CE Judaism," *NTS* 41 (1995): 183-98; John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First Century Judaism," *NTS* 38 (1992): 448-66; I. Howard Marshall, "The Synoptic 'Son of Man' Sayings in the Light of Linguistic Study," in *To Tell the Mystery, Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva, JSNTSup, ed. Stanley E. Porter, vol. 100 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 72-94.

It has been generally agreed that this phrase retains in Aramaic the idiomatic meaning of "a person" (Marshall, "Son of Man," 74). Most writers on the Gospels now assume that the Aramaic phrase could not be used as a description of the being in Daniel 7, in the sense of a specific title that could stand alone in a discussion without context (Randall Buth, "A More Complete Semitic Background for בַּר אֱנָשׁ 'Son of Man'," in *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup, ed. Stanley E. Porter, vol. 154; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, vol. 6 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 178). This appears to be the evidence coming from such church fathers such as Ignatius (Ign. *Eph.* 20.2) and the Epistle of Barnabas (*Barn.* 12.10), who choose to pair and contrast "son of man" with "son of God" and make no direct mention of Dan 7.

thrones would now be turned toward this man-like figure—while not necessarily away from the Ancient of Days. This is surely an interesting scene, one never duplicated in the Hebrew Bible.

It is important to note that the gift of worldwide kingdom in v. 14 is granted to the Son of Man alone, while in v. 18 a similar kingdom is given to the "*saints* of the Most High." The scene will continue to unfold in v. 27, yet adding that the "kingdom and dominion . . . shall be given *to the people* of the saints of the Most High." Whatever identity we give to the Son of Man in v. 13, then, we must somehow associate this being with these "holy ones" and (as I will suggest) with their human counterparts.

Our understanding of the identity of the Son of Man figure is important in this study insofar as it bears upon possible Christological considerations within Paul's gospel and his subsequent identification of spiritual powers. In summary form, the following paragraphs will attempt to demonstrate that this figure is a *divinely appointed human being* who is to be worshipped by human and divine beings alike. In the end, Jesus will lay claim to this title and Paul will likewise see Jesus as the rightful heir to its attendant promises. This general identification of the Son of Man will make the best use of the evidence which spans both Testaments. The following points will make this clear.

One, the phrase "one like a son of man"(כְּבַר אֱנָשׁ) by nearly universal consensus means simply "one like a human being." Thus on a lexical level it appears that Daniel was clear in his identification if this figure. He was to be regarded as a human being.[35]

Two, the Son of Man is therefore not an "angel" since he is a man. He is not a general angel among many,[36] nor "principal angel" within the writings of Jewish

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[35]I concur with Collins (*Daniel*, 305) that "The preposition כְּ, 'like,' is best understood as indicating the mode of perception proper to a vision, so that 'like a son of man' means 'a human figure seen in a vision.'" Thus Daniel's phraseology retains the generic sense of the idiom "(one) like a human being." It appears that phrases such as "a man-like being" (Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel*, Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965], 110), or "one like a human" (Collins, *Daniel*, 275) accurately communicates Daniel's intended meaning.

intertestamental literature.[37] He specifically should not be identified with the archangel

Michael[38] or Gabriel.[39] The representation of angels in human form is comprehensible in

the thought and usage of this period to be sure, but it would be unfair to purposely place an

angelic figure into a phrase that appears, quite on the surface, to be speaking of a man-like

figure appearing in an otherwise divine courtroom. Because an angel can be described in

human terms it does not follow that every man-like creature must be angelic.

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[36]So Barnabas Lindars, "Re-Enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 22 (1975–76): 55.

[37]For discussion, see John J. Collins, "Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler, Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature, ed. Peter W. Flint, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Florentino García Martínez, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 15; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 94-113.

[38]The classic exposition of the view placing Michael into the position of the son of man is that of N. Schmidt, "The 'Son of Man' in the Book of Daniel," *JBL* 19 (1900): 22-28, which has recently been revived most vigorously by Collins, "Jewish Monotheism," 84. Other treatments in favor of this view include John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, Anchor Bible Reference Library, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 176ff; Benedikt Otzen, "Michael and Gabriel: Angelological Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *The Scriptures and the Scrolls: Studies in Honor of A. S. van der Woude*, ed. F. García Martínez, A. Hilhorst, and C. J. Labuschagne (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 122. John Day agrees (*God's Conflict*, 172-77), though he finds that the Michael figure originates with the Baal tradition. Goldingay (*Daniel*, 172) disagrees with this view in principle, arguing that the lack of specificity in the vision should be appreciated for what it is. Since Michael is not mentioned later in the same vision, for instance (7:18, 22, 27), it would be safest to keep him out of this conversation altogether.

[39]So Yarbro Collins, "*Son of Man*," 551, and Z. Zevit, "The Structure and Individual Elements of Daniel 7," *ZAW* 80 (1968): 394-96. In my opinion, it is hard to imagine that Gabriel, a being of apparently equal rank with Michael, Israel's prince, should inherit everlasting dominion over the cosmos. This argues, of course, the same against Michael. Gabriel is cited as having the appearance of a man in other passages in Daniel (9:21; 12:6-7) and other divine beings are likewise noted to have man-like characteristics (3:25; cf. Rev 19:14; Ezek 1:26; *1 En* 87:2), but this does not warrant a backward move in placing a spiritual meaning directly into the phrase כְּבַר אֱנָשׁ.

Three, it appears that the Son of Man represents a single individual rather than a corporate group of individuals.[40] This is the most straightforward interpretation of the figure as presented by the language of Daniel.[41]

Four, we are reminded that, as a king (cf. 7:24) can be representative of his kingdom, so a man can be representative of his country. Therefore the Son of Man can be a lone individual who can be considered a representative of another group of individuals (such as "the saints of the Most High" themselves).[42] And this is what the Messiah-figure was.[43] As in 8:21, where "the he-goat is the king of Greece," so here the man-like figure can aptly represent a human being, and a kingly (or messiah-like[44]) figure at that.

Five, this man-like figure is admittedly new to the scene of Daniel,[45] and even to the Old Testament. The fact that Daniel has neglected mentioning a messianic figure in this

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[40]The correspondence between the Son of Man in 7:13 and the "people of the saints of the Most High" in 7:27 has led some to propose that he is a symbolic figure representing Israel. This is the view of John Bowker, "The Son of Man," *JTS* 28 (1977): 24; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 74; Casey, *Son of Man*, 39; D. Völter, "Der Menschensohn im Dan 7.13," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 3 (1902): 173-74. Black ("Throne-Theophany," 62) interprets the Son of Man in corporate terms as well, with a view to the future, seeing him as "nothing less than the apotheosis of Israel in the End-Times."

[41]George R. Beasley-Murray has argued ("The Interpretation of Daniel 7," *CBQ* 45 [1983]: 55) that the notion of a single (as opposed to corporate) representative works best for the following reasons: 1) it does not cancel out the idea of a corporate symbol for the nation, but includes it; 2) the use in the vision of the symbol of the cloud rider favors a personal rather than a corporate interpretation, since the "ancient of years" is certainly an individual figure; so also the little horn of 7:8; 3) in further prophetic tradition the Messiah holds just such a position of representation of Yahweh; 4) the vision of vv. 13-14 may represent the ancient Semitic ritual for the proclamation of a king of the enthronement festival of Yahweh himself (see Bentzen, *Daniel*, 34; Eric Heaton, *The Book of Daniel: Introduction and Commentary*, Torch Bible Commentaries [London: SCM, 1956], 183). This, then—even without the mention of a "messiah" by name or title—would strengthen a messianic rather than a purely corporate interpretation of the cloud rider.

[42]So Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 180.

[43]William Horbury, "The Messianic Associations of 'The Son of Man'," *JTS* 36 (1985): 38; Robert D. Rowe, "Is Daniel's 'Son of Man' Messianic?" in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982), 86-87.

[44]This was the earliest interpretation within Christian and Jewish circles (as described in Montgomery, *Daniel*, 320) who himself takes a "symbolical interpretation" (ibid., 323) though these traditions are not at all uniform. See also Segal, *Two Powers*, 33-59. For messianic interpretation within rabbinic literature, see *b. Sanh.* 98a; *Num. Rab.* 13:14.

chapter[46] (or within the whole of his book for that matter) is not reason to assume that such an association cannot be made for the Son of Man.[47] There are relatively few overt references to a personal Messiah in the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible to begin with, and in no place are we given such clear indication of his human-like quality.

Six, this Messiah will lay claim to the kingdoms of the world by the appointment of Yahweh, a scene which had taken place in type earlier in Daniel (2:44). As the Son of Man is here given authority (ἀρχὴ, Theod.; ἐξουσία, LXX) by the decree of Yahweh's council (7:14), so Nebuchadnezzar had been previously given authority by Yahweh's decision (σοὶ ὁ κύριος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ [ἔδωκεν] τὴν ἀρχήν, 2:37, LXX). As a result of this authority-on-loan all the "peoples, tribes, languages" (οἱ λαοί φυλαί γλῶσσαι, 5:19, Theod.) were said to serve Nebuchadnezzar for a time. The Son of Man's authority likewise would bring with it the promise that "peoples, tribes, languages" (οἱ λαοί φυλαί γλῶσσαι, 7:14, Theod.) would serve him. The Son of Man will bear authority "which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed" (7:14).

Is the Son of Man Jesus? Some would argue strongly against it.[48] But it seems, based largely on several New Testament appeals to a cosmic warfare reminiscent of Daniel 7, that Jesus Christ fits all the required elements of Daniel's Son of Man figure. The person

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[45]This is not to say, however, that the being who is called the "son of man" in Dan 7 cannot reappear in several important sequences in Daniel's book. Daniel's need for understanding the events which were to conclude with his own eschatological inheritance may have led to the return of this human figure in 8:11 (as the "prince of the host"), 8:16 (as a voice giving orders to Gabriel), 8:25 (as the "prince of princes"), 10:5-21 (as the "man clothed in linen"), and 12:6-7 (again as the "man clothed in linen"). There is nothing in these five visits that would preclude the Son of Man's reappearance, and there are several good reasons which would support it (e.g., his ordering of Gabriel [8:16], as well as the nearly identical visions of 10:5-10 and Rev 1:13-17; note also the unclear relationship between an unnamed angel and a son of man figure in Rev. 14:14-15).

[46]Casey (*Son of Man*, 30) is representative of this charge.

[47]Beasley-Murray, "Daniel 7," 56, 58.

[48]"The only possible, indeed probable, genuine utterances are sayings independent of Dan. vii in which, in accordance with Aramaic usage, the speaker refers to himself as the son of man out of awe, reserve, or humility. It is this neutral speech-form that the apocalyptically-minded Galilean disciples of Jesus appear to have 'eschatologized' by means of a midrash based on Dan. vii. 13" (Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* [London: SPCK., 1973], 186).

of Jesus is shown in the New Testament to be a human being who has been given the authority of the kingdoms of this world by Yahweh—only after that same authority has been taken from those who possess it now (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28).[49] The effect produced by his death and resurrection will accomplish an eschatological reconditioning of creation (Col 1:19-20) that far exceeds the salvation of individual humans. We will revisit the New Testament descriptions of the Son of Man in chapter 6.

The Promise of Dominion

Dan 7:15-18:
As for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

An interpreting spirit now appears in Daniel's dream, having been sought out by Daniel for help. This being may be Gabriel (he will appear after such a request by Daniel in 8:15), but it may just as well be one of the thousands of beings standing before the throne. He undertakes to provide the interpretation of what Daniel has seen, citing the four beasts who represented four kings.[50] The spirit then introduces something new to the equation: whereas the man-like figure had been given all sovereignty in the vision, now it is the "saints of the Most High" that receive such a kingdom.

Traditional interpretation has supposed these "saints" in v. 18 (קַדִּישִׁים) to be humans,[51] though in recent years the debate has intensified as to their identity. An

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[49]Collins (*Daniel*, 374-75) is willing to admit to the role of the Son of Man here, but not that of Jesus.

[50]As stated above, critical scholarship is nearly unanimous in citing these four kingdoms as that of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks—thus setting the stage for Daniel's vision coming to him in the years approaching 174 B.C., or the reign of Antiochus Ephiphanes. See ibid., 312.

[51]Several options within this view include: God-fearing Israelites (C. H. W. Brekelmans, "The Saints of the Most High and Their Kingdom," *OTS* 14 [1965]: 317); "the persecuted Israel," (M. Delcor, "Les sources du chapitre VII de Daniel," *VT* 18 [1968]: 298); the "corporate personality" of Israel (W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr. [Atlanta: Knox, 1984], 104; Porteous, *Daniel*, 111); "faithful Israelites" (David S. Russell, *The*

increasing number of scholars are content to believe these holy ones are indeed divine beings.[52] The argument begins with the acknowledgment that "holy ones" is a common way to refer to heavenly beings in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Ps 89:7 [MT 8]).[53] Indeed, Daniel's use of the term in every case outside of chapter 7 clearly refers to spirit beings (4:8, 9, 13, 17, 18, 23; 5:11).[54] While it can be admitted that holy people and holy objects appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Lev 21:6-8; Num 16:3), there "is a succession of quite clear instances in which the expression 'the holy ones' means heavenly beings close to God."[55] In conclusion Noth observed:

> The only certain example where "the holy ones" is used with a different meaning is in Ps. xxxiv.10[9] where the pious must be meant when "his [God's] holy ones" are mentioned. Only in the Hellenistic literature of the Diaspora does an occasional similar example occur (cf. *Wisd.* xviii. 9). According to this we must conclude that "the holy ones," used as a noun to which a genitive can be joined ("the holy ones of God," "his holy ones," "thy holy ones") generally refers to divine beings—even if some connection with the pious congregation cannot be wholly excluded.[56]

Noth also showed that Qumran literature (1QS 11.7ff) and apocryphal books (*Wis.* 18:9)[57] support this divine being usage. Hasel, though not siding with Noth in his

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Jews from Alexander to Herod [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], 235; Hartman, *Daniel*, 102). Hartman (101-2) goes on to equate the son of man to the Holy Ones by means of Moses' meeting with God on Mt. Sinai (Exod 24:18). On rare occasions these humans have been considered the Maccabees (see Casey, *Son of Man*, 64-65.). For a helpful general argument in favor of human "holy ones," see Vern S. Poythress, "The Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel vii," *VT* 26 (1976): 208-13.

[52]Collins (*Daniel*, 313-17) summarizes this view well by appealing to the usual meaning of "holy ones" in the Hebrew Bible.

[53]Gerhard F. Hasel ("The Identity of 'the Saints of the Most High' in Daniel 7," *Bib* 56 [1975]: 178) is of the opinion that this generality is too broad; he finds that, upon further review, only seven of the thirteen passages which use קְדוֹשִׁים in the Old Testament aside from the book of Daniel are undoubtedly referring to divine beings.

[54]Martin Noth ("The Holy Ones of the Most High," in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies*, ed. Martin Noth, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967], 215-28) believed that every occurrence of קְדוֹשִׁים in the Book of Daniel (adding 7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27 to the seven references in chs. 4 and 5) referred to divine beings. He was supported in this view by L. Dequeker, "Daniel VII et les Saints du Tres-Haut," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 36 (1960): 353-92. Collins (*Daniel*, 317) adds, "In view of the clear use of 'holy ones' to refer to angels in the Book of Daniel itself, we must expect that it carries that reference in chap. 7."

[55]Noth, "Holy Ones," 217.

[56]Ibid., 218.

final opinion, admitted that קַדִּישִׁם is a common designation for deity and divine beings in Canaanite religions of ancient Syria-Palestine.[58]

Can spirit beings be "worn out" (7:25)? Yes, believed Noth, as the meaning of the Aramaic verb בְּלָא in its intensive form derives from a second root בלה, present in Arabic *bala* with the meaning "to test, treat harshly, afflict."[59] His translation of 7:25 would therefore read "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall greatly offend the holy ones of the Most High," a very possible action to be taken against divine beings who have aligned themselves to a righteous sovereign (cf. 10:21).

These holy ones of 7:18, 25 are subject to mistreatment for "a time, two times, and half a time" (cf. 12:7). The fact that some power "made war with the saints" (7:21), prevailed over them, and afflicted them (7:25), demonstrates nothing more (or less) than their ability to partake in confrontation (cf. 10:13). This will later be a theme in John's vision of the end times, when spirits will be occupied in the battle front (Rev 12:7), even bringing their war to earth (Rev 12:9).

In summary, I believe the קַדִּישִׁם of 7:18, 22, 25, and 27 can be best identified as heavenly beings who, in belonging to the Most High, will play a role in assisting the Son of Man to win the approaching cosmic war. They have already been observed to make a decree against Nebuchadnezzar in favor of the Most High God (4:17). They are consistent with what we have previously described as "good" אֱלֹהִים, or those divine beings which support Yahweh's cause in the administration of justice.[60] We are not able to define their role in a

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[57]See Dequeker, "Daniel VII," 371-92.

[58]Hasel, "Saints of the Most High," 182.

[59]Noth, "Holy Ones," 225.

[60]Both Gabriel (who appears twice [8:16; 9:21] to support Daniel in his understanding of the timing and events of the future for the people of Israel) and Michael (who again appears twice [10:13-21; 12:1] as the protector of Israel under the ultimate leadership of Yahweh) would qualify as "good" אֱלֹהִים in this sense. Neither are ever called a מַלְאָךְ in the Hebrew Bible, though John J. Collins ("Gabriel," in *DDD* [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 338) and Michael Mach ("Michael," in *DDD*, 569) both begin their discussions of these figures by referring to each of them as an "angel."

biblical pantheon any more than this. To restate our understanding of specific terms, however, we note that there is no lexical or theological reason to call these beings מַלְאָכִים, nor is there reason to speak of them as "angels." We have yet to meet in our discussion of Daniel, in fact, any mention of מַלְאָכִים.

> Dan 7:19-25:
> Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceeding terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke great things, whose look was more stout than its fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.

The middle of this chapter appears to recap many of the motifs from vv. 7-14 and 17-18. Daniel revisits the most troubling elements of the vision, seeing the little horn make war on the קַדִּישִׁים. Yahweh evidences his control of the situation, however, as the predetermined "time, times, and half a time"(ἕως καιροῦ καὶ καιρῶν καὶ ἕως ἡμίσους καιροῦ, LXX) came to an end. Whatever rule is included under the authority of the horns is now about to end.

The Judgment of the Powers and Authorities

> Dan 7:26-27:
> But the judgment shall be set, and they shall destroy his authority (ἐξουσίαν ἀπολοῦσι, LXX)/remove his rule (ἀρχὴν μεταστήσουσιν, Theod.) to consume and to destroy (ἀπολέσαι, LXX, Theod.) it unto the end. And the kingdom and the authority (ἐξουσίαν, LXX, Theod.), and the greatness, and the rule (ἀρχὴν, LXX) of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all authorities/rulers (ἐξουσίαι, LXX, ἀρχαὶ, Theod.) shall serve and obey him.

It should be noted here that the Greek versions of Daniel include the LXX/OG

and Theodotion. We have been including important Theodotion readings in the above

paragraphs because the LXX is unfortunately not preserved well in Daniel.[61] The text of

Theodotion, dated close to the second century A.D., clearly based its translation on a

manuscript tradition which existed in New Testament times. Certain renderings once

thought distinctive to Theodotion are found in the New Testament, for instance (cp. Dan

6:23, Heb 11:33). In general, modern scholarship views Theodotion's text as generally

superior to the LXX or OG of Daniel.[62] Charles notes that, prior to Jerome's time, the

church discarded the use of the LXX version of Daniel in favor of that of Theodotion.[63]

Since we are unable to discern which text was most available to Paul (or available at all), we

have noted in the translation above the vocabulary differences that bear upon our study.

In v. 26 the holy ones are not the court, it seems, but rather the beneficiaries of

the court's decision. The "judgment" or court (v. 10) now "destroys" the authority of the

fourth beast and in so doing gives this authority to "the people (עַם) of the saints of the

Most High." Here the concept of humans now stands side-by-side with the concept of "the

holy ones" which we had earlier identified as spirits.[64] In 1QM 10:10 the "people of the

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[61]Charles, *Daniel*, xxvi. For an updated discussion on the LXX/OG/Theodotion witness to Daniel, see Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 41-42.

[62]John William Wevers, "Septuagint," in *IDB* 4:275.

[63]Charles, *Daniel*, xxvii. Critical apparatus for both LXX and Theodotion is available in Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum: Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Gottingensis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), 174-75.

[64]The general meaning of עַם in the Hebrew Bible describes kin, people, or peoples (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann J. Stamm, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, vol. 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 837-38), with no evidence that the term ever refers to אֱלֹהִים-class beings.
When Waltke and O'Connor (Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 143) admit that "The noun-noun genitive phrase or construct chain is immensely versatile and hark-worked," they are predicting the difficult nature of securing the meaning for 7:27's עַם קַדִּישֵׁי עֶלְיוֹנִין. While this construction may offer the meaning "holy people" similar to the form found in Ps 2:6 ("my holy hill," classified by Waltke and O'Connor as an attributive genitive [9.5.3b]), a broad analysis of the phrase "people of . . . " (עַם in the absolute followed by a noun in construct) in the Hebrew Bible yields consistent evidence that we should employ the genitive of

holy ones of the covenant" are identified with "your people Israel." The context of this statement appears to be the mingling of humans and heavenly beings in the final eschatological battle, thus allowing for both humans and divine beings to be in view. Upon hearing of the reversed phrase "holy ones of the people" (1QM 6:6, 16:1) we are again shown how humans and non-humans were considered together in the final battle.[65]

Thus while the phrase "the saints of the Most High" cannot be settled conclusively from the usage of קְדֹשִׁים elsewhere, we can move to the end of the vision with equal assurance that *God's own* will win the consummate war. This much is clear. The beings that Yahweh has appointed to inherit the governance of the nations will in fact obtain what was promised them. It appears most satisfactory, in the end, to take the genitive as a possessive in v. 27, meaning that the people pertaining to or under the protection of the holy ones are in view.[66] The nation that Yahweh had kept for his own possession (Deut 32:8) through the heavenly prince Michael (Dan 10–12) now is the beneficiary of a kingdom. Therefore, the "people of the holy ones" are humans who are the chosen faithful who will inherit the coming kingdom through cosmic battle against evil men and spirits.[67] It is fitting that Daniel himself will be the human subject that is first told of the glories to follow when encouraged to remain faithful to the end (12:12-13).

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possession. Examples of this construction are fairly easy to find: Exod 1:9, "The people of the children of Israel;" 2 Sam 11:17, "people of the servants of David;" Ps 47:9 [MT 47:10], "people of the God of Abraham;" Esth 4:11, "people of the province of the king."

[65]"It is apparent from 1QM 12 that angels mingle with men in the final battle and that mighty deeds are done by the aid of the heavenly holy ones (e.g., 12:7: 'the congregation of the holy ones is among us for everlasting succor')" (Collins, *Daniel*, 315). Thus while the holy ones in the sectarian literature of Qumran are normally heavenly beings, confusion rightfully arises because the human community there believed that it mingled with the heavenly host in eschatological war, in the cult, and even in the community itself on a daily basis. Both אֱלֹהִים and men were therefore considered to be "the host of the holy ones of the Most High."

[66]So Goldingay (*Daniel*, 182), who appeals to the fact that, in his opinion, no passage in the Old Testament or in the Qumran literature uses עַם to refer to celestial beings.

[67]So Beasley-Murray, "Daniel 7," 50.

The close relationship here between "people" and "holy ones" may also offer a further meaning beyond what has been noted above. Müller has suggested, and Collins generally agrees, that the "holy ones" are divine beings while the "people of the holy ones" denote humans on earth who are destined to belong to the holy ones in heaven.[68] Such a view fits comfortably with that of the community at Qumran, as expressed in the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness (12:6-9):

> Thou, O God [art terrible] in the glory of thy majesty, and the congregation of the holy ones are amongst us for eternal alliance, and we (they?) [shall render] scoffing unto kings, scorn and derision unto mighty men, for the Lord is holy, and the King of Glory is with us, a people of saints; migh[ty men and] a host of angels are among those mustered with us, the Mighty One of War is in our congregation, and the host of his spirits is with our steps, and our horsemen are [like] rain clouds and like clouds of dew covering the earth. . .[69]

In this interpretation it is possible to understand the close relationship shared by human and divine beings under the ultimate sovereignty of Yahweh. In Dan 10, it will become evident that divine beings represent nations of the earth; Michael is described in 10:21 as "your prince" (שַׂרְכֶם) and in 12:1 as "the great prince that stands for the children of your people" (הַשַּׂר הַגָּדוֹל הָעֹמֵד עַל־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ). The spiritual and physical worlds do not function independently, either in times of persecution (7:21; Rev 12:7) or victory (7:27). It therefore appears the most natural understanding of the phrase לְעַם קַדִּישֵׁי עֶלְיוֹנִין relates to human beings which have been placed under the watchcare of spiritual "holy ones" (cf. Dan 12:1).

In defense of this interpretation we need to notice the similarities between Dan 7 and Dan 2. The promise of 2:44 states, "In the period of those kings the God of heaven will establish a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; that kingdom shall never pass to another people (מַלְכוּתָה לְעַם אָחֳרָן לָא תִשְׁתְּבִק); it shall shatter and make an end of all these

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[68]S. K. Müller, "Der Menschensohn im Danielzyklus," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn: Für Anton Vögtle*, ed. R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 59.

[69]Translation by Yigael Yadin, ed., *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 316.

kingdoms." It is not by accident, it appears, that *people* are once again predicted to the bearers of the sovereignty of the kingdom in question.[70]

The final message is clear as brought to summation in this vision of Dan 7: Yahweh is king, and his kingdom will not suffer lapse in either character or timing. In the end all opposition will acknowledge the supremacy of this God over all the others who may temporarily show signs of competitiveness. This supremacy will include a kindness and love which has been indicative of Yahweh's treatment of his own all along: he will "bless his people with peace" while he "sits as king" (Ps 29:10-11).

Conclusion

Our previous chapter attempted to develop a biblical assembly of spirit beings while purposely avoiding the Book of Daniel. This was done to allow Daniel's vision of the divine council to develop on its own terms and with its own emphases. Daniel's vision of chapter 7, as well as his book as a whole, now can be summarized with our eventual goal in view, that of finding the identity of Paul's use of "principalities and powers." Our summary will be comprised of seven points.

First, before coming to the Book of Daniel it had been demonstrated that plural אֱלֹהִים-class beings exist by the design of Yahweh and function according to his ultimate purposes. Dan 7 demonstrates that this construct is still firmly in place at the close of the Hebrew canon. Spirit beings are found to sit on thrones and make judgments or decrees which reflect the same pattern in previous divine council texts (Isa 6, 1 Kgs 22; Job 1; Dan 4). Whatever fear lurked in the minds of future rabbis concerning a possible "two powers

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[70]Some New Testament Son of Man sayings appear to deal particularly with this idea of divine beings partaking with humans in the final assize. In Mark 8:38 the Son of Man is said to come "in the glory of his Father and with the holy angels" (cf. Matt 16:27; Luke 9:26; Rev 19:14). In Mark 13:27 the Son of Man is said to send his ἄγγελοι to gather the elect. The assimilation is most easily explained if the holy ones in Daniel 7 were understood as heavenly beings. Paul also noted that the coming of Jesus will be coupled with the appearance of his "might angels" (2 Thes 1:7). But, because that coming will also be for the aid of the elect (i.e., with "gathering" in mind), it is, in effect, the "people of the divine beings" that are ultimately in view. Thus it appears that the idea of humans accompanying spirits in the final victory is certainly afforded us by New Testament texts.

in heaven" heresy,[71] this fear did not lead to the emendation of the surviving texts of Daniel. A host of אֱלֹהִים-class beings are clearly and vitally involved throughout the courtroom scene of Dan 7.

Second, the absence of מַלְאָכִים from any divine council setting in Daniel is consistent with previous description of spirit beings in the Hebrew Bible. We have found that אֱלֹהִים are the personal beings which God has created "above" mankind (Ps 8:5-6), while מַלְאָכִים are those אֱלֹהִים which are sent by Yahweh to do his bidding. As we have noted, this fits the use and meaning of the word מַלְאָכִים throughout the Hebrew Bible. In short, a מַלְאָךְ is not an "angel," but an אֱלֹהִים which has been sent.[72] It now appears that the entire Old Testament (including Daniel) remains consistent in using this vocabulary for the spirit world.

Third, we have noted that the Hebrew Bible has shown that not all אֱלֹהִים are loyal to the purposes of Yahweh. As Ps 82 has promised that Yahweh will judge בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט ("among the gods"), so it appears from biblical narratives and from Dan 7's vision that some אֱלֹהִים qualify as rebellious or antagonistic to Yahweh. It also appears that these אֱלֹהִים are those most "distant" from the throne, as it were, or those who are most involved in the administration of the world (Deut 4:19; 32:8-9 [LXX]). These are likely the specific rulers of world governments who are judged in Ps 82.[73] Therefore the Danielic

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[71]Segal (*Two Powers*, 33-59) finds that later rabbinical writings have demonstrated a continual effort on the part of editors and commentators to remove hints of divine plurality within the texts of the Jewish religion (we will consider this evidence in chapter 5). His main contention, however, is that Judaism as a large-scale movement did not condemn a belief in two divine beings or manifestations of God until only *after* the rise of Christianity and in reaction to it. See also Otzen, "Michael and Gabriel," 121.

[72]The only two occurrences of a מַלְאָכִים in Daniel occur in just this fashion: 1) a being first recognized as a בַּר־אֱלָהִין (3:18) is later acknowledged as a messenger who had been sent (שְׁלַח מַלְאֲכֵהּ, 3:28); 2) an unspecified being is sent to aid Daniel in the lions' den and is cited by the prophet as a messenger who, again, had been sent (שְׁלַח מַלְאֲכֵהּ, 6:22[3]).

[73]Such is the clear tradition among the intertestamental writers who considered the meaning of "national gods." The author of Jubilees (15:31) took the tradition ever further: "And [God] sanctified [Israel] and gathered them from all of the sons of man because (there are) many nations and many people, and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might lead them astray from following him" (translation by O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends,*

vision of *spirits judging spirits* (cf. 7:10, 12, 26) reflects in narrative form what had been poetically promised in this Psalm.

Fourth, we also have noted the opposite, that some אֱלֹהִים are presented as loyal to Yahweh. With the unique appearance of plural "thrones" in the Dan 7 we apparently learn that Yahweh's "council" is composed of at least some אֱלֹהִים who support Yahweh's will in just this way.[74] Every mention of council activity in Dan 7 (7:9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 22, 25, 26, 27) finds the spirits affirming Yahweh's sovereignty and working against evil powers on earth and in heaven. Within the Hebrew Bible as a whole, and within Daniel specifically, there does not seem to be any evidence of antagonistic אֱלֹהִים in the divine council, or those who closely surround the throne of Yahweh.

Fifth, the evidence from Daniel underscores our previous insistence that the actions and judgments of the council are ultimately credited to the will of Yahweh. This seems to be the connotation of Dan 7:22 ("until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High") and Dan 4:24 ("this is the decree of the Most High,") when considering that just moments before in each case a decision by the council had been made (7:13-14; 4:17). Yahweh, the Most High God, must never ultimately contend for his own glory or his right to rule, even in the presence of his loyal subjects.[75] Yahweh may even ask the question to those who surround him,[76] "As a counselor [who]

Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Anchor Bible Reference Library, ed. David Noel Freedman [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 87).

[74]We are given the indication in Daniel that plural אֱלֹהִים (functioning "in council") may be more active than we are clearly told. In Daniel 4:17 a "decree of the watchers, and a demand by the word of the holy ones" was executed for the furtherance of Yahweh's reputation. We are given no background for this event, and instead are privileged only to observe the effect that this decision made upon Nebuchanezzar. This incident does not teach us the ways of the heavenly council as much as it reminds us that their activity is assumed and their decisions are effective.

[75]Cf. 1 Kgs 22:22: The offer made by an attending spirit was finalized with Yahweh's declaration, "You shall prevail," underscoring who was ultimately in control of Ahab's life and death.

[76]The plural imperative of Isa 40:1 ("comfort" נַחֲמוּ) with its plural suffix ("your God" אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) has led several interpreters to regard this chapter (and much of Second Isaiah) as a divine council setting. See Frank Moore Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *JNES* 12 (1965): 274-77;

has taught [Yahweh]? With whom did he take counsel, and who instructed him?" (Isa 40:13b-14a). All other divine council decisions available to us in the Old Testament are consistent with this model.[77]

Sixth, no personal names are attached to the wicked אֱלֹהִים which are condemned in Dan 7. They are a nameless group that is plainly called, at the climax of the vision, "authorities" (ἐξουσίαι, LXX)[78] or "rulers" (ἀρχαί, Theod.)[79] (7:27). This should not be considered inconsequential in the sense that Paul will also veer away from using personal names when listing spiritual powers in the New Testament. As references to a singular "Satan" are relatively few in the Old Testament, so will Paul be found to refer to Satan only ten times, and never in proximity to one of his many lists of evil spiritual powers. Yahweh's antagonists exist in the plural (e.g., Ps 82; Daniel's "beasts"), though they can be represented in the singular (e.g., the satan of Job 1; Daniel's "little horn"). These wicked spirits are rarely mentioned by personal names in the Hebrew Bible,[80] and Paul will sound conspicuously similar.

Seventh, the vision of Dan 7 portrays the future condemnation of wicked אֱלֹהִים in very clear and strong terms. The fourth beast (representing a final evil kingdom, 7:23) will have his "authority destroyed" (ἐξουσίαν ἀπολοῦσι, LXX) or his "rule removed"

Christopher R. Seitz, "The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 109 (1990): 229-47.

[77]The situation of Job may be unique, though it is also instructive in its own right. We are not told that Yahweh's contention with the satan was a council issue (Job 1–2), though it is clear that the opening scene (1:6; 2:1) lends support to a council setting. Even if the satan acted within the will or judgment of the council, Yahweh takes ultimate credit for the evil that had come upon Job (42:11).

[78]Except for Dan 3:2, where ἐξουσίαι is used in reference to physical rulers, this is the only verse in the LXX where ἐξουσίαι occurs in the plural. Thus instead of speaking of the administration of authority, it is speaking of actual authorities, or those beings who are exerting authority.

[79]Of the nine uses of ἀρχή in Theodotion's recension of Daniel, this is the only time it occurs in the plural. It is used five times in Judges, each time speaking of physical rulers.

[80]This appears as one of the most consistent and clear distinctions between the canonical Old Testament and the religious literature which came before it (Canaanite and Ugaritic mythologies, etc.) and the religious literature that came after it (pseudepigrapha, Qumran, etc.). See Clinton E. Arnold, "The 'Exorcism' of Ephesians 6:12 in Recent Research," *JSNT* 30 (1987): 73.

(ἀρχὴν μεταστήσουσιν, Theod.) according to 7:26, while the vision early on described this event as the beast being "slain, and its body destroyed, and . . . given to be burned with fire" (7:11). These do not need to be thought of as contradictory forms of judgment; one may simply lead to the other. The judgment of death (cf. Ps 82:7) appears to be the ultimate pain suffered after having handed over the reigns of rule.

This study of the vision of Dan 7 has therefore added depth and further meaning to what was brought to our attention in chapter three: *a host of unnamed antagonistic spirit beings are given temporary authority in the world before being stripped of that rule and condemned to punishment.* Daniel's vision placed the story of competing אֱלֹהִים and their "kingdoms" into a explicit eschatological narrative yet to be played out in the future. It will be demonstrated in the final two chapters that, despite the challenge of translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek, these same powers will reappear in full force through the words of the Apostle Paul.

in Qumran (especially 4QShirShabb) and, presumably, of the priestly council which they led.[13] *Jubilees* presents a system of two elite angelic classes with priestly functions, "the angels of the Presence" (4Q400 1 i 3 speaks of this classification as "the holiest of the holy ones") and "the angels of sanctification," also called simply "the holy ones" (*Jub.* 2:2, 18; 15:27; 31:14). In *Jubilees* the lower ranking angels are not priestly but are angels responsible for the phenomena of the natural world:

> *Jub.* 2:2:
> For on the first day he created the heavens, which are above, and the earth, and the waters and all of the spirits which minister before him: the angels of the presence, and the angels of sanctification, and the angels of the spirit of fire, and the angels of the spirit of the winds, and the angels of the spirit of the clouds and darkness and snow and hail and frost, and the angels of resoundings and thunder and lightning, and the angels of the spirits of cold and heat and winter and springtime and harvest and summer, and all the spirits of his creatures which are in heaven and on earth.[14]

The author of this text seems to be setting out to give as complete a list as possible of created beings that dwell in the heavens (cf. 2:1, "all that he created," 2:2, "all the spirits that he created"). Yet conspicuous by its absence is any mention of the gods (=θεόι) of the Old Testament. But while it may seem that the specific term for "gods" has disappeared, this is only in reference to their name; for now they seem to reappear as beings[15] which, elsewhere in *Jubilees,* teach men skills (3:15; 12:26ff.), inform them of God's will (12:22), test them (19:3), report their sins to God (4:6), announce future events

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[12]So Philip S. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments,* vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 242.

[13]See Carol A. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition,* Harvard Semitic Studies, vol. 27 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 34.

[14]Translation by O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Widsom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Framents of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works,* vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 55.

[15]We are not certain what these beings were called in the original writing of Jubilees, which seems to have been in Hebrew (ibid., 41). We suspect they were called מַלְאָכִים, but need to reserve that judgment without better textual evidence, since to date only fragments of the Greek text survive. In every instance the Greek reading is ἄγγελοι.

(16:1-4, 16), reveal secret cosmic lore (4:21), bind up evil spirits (10:9f.), and guard individuals for which are assigned responsibility (35:17).[16]

In light of such a book as *Jubilees*, it soon becomes evident that the angelology of the intertestamental period presents a very disparate doctrine of divine beings in general.[17] There remains too much non-systematic—even conflicting—data to wade through. It is even quite evident that we are not dealing with one angelic tradition across the Hellenized world. "This [angelological] development may have taken place under foreign, perhaps Persian, perhaps also Babylonian, influence, and it is always of great interest to trace foreign influence in Jewish religion."[18] With such wide and varied influence it is not difficult to envision an angelology which is, in its very essence, fluid.

Intertestamental Greek literature widely employed the term ἄγγελος to express the identity of spirit beings who played an intercessory role with mankind (e.g., *Tob* 12:12; *Jub* 30:20; *T. Dan* 6:1-2; *T. Ash.* 6:6; *T. Levi* 5:5-7). Bousset has argued that this indicated a blurring of the central importance of God and suspected that in Jewish "popular piety" the interest in ἄγγελοι led to their veneration.[19] The common angelic warning of "Do not worship me" (Rev 19:10; 22:8; *Ascen. Isa.* 7:21; 8:5) constituted much of Bousset's argument in the sense that it indicated to him that worship of angels was indeed practiced on a widespread level.[20] However, his claim that there developed a systematic doctrine of angels ("eine Engeldogmatik, eine Angelologie"[21]) is overstated, as many have recog-

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[16]This is representative of the list offered by ibid., 47.

[17]H. W. Kuhn, "The Angeology of the Non-Canonical Jewish Apocalypses," *JBL* 67 (1948): 219, 224, 230-32.

[18]Benedikt Otzen, "Michael and Gabriel: Angelological Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *The Scriptures and the Scrolls: Studies in Honor of A. S. van der Woude*, ed. F. García Martínez, A. Hilhorst, and C. J. Labuschagne (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 118-19.

[19]W. Bousset and H. Gressmann, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966), 329-30.

[20]Ibid., 330.

[21]Ibid., 321.

nized.[22] Stephen Noll's description of the angelology of the Qumran texts as "not a carefully worked out system but a more impressionistic portrayal of the heavenly world"[23] seems representative of postexilic Jewish literature as a whole.

The Development of the Term ἄγγελος in the Intertestamental Period

Walter Grundmann, in speaking of Josephus' use of ἄγγελος, says "the word is . . . used in the twofold sense of 'messenger' and 'angel.'"[24] This notion of using the word "angel" to define what is meant by ἄγγελος is noteworthy. Grundmann has assumed that the transliteration of a word (ἄγγελος=angel) qualifies as its translation or meaning. But surely this is not the case. If Grundmann had said that the Hebrew כְּרוּב was "used in the sense of 'cherub,'" we would accuse him of stalling. He has not told us what a כְּרוּב is, but has merely pronounced a Hebrew word in the English language.[25] Peggy Day had earlier fought against this problem in equating שָׂטָן to the developed sense of Satan.[26] It appears the problem is much the same for ἄγγελος. To say that ἄγγελος is an "angel"—as Grundmann does above, as well as countless writers before and after him—is to leave the reader uninformed as to the meaning of ἄγγελος.[27]

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[22]For example, see P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen. Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 9.

[23]Stephen F. Noll, "Angelology in the Qumran Texts" (Ph.D. diss., Manchester, 1979), 180.

[24]Walter Grundmann, Gerhard von Rad, and Gerhard Kittel, "ἄγγελος," in *TDNT*, 1:76.

[25]Notoriously difficult biblical words (and the concepts behind them) are often transliterated and left untranslated, of course (e.g., "And you shall put the Urim and the Thummim [אוּרִים וְאֶת־הַתֻּמִּים] in the breastplate of judgment," Exod 28:30). Yet one would hope that this method of translational theory be kept to a minimum, as it merely delays understanding for the reader. Meaning cannot be assumed when the sound of letters has been exchanged between languages. If meaning is assumed—as it seems to be with "angel"—we have the right to return to the original meaning of the term to see if such assumptions are warranted.

[26]See pp. 108-10 of this study.

[27]The presumed meaning behind the English "angel" becomes most evident in catching modern writers use such a term as "angelic." Presumably this means "angel-like," or even "angelish," but since "angel" is itself only a transliteration of ἄγγελος we should admit that the word is basically useless as an adjective.

The question to begin with, of course, is to ask, "What was an ἄγγελος in Greek intertestamental literature?" In general, the use of the term seems to reflect "divine messenger." It was the gods of Greek literature, in fact, that acted like the בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים of Gen 6 in coming to the earth on a regular basis. The term ἄγγελος is regularly used of Hermes, Nemesis, Hecate, Artemis, and other divine beings of the underworld in Greek literature.[28] Their mention is often made in the magical papyri associated with incantations. Kittel concludes, "Greek and Hellenistic religion thus felt itself to be in connexion with divinity through the divine messengers."[29]

The earliest use of the Greek ἄγγελος carried the meaning of "one who brings a message," or "messenger" in the Greek and Hellenistic world.[30] In this sense we may consider ἄγγελος to be the functional equivalent of the Hebrew מַלְאָךְ. Further study of the use of ἄγγελος, however, soon reveals that the term is considered "sacral," as Grundmann finds that such a being was understood to function "under the special protection of the gods."[31] In the physical sense the term remains usable as the technical term for emissary (Herodotus Wars 1.36; Xenophon Historia Graeca 2.1.7), delivering official messages. The sacral or spiritual use of ἄγγελος is never far from view, however. The heavenly ἄγγελος in the strict sense was the god Hermes.[32] In the end, Bremmer finds that the Greek gods look suspiciously like Old Testament gods: "Greek gods . . . were invisible, they were not loving, almighty, or omnipresent. Moreover, they were 'envious and disorderly' (Herodotus Wars 1.32.1), their presence could be uncanny, sometimes horrific, and, last but

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[28]Grundmann, Rad, and Kittel, "ἄγγελος," 1:75.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., 1:74.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid., 1:75.

not least, they were frivolously amoral . . . . Although gods did uphold the rules of justice, their obligations to kin and friends had priority."[33]

We will now turn our attention to the path that ἄγγελος took through the intertestamental period, as well as other words (such as מַלְאָךְ) which may disclose the location of the gods of the first commandment. One can safely assume that the gods so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament did not merely go away. As they were described at the end of Daniel's vision in ch. 7 to be the ἀρχαί and/or ἐξουσίαι of the present world (7:27), they are predicted to extend their rulership throughout the world until their reign is violently taken away (7:12, 26). Therefore it would be helpful to consider how Daniel's prophecy was used and understood within intertestamental literature.

Appeals to Daniel 7 in Intertestamental Literature

1 Enoch

First Enoch a difficult work whose interpretation is troubled by the fact that the text is extant only in late Ethiopic manuscripts. Yet it must be considered a central piece of evidence for the widespread belief in heavenly powers within Judaism right up to the time of Paul. The book can roughly be dated 100 B.C.–A.D. 70.[34] The writer appears to make an appeal to Dan 7:9f beginning at *1 En* 46:1, which emphasizes its importance to this present study. In this text the writer will speak of "one who had a head of days," which seems to reflect the Ancient of Days of Daniel; indeed, the remainder of the description of this being is virtually lifted from Dan 7:9. The description of the man-like figure is more elaborate

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[33]Jan N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, Greece and Rome: New Surveys in the Classics, ed. Katherine Clarke and Christopher Vurnan, vol. 24 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11.

[34]Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 204; J. T. Milik, "Problemes de la Litterature Henochique á aa Lumiere des Fragments Arameens de Qumran," *HTR* 64 (1971): 335; Matthew Black, "The Parables of Enoch (*1 En* 37-71) and the 'Son of Man'," *ExpTim* 78 (1976): 5-8; E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 6-7.

than that of Dan 7:13, and yet the figure remains quite man-like. *First Enoch* 46:2 records a question from Enoch concerning the specific phrase "the son of man."[35] Thus to ignore this intertestamental work would be to miss an important version of what the Daniel text was taken to mean in years immediately following its publication.[36]

In Dan 7:9, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his place among a host of divine beings. In *1 Enoch*, there is no mention of the placing of thrones, though there is indication of a host of beings who occupy space around the Most High without sitting as a court. For in this vision the beings always stand; this is specifically stated in *1 En* 40:1; 47:3; and 60:2. The absence of the "court" is not immediately discernible if one does consider this text in relation to Dan 7. The opening of the books (of judgment, presumably) still takes place in front of the Head of Days in *1 En* 47:3. The most striking parallel between Dan 7:9-10 and *1 Enoch* is given in below, found in 14:18-23 (italics added for comparison to be noted below):

> "And I looked and I saw in it a high throne, and its appearance as like ice and its surrounds like the shining sun and the sound of Cherubim. And from underneath the high throne there flowed out rivers of burning fire so that it was impossible to look at it. And He who is great in glory sat on it, and his rainment was brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow. And *no angel could enter*, and at the appearance of the face of him who is honoured and praised no creature of flesh could look. A sea of fire burnt around him, and a great fire stood before him, and *none of those around him came near to him*. Ten Thousand times ten thousand stood before him, but *he needed no holy counsel*. And the Holy Ones who were near to him did not leave by night or day and did not depart from him."[37]

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[35]The identification of the son of man within *1 Enoch*, of course, turns out to be Enoch himself. In the course of the Similitudes, Enoch appears to have been given everything that the Danielic Son of Man figure receives in Dan 7:14, including the reverence of all peoples and nations of every language (*1 En* 47:5; cf. 62:6).

[36]It appears that Dan 7:15-28 has left no definite trace anywhere in *1 Enoch*. In other words, we are told of the son of man without being privileged with Daniel's interpretation, which would have proven helpful for our present study. For further discussion see Maurice Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 107. "In considering the possibility that Dan. 7:22 might have been interpreted to mean that the Saints became the judges, the most interesting passage is *1 Enoch* 69.27, 'and the sum of the judgement was given to the son of man.' If the son of man figure of Dan. 7.13 was interpreted as the leader of the Saints of the Most High, Dan. 7.22 thus interpreted might conceivably lead to the conception of their leader as the man who did the judging" (ibid., 107-8).

[37]Translation from Isaac, "1 Enoch," 21.

It is apparent that Enoch's vision is considerably more elaborate than Daniel's, a fact which is consistent with the general thesis of this study. But there are no longer plural thrones in Enoch's vision. The Most High God is no longer in need of "holy counsel." The privileged beings which are allowed into the presence of the sovereign are only there to be silent, and not even allowed to come "near to him." This is not consistent with Daniel's vision, specifically as it related to the beings which were considered "near" to God.

The scene presented in Enoch's vision also stands in stark contrast to other biblical material we have previously noted. Job 1–2 presents a free discourse, it appears, between Yahweh and the שָׂטָן figure; 1 Kgs 22 even finds Yahweh eliciting the thoughts and judgments of those around him. In Isa 6 Yahweh includes his spiritual bystanders in asking the question, "Who will go for us?" It does not appear in Enoch's vision of the heavenly palace that such a scene would ever take place. An evolution of sorts is evident; God has ascended in splendor and the divine beings (whatever their title) have descended in privilege. Yahweh is still not alone, though the role of the attendant spirits is reduced. These beings have vacated thrones which, for Enoch, no longer even exist.

3 Enoch

Though there are differences in detail, the consistent picture again develops in *3 Enoch* of a very lively and real world in the heavens that is ruled over by one supreme God. There is, however, no mention of an eschatological consummation that concerns these beings in this book.

The themes of Dan 7:9-10 are evident in the writing of *3 Enoch*. Consider the following: in 18:19 a "court was held and the books were opened;" in 28:7 the "Holy One . . . sits on the throne of judgment and judges all the world with the books of the living and the books of the dead open before him;" in 30:2 the "Great Law Court sits in the height of the heaven" and "a court was held and the books were opened;" in 35:4 a "thousand thousand waited on him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; a court was

held, and the books were opened;" and in 36:1 there is mention of a "throne of glory").[38] Beyond the scenes of a heavenly court, however, it does not appear that *3 Enoch* attempts to offer an exegesis of Dan 7.[39]

Yet *3 Enoch* clearly went beyond Daniel and all of the Old Testament in its development of an angelology. The tradition of a super-angel reached its climax in *3 Enoch* where a figure known as Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, is "called by the name of the Creator with seventy names . . . [and is] greater than all the princes, more exalted than all the angels, more beloved than all the ministers, more honored than all the hosts and elevated over all potentates in sovereignty, greatness, and glory" (4:1). Metatron is given a throne like the throne of glory (10:1) and is even called "the lesser Yahweh" (12:5). By one observer's opinion within the throne room Metatron is one of "two powers in heaven" (16:3). We are not sure who Metatron is likened to in later Jewish tradition, though he is considered by some to be a later development of the Son of Man figure in the Similitudes of Enoch (chs. 37–71).[40] We will revisit this "two powers in heaven" motif later in this chapter.

4 Ezra

There is no doubt that *4 Ezra* 11–12 is dependent upon Daniel, and chap 13 is also recognized by most scholars to be specifically dependent upon Dan 7. The narrative passages of this work reflect upon Daniel's as well (*4 Ezra* 3:1-2, cf. Dan 7:1, 15; *4 Ezra* 5:14-15, cf. Dan 7:28). In *4 Ezra* 6:20 there is mention of "opening of the books," but this may be too common an occurrence for a sure appeal to Dan 7:10. It can be said with certainty that the writer of *4 Ezra* 1–10, 14 belonged to the same general thought-world as Daniel even though precise literary dependence cannot be demonstrated.[41]

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[38]Translations from Alexander, "3 Enoch," 244.

[39]This is also the opinion of Casey, *Son of Man*, 130.

[40]For discussion, see Alexander, "3 Enoch," 243-44.

Fourth Ezra 11–12, however, makes this dependence upon Dan 7 made explicit. The statment, "The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which your brother Daniel saw in a vision" (12:11), reveals that such appeals made throughout chap. 11 (vv. 1, 2, 39, 40) are indeed taken from, or at least dependent upon, the text of Dan 2 and/or 7. For the writer of *4 Ezra*, the eagle of 12:11 represents Rome; he is clearly identified as the fourth kingdom in Dan 7. It should follow that the author of *4 Ezra* believed that the fourth beast in Dan 7 symbolized the Roman kingdom, and this is how his remarks should apparently be interpreted. "It was not interpreted for him as I am now interpreting it, or have interpreted it, for you" (12:12). Thus it may safely be supposed (cf. especially 11:39) that *4 Ezra* also interpreted the previous three kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. Dan 7:11, for *4 Ezra*, was the destruction of Rome itself.

The impact of Dan 7 is evident throughout chap. 13 (vv. 2, 3, 4, 25, 32), especially as it relates to the significance of a human figure (the phrase "one like the resemblance of a man" [13:3] is not used as a title) which comes from the sea and then flies with the clouds of heaven. The writer speaks of this man-like being in glowing terms: "But he will stand on the top of Mount Zion. And Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, prepared and built, as you saw the mountain carved out without hands. And he, my Son, will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness and will reproach them to their face with their evil thoughts and with the torments with which they are to be tortured; and he will destroy them with effort by the law" (*4 Ezra* 13:35-38).[42] Thus the writer believed that Daniel's vision was symbolic of four worldly kingdoms, with the last kingdom coming to ruin through the efforts of a man-like figure. Unlike Dan 7, however, we are never told in *4 Ezra* of antagonistic evil spirits which guided the kingdoms of the world before the appearance of this being.

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[41]Casey, *Son of Man*, 122.

[42]From Bruce M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 552.

Daniel in the Dead Sea Scrolls

A total of eight manuscripts of the Book of Daniel have been discovered at Qumran, none of which are complete.[43] This is a significant number of scrolls, and exceeds the Qumran finds for most books of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament.[44] This suggests that the Qumran community regarded the Book of Daniel as a scriptural book, as does the way in which the book was used at the site. 4Q174 quotes Dan 12:10 as "written in the book of Daniel, the Prophet." It similarly appears that biblical interpretation at Qumran included discussion about the meaning of Dan 7.[45] This is not to say that understanding the interpretation is an easy task, for there are no direct quotations of Dan 7 in Qumran literature. We are dealing only with what Casey, for instance, calls possible "reminiscences" of this chapter.[46] Yet it appears that the Qumran sect knew of the four kingdom sequence with Rome as the fourth kingdom.[47]

Qumran is a good test case, then, for what we have found in the rest of intertestamental literature. If there is one pattern that emerges from our brief survey of Dan 7 within these books, it is the dependence on some important themes (throne room visions, coming world powers, etc.) without the use of direct quotation. As we shall witness in the coming chapter, this is very consistent with what we will notice in the writings of Paul.

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[43]Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 147.

[44]The Dead Sea Scrolls include more than 225 "biblical" manuscripts, about 215 of which were found at Qumran. Some biblical books appear to be "favorites" among the community, as thirty-seven manuscripts include passages from the Psalms, thirty include passages from Deuteronomy, and twenty-one cite passages from Isaiah. On the other end of the scale, the caves have only produced two manuscripts of Joshua, four of Samuel, three of Kings, two of Proverbs, three of Job, and none of Esther. See Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999), xiv-xvii; Peter W. Flint, "The Daniel Tradition at Qumran," in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint, Studies the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature, ed. Martin G. Abegg Jr. and Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 41.

[45]Casey, *Son of Man*, 113.

[46]Ibid.; these reminiscences of Dan 7 are not "certain" in his mind. "The outline of [Dan 7's] interpretation must be deduced in a more complex manner" (ibid., 114).

[47]Ibid., 115.

Casey could basically repeat for Paul what he said for Qumran regarding the use of Dan 7: we will have to look for "reminiscences," and not direct citation.

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**Specific Appearances of ἄγγελοι in the
Intertestamental Period**

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Does a discernable and unified angelology ever evidence itself within intertestamental literature? To ask this question is to ponder the larger subject of spiritual powers during this period. That is to say, we cannot determine an "angelology" of this period by merely noticing how the term ἄγγελος is used. As in the New Testament, a host of terms will be used in the Greek language to speak of powers in the heavens. We have already noticed, by way of overview, that the world of heavenly beings has become somewhat garbled and definitely more involved since the close of the Old Testament. By comparison the Hebrew Bible presented a rather simplified cosmology. Spiritual messengers (מַלְאָכִים) played a quiet and almost unassuming role. But now, as we approach the New Testament era, it will become abundantly clear that heavenly creatures of all kinds play a more intensified function.

When considering the handling of the doctrine of divine or heavenly beings in intertestamental literature, our attention needs to return to the Enochian books. As noted previously, to observe the ἄγγελοι in Enoch is to observe the gods of the Old Testament. In the Book of the Watchers, angels belong to high heaven, while people belong on earth (*1 En* 15:3-10). Angels do not need to marry and procreate since they live forever (*1 En* 15:4, 6) and are spirits who dwell with God. The angels are apparently created beings, though careful description of this is never offered. Little interest is given to their form, though it is assumed they are spirits (*1 En* 15:4, 6, 7, 10). Angels are marked by their knowledge, and this knowledge was sometimes communicated to human beings (*1 En* 9:6; 16:2-3). The angels chose to descend to marry women (*1 En* 6:1-5) and teach metallurgy and sorcery (*1 En* 8:1-3; 10:8). However, the author does not speculate on how these ἄγγελοι could marry and beget offspring.

In general it can be observed that the Greek language of the intertestamental period offers us a use of the term ἄγγελος which is basically interchangeable with the אֱלֹהִים of the Old Testament. *First Enoch* relates the story of the beings who descended from heaven and had sexual relations with the daughters of men (Gen 6:2-4). In chaps. 1–36 these beings are referred to as "sons of heaven." The Gizeh Greek fragment of 1 Enoch renders the phrase in 6:2 as οἱ ἄγγελοι υἱοὶ οὐρανοῦ. The בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים then, have become ἄγγελοι. Later, in another vision of Enoch, the seer describes how his spirit ascended into the heavens where he saw οἱ ἄγγελοι υἱοὶ οὐρανοῦ as they were stepping on flames of fire while wearing white garments and with their faces shining as the sun (69:4-5; cf. 71:1). This shining-face motif is repeated in a further fragment at the end of *1 Enoch*: "I have begotten a strange son [Noah], diverse from and unlike man, and resembling the sons of God of heaven; his eyes are as the rays of the sun, and his countenance is glorious. And it seems to me that he is not sprung from me but τῶν ἀγγέλων" (106:5-6).

Other Jewish literature of the period appears to equate glorified humans with ἄγγελοι on the basis of their anticipated appearance. In *2 Baruch* we read:

> (51:3) Also as for the glory of those who have now been justified in my law, ... then their splendor shall be glorified in changes and the form of their faces shall be turned into the light of their beauty, that they may be able to acquire and receive the world which does not die, which is then promised to them ... (5) ... they shall ... be transformed ... into the *splendor of angels*... (9) ... time shall no longer age them. (10) For in the heights of that world they shall dwell. And they shall *be like the angels, and be made equal to the stars*. And they shall be changed into every form they desire from beauty into loveliness and from light into the splendor of glory ... (12) Moreover, there shall then be excellency in the righteous surpassing that in the angels."

Baruch's use of the term ἄγγελοι is remarkable. It is a word which describes beings—glorified humans in this case—which are likened to the stars, reminiscent of Job 38:7. Being an ἄγγελοι in *2 Baruch* appears to be a means of experiencing eternal life ("time shall no longer age them").[48] The parallelism between being made "like ἄγγελοι"

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[48]So also the opinion of Brendan Byrne, *"Sons of God"—"Seeds of Abraham": A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 66.

and "made equal to the stars" suggests other intertestamental passages as well, such as *As. Mos.* 10:9, which speaks of the righteous Israelite being exalted and made "to approach to the heaven of the stars" (cf. Dan 12:3-4). In *Joseph and Asenath*, the heroine, after her penitence, takes on a state of glorious beauty, matching that of an ἄγγελος who has been guaranteed immortality (ch. 16).

In the Old Testament this kind of description would have been specifically reserved for אֱלֹהִים-class beings. Where one would expect to hear a description of divine beings (or "gods"), we are now being told of ἄγγελοι (or "angels"). We have previously noted in our overview of the Hebrew Bible that no מַלְאָךְ is ever found in the divine court-room of Yahweh; yet now we find ἄγγελοι "in thy holy dwelling" (1QM 12.1). Thus is appears that an ἄγγελος has basically become a functional equivalent to Hebrew אֱלֹהִים-class beings in the general literature of the period.

This evolution of terminology does not appear to be consistent, however. The plural "thrones" occurs in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice ("the thrones of his glory," 11QShirShabb 2.1.9, lines 5-6), reminding us of Dan 7:9. Beings called אלים appear in the War Scroll. The common use of the plural אלים/אלהים in Qumran sectarian literature often applies to titles of Yahweh, such as "God of gods," or in overt divine council contexts.[49] The War Scroll itself used אלים several times to denote spiritual beings:[50]

1QM (War Scroll):
1:10: "The assembly of the אלים and the hosts of men shall battle"
1:11: "The clamour of אלים and men"
14:15: "lay low the אלים"
14:16: "Rise up, rise up, O God of gods . . . ! The light of Thy greatness shall shine forth on אלים and men."

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[49]For further discussion here, see John J. Collins, "Jewish Monotheism and Christian Theology," in *Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One: Symposium at the Smithsonian Institution, October 19, 1996, Sponsored by the Resident Associate Program*, ed. Hershel Shanks and Jack Meinhardt (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1997), 86.

[50]English translation taken from Geza Vermes, ed., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1997). The same could be said for the use of "sons of heaven," "mighty ones," "holy ones," "council of holy ones," "spirits," "hosts of spirits," "prince," and "authority," uses of which are spread over the War Scroll. See Yigael Yadin, ed., *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 230-32.

15:14: "[The hosts of] the warrior אלים gird themselves for battle"

It should not come as a surprise, then, to note that Qumran literature shows a development (beyond that of the Old Testament) in its use of מַלְאָךְ. A survey of Hebrew fragments at Qumran shows that the word came to be used for something beyond a mere "messenger." It begins to take on the more general meaning of "heavenly being," much like ἄγγελος. Some Hebrew phrases that come from Qumran documents, for instance, find no parallel in the Hebrew Bible:

מלאך of his truth (1QS 3:24)

מלאך of Darkness (1QS 3:20-21)

מלאך of his glory (Shir *b* 20 i 2; 35 4)

מלאך of his dominion (1QM 1:15)

מלאך of the Presence (1QH 6:13)

מלאך of holiness (1QM 7:6; 10:11)

מלאך of knowledge (11QShirShabb 2.1.9 5)

It appears that the Qumranites now had begun to speak of spirit beings with "job descriptions," as it were, and thus it would have been considered the "role" of certain heavenly beings to do certain things. The fact that the Hebrew Bible does not employ these terms shows that, at Qumran, this distinction was one of development. The only role of a מַלְאָךְ in the Hebrew Bible was to deliver a message or to do Yahweh's bidding in relation to a human.[51] Now, at Qumran, they are carrying out duties within the courts of heaven itself. This is clearly new.

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[51]We are always interested in this discussion to notice "what the spirit being was" before noting what he did. In Genesis 32:31, Jacob wrestled with a mysterious being which, though called a man (אִישׁ, 32:24) by the narrator, later refers to himself as an אֱלֹהִים (32:28). When Jacob realized what had happened, he too believed he had met an אֱלֹהִים (32:30). This being is never called a מַלְאָךְ in the Genesis account. Hosea 12:5 reports that Jacob struggled with a מַלְאָךְ. Hosea equated the terms in referring to the being's role in the story; Jacob fought with God's messenger. But Jacob also fought with an אֱלֹהִים. Philo, in commenting on this passage, remarked that "the living God is so completely indescribable, that even that power [δύναμις] which ministered unto him did not announce his proper name to us" (*On the Change of Names*, 14). This is the kind of exegesis we then find repeated in the Targums; *Pal. Tg.* represents Jacob as saying, "I have seen face to face the angels from before God" (See A. T. Hanson, "The Treatment in the LXX of the Theme of Seeing God," in *Septuagint, Scrolls, and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the*

It is modern writers, however, who tend to overlook this trend in the Hebrew literature of the Second Temple period and once again abuse the terminology for celestial beings. Newsom, for instance, has noted that אלים is a frequent designation for the "angels" in Qumran literature, especially in 1QM and 1QH.[52] In calling these beings "angels" she has overlooked the development of a key term in our understanding of biblical cosmology. The same goes for אֱלֹהִים, in which case Newsom admits it is hard at times to know if the writer is speaking of God or "angels."[53] She admits that other titles for heavenly beings in Qumran literature include "holy ones," "spirits," "princes," and chiefs," though (again) acknowledges these only as "angels."[54]

International Symposium on the Septuagint and Its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings, ed. George J. Brooke and Barnabas Lindars, Septuagint and Cognate Studies, ed. Claude E. Cox [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 558).

[52]Newsom, *Songs*, 23.

[53]". . . such expressions as כול אלוהים (4Q403 1 i 32, 32-33) and מלך אלוהים (4Q400 2 5) unequivocally attest the use of אלוהים for the angels" (ibid., 24). Newsom then shows her continual bent toward a developmental use of "angel" by continuing, "A biblical basis for אלוהים = angels is provided by Pss 8:6; 82:1, 6; 97:8; 138:1; etc., and by the expression בני אלוהים in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7." Yet an angel (מלך) is never mentioned in any of the passages she lists. She earlier (ibid., 23-24) coined two enigmatic phrases ("angelic *elim*" and "angelic *elohim*") and in the process abused both terms (what, if one may ask, is an angelic *elohim*?).

[54]Newsom, *Songs*, 24-8; John J. Collins ("Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler, Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature, ed. Peter W. Flint, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Florentino García Martínez [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 19) makes this mistake as well: "This may seem to be a very bold restoration, but in fact Melchizedek had already been identified with the *Elohim*, or God, of Psalm 110. In the view of the midrash, the Most High God is El. *Elohim* is a lesser deity, an angel, if you prefer. But the striking thing about this passage is that the term *Elohim*, which is usually understood to refer to the Most High in the biblical psalm, now refers to a lesser heavenly being. There are, at least, two divine powers in heaven, even if one of them is clearly subordinate to the other." George R. Beasley-Murray ("The Interpretation of Daniel 7," *CBQ* 45 [1983]) obliges with the same mistaken notion: "'Holy ones'" in Quman is the title par excellence given to angels" (50). Davidson (*Angels*, 297) continues the onslaught with "אלים in the Qumran literature always refers to angels and occurs frequently." He cites as evidence for this 1QH 7:28; 10:8; 19:3; 1QH frg. 2 3, 10; 1Q22 (*Words of Moses*) 4:1; 1QM 1:10, 11; 14:15, 16; 15:14; 17:7, and the *Sabbath Shirot*, with more than thirty occurrences including 4Q403 1 i 26, 33, 38. To hear Davidson (ibid., 202-3) again:
"In 1QH frg. 2 10 [אלים] is in parallel with 'sons of heaven' which refers to angelic beings in 1QH 3:22. The term is the War Scroll is used several times to contrast the heavenly army with the earthly one (e.g. 1QM 1:10-11; 15:14). The question might be asked whether אלים in these contexts means 'gods' in an ancient, polytheistic sense. Such an idea, that God is one among many, is never contemplated elsewhere in Qumran thought. Moreover, the use of the term in the Qumran literature argues strongly against such an interpretation. For example, in 1QM 17:7, Michael is to be exalted among the אלים. This idea is in parallel with Israel's exaltation among the peoples. The likely meanning is that the angel Michael

Another example for our consideration here is the well-established conception in Jewish thought of "guardian angels" or "angels of the nations" (*Sir* 17:17; *1 En* 20:5; *Jub* 15:31; *Tg Ps-J* on Gen 11:7-8). This is commonly thought of as relating to the Hebrew Bible's mention of the dividing of the world under the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים in Deut 32:8 (LXX reconstruction) and אַחַד הַשָּׂרִים ("one of the chief princes") in Dan 10:13. But the Hebrew Bible did not call these beings מַלְאָכִים. The use of the Greek ἄγγελος in Deut 32:8 (LXX) and Dan 10:21 (LXX) is thus clearly interpretive. Thus again the gods turned into angels.[55]

Once this interpretational move has been made it not surprising that Qumran literature speaks of these beings as inhabiting the heavens themselves (1QM 12:1). They are described as holy (1QS 11:8; 1QM 7:6), as spirits of knowledge (1QH 3:22-3), and are

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is to be honoured among those his own kind, as Israel is to be honored among other human beings. . . . אלים is often translated 'gods,' but while the singluar could be used for a pagan god (e.g. Exod. 34:14; Deut. 32:12), 'angelic beings' is clearly the sense in the Qumran literature. Cross considers that the 'apparent plural 'elim' of אל (as distinct from OT references using a plural form of 'ram' as a 'military or nable appellation') 'occurs in the Bible only four times' (Pss 29:1; 89:7; Exod. 15:11; Dan. 11:36). He sees its use in 'late apocalyptic' as being 'in reference to angelic members of Yahweh's court,' and as 'appellative.' In the present passage, 1QH 7:28, the main thrust is clear. God has no rival. No one among the angels is to be compared with him. He is the everlasting God (1QH 7:31-2) who had his angelic court, but he is certainly not one god among many."

Davidson's fears are unfounded. We have already noted that comparable monotheism in no ways sets the groundwork for rivals to Yahweh's throne (see pages 60-61 of this study). Therefore to assess the situation as Yahweh vs. "angels" and not as Yahweh vs. אלים is unfortunate, as this is precisely the argument of the Hebrew Bible. Davidson need not do what so many others have done and merely rename אלים as angels so as to avoid an apparently theological conundrum. Leave well enough alone, we could say, and the text can handle the problem without so much as a problem. The Qumran writings even solve this apparent problem for Davidson, as in 1QH 10:8-10 [speaking of Yahweh]: "Behold, you are the prince of gods (אלים), and king of the honored ones (נכבדים), and lord of every spirit, and ruler of every created thing." Since Yahweh is above the אלים it is not necessary to "lower" our estimation of the אלים. We would do better to leave them in their Old Testament status and keep the heavenly cosmology of the Hebrew Bible intact.

[55]Though in Psalm 8:5 the Hebrew has "You have made him a little lower than אֱלֹהִים," the Targum has ממלאכיא (see Philip S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6," *JJS* 23 [1972]: 65). This reading for "messenger," then, follows through in the Targums for Pss 29:1, 82:6, and 89:7. Thus it appears that the move to think of the gods in terms of "messenger" language had been made in the Aramaic language as well as in the Greek.

Moving well ahead into history, Codex Alexandrinus (ca. A.D. 450) shows an interesting correction on Gen 6:2. Whereas the LXX of Genesis 6:2 reads ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, a scribe has clearly replaced υἱοὶ with ἄγγελοι (Trustees of the British Museum, *The Codex Alexandrinus in Reduced Photographic Facsimile: Old Testament, Part I: Genesis–Ruth* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915], on Gen 6:2). This replacement is inconsistent, however, as 6:4 reads υἱοὶ τοῦ θεου. The purpose of this action is, of course, not known—but we can assume that some sort of interpretation was happening. Either he was 1) lowering the "sons of God" to the status of "angel," 2) raising the status of "angel" to that of "sons of God," 3) generally equating the two positions, or 4) giving the anthropomorphic "son" a spiritual meaning.

frequently associated with God himself and present within heaven's inner sanctum (1QSb 4:24-6). We retain a similar hint of comparable monotheism, however, in that there is no competition in their likeness to God.[56] Several documents made it clear that these heavenly beings are created (4Q402 4 12). Davidson noted that the strong dualism of the scrolls, mixed with the need for a clear statement of monotheism within the community, prompted the authors of 1QS 3:15-21 and 1QM 13:10-12 to state that God was the creator, and thus the sovereign ruler, over all created beings.[57] There was no conspicuous attempt, in other words, of violating monotheism by such a vocabulary, nor by violating the character and uniqueness of the Most High God.

In the Enochic books, there is a strong theme of God's judgment yet to come upon the heavenly beings who have done wrong and thereby caused affliction on earth. This is a central theme in the Book of the Watchers, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle of Enoch. "God's people suffer injustice in the world, but the prospect that ultimately God will bring to account those who sin, while vindicating his own people, is presented in several ways. . . . Enochic books reveal an eschatology that looks to a final judgment, with angels among those to be punished in each case."[58] In 1QH 10:34-5 the author contemplates this theme again: "And I was afraid when I heard thy judgment of the strong valiant ones (כוח גבורי) and thy trial of the hosts of thy saints (צבא קדושיכה)."

The Survival of Monotheism in the Intertestamental Period

The intertestamental period—beyond that of the Old Testament itself—seemed to struggle with the concept of divinity, or where to draw the line between man and heaven.

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[56]In 1QHa 15:26-33 and 18:8-11 the idea that God is superior to spirit beings is made very clear. 1QHa 15:28 reads "Who among the gods (אלים) is like thee, O Adonai," comparing God with the אלים and implying his authority over the spiritual world. The question is identical to that in the Song of Moses (Ex 15:11), except that our author substitutes אדוני for the tetragrammaton. In Davidson's opinion (*Angels*, 297), this appearance is indicative for what any reader of the Qumran literature would find.

[57]Ibid., 291.

[58]Ibid., 297.

The classical Greek period often spoke of the stars as the angelic host. Even a dying righteous human could in some sense be "divinized" in that he could become a god, as the Greek gnomic poet Phocylides (ca. 600 B.C.) expressed the hope "that the remains of the departed will soon come to the light again out of the earth, and afterwards become gods."[59] We have no information leading us to believe that the Greeks believed that the righteous dead were to be thought of on par with the Olympian gods, though it does indicate that the line separating the divine from the human in the ancient world was not as absolute and clear-cut as is sometimes supposed. The classification o deity appears to be, for the early Greek, a fluid term.

Philo, in commenting on Exod 7:1 ("I [Yahweh] have made you a god unto Pharaoh"), wrote, "Moses was named god and king of the whole nation."[60] Philo also adapted the Jewish concept of the Logos as "the divine reason, the ruler and steersman of all" (*On the Cherubim* 36). Even stronger language appears in *Questions on Genesis*: Philo asks, "Why does [Scripture] say, as if another God, 'In the image of God He made man' and not 'in His own image'? Most excellently and voraciously this oracle was given by God. For nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the Most High One and father of the universe, but only in that of the second God, who is His Logos." In the end, Philo's discussions about plural gods reveal that he does not seem to regard as improper the use of the term "God" for the Logos, though he clearly distinguishes between the supreme God and the intermediary deity.[61]

One could imagine where this would lead. With an unclear boundary line between man and the gods, the glorification of ἄγγελοι was not lacking in the first century

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[59]Pieter W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 185.

[60]*Life of Moses* 1.55-58. For further discussion, see Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354-71.

[61]For complete discussion, see David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo and Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1985).

A.D.[62] But this was not the worship of angels, as such, as much as the worship of the gods under a different guise. Ringgren noted this problem forty years ago (italics added):

> Strangely enough concepts of hypostases are lacking in Qumran. Granted there is often mention of God's wisdom, but it is never personified or hypostatized. One does not say: "The Word said so and so," but: "God said." Of course there is avoidance of naming the divine name, Yahweh, as has been seen, but it is not replaced by such words as The Name, The Word, or The Shekinah. Thus, the Qumran congregation knows itself in spite of God's sublime distance to stand in a nearer and more immediate fellowship with God than is the case with rabbinic Judaism . . . .
>   This observation is also of importance for the understanding of the doctrine of angels. *For here the angels seem to be—as in the Old Testament—God's heavenly court rather than actual intermediary beings. Angels are seen to move "up" as gods come down.* They have not been created to bridge the gulf between the divine, or heavenly, and the earthly, but they have simply been taken over from the Bible and the thought world of contemporary Judaism and been understood as God's messenger's and servants.[63]

In view of this kind of evidence across a considerable variety of literature there developed two widespread tendencies in the intertestamental period: first, the common use of ἄγγελοι as a Greek replacement of the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים (at least in concept if not in actual terminology), which served to protect the reputation of Yahweh while lowering the culture's estimation of the biblical depiction of אֱלֹהִים; and second, the broad tendency in Jewish angelology of this period to bifurcate the concept of God, or allow for another divine figure who acts in God's place in the form and character of God.[64] This latter tendency, while sounding almost the opposite of the first, is better considered a similar reaction with a slightly different trajectory. This latter issue has been commonly termed the "two powers in heaven" problem, attested by several modern scholars.[65] At issue is such an Old Testament text as Psalm 2, in which God tells the king, "You are my son; this day I have begotten

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[62]Alexander, "Targumim," 69.

[63]Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. Emilie T. Sander (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 81-82.

[64]Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, SNTSMS, ed. Richard Bauckham, vol. 95 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 97-98.

[65]For a brief overview of this idea, see Segal, *Two Powers*, 1-10.

you." This is often understood as an adoption formula, spoken when the king ascended the throne.[66] Segal is committed to the idea that, in Semitic terminology, two beings can both be classified as deity, or אֱלֹהִים.[67]

It is by this means that modern scholarship is often able to advance the thesis, as Rowland has, that the appearances of Jesus in Revelation may be best explained in terms of developments in Jewish theology and angelology in which a glorious angel "embodied the attributes of the glorious God whom the prophet Ezekiel had seen by the river Chebar."[68] Hurtado, on the other hand, has argued that such a belief in divine agency "operated within the traditional Jewish concern for the uniqueness of God."[69] Both Rowland and Hurtado believe that the concept of deity can be "shared" between two or more individuals. If true, this idea would have aided the development of Christianity among Jews who were converting to the belief in Jesus being worshipped as "God" in some sense; the "divine agency" tradition as recommended by Hurtado allowed Jews such as Paul to retain their Jewish loyalty to monotheism and become Christians. Briefly put, the exalted Jesus was to be understood as this "chief divine agent,"[70] in the end becoming "a second object of devotion alongside God."[71] This is what leads Hayman to suggest that the earliest Christians retained a "dualistic pattern" from its ancient Jewish/Canaanite environment, and that "functionally Jews believed in the existence of two gods."[72]

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[66]J. J. M. Roberts, "The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 42-43.

[67]Segal, *Two Powers*, 10.

[68]Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 103.

[69]Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 38.

[70]Ibid., 93-99.

[71]Ibid., 99-124.

[72]Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—a Misused Word in Jewish Studies?," *JJS* 42 (1991): 14.

It thus appears that monotheistic belief was available to Jews within intertest-amental literature even though the concept of deity could be shared among a plurality of beings. The gods did not have to come down for Yahweh to stay up. One final look at an important Qumran fragment will make this clear. In a passage in the Rule of the Community, which is arguably the best known doctrinal statement in the whole corpus of the Scrolls, we find the "Treatise on the Two Spirits." In 1QS 3:15-17 we read (italics added): *"From the God of knowledge stems all there is and all there shall be.* Before they existed *He established their entire design.* And when they have come into being, at their appointed time, they will execute all their works according to his glorious design without altering anything. In his hand are the laws of all things and *supports them in all their affairs.*"[73]

This would appear to be as strong an affirmation of comparative monotheism—yet with divine plurality—as one could ask for. This text goes on to say, however, that God created for humanity two "spirits" in which to walk; these may be considered both psychological dispositions as well as two personalized angelic beings, called "the Prince of Light" or "Angel of Truth" on the one hand, and "Angel of Darkness" on the other.[74] Judging from their abilities and powers, these two powers may be considered "super-natural."[75] They are forces that are balanced in our world, yet both are ultimately under the sovereign will of God. In the War Scroll it appears evident from its opening line that God and Belial are the two opposing forces in this cosmic dualism of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.[76] God does not act alone in this warfare, however, for "mighty men and host of angels are among those mustered with us, the Mighty One of War is in our congre-

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[73]Translation from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition,* vol 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 75.

[74]See John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 38-43.

[75]Collins, "Powers in Heaven," 17.

[76]Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,* 91-109.

gation, and the host of his spirits is with our steps" (1QM 12:8). Thus God is not equated to angels or spirits, but uses them. Angels are treated as "princes," however, in a later text: "Who is like unto You in strength, O God of Israel, and yet Thy mighty hand is with the poor. What angel or prince is like unto the help of [thy face]?"

The author or compiler of the War Scroll wanted to be sure that the uniqueness of God was not compromised in the face of the other spirits that did his ultimate bidding, such as the Prince of Light. We also read in 1QM 17:6-7 that Michael is considered an angel as well as a prince: "He has magnified the authority of Michael through eternal light . . . so as to raise among the angels the authority of Michael and the dominion of Israel amongst all flesh." Michael is among the angels as Israel is among the people; yet we know that Michael is a prince, a ruler, a leader. Thus it would be unfair to substitute "messenger" here for Michael, or at least not in primary meaning.

Thus while "monotheism hardly seems the right word to describe the religion of the Dead Sea Scrolls,"[77] the supremacy of Yahweh as the Most High is never in doubt. He is a God who does not dwell alone, but he is a king who is unique. He is surrounded by named and unnamed divinities. These exalted beings of the Scrolls are relevant to the background of the deification of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, of course, though the scene of Dan 7:13-14 remains our clearest example of where a human being could be enthroned in heaven.[78]

The New Gods of the LXX

As could be expected, the use of ἄγγελος in the LXX basically mirrors the use of מַלְאָךְ in the Old Testament, especially as it relates to human messengers. Yet modern LXX scholarship is in general agreement that ἄγγελος often indicates a type of being (in the celestial realm) which has a broader meaning than that of מַלְאָךְ. We have just witnessed this

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[77]Collins, "Powers in Heaven," 27.

[78]James H. Charlesworth, "The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 135-51.

same tendency within the Greek religious literature of the intertestamental period. To

conclude this chapter we will overview the evidence which acknowledges that ἄγγελος will

often[79] be used in the LXX to speak of divine beings in general, even directly translating the

Hebrew אֱלֹהִים into ἄγγελος.[80]

An early interpretational gloss reflecting the use of ἄγγελος in the LXX is

noticeable in Exod 4:24: "And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Jehovah

met him, and sought to kill him" (וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בַּמָּלוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ יְהוָה וַיְבַקֵּשׁ הֲמִיתוֹ, MT). The LXX adds another

element to the story: ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐν τῷ καταλύματι συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ἄγγελος

κυρίου καὶ ἐζήτει αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι. The MT says Yahweh tried to kill Moses; it is a

straightforward (though admittedly interesting) story with no signs of מַלְאָכִים. The LXX,

however, adds an ἄγγελος to the narrative, possibly trying to absolve Yahweh of wrongdoing

(cf. Judg 6:16). This is admittedly a small example, but it of interest to the interpreter

because it hints that the LXX may be willing to adjust its text for theological purposes,

especially as it relates to the person of God and his relation to ἄγγελοι.

We need not maintain, however, that the LXX translator was always intent on

changing the meaning or interpretation of a given passage that had to do with the celestial

realm. In considering the general use of ἄγγελος in the LXX, the following passages offer

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[79]It is not surprising to find that the pattern of translation is not consistent throughout the entire LXX, and not even within particular books. For discussion, see David W. Chapman and Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Jewish Intertestamental and Early Rabbinic Literature: An Annotated Bibliographic Resource," *JETS* 43 (2000): 577-618.

[80]The question of *why* the Greek culture was able to broaden the meaning of ἄγγελος is a good one, and may not have a sure answer. Languages tend to expand the meanings of words over time (e.g., silverware, gentleman, etc.); but some believe the propensity to emphasize the divine nature of an ἄγγελος was predictable because of the spirit of the times. Ramsay MacMullen (*Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* [Cambridge: Harvard University, 1966], 103) says, "The total of the evidence affirms the belief of peoples of the time that the strength of their spirit could be increased by the right practices or that another spirit could be engaged to reach out against their enemies. The ancient world was as tangled in a crisscross of invisible contacts, so it might be thought, as our modern world is entangled in radio beams." Shirley Jackson Case (*The Origins of Christian Supernaturalism* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946], 1) continues the point: "Traffic was heavy on the highway between heaven and earth. Gods and spirits thickly populated the upper air, where they stood in readiness to intervene at any moment in the affairs of mortals. And demonic powers, emerging from the lower world or resident in remote corners of the earth, were a constant menace to human welfare. All nature was alive—alive with supernatural forces."

strong evidence that the term had generally come to mean "divine being," referring to

אֱלֹהִים-class beings:

Job 1:6:
Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, MT; ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ, LXX,) came to present themselves before Yahweh, that Satan also came among them. (cf. 2:1)

Job 5:1:
Call now; is there any that will answer you? And to which of the holy ones (מִקְּדֹשִׁים, MT; ἀγγέλων ἁγίων, LXX) will you turn?

Job 38:7:
When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, MT; ἄγγελοί, LXX) shouted for joy?

Ps 8:6:
For you have made him a little lower than gods (אֱלֹהִים, MT; ἀγγέλους, LXX), And crowned him with glory and honor

Ps 97:7:
Let them all be put to shame that serve graven images, That boast themselves of idols: Worship him, all you gods (כָּל־אֱלֹהִים, MT; οἱ ἄγγελοι, LXX).

Ps 137:
I will give you thanks with my whole heart: Before the gods (אֱלֹהִים, MT; ἀγγέλων, LXX)[81] will I sing praises unto you.

Dan 2:11:
And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is no other that can show it before the king, except the gods (אֱלָהִין, MT; οἱ ἄγγελοι, LXX; θεοί, Theod), whose dwelling is not with flesh.

Dan 3:25:
He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods (בַּר־אֱלָהִין, MT; ἀγγέλου θεοῦ, LXX, v. 92; υἱῷ θεοῦ, Theod.).

Dan 4:13:
I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one (עִיר וְקַדִּישׁ, MT; ἄγγελος, LXX; ιρ καὶ ἅγιος, Theod.) came down from heaven (cf. 4:23).

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[81]Joseph A. Fitzmyer ("A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of 1 Corinthians 11:10," *NTS* 4 [1957–58]: 53) finds this passage to be the likely background for Paul's admonition of 1 Cor 11:10 that "the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the *aggeloi*," indicating that the heavenly host are observers of human conduct, especially in worship (cf. Heb 12:22; 1 Cor 4:9).

Dan 10:21:
But I will tell you that which is inscribed in the writing of truth: and there is none
that holdeth with me against these, but Michael your prince (שַׂרְכֶם, MT; ἄγγελος,
LXX; ἄρχων, Theod.).

These passages make it possible to say that the gods of the Old Testament are

identifiable, at various times, as ἄγγελοι in the LXX. Yet, on the whole, the LXX is

inconsistent in its translation practice regarding divine beings. Some LXX texts (Gen 6:2, 4:

Pss 29:1; 82:1, 6; 89:7; 96:4) translate the MT in a word-for-word fashion, making, for

example, the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים in Gen 6:2 to read οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ. What is clear is that the LXX

did not create a "category of being" called an ἄγγελος; its translators instead placed this

well-used term into texts which were describing אֱלֹהִים-class beings (the only category of

being they were familiar with above that of mankind, cf. Ps 8:5). Modern writers have noted

this idea over the past several decades. Sanders noted in 1969 that "The LXX is fairly

consistent in using ἄγγελος to translate terms which in the MT would indicate the heavenly

council. This observation is very important in the Epistle to the Hebrews, especially chs. 1

and 2."[82] Whybray agreed two years later, concluding that by the time of the Second

Temple era "the heavenly council had reached its final stage of development" and that the

council members "are to all intents and purposes the angels of later Jewish literature."[83]

Within the last decade two other scholars have agreed that the gods of the Old Testament

have been hiding in translation: "By the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls . . . the word אלהים

was used even by contemporary authors to mean 'messengers,' or what we call 'angels,'

when it was not used to refer to Yahweh . . . these אלהים, previously understood as deities,

had come to be understood as angels."[84] "There are various Old Testament texts which

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[82]James A. Sanders, "Dissenting Deities and Philippians 2:1–11," *JBL* 88 (1969): 283, n. 19.

[83]R. N. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiah XL 13-14: A Study of the Sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah*, Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series, ed. J. A. Emerton, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 82.

[84]Lowell K. Handy, "One Problem Involved in Translating to Meaning: An Example of Acknowledging Time and Tradition," *SJT* 10 (1996): 19.

speak of many gods (אלהים). However, at least by the turn of the eras these are regarded as God's angelic host. This can be seen in particular in the Dead Sea Scrolls where אלהים (or אלים) is a common way of referring to angels."[85]

We are left with the questions, then, of wondering where the concept of an "angel" came from and why we let this translitered term take the place of an entire classification of being in the Old Testament. Scholarship familiar with the linguistic issues is united in its conclusion that the developed angelology of today—the ability to speak of angels as distinct from the gods of the Old Testament—is not the result of a carefully constructed biblical cosmology. Jobes and Silva recently made this point very clear once again:

> . . . [T]he noun ἄγγελος in Classical Greek meant "messenger" in a fairly general sense. When the LXX translators used it to represent Hebrew מַלְאָךְ, which often specifically designated a (superhuman) messenger sent by God, a new acceptation or definition was created. (Note that in the phrase ἄγγελος κυρίου [e.g., Gen 16:7] this semantic change has not yet taken place. It is only when the noun is used by itself to represent the meaning that the technical specialization occurs [e.g., Gen. 48:16]. Note further that the translators had the option of simply transliterating the Hebrew term and using it as a loanword [as they did with πασχα for פֶּסַח, 'Pass-over'; an additional option was to coin a new word, such as ἀπερίτμητος for עָרֵל, 'uncircumcised']. In fact, English translations typically translate both מַלְאָךְ and ἄγγελος not with 'messenger' but with the Greek loanword 'angel'.) The use of this specialized Greek term in the New Testament doubtlessly reflects the strong influence of the LXX. From the standpoint of language, however, such a new meaning can be seen as merely a semantic addition to the lexical inventory, necessitated by the appearance of a new "thing." Any explanations of what this thing is belong not to linguistic description but rather extralinguistic—in this case, theological.[86]

Later, Jobes and Silva make their case even more specific:

> Thus, for example, when Paul describes the law as having been ordained through angels (Galatians 3:19; cf. Acts 7:53 and Hebrew 2:2), we should take into account LXX Deuteronomy 33:2, which speaks about the Lord's coming from Sinai σὺν μυριάσιν Καδης ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ ("with myriads of Cades, [and] on his right hand his angels were with him"). The Hebrew text does not have

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[85]Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, and Soteriology*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, vol. 94 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997), 3-4.

[86]Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 199, including n. 35 within parenthesis.

the word מַלְאָךְ at all,[87] and the last clause is very problematic. It is likely that the Greek translator was simply stumped by that clause and came up with a statement conceptually parallel to the previous clause so as to disturb the context as little as possible. For Paul, as well as for other Greek-speaking Jews who used the LXX, this passage would have contributed to the belief (suggested elsewhere, perhaps Ps. 68:17) that angels were involved in the giving of the Mosaic Law. (Note again, however, that to describe an angelic function is quite different from discussing the meaning of the word ἄγγελος.)[88]

Conclusion

Was Judaism monotheistic in the Hellenistic period? At no point is the supremacy of the Most High God ever questioned, though there is considerable room for lesser beings who were thought to be "gods," whether known in Hebrew as אֱלֹהִים or in Greek as ἄγγελοι. To be sure, the practice of monotheism shines through Israelite worship, where the official cult in Jerusalem was intensely monotheistic in terms of statement and prophetic pronouncement.[89] This is why Hurtado has rightly suggested that monotheism be best defined by those who believe in it, not by its opponents.[90] As long as Israel did not

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[87]Jobes' footnote (37) here further explains "For the first clause, the MT apparently says, 'he came from myriads of holy ones (אָתָה מֵרִבְבֹת קֹדֶשׁ); the LXX vocalized the last word as referring to Kadesh, and on that basis many scholars further revocalized and read, 'he came from Meribath-Kadesh,' but several other reconstructions have been proposed" (ibid., 200, n. 37).

[88]Ibid., 199-200.

[89]In the persecution instituted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Temple in Jerusalem was renamed the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and Jewish people were compelled to worship other gods (cf. 1 Macc 1:43, 47, 51, 54-5; 2:15, 23-5; 2 Macc 6:2, 7-9). In this sense, abandoning monotheism—leaving the worship of Yahweh to begin worship of another god—would mean abandoning Judaism. So Philo interpreted the first commandment as "Let us, therefore, fix deeply in ourselves this first commandment as the most sacred of all commandments, to think that there is but one God, the most highest, and to honour him alone; and let not the polytheistical doctrine ever even touch the ears of any man who is accustomed to seek for the truth, with purity and sincerity of heart" (The Decalogue, 65, translation by Yonge, Philo, 524). In short, being polytheistic meant being Gentile (Maurice Casey, The Deification of Jesus," in SBLSP 1994, ed. E. H. Lovering Jr. [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994], 698). This is the main reason why one could find such a strong committment to monotheism—even that kind that exceeded the linguistic and theological boundaries of the Old Testament—as a boundary marker of the rabbinical community.

[90]"I urge us to work more inductively, gathering what 'monotheism' is on the ground, so to speak, from the evidence of what self-professed monotheists believe and practice" (Larry W. Hurtado, "What Do We Mean by 'First-Century Jewish Monotheism'?," in SBLSP 1993, ed. E. H. Lovering Jr. [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], 354). Handy argues similarly, beginning with the premise that the Psalms continually praise the worship of Yahweh while "simply assum[ing] the existence of other deities in the heavenly sphere (Ps 8:6; 29:1; 82; 86:8; 89:7; 95:3; 97:7; 135:5; 138:1; 148)" (Lowell K. Handy, "The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," in The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms, ed. Diana Vikander Edelman [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 31, n. 9).

make the mistake of allowing its belief in a supreme, creator-God to digress into a *true* polytheism, the concept of comparable monotheism can be maintained and defended.[91]

What is true, on the other hand, is that the Hellenized Jewish community increasingly viewed ἄγγελοι as evidence of God's power as it reached down to all areas of the world. God was indeed involved in all operations of creation and expressed this control through his deployment of heavenly beings, no matter their name.[92] Further, "the description of the heavenly hosts as a gigantic hierarchy of many ranks with numerous specialized duties is quite easily understood as an attempt to defend the power and significance of Israel's God. The point of these descriptions [of massive angelic hosts] is to say, 'Do you see how great our God is, who has such a vast and powerful retinue to do nothing but serve him?'"[93] This heightened view of spiritual powers would therefore signal God's power and sovereignty throughout creation.

With this kind of a monotheism in hand we now turn to the New Testament in an attempt to identify Paul's understanding of the spiritual powers. We will notice that his terminology for powers is quite varied, as reflected in passages of the intertestamental period: "And he [God] will summon all the forces [δύναμις] of the heavens, and all the holy ones above, and the forces of the Lord—the cherubim, seraphim, orphanim, all the angels of governance [ἀρχαί], the Elect One, and the other forces [ἐξουσίαι] on earth and over the water" (*1 En* 61:10). "And I saw there [in the seventh heaven] an exceptionally great light, and all the fiery armies of the great archangels, and the incorporeal forces [δύναμις] and the

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[91]This is not to maintain, however, that Israel avoided the appearance of polytheistic practice. Handy ("The Appearance of Pantheon in Judah," 30) believes, and the evidence is strong, that daily existence in Judah during the days of the later monarchy would have looked and felt suspiciously polytheistic (Isa 2:18-20; Jer 1:4-6; 7:9-19, 30-1; Ezek 8:10-16; Hos 2:15; 11:2; 13:1-4). See also B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983).

[92]H. B. Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, ed. Joachim Jeremias and D. Otto Michel, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), 103; H. J. Wicks, *The Doctrine of God in the Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 125-26.

[93]Hurtado, *One God*, 25.

dominions [κυριότητος] and the origins [ἀρχαί] and the authorities [ἐξουσίαι], the cherubim and the seraphim and the many-eyed thrones [θρόνους]" (*2 En* 20:1). "There with him [God] are the thrones and authorities [ἐξουσίαι]; there praises to God are offered eternally" (*T Levi* 3:8).

While we need not maintain that Paul directly quoted from these passages, it is clear that terminological similarities apply. As we approach our final chapter it will be generally admitted that the language of the powers in the New Testament was closely associated with that of the Hellenistic age. But when it came to what those powers actually *were* or *what was going to happen to them*—Paul clearly moved in a different direction. He will speak with a Greek vocabulary, though he will adhere to an Old Testament cosmology.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF *ELOHIM* IN PAUL'S USE OF

"PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS"

In this concluding chapter we will attempt to demonstrate that when Paul spoke

of ἄγγελοι he had in mind the general host of heaven. When he specifically mentioned

powers antagonistic to God, however, it appears he was speaking of that particular host in

heaven that had been delegated authority on earth during this present era. These powers are

identified in the Old Testament as the אֱלֹהִים which improperly and even wickedly demanded

the worship of humans as part of their heritage. The time of the end was at hand, believed

Paul, and that end would bring with it the consummation of all things under the sovereignty

of the true Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

Paul is sometimes considered to work within a the Jewish thought world of

apocalyptic literature, even to the point of believing that Jewish apocalyptic formed the basis

of his thought.[1] It is probable that we are going too far if we claim that Paul depended upon

Jewish apocalyptic as a literary genre in speaking of spiritual powers.[2] For instance, it will

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[1]J. Christian Beker, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought*, trans. Loren Stuckenbruck (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 19.

[2]Hurtado rightly warns of the assumption that all characteristics of early Christianity (whether beliefs, ethics, practices, or concepts) must have been borrowed from the surrounding religious environment. He believes that, too often, we presume that the religious influences are seen as coming *from* the surrounding world *into* early Christianity (Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 9). It can be admitted, it seems, that early Christian beliefs and practices were conditioned in varying ways by the ancient religious and social environment. But, to follow E. P. Sanders' advice which is profitable for our current study, one must always view a particular religious phenomenon in the overall "pattern" of each religious movement, without positing that this pattern could not be given very different significance and meaning (E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977], 12-18). Gordon D. Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 752) further reminds us that it is not necessary to think of Paul's view of the future as "apocalyptic" any more than it is to think of it as Paul's straightforward eschatology.

not be argued that "principalities and powers" is a direct quotation from a distinct piece of apocalyptic literature such as *Enoch* or Daniel. Yet Paul found that apocalyptic motifs were a vigorous and dependable way to present the work of Jesus Christ. The interpretation of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ adapts to the use of an apocalyptic mind-set, for to Paul all statements about salvation as an accomplished fact included statements about the future.

It is not uncommon, in the modern search for the identity of Paul's spiritual powers, to inspect the terms used in the Jewish demonology of the Greco-Roman period.[3] This approach has offered some valuable insights into the belief patterns of Paul's audience. But it would also, by design, not tend to stress the Old Testament itself in searching for the identity of these powers. When Clinton Arnold admitted, "it is not adequate to say Paul derived his terms for evil spirits exclusively from the Old Testament,"[4] he was saying that the Old Testament itself was a limited source. He is, to a certain degree, correct; there is a general lack of specialized language in the Old Testament referring to spiritual powers. But this search for Paul's powers is not essentially based in terminology as much as it is based in a concept or in an idea.[5] Paul often spoke of husbands and wives, for instance, though he never used the word γάμος ("marriage") in doing so. It is possible that we are missing Paul's appeal to the powers, therefore, if we are limiting ourselves to a lexical search.[6]

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[3]Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 90.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Thus our approach in determining the spiritual forces in the New Testament will mirror the approach we used in the Old Testament. The gods of the Hebrew Bible often appeared without the specific title אֱלֹהִים attached (see pp. 39–59 of this study).

[6]The Book of Ephesians, in fact, provides a good example of what we mean by a conceptual (as opposed to linguistic or lexical) search. The book is full of appeals to spiritual powers (1:21; 3:10; 6:12; etc.); does this mean that the writer merely borrowed his words from the apocalyptic material of his day which also used this terminology? Barth would warn against this as a short-sighted approach to understanding Ephesians as a whole: "The reader of Ephesians would be left to the wildest guesswork if,

To this point in our study we have stressed the need to appreciate the importance of plural אֱלֹהִים and the role they play in the ultimate plan of God. It appears that a belief in a comparable monotheism adequately sets the groundwork for Paul's ability to speak of אֱלֹהִים-class power in the New Testament. In this way the identity of these powers can arise from within the Old Testament itself without depending upon the development of intertestamental angelic hierarchies. Many powers of the Greco-Roman world were available to Paul, of course, as current scholarship has demonstrated. But our challenge is best met if we conduct our search with Paul's source of spiritual authority in mind, the Hebrew Bible.[7]

The Use of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία in the New Testament

The search for clear antecedents to Paul's language of power may at first appear disappointing. In our understanding of intertestamental literature, it would be fair to summarize the meaning of the terms ἀρχή ("rule") and ἐξουσία ("authority") by concluding these are the typical words for power in the days of Paul. If this is the case, we

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without the aid of the Old Testament, he had to explain what might be meant by Jesus' title, 'the Christ' (the Messiah); by the designation of his death as an 'offering and sacrifice' of 'pleasing odor' (5:2); by verbs such as to 'elect,' to 'raise,' to 'reveal,' to 'be subject;' by nouns such as 'covenant' and 'peace,' 'grace' and 'fear.' Only a total lack of concern for the obvious dependence of Ephesians upon the Old Testament people, history, and literature would permit a commentator to spend his time exclusively roaming the fields of Hellenism, Gnosticism, Qumran, or New Testament books" (Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3*, AB, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 34 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974], 27-28).

Keeping with the subject of Ephesians, what kind of Old Testament genres or sources did the writer appeal to for the composition of this book? According to Barth's count (ibid., 27-28), the writer of Ephesians references the Pentateuch seventeen times, the Psalms eleven times, and the prophetic books thirty times. These numbers demonstrate Paul's dependence upon the entire Old Testament, far beyond its so-called apocalyptic sections. Charles Cousar (*The Letters of Paul*, Interpreting Biblical Texts, ed. Charles Cousar [Nashville: Abingdon, 1996], 173), in noting the Ephesian metaphors of the church—the fullness of Christ (1:25; 4:13), the household of God (2:19), the holy temple (2:21-2), the bride of Christ (5:23-4); and, most prominent of all, the body of Christ (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30)—also proposes looking across the entire span of biblical genres when considering the possible sources of Paul's writings.

[7]Like others of his time, Berkhof thought we would find Paul's powers in intertestamental writings because they are "devoted to the exposition of heavenly mysteries, [which] conceive of the 'powers,' 'thrones,' and the like as classes of angels located on higher and lower levels of the heavens" (Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. J. H. Yoder [Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1977], 16). But this is precisely the problem. This development of "heavenly mysteries," as noted in our last chapter, went far beyond the boundaries of the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul gives no evidence of belief in intertestamental angelic hierarchies and studiously avoids contemplating how the spiritual realm "works." So, with Berkhof, we may spend time looking in the right place for Paul's terminology, all the while misunderstanding what goes behind this terminology. It appears we need to look farther back than Berkhof thought necessary.

are not dealing with difficult terminology as much as we are dealing with unspecified identities. We need to know who or what these powers are, and it is apparent that the common use of the terms hinders our search more than solves it. We have too many places to look, not too few. Wink finds the powers to be "the normal, daily" conversation which "described the political, religious, and economic structures and functionaries with which people had to deal."[8] It was far from the case that these terms had specialized meaning in the audience of Paul, especially when it came to their use in defining any kind of heavenly hierarchy.

Our assessment of the New Testament use of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία stands in basic agreement with the previous works of Walter Wink[9] and Wesley Carr.[10] Indeed, their extensive overview of the use of Paul's terms for power cannot be improved upon for their lexical precision.[11] It does little good, in fact, to reproduce their work here; in the paragraphs below it will be noticeable that the corner has been turned on defining the terms. What remains a matter of dispute, however, will be Paul's possible sources and his larger theological perspective in describing what role these powers play in redemptive history. That being said, a brief overview of the New Testament uses of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία is relevant to our study. Paul is not alone in his reference to the powers, of course, as no New Testament book is without the language of power. His terminology is akin to that of the New Testament as a whole.

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[8]Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, vol. 1, The Powers (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 14.

[9]Ibid., 3-35; A concise summary of Wink's lexical investigation (in which the author concurs with Wink's conclusion) is found in Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *'Put on the Armour of God': The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, JSNTSup, ed. Stanley E. Porter, vol. 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 122-23.

[10]Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase Hai Archai kai hai Exousiai*, SNTSMS, ed. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[11]Wink, for instance, accounts for nearly every use of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία in Greek literature in Appendix 1 and 2 of *Naming the Powers*, 151-58.

In the New Testament, ἀρχή occurs fifty-five times, "always signif[ying]

primacy."[12] This may be in reference to time, place, or rank. When used in this third sense,

it refers to authority, sovereignty, or exercise of power, whether in a neutral or in a personal

sense.[13] It may be used of the earthly or supraterrestrial spheres or figures of power,

depending upon context. "[T]he word regularly appears in connection with ἐξουσία (Jude 6

is an exception) so that the phrase ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐξουσία represents a sort of hendiadys (attested

already in Plato *Alc.* i.135a) for powers, rulers, sphere(s) of control, authorities, and,

concretely, governing authorities, officials. The phrase does not define these concepts with

any great degree of precision."[14] The dictionary evidence clearly and unanimously points

to a term that denotes a meaning of *power* or *authority*. Only further contextual use of the

term can supply greater specifics than this.

> Daniel uses *archon* 21 times of human captains, rulers, officials, chiefs, command-
> ers, and 1 (LXX) to 7 (Theodotion) times for angelic spirits (10:13; 20-1; 12:1).
> *Asc. Isa.* 3:11 speaks of human 'princes' (*archonton*) of Judah, yet uses the same
> term in 10:11-12 and 11:16 for heavenly powers. *Test. Abr.* 9 uses a form of *archo*
> to speak of Michael as the "commander-in-chief [*archistrategos*] of the upper
> powers [*dynameon*]," yet later speak of human "kings and rulers" (*archontas*)
> (19, both Recension A). In *Test. Job* 21:2b and 40:8-9, *archonton* is used of human
> rulers, while in 33:8a and 34:4b a different word is used for such rulers, *hegou-
> menoi*; then in 49:2 *archonton* designates angels. And *3 Enoch*, which refers
> repeatedly to heavenly princes (*sar*, a word usually translated by *archon* in the
> LXX), nevertheless also lists a strain of earthly "rulers of each generation," which
> includes heads, court officers, chiefs, presidents, magistrates, princes, and nobles, at
> least some of which would be rendered into Greek by *archontes* (45:1-5). And no
> one reading this passage would infer that these were anything but human leaders.[15]

What appears true about the term ἀρχή can be said about ἐξουσία. The New

Testament uses ἐξουσία 102 times, eighty-seven of them "for the personal capacity for

action which is bestowed by an office."[16] It is used to refer to a structural dimension of

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[12]G. Delling, "'Αρχή," in *TDNT*, 1:479.

[13]K. Weiss, "'Αρχή," in *EDNT*, 1:161-2.

[14]Ibid., 162.

[15]Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 9, n. 6.

[16]Ibid., 15.

existence, whether or not that dimension includes a celestial or terrestrial authority. Thus, like ἀρχή, the term enjoyed a wide range of meaning. Furthermore, "These meanings are fluid because right and authority cross over to each other; authority presupposes power/ability, and the first meaning encompasses the third."[17] But this was not anything less than a cultural way to view the world, in the end. The powers were everywhere, it was thought, and thus were more sociological than spiritual, and more institutional than cosmic.[18]

In comparing ἀρχή and ἐξουσία, then, we find the authors of the New Testament using single words with more than one meaning, and we also find that a writer such as Paul was not averse to using two words with apparently the same (or at least nearly the same) meaning in mind. The rulers in Rom 13:3 were to be respected for what they were: "For rulers (ἄρχοντες) are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And would you have no fear of the power (ἐξουσίαν)?" If a difference is to be made between ἐξουσία and ἀρχή in this verse it would have to be slight.[19] In another New Testament example, the words appear to work without distinction in such a phrase as ὥστε παραδοῦναι αὐτὸν τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος ("so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor," Luke 20:20).

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[17] I. Broer, "'Εξουσία," in *EDNT*, 2:10.

[18] "The NT use of ἐξουσία for [only] supraterrestrial powers is new, i.e., attested neither in the LXX nor in Hellenistic Greek" (ibid., 11); cf. W. Foerster, "'Εξουσία," in *TDNT*, 2:571.

[19] Wink believes that, at most, there may exist a connotative difference between ἀρχή and ἐξουσία in the New Testament as a whole. "Despite all this imprecision and interchangeability, clear patterns of usage emerge. *Archon* (always, without exception in the LXX, Josephus, and the New Testament) refers to an incumbent-in-office. *Arche* can indicate the office itself, or an incumbent, or the structure of power (government, kingdom, realm, dominion). *Exousia* denotes the legitimations and sanctions by which power is maintained; it generally tends to be abstract. *Dynamis* overlaps with *exousia* in the area of sanctions; it refers to the power or force by which rule is maintained. *Kyriotes* may point to that over which the *kyrios* reigns—the dominion, realm, territory—although in later usage it collapses toward equivalence with *kyrios*. *Thronos* designates the seat of power, the locus or centralization of rule. And *onoma* is a metonym in which the part ('name') stands for the whole (the person), usually a person or power of celebrity or rank" (Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 10).

The phrase ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι does appear to be a stock phrase[20] which is employed by both Paul and his ministry partner Luke. No other New Testament writer uses the couplet. Always appearing in the same order, these two words are paired ten times in the New Testament. Luke uses the couplet twice: "And when they bring you before the synagogues, and the rulers (ἀρχὰς), and the authorities (ἐξουσίας), be not anxious how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say" (Luke 12:11); "And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power (ἀρχῇ) and authority (ἐξουσίᾳ) of the governor" (Luke 20:20). In both instances Luke is explicitly referring to human agents or institutions.[21] It may be that Luke was influenced by Paul's use of this tandem, as the parallel synoptic accounts make use of neither term (Matt 10:17; 22:15; Mark 12:13; 13:9). Paul uses the word pair a total of eight times, occurring in both the singular and plural:

> 1 Cor 15:24: Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority (πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν) and power.

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[20]We do not mean to imply, however, that Paul used this as a *technical phrase*. The words appear to have rolled almost effortlessly off his pen, as it were, but there exists no formal argument for the use of this couplet as a formalized phrase in literature prior to the New Testament. Weiss, ("Ἀρχή," 162), believes that the earliest instance of the couplet is in Plato (*Alc.* 1.135AB), where the reference is clearly to civil government. Even for Paul, Col 2:10 and Eph 3:10 are the only locations where the pair occurs without any other word for power. Thus, while it remains a curiosity that only Paul and Luke use this couplet in the New Testament, we are left with no clear reasons as to why this is the case.

[21]It does not seem vitally important as to whether the terms can stand for physical or spiritual powers. Wink believes this is technically a safe conclusion, arguing that a case cannot be made that these terms must always refer to either a physical or spiritual entity. By his count in the New Testament, for example, ἀρχή refers twice to human rulers, and perhaps as many as eight times to divine powers; similarly, he finds that ἄρχων refers to human rulers 24 times, and nine times (at least) to divine powers (Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 7). "In the New Testament the singular *exousia* (the abstract sense) is used to refer equally to the divine authority of God as well as satanic authority over the world (Acts 1:7; Jude 25; Mark 1:22; 2:10; Matt 7:29; 21:23; 28:18; cp. Luke 22:53; Eph 2:2). *Exousia* can then designate, without much difficulty, both the abstract authority and the agents which execute it (Oscar Cullman, *The State in the New Testament*, Revised ed. [London: SCM, 1963], 80). (This is Cullman's argument, in the end, linking both a spiritual and physical aspect to the ἐξουσία of Rom 13:1). In our conclusion it will be noted that Paul did not want to limit the powers to either the heavenly or earthly realm and employed two phrases to accomplish this in Col 1:16: "For in him were all things created, *in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible*, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him."

Eph 1:21: Far above all principality, and power (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας), and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

Eph 3:10: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers (ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις) in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Eph 6:12: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers (πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας), against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Col 1:16: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers (ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι): all things were created by him, and for him.

Col 2:10: And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας).

Col 2:15: And having spoiled principalities and powers (τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας), he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Titus 3:1: Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers (ἀρχαῖς ἐξουσίαις), to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.

This list, however, must be compared to the numerous ways that writers of the New Testament appeal to power, whether physical or spiritual. When compared to the many other descriptors used to reference these powers, it appears that ἀρχαὶ and ἐξουσίαι (as used with any case or number) was just one way for Paul to reference a vast host of unnamed spiritual powers without a developed pantheon or hierarchy in mind.[22] Indeed, the use of power language in the New Testament yields an impressive list.[23]

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[22]So the opinion of F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 64. The days will come, of course, when the church fathers will develop extensive spiritual hierarchies much like those formulated during the intertestamental era. The trend toward speculation on the arrangement of heavenly beings grew more rather than less popular, as coming into the Middle Ages the groupings of angels was the fancy of writers and theologians alike. "The distribution of angels in nine groupings, in the Byzantine gradation of ranks and ministries which finds (or makes) its analogous in the nine Ptolemaic spheres, was fixed for Western Christendom in the treatise by Pseudo-Dionysius called *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. The author describes two hierarchies—that of the heavens and that of the Church—as organized in a triadic and thus Trinitarian mode. The triads descend from the One" (James Torrens, *Presenting Paradise: Dante's Paradise, Translation and Commentary* [Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1993], 224-25).

[23]The following combines the list of references in Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 7-9, and Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 218.

Single words, including those for Satan:

Satan (ὁ σατανᾶς) (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thes 2:18; 2 Thes 2:9; 1 Tim 1:20; 5:15)

Devil (διάβολος) (Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim 3:6, 7; 2 Tim 2:26)

Evil one (τοῦ πονηροῦ) (Eph 6:16; 2 Thes 3:3)

Belial (Βελιάρ) (2 Cor 6:15)

Adversary (ἀντικειμένῳ) (1 Tim 5:14)

Tempter (ὁ πειράζων) (1 Thes 3:5)

God of this age (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) (2 Cor 4:4)

Rulers of this age (ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) (1 Cor 2:6)

Principles of the world (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) (Gal 4:3, 8; Col 2:8, 20)

Demons (δαιμονίων) (1 Cor 10:20-1; 1 Tim 4:1)

Pairs of words:

Rulers (ἄρχοντες) and great men (μεγάλοι κατεξουσιάζουσιν) (Matt 20:25)

Supposed rulers (οἱ δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν) and great men (Mark 10:42)

Kings of Gentiles (βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν) and those in authority (οἱ ἐξουσιάζοντες) (Luke 22:25)

Chief priests (ἀρχιερεῖς) and rulers (ἄρχοντες) (Luke 24:20)

Rulers (ἄρχοντες) and elders (πρεσβύτεροι) (Acts 4:8)

Kings of the earth (βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς) and rulers (ἄρχοντες) (Acts 4:26)

Angels (ἄγγελοι) and rulers (ἀρχαί) (Rom 8:38)[24]

Rule (ἀρχῆς) and authority (ἐξουσίας) (Col 2:10)

Power (δυνάμει) and name (ὀνόματι) (Acts 4:7)

Power (δύναμιν) and wisdom (σοφίαν) (1 Cor 1:24)

Power (δύναμιν) and authority (ἐξουσίαν) (Luke 9:1; Rev 17:13)

Authority (ἐξουσίας) and commission (ἐπιτροπῆς) (Acts 26:12)

Authority (ἐξουσίᾳ) and power (δυνάμει) (Luke 4:36)

Groups of three words:

Chief priests (ἀρχιερεῖς), captains (στρατηγοὺς), and elders (πρεσβυτέρους) (Luke 22:52)

Chief priests (ἀρχιερεῖς), rulers (ἄρχοντας), people (λαὸν) (Luke 23:13)

Rulers (ἄρχοντας), elders (πρεσβυτέρους), scribes (γραμματεῖς) (Acts 4:5)

Synagogues (συναγωγάς), rulers (ἀρχάς), authorities (ἐξουσίας) (Luke 12:11)

Angels (ἀγγέλων), authorities (ἐξουσιῶν), powers (δυνάμεων) (1 Pet 3:22)

Power (δύναμιν), throne (θρόνον), authority (ἐξουσίαν) (Rev 13:2)

Groups of four words:

Principalities (ἀρχάς), powers (ἐξουσίας), world rulers (κοσμοκράτορας), spirits of wickedness (πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας) (Eph 6:12)

Thrones (θρόνοι), dominions (κυριότητες), principalities (ἀρχαί), authorities (ἐξουσίαι) (Col 1:16)

Salvation (σωτηρία), power (δύναμις), kingdom (βασιλεία), authority (ἐξουσία) (Rev 12:10)

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[24]This is being treated as a suspected pair within a string of other suspected pairs. Codex Bezae (D) adds ἐξουσίας before ἀρχαί; codex Ephraemi (C) adds it in the plural after ἀρχαί. For purposes of our study we will be following the preferred shorter reading.

Glory (δόξα), majesty (μεγαλωσύνη), dominion (κράτος), authority (ἐξουσία) (Jude 25)

<u>Group of five words:</u>
Rule (ἀρχῆς), authority (ἐξουσίας), power (δυνάμεως), dominion (κυριότητος), name that is named (ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου) (Eph 1:21)

<u>Listing that appears to work with pairs in mind:</u>
Death (θάνατος), life (ζωή), angels (ἄγγελοι), principalities (ἀρχαί), present things (ἐνεστῶτα), future things (μέλλοντα), powers (δυνάμεις), height (ὕψωμα), depth (βάθος), any other creature (κτίσις ἑτέρα) (Rom 8:38)

The visual impression of these lists cannot help but lead one to concur with Wink that the language of the powers in the New Testament is "imprecise, liquid, interchangeable, and unsystematic.[25] One may wonder how we can ever hope to identify Paul's use of the single phrase ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι when the New Testament offers so many options for identifying spiritual and physical power. Our method will aim to simplify the process, as noted above, by attending to the available *themes of power* that bridge the Old and New Testaments.

Identifying the Powers of Paul

Our goal set at the beginning of this study is now within reach. In chapters 2 and 3 we have noted that, throughout the Old Testament, antagonistic spiritual beings have been given temporary rule by Yahweh in the physical world of humans. These created "gods" were apparently the object of discussion in the first commandment due to the danger they presented to the Hebrew nation as they attempted to maintain their faithfulness to Yahweh. The time of rule for these spirits, however, was destined to end in judgment and destruction. Our fourth chapter described, with the help of a brilliant vision in Dan 7, this judgment of evil אֱלֹהִים at the hand of Yahweh's council of faithful אֱלֹהִים. These wicked "authorities" (ἐξουσίαι, LXX, Dan 7:27) or "rulers" (ἀρχαί, Theod., Dan 7:27) were

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[25]Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 9; O'Brien agrees, finding that the "names given to the powers of evil are in large measure interchangeable" (Peter T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context*, ed. D. A. Carson [Exeter: Paternoster, 1984], 137).

destined to lose their authority (ἐξουσίας, LXX, Dan 7:12) or rule (ἀρχή, Theod., Dan 7:12) and see it given to another. Chapter 5 of this study noted how a change in language tended to obscure the identity of the gods during the intertestamental era. The gods of the Old Testament did not go away, to be sure, though their Hebrew name (אֱלֹהִים) did; what eventually took its place was the Greek word which came to represent "divine being," or ἄγγελος.

In our sixth and final chapter we are left to consider how Paul would have "resurrected" these antagonistic אֱלֹהִים for his Greek-speaking readership. He would need to be specific, in the sense that ἄγγελος would function too broadly in relating to all divine beings in general; after all, many "good" ἄγγελοι were still loyal to Yahweh (2 Cor 11:14; Gal 3:19; 4:14; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 5:21). It appears that Paul will do in his epistles what Daniel did in relating his vision: he will speak of these evil spirits in terms of their temporary role ("authorities" and "rulers") instead of their undeserved title ("gods"). Paul's identification of the powers was therefore not original, as it was the same method of identifying the powers as used by one of the last great prophets of the Hebrew Bible.

This chapter will bring our study to conclusion by noting four lines of argument, with each offering an increasingly specific means of equating Paul's powers to the Old Testament אֱלֹהִים. First, we will find that Paul believed the powers of his day had the same *character* as the powers of the Old Testament; that is, that the New Testament powers were created beings who were antagonistic to the purposes of Yahweh and his people. Second, we will notice that Paul found that the powers of his day still claimed the same *role* as the powers of the Old Testament; that is, the New Testament powers were ruling in the affairs of men by the ultimate pleasure of Yahweh. Third, we will find that Paul realized the same *destiny* was about to come upon the powers of the New Testament that was promised to those of the Old Testament; in a word, they would be destroyed. Finally, we will notice that Paul's employed the exact *titles* (ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι) which were used in Dan 7:27 (LXX/Theod.) to refer to the spiritual enemies of the Son of Man.

The Character of Paul's Powers: Creaturely
Antagonists to God and Christians

If there was such a thing as a New Testament pantheon, it would have to survive

the test of comparable monotheism as set forth in the Old Testament. God was not alone in

heaven's courtroom, as it were, but there was no doubt as to who created whom and who

was in sovereign control of the cosmos. The strongest Old Testament theme of monotheism

is widely attested to be Deut 6: 4: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah."

Turning to the language of Paul, the distinctively Jewish sound of the monotheism motif is

heard in 1 Cor 8:5-6, mixed with a Christian element: "For though there be that are called

gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be many gods, and many lords), but to us there

is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus

Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." This approaches a Christian Shema as

much as anything else in the New Testament text.[26] The emphasis upon "one God" to the

exclusion of all other "so-called gods" is also a clear mark of Jewish religious tradition.

Other gods are inconsequential in the sense that they are weak, beggarly, and (by compar-

ison) unable to function with any real independence.[27]

But it is clear that what Paul objected to was not other heavenly beings. He was

particularly scrupulous to avoid the connotation that any heavenly being could exercise

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[26]Dunn says that Paul here "splits the *Shema* . . . between God the Father and Christ the Lord in a way that has no earlier parallel" (James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation,* 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 180).

[27]Thus Paul distinguished Christian devotion from Greek, Roman, and other forms of polytheism by declaring that for Christians there can only be one "true" God despite the so-titled gods of the heathen nations. It still was a matter of emphasis, it appears, as the other gods were still assumed to exist. See Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism, Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus,* ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, ed. John J. Collins, vol. 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 234. The challenge for Christians, of course, would be the worship of Jesus while maintaining belief in one true God. Within Judaism generally, and within Christianity specifically, was the problem of how veneration of another individual besides God could be practiced while still affirming the Jewish tradition that there was only one God. For Hurtado, this could still be done within traditional Judaism, but it required a "mutation of sorts" (Hurtado, *One God, One Lord,* 1-2).

independent authority by stating clearly that from one God, the Father, came "all things."[28]

There were not two or more authorities in heaven, though Paul had to admit that "many

gods and many lords" did indeed bear an amazing, delegated title. But they were "so-

named" (λεγόμενοι θεοί)[29] gods, which needed clarification in Paul's thinking.

A name was not an arbitrary label in the ancient Orient. Barth has noted that it

was often identified with a person's hidden essence, demonstrated power, and recognized

honor (cf. Phil 2:9; Rom 15:20; Eph 2:11; 3:15; 2 Tim 2:19).[30] The efficacy of a name

could be extended to honorific titles, official appellations, and even personal names. Such

titles were also thought to be in a very real way a part of a being's personhood, its power

and position.[31] How far could the title "god" (θεός, 1 Cor 8:5) carry these beings, however,

when it came to their actual power and position in relation to their creator?

Paul seems to have these gods in view when he speaks of the risen Christ being

exalted "Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and *every name that is*

named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph 1:21). Isaiah may

have previously appealed to these "named" beings (40:26): "Lift up your eyes on high,

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[28]References to God as creator are repeatedly found in Pauline writings (e.g., 1 Cor 11:9; Rom 1:20, 25; Col 1:16; Eph 3:9; 1 Tim 4:3-4). This is an Old Testament theme as well, often related purposely to the doctrine of salvation (Isa 41:11-20; 45:7-8; 51:9-11). In combining these concepts Paul probably saw the new creation to be a place of safety (i.e., salvation) for those who have been pulled out of this world which is presently under the domain of antagonistic spiritual forces.

[29]Jesus himself bore the title ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός ("the one who is called Christ," Matt 1:16). The use of this participle speaks more of a given title for a real being (Col 4:11: "And Jesus, which is called [λεγόμενος] Justus") than it does for a title of a being whose very existence is in doubt (e.g., "so-called witches of Salem"). Yet the use of this participle by Paul leads at least one commentator to believe that this was the very means used by Paul for dispensing with the reality of the gods of the Old Testament: "Paul recognizes . . . that human actions and thoughts and habits are often more shaped and determined by 'perceived reality' than by 'true reality,' by humanly created superstitions than by divine revelations. It is this recognition which stands behind the words about 'so-called gods' and 'gods and lords'" (Manfred Brauch, *Hard Sayings of Paul* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989], 131). The phrase λεγόμενοι θεοί ("so-called gods") appears in one other New Testament location (2 Thes 2:4, with "god" in the singular) which finds that the coming "lawless one" was going to "exalt himself above everything that is called God or is worshipped." As in the Corinthians text, here is further evidence that real spiritual forces will be involved in the life and times of the antichrist (2:9, "whose coming is after the working of Satan").

[30]Barth, *Ephesians*, 155.

[31]Thomas Allen, "God the Namer: A Note on Ephesians 1.21b," *NTS* 32 (1986): 471.

and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number; he calls them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking." The author of Hebrews emphasizes in his introduction (1:4) that Christ's rank outstripped that of all divine beings because he became "so much better than the [ἄγγελοι], as he has inherited a more excellent name than they."

Consistent with the Old Testament, Paul's powers were not only created; they were to be considered *evil*, or antithetical to the cause of Yahweh and his people. Paul ties Christian frustration to the fight "against rulers (ἀρχάς), against authorities (ἐξουσίας), against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12), clearly earmarking these powers as harmful to the Christian.[32] Bruce believes it was these beings that the Colossian people must have been tempted to worship (Col 2:18),[33] much like the days of the Israelites gathered at Mt. Sinai (Exod 20:4). The last words of Eph 6:12 ("against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places") confirm the heavenly position of these cosmic powers. These beings direct the course of the world from the position of heaven itself, akin to the position to the wicked forces of evil in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut 4:19).

Paul identified the "powers" as evil in other texts as well. His reference to the "ruler of the authority of the air (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος), the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2) speaks of Satan and the position of power which he has been given in the present world order. Conversely, one who has escaped the dominion of this wicked spirit is said to have been "delivered . . . from the power of darkness" (τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους, Col 1:13). In each case it is unmistakable that Paul deemed the present powers to be working against—at least in the present tense—the cause of God.

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[32]We have previously mentioned that Wesley Carr (*Angels and Principalities*, 65), in an attempt to defend his view that the powers of Paul were good angels, treats Eph 6:12 as a late addition to the text of Ephesians. He unfortunately offers no textual evidence for this view.

[33]Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 51.

The Role of Paul's Powers: Ruling Spirits
of the Present Era

In 1 Cor 8:6, as mentioned above, Paul is content to admit to the presence of "so-named" gods if their role in subservience to Yahweh is maintained. In this sense he is simply maintaining the monotheism of the Hebrew Bible. There remains a curiosity in that verse, however. Though he clearly states "there is but one God" (reflecting upon verse 4), that conviction is qualified by the word "for us" (ἡμῖν). Is it possible that Paul was deftly admitting that gods existed "for others"?[34]

Paul's concern for monotheistic orthopraxy is reflected in his discussion regarding the practice of eating meat which had been sacrificed to pagan idols (1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:14-30). Christians were curious how to handle the buying of sacrificial meat that was resold to the populace in the meat markets (1 Cor 10:25). In the private setting the situation was similarly questionable: what if pagan friends and neighbors invited the Christian to eat such "idol meat" (8:1, 4; 10:27-8)? Since such gatherings were associated with the god or gods which were worshipped in those temples, the Christian was made to wonder about the moral legitimacy of such association (8:7).

Consistent with his belief in "one God, the Father, of whom are all things," (1 Cor 8:6), Paul is able to recommend a bold course of action. If the foreign gods were only fable or mythology, he would hardly have recalled to mind the prime reason in the Old Testament for making Yahweh jealous: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons (δαιμονίων): you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons (δαιμονίων). Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" (1 Cor 10:21-22, referring to Deut 32:17). As in the days of the Old Testament, Paul could declare that "an idol is nothing" (1 Cor 8:4) in that it is made of human hands and thus unable to be a god of any worth (Isa 44:16-17). But idol worship did have a negative spiritual purpose far beyond what the casual observer might realize: "But I say, that the

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[34]Brauch, *Hard Sayings of Paul,* 129.

things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God (δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ): and I would not that you should have fellowship with demons (κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων)," (1 Cor 10:20).

By no means, then, did Paul believe the idol worshipper was partaking of frivolous or meaningless activity. The first commandment of Exod 20 was still in effect. While the Christians were enjoying "fellowship of the body of Christ" (κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor 10:16) during the Lord's Supper, the heathen were having fellowship as well—but "with demons." In a very real sense, the Christian had his God, and the non-Christian had his as well. Neither was more real than the other.

But what was the relationship of a non-Christian to his god? In the Old Testament, we recall, every roadside village had its own deity ("For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god," Mic 4:5). There is no evidence, according to Paul, that anything in that situation had changed, except that maybe now the sphere of evil influence had grown even wider. Paul used the term "world rulers" (κοσμοκράτορας) in Eph 6:12, associating them in the same verse to the ἀρχάς and ἐξουσίας which wrestled with the Christian. These were spiritual beings, which worked in ways which are largely unknown. Paul does not here describe "how" they rule, only that they do. It is difficult for most commentators to dissociate these powers from the "rulers of this age" (ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) who did not originally discern God's eternal wisdom when they killed "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:6, 8). John also speaks of a singular, spiritual ruler with three references to the "prince of the world" (John 12:31, 14:30; 16:11) who was busily at work in the moments prior to the crucifixion.

In considering the concept of ruling gods in the New Testament we are especially led to Galatians, a letter of Paul with "an uncharacteristically long greeting in which he emphasizes the work of Christ in delivering his people from the present evil age."[35] In 4:3 Paul reflects upon the pre-Christian existence as being "children, [when we]

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[35]Clinton E. Arnold, "Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3, 9," *NovT* 38 (1996): 55.

were in bondage under the elements of the world (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου)." Arnold believes

that enough documentation exists to support the claim that Paul's use of στοιχεῖα refers to

pagan gods in the days of the New Testament.[36] He unfortunately excuses himself from

making reference to the Old Testament and says they are to be identified as "evil demonic

powers" which is how he identifies all the evil powers of the New Testament.[37] Bornkamm

agrees that careful analysis of the text reveals that the στοιχεῖα are personal beings.[38]

Paul enhances this pre-Christian experience in Gal 4 by saying that it included

"service to them which by nature are not gods" (ἐδουλεύσατε τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς, v.

8), reminiscent of the Old Testament experience of serving other gods (δουλεύσῃς τοῖς θεοῖς

αὐτῶν, Exod 23:33 LXX) in the land of Canaan.[39] Paul then had good news mixed with a

straightforward warning: "But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of

God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα)

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[36]Ibid., 58. In the Greek Magical Papyri, the term στοιχεῖα is used most commonly in connection with the stars and/or the or gods they represent. In a related sense, στοιχεῖα was also used to refer to the 36 astral gods that rule over every 10 degrees of the heavens (Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, vol. 1 [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986], 440-41). It is also used of astral gods in Rome during the first century B.C. (Wilhelm Gundel, *Dekane und Dekansternbilder. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sternbilder der Kultervölker*, 2d ed. [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969], 28). As we could expect, they are referred to by the Greek ἄγγελος, translated into English versions as "angel."

[37]Arnold, "*Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits," 63.

[38]"Paul could hardly have compared them (the στοιχεῖα) in Gal. 4:2 with the ἐπιτρόπους and οἰκονόμους [guardians and trustees] to whom minor children are subject, and designated them as φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς [those who by nature are not gods, 4:8],whom the Galatians served, unless the latter had regarded the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου [elements of the world, 4:3] as personal, divine beings" (Gunther Bornkamm, "The Heresy of Colossians," in *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies*, ed. Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks. Sources for Bible Study, vol. 4 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975], 124). This interpretation provides consistency throughout the extended passage, as the multiple references to "you" (3:26, 27, 28, 29; 4:6, 7) can refer to the same individuals designated as "we" (4:3, 5). The difference, according to Paul's argument, is one of timing. A young ("you" before salvation) heir is the same individual as the adult ("we" after salvation) heir (4:1), though his debt of service has changed (4:2).

[39]The "we" of Gal 4:3, 5 likely includes the Israelite who had given himself to the "bondage" of pagan gods. In "playing the harlot against their God" (Hos 4:12) Israel had unfortunately disobeyed the warning of Exod 23:33 and began to serve the gods of the nations. God broke the bondage that these spirits had over Gentiles at the crucifixion (Col 2:13-15). See Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermenia, ed. Helmet Koester et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 205; also Bo Reicke, "The Law and This World According to Paul," *JBL* 70 (1951): 262.

of the world?" (4:9).[40] The temptation will be to give up the Christian journey, thought Paul, under a world that is still showing evidence of being under the realm of futile spirits.[41] Even the Christian, in this sense, is still subjected to the "elements of the world," which seem to be personal, spiritual beings bent on the antagonistic treatment of God and Christians.[42]

Thus Paul indicates his agreement with the widespread Jewish notion, riding squarely on the shoulders of the Old Testament, that the peoples of the world (and their governments) were entrusted to disloyal אֱלֹהִים. As functions of government, physical rulers, lords, and authorities were functionaries of spiritual powers "above" and beyond them.[43]

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[40]While it is possible that Paul was warning his followers against a return to the domain of Jewish law (so Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph P. Martin, vol. 41 [Dallas: Word, 1990], 165-66), we need not restrict the στοιχεῖα of this passage to the physical stipulations of mosaic law alone. It is fitting, at least in theory, that pagan gods would be known by restrictive patterns of worship in the New Testament as they were in the Old Testament (cf. Exod 23:24; Deut 12:30). The legalistic refrain of Gal 4:10 ("You observe days and months and seasons and years") is reminiscent of Col 2:16 ("Therefore let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths") which rehearses the freedom of the Christian in direct contrast to the "disarm[ing of] principalities and powers" (Col 2:15), or personal spirit beings. In this sense the Colossian Gentiles (Col 2:13, "the uncircumcision of your flesh") were just like the Galatian Jews (Gal 3:23, "we were kept under guard by the law") and Galatian Gentiles (Gal 5:2, "if you become circumcised") in that they all became free from στοιχεῖα who were often associated with legalistic tendencies (Gal 4:9-10; Col 2:8).

[41]This reflects Barrett's paraphrase of Rom 8:20: "For the creation was subjected to a vain life under inferior evil spiritual powers" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Black's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick [London: Adam and Charles Black, 1962], 166). Barrett argues that Paul is here recalling the promised vanity of the gods of the heathen, using Ps 31:6 to substantiate his case.

[42]The subject of New Testament στοιχεῖα goes well beyond what we can study here. Arnold ("*Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits," 55-56) summarizes the interpretive possibilities of στοιχεῖα as 1) the fundamental principles of all religions (Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 74; Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 75-76); 2) the regulations of the Torah (Longenecker, *Galatians*, 165-66); 3) the domain of flesh, sin, and death (P. Vielhauer, "Gesetzesdienst und Stoicheiadienst im Galaterbrief," in *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann Zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann, and P. Stuhlmacher [Tübingen: Mohr, 1976], 553; A. J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* [Kampen: Kok, 1964], 57-69); and 4) the four physical elements (James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of* ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ *in the Pauline Corpus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, vol. 48 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1992], 159-60; Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 554-55; Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* [Göttingen: 1909], 78-85; Otto Everling, *Die paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie* [Göttingen: 1888], 66-76). Arnold believes that the evidence is convincing (while nuanced conclusions still abound) that there is personal existence to the term στοιχεῖα, even if current thinking in the days of Paul incorrectly placed these spirits over the four elements of the physical world.

[43]Reflecting on 1 Cor 2:8, Benoit finds "The context suggests clearly enough that these human authorities have been manipulated by superior powers who have an influence on the progression of

Paul did not elaborate on the mode or method of these spiritual rulers; it is possible he did understand this himself. But, even as Israel had its spiritual protector (Deut 4:19; 32:8-9; Dan 10:13 [τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων, LXX), each nation had a "shepherd" of sorts, or a ruler that found spiritual identity in the heavens.

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The Destiny of Paul's Powers: Destruction
after a Period of Servitude

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Evil spiritual powers earned the attention of Jesus Christ long before becoming the object of attention in Paul's letters. Seeing that the "Gospel" had been preached without the disciples' awareness of Jesus' death (Luke 9:6; cf. 9:44-5), this early message probably signaled the taking of spiritual authority that rightfully belonged to Jesus. In small sample-like measures, this would have included overcoming the destructive work of plague and death on earth (Matt 11:5, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them," cf. Luke 4:18; Rom 8:20-22) as well as the demonstration of power over evil spirits (Mark 5:7-8). Thus the prediction of Dan 7 could function in the life and ministry of Christ before Jesus announced his impending death.

For Paul, as well, there may have been no greater theme to be found in the Gospel than that of borrowed authority coming back to its rightful place. "Then comes the end" (εἶτα τὸ τέλος, 1 Cor 15:24a) appeals to a time and place in history when all that has come before will find meaning. This "end" will be "when [Jesus] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule (ἀρχὴν) and all authority (ἐξουσίαν) and power" (1 Cor 15:24b). It is in this sense that all things will be "reconciled," or brought under the proper administrative authority (Col 1:20). In the meantime even inanimate creation has been subject "to the frustration of not being able

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the world" (Pierre Benoit, "Pauline Angelology and Demonology: Reflexions on the Designations of the Heavenly Powers and on the Origin of Angelic Evil According to Paul," *Religious Studies Bulletin* 3 [1983]: 12).

properly to fulfill the purpose of its existence, God having appointed that without man it should not be made perfect."[44]

The general plan for the future subjugation of spiritual powers is a strong and recurring theme in the New Testament. Paul described the mode of Christ's victory in various ways and with different emphases. In Eph 1:10 Christ is from eternity given the commission to be head over all things ("that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him"). Colossians 1:15-16 fixes Christ's finalized role as head over all things. According to Col 1:20-22, 2:14-15, and Eph 2:14-16 this victory is gained through the crucifixion, an event ordained to accomplish an unexpected result in the opinion of evil spirits (cf. 1 Cor 2:8). Christ's resurrection reversed the effect of sin and won human salvation (Col 2:14) while disarming these enemies (Col 2:15). His ascension, enthronement, and present rule over the church and over the world are Christ's means of subjugating the powers in the world to come (Eph 1:20-23). Christ's future and total conquest will come at his appearing to the world (1 Cor 15:26-27).

Within this general plan of the Gospel our specific interest lies in what will happen to the spiritual enemies of Christ. We recall that the Old Testament carries a striking prediction of what will happen to those אֱלֹהִים who are judged worthy of punishment: "You shall die like men," (Ps 82:7); "Yahweh will punish the host of the high ones on high," (Isa 24:21); "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens," (Jer 10:11). Daniel only made the ending more explicit: "Then the court shall sit, and [the fourth beast] shall be deprived of his sovereignty, so that in the end it may be destroyed and abolished. The kingly power, sovereignty, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. Their kingly power is an everlasting power, and all sovereignties shall serve

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[44]C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: Clark, 1975), 413-14.

them and obey them" (7:26-27). Does the New Testament, and Paul particularly, reflect this ending for the spiritual powers?

Three passages in the New Testament associate Christ's session at God's right hand and his victory over his enemies with his destruction or subjugation of spiritual powers. The phraseology of each passage is worth noting since they all appeal to a singular passage in the Old Testament:

> 1 Cor 15:24b-25: when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν). For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet.

> Eph 1:21-22a: Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος), and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; And has put all things under his feet.

> 1 Pet 3:22: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers (ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων) being made subject unto him.

The echo of these passages can be heard in the language of Ps 8:6 ("You have put all things under his feet") which is again reflected in the picture of Ps110:1 ("Yahweh says unto my lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'"). The New Testament writers were employing recognizable Old Testament phraseology to portray the victory of Jesus Christ over spiritual ruling powers. The target of Yahweh's warning in Ps 110:1 is the "enemies" of "his lord," which Paul and Peter take to be spiritual powers (ἀρχὴν, ἐξουσίαν, 1 Cor 15:24b; δύναμιν, κυριότητος, Eph 1:21; ἀγγέλων, 1 Pet 3:22). In this sense the New Testament writers are heard to promise the *use* of these enemies more than their destruction. They are fit to be employed as "footstool" of sorts, giving rest to the feet of the victor. Can this "use" of New Testament powers be found in the Old Testament, especially as we view what was said of the end of the gods? It appears that we can, notably by returning to the vision of Dan 7.

We witnessed in chapter four of this study that the larger purpose of Dan 7 was to grant the authority of the universe to its rightful owner. The Son of Man figure did not

take authority to himself (7:14) without that authority first being taken from others (7:12). This authority belonged to the beasts who were granted to use this authority for a determined amount of time (7:12). Their power was only delegated power. When the divine council took their dominion away it could then be given to its rightful owner. To this human figure, then, went the authority over all the nations of the earth (ἐξουσία καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς, 7:14 LXX). It therefore appears that the New Testament writers are not adding an element of surprise to the text which was not available in the Old Testament. The אֱלֹהִים under judgment in Dan 7 were to be relegated to the status of service (" all dominions [ἐξουσίαι, LXX; ἀρχαὶ, Theod.] shall serve and obey him," 7:27) before any word of their destruction was uttered.

Does the New Testament offer further insight into the "use" of evil spiritual powers before their destruction? Pierre Benoit has developed this theme in a firm belief that the antagonistic powers of the present era were created "in Christ" (Col 1:16) for his ultimate purposes.[45] They may even be considered "good" when viewed from what they ultimately accomplish. The judgment about to befall them, and are in fact already undergoing (1 Cor 2:6), is "not a suppression of punishment, but the abrogation of a regime,"[46] or their loss of power over the cosmos. The government entrusted to the spiritual powers may in this sense be *good though temporary* in that it fulfilled a purpose of God himself (Rom 8:19-21). The powers were guardians to whom God entrusted humanity still in its infancy (Gal 4:2).[47] Their actions, much like the workings of the Mosaic Law itself, did not and cannot save man from sin.

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[45]Benoit, "Pauline Angelology and Demonology," 13.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Benoit (Ibid., 14) presses the issue further: "In . . . Galatians Paul speaks of the Jewish Law (4:5), but also of the 'Elements of the world' (4:3, 9), and there precisely lies the knot of his argumentation (9). He assimilates Mosaic Law to the other religious laws of the ancient world, because, like these, it concerns only the material observances, allowed or forbidden foods, calendar and liturgical feasts, circumcision, and it subjects man to the cosmic Powers who administer these material constituents of the cosmos. To say it briefly, Jews and Pagans were subjected to the same 'Elements of the world.' This explains the argumentation of Gal 4:8-10: if the converts of Galatia, pagan by birth, subject themselves to

In the end Paul uses picturesque terms to describe what will happen to the evil powers. Their destruction seems to occur in phases, finally accomplished only after having "served their term" as it were. They are to be informed of their role in relation to the church (Eph 3:9-10), subjected to Christ (1 Cor 15:28), disarmed or stripped of power (Col 2:15), led in triumphant procession (Eph 4:8; Col 2:15) toward their captivity, made to genuflect (Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:10-11), and, interestingly, reconciled to Christ (Col 1:20; Eph 1:10). This last term is not meant, apparently, to bring the powers into fellowship with God, for such is only reserved for justified and sanctified humans (Heb 2:14-18). They are not "in Christ" (Eph 1:1-2) as humans are allowed to be. Their reconciliation may simply be defined as their eternal punishment (cf. 2 Thes 1:7-9). Their defeat will be the means by which heavenly blessings come to mankind,[48] so much so that these powers can be addressed by the author of Hebrews as both footstools of Christ (Heb 1:13) and (in Cullman's opinion) "ministers to those who will inherit salvation" (Heb 1:14).[49] Their

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circumcision and to the other obligations of the Jewish Law, they will simply return to being slaves of the same 'Elements of the world,' which they formerly served in paganism."

[48]Barth (*Ephesians*, 78) finds the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ("in the heavenlies," Eph 1:3) to mean that "heavenly beings are bypassed in favor of men." For discussion of this theme of apotheosis, see John J. Collins, "A Throne in the Heavens: Apotheosis in Pre-Christian Judaism," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1995); James Tabor, "Firstborn of Many Brothers: A Pauline Notion of Apotheosis," in *SBLSP 1984*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Scholars, 1984). In the Gospels, the apostles are promised that they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30). In *1 Enoch* 108:12, God "will bring out into shining light those who love my holy name, and I will set each one on the throne of his honor." Rev 3:21 promises the one who conquers "to sit on my throne with me," and in Rev 20:4 John sees "thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge." According to the *Asc. Isa.* 9:24-26, those who believe will receive "robes and thrones and crowns." 1QS 11:5c-9a uses enthronement terminology that is reminiscent of the divine council scenes from the Old Testament: "My eyes have observed what always is, wisdom that has been hidden from mankind, knowledge and prudent understanding (hidden) from the sons of man, fount of justice and well of strength and spring of glory (hidden) from the assembly of flesh. To those whom God has selected he has given them as [sic] everlasting possession; and he has given them an inheritance in the lot of the holy ones. He unites their assembly to the sons of the heavens in order (to form) the council of the Community and a foundation of the building of holiness to be an everlasting plantation throughout all future ages" (trans. by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 97).

[49]Cullman (*The State in the New Testament*, 70-83) admits that, while it can be conceded that we have no text in the New Testament where it is explicitly states that the defeated powers are subjected to "servitude," it is the expression in Hebrews 1:14 which may be "decisive" (ibid., 81) for this purpose. Cullman argues that Heb 1:14 should be interpreted with Ps 110 in mind:

destruction includes what Wink considers to be the "embarrassment" of accomplishing the hidden wisdom of God (1 Cor 2:7, 8).[50]

<div align="center">

The Titles of Paul's Powers: "Rulers" (ἀρχαί)
and "Authorities" (ἐξουσίαι)

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We have come to our final means of determining the identification for Paul's powers in the New Testament. We have previously noted, with the agreement of modern scholarship, that the terms ἀρχή and ἐξουσία are quite broad in their meaning. It would be our best hope, of course, to find that either ἀρχή or ἐξουσία is used in a Greek source such as the LXX, Greek pseudepigrapha, or even a fragment at Qumran to specify a particular being or agent that would fit our New Testament profile. This identification has not been found. We instead discover in these texts a considerable and even exaggerated interest in heavenly powers that exceeds Paul's use of the terms. It also appears that Paul did not use words such as ἀρχή and ἐξουσία (or any word for power) in a way which would have been unidentifiable to his wider audience. Paul was therefore able to be read side-by-side with other New Testament writers who used general words for spiritual powers (ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων, 1 Pet 3:22).

"In the context the 'servant spirits' [λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα] are designated as ἄγγελοι. But in the previous verse Psalm 110 is cited, and here the ἐχθροί (the 'enemies') are mentioned, which are to be made the footstool of the victor. We have seen how current the conception is in the New Testament and also precisely in Hebrews that the ἐχθροί are to be equated with the angel powers. Von Campenhausen writes that I have fallen into unusual error on this point, because the λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα of Heb. 1.14 are, in his own words, 'certainly not the previously mentioned ἐχθροί.' Is this really so completely out of the question? After I have so confirmed the hardly deniable fact that the early Christian exegesis regularly related the ἐχθροί of Psalm 110 to the subjected angels, it is certainly more than obvious that in this framework, where the angels are spoken of directly in connection with Psalm 110 and the expressly named ἐχθροί, τηε λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα are the subjected angels. By this fact is demonstrated the supremacy of the Son over the angels"(ibid., 81-82). Loren T. Stuckenbruck (*Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and the Christology of The Apocalypse of John*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius, vol. 70 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1995], 96) appears completely unaware of Cullman's argument, taking the reference of Heb 1:14 to be good angels.

[50]"The parts do not or cannot know the effect of their acts on the whole," (Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 114). This is to say the hosts of heavenly beings that are created by God only know that which they are allowed to know. Much like a messenger, they are given only the necessary information to accomplish the given task, and no more. It is possible, in taking 1 Cor 2:6-8 at face value, that divine beings are ignorant of their final role in the plan of God. The passage appears to teach that the crucifixion itself was accomplished by God through a willing-yet-ignorant enemy. See Fee, *First Corinthians*, 99.

In bringing the final scene of Dan 7 back to our attention it is noticeable that a lexical connection between Daniel and Paul can be made. The vision ended, we recall, in a stunning portrayal of authority which was taken from one group and given to another:

Dan 7:26-27:
But the judgment shall be set, and they shall destroy his authority (ἐξουσίαν ἀπολοῦσι, LXX)/remove his rule (ἀρχὴν μεταστήσουσιν, Theod.) to consume and to destroy (ἀπολέσαι, LXX, Theod.) it unto the end. And the kingdom and the authority (ἐξουσίαν, LXX, Theod.), and the greatness, and the rule (ἀρχὴν, LXX) of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all authorities/rulers (ἐξουσίαι, LXX, ἀρχαὶ, Theod.) shall serve and obey him.

Though we cannot prove that Paul literally "lifted" his vocabulary for spiritual powers from the climax of this vision, several points should be noted concerning the close ties which seem to appear between Paul and Daniel. First, Dan 7:27 is the only verse in the LXX where ἀρχή (220x) and ἐξουσία (72x) occur together. The fact that Paul is the only author (outside of his friend Luke) who uses these words together may hint that this verse had unique meaning to Paul. Second, building on the theme of this final verse in Daniel's vision, Paul's gospel will reflect a similar cosmic nature of Christ's death. It was not a human achievement, but a spiritual means of destroying Yahweh's enemies (Dan 7:12; cf. Col 2:15). Third, the plural ἐξουσιῶν is used only twice in the LXX, both in Daniel (3:2; 7:27). In each case they would qualify as evil rulers who possessed power that is to be taken away from them, a theme noted in the gospel of Paul (1 Cor 15:24-28). Fourth, in considering Daniel's vision carefully, the terms אֱלֹהִים/θεός never appear. Short of the descriptive title "beast," the antagonist of this story is never referred to by a title.

Or is he? The fact that the beast is a "kingdom on earth" (7:23) gives probable reason for the plural designation "rulers" (ἀρχαί, Theod.) or "authorities" (ἐξουσίαι, LXX) in 7:27 who will have their (plural) dominion taken away before punishment. After having read this story in Greek—after having waded through the difficult news of the pains that would be necessary in waiting for this vision to find its fulfillment—it appears as though the final moments of the vision would have left either of two words (or both,

depending on the version available) ringing in one's ears: ἀρχαί (Theod.) or ἐξουσίαι

(LXX). For Paul, it is fitting that these would be the consummate enemies of the Gospel.

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that Paul's reference to evil spirit

ruling powers—eight times specified in the phrase ἀρχή καὶ ἐξουσία or ἀρχαὶ καὶ

ἐξουσίαι—recalls the warning of the first commandment in which created אֱלֹהִים are deemed

the spiritual antagonists to God's chosen people. This final chapter has noted the simi-

larities between Paul's references to powers and the beings who were considered the

powers of the Old Testament. Looking back upon this entire study, we may now summarize

the specific elements of our argument.

This investigation began by noting that previous "principality and power"

research has largely avoided a careful appeal to the general cosmology of the Old Testa-

ment. The course of our study therefore began with an investigation of the Hebrew Bible. In

attempting to identify the evil spirit ruling beings in the Old Testament, we noted that

Yahweh was openly described as dwelling among a host of created divine beings. I used the

phrase "אֱלֹהִים-class being" to speak of these spirits which appeared under various

terminology (מַלְאָכִים, צְבָאוֹת, רוּחֹת, קְדֹשִׁים, בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים). It was further noted that such a

multiplicity of divine beings was a common element of ancient Near Eastern pagan religion.

The Hebrew Bible separated Israel's God from all competitors, however, when considering

Who created whom and Who controls whom. Yahweh was the true "God" of the Old

Testament when all comparisons had been made.

Our study then turned to a consideration of the role that these אֱלֹהִים-class

beings played in the purposes of Yahweh. A rudimentary pantheon appeared in the text of

the Old Testament, affording Yahweh such a title as "the Most High God" while not

dismissing the existence of other created gods. It further appeared that some of these divine

beings were loyal to the temporal causes of Yahweh, while others appeared to be disloyal. At

least some of these disloyal spirits were found to have been assigned rule over the created world, though their governance was prophesied to be cut short due to their wickedness.

We then gave special attention to Dan 7 because it presented all the important specific elements of an Old Testament heavenly cosmology in one remarkable vision. Daniel saw plural beings on thrones (which surrounded the Most High God) take delegated authority away from rulers of the earth and give this authority to the Son of Man figure. I therefore concluded that this chapter recounted the larger Old Testament theme of evil spirit ruling powers, anticipating that it would also set the groundwork for Paul's later vocabulary of evil spirit ruling powers.

We next turned our thoughts to the literature between the testaments, which offered interesting developments in both cosmology and language. Descriptions of the heavens during this period far exceeded those found in the Hebrew Bible, and spirit beings came to be known by different titles. Though the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים could be expected to be translated into the Greek θεοί, this pattern was not at all consistent. The gods of the Old Testament were often depicted as ἄγγελοι, whether in word-for-word translation, or in concept. The titles אֱלֹהִים and ἄγγελος were found to generally function interchangeably in the intertestamental period, as well as in the LXX. It would be expected, then, that New Testament writers would be speaking of the Old Testament gods with a new vocabulary.

Our final chapter noted that the meanings of ἀρχή and ἐξουσία have generally not been contested in modern scholarship. Paul and other writers used these terms to speak of authority and exercise of power, whether in a physical or spiritual sense. Therefore I argued that our identification of Paul's powers needed to look beyond issues of vocabulary and instead focus on the broader issue of Paul's world view. Paul relied on the Old Testament; if he believed what it taught about evil spiritual ruling powers, it would be reasonable to assume that his identification of such powers would be similar if not identical. We concluded our study, therefore, by noting four lines of argumentation which equated

Paul's powers to those of the Old Testament. Each element of the phrase *evil spiritual ruling power* bears importance in this conclusion.

First, the powers of Paul and the powers of the Old Testament were found to be similar in character; they are spirits which are antagonistic to the temporal causes of God and his people. Second, the two groups of powers were found to be similar in role; both are given temporary rule over humans on earth according to the ultimate pleasure of Yahweh. Third, both groups of powers were noted to suffer the same destiny; in the end they will have their rule taken from them and they will be punished. Finally, the specific titles ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι were found to be used in the very LXX text which functioned as the climax of the Son of Man vision.

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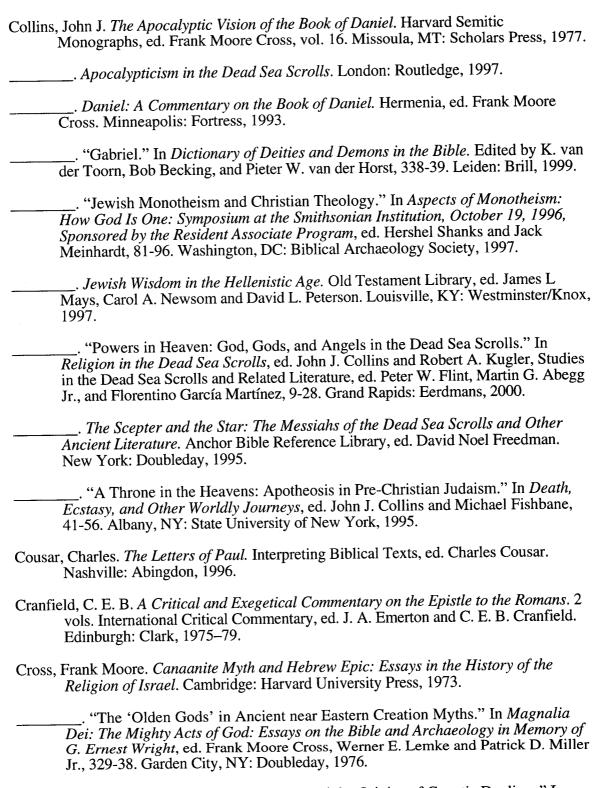Beyerlin, W., ed. *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament.* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.

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