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WHO MOURNS FOR ADONAI? OR WHERE HAVE ALL THE GODS GONE?

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ABSTRACT. Belief in God is a steady epistemic state sustaining an ancient social institution. Not only is it still with us, it is still the same as it ever was. It rests on the same inspiration it did thousands of years ago, commanding the same attention with the same motivation. Deities come and go but the belief stays the same. That is the thesis of this paper. It is more specifically a study of classical Greek polytheism as a paradigm for our longstanding relationship with religious social structures. The main methodological vehicle is a survey of Hesiodic theogony for insight into the monotheism(s) we have adopted in its place. The evidence and implications for meaningful continuity are explored largely through the Judeo-Christian tradition, though that choice is representative rather than exhaustive with respect to the present spectrum of religious affiliation. The overall aim is not to dispute the validity of any particular belief system, past or present, but to expose the prevailing ones as extensions of the abandoned ones originally embraced with the same passion exhibited today. The underlying conviction is that theological explanation and religious orientation are reciprocal parts of a collective work in progress mapping out our common initiative to make sense of the world.

Keywords: philosophy of religion; Greek polytheism; Hesiodic theogony; Abrahamic faiths

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1. Introduction

Imagine a giant hand materializing out of thin air to seize a massive starship cruising through uncharted territory in deep space. It is the hand of God, or rather, a god. And the starship, the pride of Starfleet, is on a mission of interstellar exploration “to boldly go where no man has gone before.” This is the story of a confrontation

between the intrepid crew of the USS Enterprise and the Greek god Apollo from the perspective of the television series *Star Trek*. Set in the mid-twenty-third century (stardate 3468.1 = Gregorian equivalent 2267), the central plot has the protagonists run into the forlorn deity on a distant planet (Pollux IV) where he has been seeking solace in solitude after being abandoned by his followers on Earth. The theme revolves around how humans have outgrown their gods. The title of the episode is “Who Mourns for Adonais?” – a haunting question originating with Shelley in his celebrated elegy of Keats.¹

The poetic force of Shelley’s rhetorical question captures the dialectical motivation of this paper to ask where all the gods have gone and to locate the enduring spirit of Greek polytheism in present monotheism(s). Studying one thing for insight into another requires an overview of at least the first thing, often sufficient in the event of general familiarity with the second thing. The presentation here proceeds accordingly with an overview of Hesiodic theogony (sections 2–4) as a possible influence on the patterns of transition from polytheism to monotheism (sections 5–6), followed by an appraisal of the outcome in elaboration of the input (section 7). The primary aim is to stimulate reflection on our cultural heritage in order to identify the common threads of religiosity running through it from the beginning, with the hope of laying the groundwork for open dialogue.

The approach is both exploratory and demonstrative. A methodological caveat may help avoid a potential misunderstanding: The thesis is not that the presence of ancient mythological motifs in current theological platforms makes the former plausible or the latter pointless. The presence of one in the other is a matter of fact, quite beyond dispute, but also beyond immediate relevance. In other words, it is true, but it does not prove anything. It does not come with implications concerning the validity of the old or the vacuity of the new. Any inference in that regard requires logical development beyond the establishment of continuity between the two and thus beyond the aspirations of this paper, except for a skeletal sketch of skeptical reflections for further discussion at the end (section 7).

That said, the continuity is there, and it is meaningful. Neither what we believe, nor why we believe it, is any different now than it was thousands of years ago. This is not a generalization about cognitive processes or doxastic states but an observation specifically about religious belief. What we are prepared to believe without evidence is not just amazing, especially in view of our collective and cumulative experience with the scientific method, but also amazingly similar to what we have always been willing to believe without evidence.² The first part of this statement invokes a hopeless controversy: whether what we believe is actually believable.³ The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the second part: that what we believe is much like what we have always believed.

The demonstration builds up to the emergence and development of institutional religion as a human construct in response to human concerns as opposed to the earthly fulfillment of a heavenly mandate (sections 5–7). This is pursued in the spirit of a devil’s advocate rather than deduced as the conclusion of a formal argument.

This advocate of the devil is skeptical but not unreasonable. He does not have a particularly subversive agenda. His motivating suspicion is not that natural development is indubitable, or divine revelation untenable, but that natural development is a better explanation than divine revelation, though neither is good enough to rule out the alternative. Any effort to sort out the remaining ambiguity stands to benefit from a closer study of our common history.

The continuity in our religious orientation suggests that belief systems are better understood in consideration of their historical development than in isolation of their doctrinal content. We tend to miss a lot when we think of the past as holding no currency and little value beyond the various episodes of divine revelation. What once was, was once the only thing that mattered, much like what matters to us now.

The past is still relevant, not just there and then, but also here and now. We may be far removed from Greek polytheism in time but not so much in spirit. The passion, at least, is still with us. This is the very passion that both created and abandoned the various gods and goddesses of antiquity. If there is anything interesting about the rise and fall of heavenly kingdoms, it is that centuries of nurture and worship somehow somewhere turned into neglect and rejection. What is most fascinating from a scholarly perspective, and more than a little ominous from any perspective, is that the force eventually proving strong enough to topple gods and goddesses, who had themselves failed to destroy one another despite their never-ending conflicts, is nothing other than human passion, basically the feeling that determines where we direct our attention.

That same focus of attention continues to drive everything we do today and merits contemplation from its nascency onward as a pervasive process with telling twists and turns. Studying Greek gods and goddesses in particular, though also Greek mythology in general, promises to enrich our understanding of who we are and what moves us. While this calls for more than the passing exposure readily available in popular culture, especially in movies, television, and comic books, it also requires serious reflection on top of adequate exposure. Hence, the two substantive parts to this paper, the first providing the basic exposure (sections 2–4), the second adding the serious reflection (sections 5–7).⁴ Both are necessary for a healthy assessment, because reflections work best when grounded in facts, but facts are rarely enlightening unless we appreciate their relevance.

2. Methodological Orientation

Greek mythology is a compromise between completeness and consistency. This is because the subject matter, even when dealing with specific areas, such as cosmogony or theogony, does not represent a uniform body of knowledge. It has emerged and developed variously over land and time, with a natural tendency toward adopting and adapting legends no less than toward creating or rejecting them, yet still remaining far from constituting a unified whole. Neither a common denominator nor a comprehensive survey promises a definitive account.

Every mythos we now have on record must have had a seminal and spontaneous starting point, possibly though not necessarily on a multiregional stage, whether within the Greek world or beyond it. This is a matter of common sense if not of historical fact. It draws on the reductionist principle that there can be no course of development without a point of origin, thus suggesting the existence of a core set of formative mythoi. But this must be weighed against the fact that what we are privy to is restricted to headlines and highlights. The chronicles handed down through the ages compress centuries of parallel development and multicultural assimilation. This is why the field of study answering at present, and in general, to a designation as Greek mythology still harbors discrepancy despite an original predisposition to reconcile the multiplicity of sources by emphasizing the mutual consistency in complementary accounts rather than settling for contradictory alternatives juxtaposed without rhyme or reason. Since not every story can readily be positioned as completing another, the tendency to seek out common features is balanced by a parallel appreciation of alternatives, even contradictory ones, as a welcome enhancement of the received view, or at least as a tolerable refinement of it.

The resulting diversity is responsible for the richness of our cultural heritage. It is in this spirit that we must approach the various cosmogonies and theogonies, making room for competing instantiations as unique contributions rather than dismissing them severally or jointly as internal contradictions. Yet any contemporary discussion, be it expository or argumentative, is best indexed to a single source or tradition unless it is intended for a generalist encyclopedia. The main source informing this paper is Hesiod.

Proper orientation in Greek theogony requires an acquaintance with both the primeval gods of the accepted cosmogony and the powerful dynasties of the prevailing pantheon. The defining difference is that the primeval gods, known collectively as the Protogenoi, emerge without a progenitor and give rise to the rest of the universe, later ruled by their celestial progeny, most notably the Titans and their insurgent descendants, the Olympians, two sovereign houses, which become, in revolutionary succession, masters of the universe, but not creators of it.⁵ An incidental difference is the degree of personification, with the primeval gods, divine though they may be, bearing a closer resemblance to elemental forces, or in some cases to spatial regions or spiritual realms, than to sentient or sapient entities, unlike their sovereign scions subsequently ruling the universe in full anthropomorphic fashion, including all the ambition and decadence commonly associated with humankind.

The exploits of the ruler gods, as distinct from the creator gods, both reflect and influence the actions of human beings and societies, particularly through a canonical history built on violent revolutions glorified through the tumultuous rise and fall of divine dynasties, with Zeus finally emerging victorious upon vanquishing his father Cronus, who had, in turn, usurped the throne from his own father, Uranus, castrating him in the process. This legendary battle between the Titans, led

by Cronus, and the Olympians, led by Zeus, is a chilling echo of the human condition, but Greek mythology is also a repository of stories celebrating the noblest aspects of the human spirit.

No better insight can be gained into the depth and breadth of the collective consciousness of the ancients than through the original sources, but any such undertaking can benefit from structural guidance providing bearings for enlightened study. The next two sections serve that end, the first in connection with the creator gods, the second in connection with the ruler gods.

3. Creator Gods

The earliest gods of the Greeks are the Protogenoi (*prōtogenoi* [πρωτογενοι]), literally the “firstborn” (*prōto* [πρωτό] + *gonos* [γόνοϛ]), from which all others descend. The setting for these primeval, or primordial, gods is universal, while the characters vary with the source, usually with minor variations, but sometimes with substantial differences. The central plot draws on a basic cosmological template, a process of creation proceeding either from a single divine force or from several in combination.

As with many other aspects of our intellectual heritage, our knowledge of the Protogenoi is limited by gaps and inconsistencies in the corresponding records. What is found in one source may not be found in another and treated differently in yet another. Although a comprehensive account can be compiled even from such divergent sources, the result would be an anachronistic reconstruction of lore in progress rather than a veridical reflection of beliefs common and unique to the entire ancient world throughout its history. Consulting an existing record closer to the source is a viable alternative to working with a reconstruction in hindsight, the latter inevitably introducing an extra layer of interpretation even if achieving greater integration.

The Hesiodic rendition is an authoritative reference in that regard. The cosmogony of Hesiod (*Theogony* 116–138) proceeds with four primordial forces, often discussed in terms of one-plus-three in view of their temporal precedence: Chaos (Chasm); Gaea (Earth); Tartarus (Underworld); Eros (Love). Together with the most salient results of their common reproductive activity, specifically the notable offspring in the second and third generations, these four divinities constitute the *dramatis personae* of the act of Creation as depicted by Hesiod in his genealogy of the gods (Table 1).

The breakdown in Hesiod illustrates merely one perspective, differing from others explaining the same phenomenon with the same data and comparable sources, all part of the multiregional oral tradition in circulation at the time. Alternate possibilities tend to confirm, expand, or contradict Hesiod. The Orphic tradition, for example, can be as different from the Hesiodic or Homeric as those are from the Babylonian. Greek cosmogony is so fluid that an original state is beyond positive identification.

A stable representative account can be synthesized as a common denominator, but the further one branches out from Creation, the greater becomes the universe to be accommodated in different versions. Yet the early stages can be just as difficult to reconcile in their incongruous instantiations, especially if studied with a preference for harmony over diversity. Inconsistencies often survive consolidation in a single source. For example, the Moerae (Fates) receive two different pedigrees in Hesiod's *Theogony*, initially presented as the parthenogenetic offspring of the primeval goddess Nyx (211–225), and later reintroduced as daughters of Zeus, born of the Titan goddess Themis (901–906). While the parentage of the Moerae differs widely in ancient references, the *Theogony* is remarkable for contradicting itself in this regard, with Hesiod offering no explanation for the discrepancy in the competing accounts he provides.

A contradiction of this sort in a work of this nature is not to be censured as harshly as it might be in an analytic treatise or in pure fiction, nor perhaps even protested at all, because given that the mythographer is relating lore rather than advancing arguments or making up a story, the inconsistency is more like the recognition of equally popular accounts than like the defense or development of jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive positions. Apollodorus corroborates the descent from Zeus and Themis (*Bibliotheca* 1:3.1), while other sources adopt the Nyx alternative, sometimes with and sometimes without a mate. Plato makes a unique but sensible assignment to Ananke (Necessity) in the tenth book of the *Republic* (10:617c–d), representing one of several alternatives to either of the two accounts in Hesiod.⁶ The degree of variation on a single theme, even when pertaining to an isolated part of the pantheon, attests to the difficulty of extracting a linear storyline out of the multifarious arrangements in circulation. It also underscores the value of Hesiod, who achieves just such a result in the *Theogony*.

As far as Hesiod is concerned, Creation begins with a divine quartet. The relationships therein are not clearly defined. Causality can be inferred, but it can just as reasonably be denied or ignored. The presentation, while patently chronological, carries no wording to confirm a causal relationship coloring the temporal one stringing together the four cosmic powers, but the absence of denial is sometimes taken as an interpretive license for picturing Chaos as producing the other three, or in less intentional terminology, for picturing the other three as emerging from Chaos as opposed to simply after Chaos.

Chaos itself is not associated with any particular origin. All we know is that it had a beginning and that it came before everything else with a beginning. This is not necessarily creation out of nothing, though the absence of a formal explanation does suggest creation without an external cause. Hesiod's account remains ambiguous between *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio ex materia*. Chaos is definitely a creation, but Hesiod speaks only of its coming into being and not of the forces or sources responsible for that, nor of the absence of such. The ambiguity, therefore, is through silence. The tendency in the scholarly literature is to dismiss the possibility of

creatio ex nihilo, as Hesiod is commonly taken to predate the emergence of the concept.⁷

Strictly speaking, creation without a cause, especially without an external one, if it works for Chaos, cannot be conceptually repugnant for other phenomena either. Just because Chaos was already in existence, and therefore available as a source, before the other three forces came into being, does not mean that the other three must have come from Chaos. Creation without intervention is conceivable in their case as well, though probably not so much for the ancient Greeks, who had a penchant for associating temporal precedence with causal explanation.

Moreover, interpreting Chaos as the progenitor of the other three forces diminishes the dramatic impact and metaphysical significance of introducing Eros as the primeval stimulus for reproduction. From this perspective, too, any act of creation prior to the inauguration of the cosmological principle of reproduction through Eros seems to make more sense without an external cause. Chaos may have been the vital spark, but the three forces to follow, and perhaps a few more after that, are no less indispensable.

The four Protogenoi can sensibly be considered autonomous cosmic entities coming into existence independently of one another (and of anything else) and jointly accounting for all of Creation, or more precisely, for the remainder of the creation process. This is not to say that taking Chaos as a causal singularity is not sensible but that a tenable alternative is available at least from our frame of reference.

Chaos (Chasm), the first of the Protogenoi, is the universal void prevailing prior to ontological differentiation. It is what existed before anything else did. The literal meaning of the term is “gap” or “chasm,” or better yet, “gaping void,” either way, designating a primordial vacuum preceding all things. This is not a void in the sense of nothing at all, for the question whether the other Protogenoi came from Chaos would then be an anachronistic matter of *creatio ex nihilo* instead of a coherent matter to be debated in its proper context. Chaos is something rather than nothing, as confirmed, for instance, by Aristotle (*Physics* 4:208b27–209a2), who reasons that Chaos must have come first because it can exist without anything else while nothing else can exist without it.⁸ The association of the word with disorder and confusion is a later development, either absent or not explicit in the original meaning, and possibly grounded in exegeses transforming Chaos from a simple and featureless phenomenon into an unstructured amalgam of primordial elements interacting to account for the universe (Ovid: *Metamorphoses* 1:5–20). The Orphic rendition has it as the chasm separating the earth from the heavens, specifically the Air below the Aether, the latter two both born of the coupling of Time and Necessity (the first gods of the Orphic tradition).

Gaea (Earth) is the first divine force to emerge after Chaos, or perhaps from Chaos, the difference between temporal and causal precedence remaining open to interpretation, as with the two divinities next in line. Gaea has a special significance among the Protogenoi, not merely because she precedes all but one, but

more so because she is the mother and grandmother, respectively, of everyone in the two most powerful dynasties in creation, giving birth to the Titans, the ancient ruling house, wherefrom spring the Olympians, the prevailing ruling house (still current from the Hesiodic perspective). Her own firstborn is Uranus (Sky or Heaven), a parthenogenetic son, with whom she couples to produce the Titans. Other parthenogenetic offspring include the Ourea (Mountains) and Pontus (Sea). Able to conceive from semen and blood alike, and not necessarily in need of either, Gaea stands out among the first four Protogenoi, and, in fact, among all primeval forces across all generations, as the fountainhead of life, including that of gods, humans, and demons, in addition to fauna and flora and the supporting biosphere (Table 2).

Tartarus (Underworld), the second primeval god to follow Chaos, is the divine personification of the dark and stormy pit beneath the earth (Gaea). With the earth itself conceived as flat rather than spherical, Tartarus was imagined as an underlain cavity, somewhat like an inverted dome surrounding the earth from the opposite side of the vault of heaven represented by Uranus (Sky). The dome above and the pit below the earth can be thought of geometrically as the inverse of each other. The total ensemble is analogous to a hollow sphere divided into two equal parts by a circular platform at the center. The pit of Tartarus is not the netherworld of Hades, which may indeed be sought on the reverse side of the inhabited surface of the disk that is earth but cannot be equated with the entire pit surrounding it on that side. Its identification with the Hadean realm of the dead is a later addition alien to Hesiodic tradition (*Theogony* 713–744), which clearly embraces the distinction recognized by Homer (*Iliad* 8:8–13), or reflected by him, depending on the correct historical perspective.

Eros (Love), the last of the three primeval divinities immediately following Chaos, or emerging from it, is the cosmic principle of love. As the embodiment of love, both spiritual and physical, and as the god of procreation, Eros provides the impetus behind the generative power of the early cosmos. Anthropomorphic reconceptions as a playful cherub igniting the passion of love through a trademark bow and infectious arrows reveal a distinction between the original cosmogonic force and a younger deity, traditionally distinguished as Eros the Elder and Eros the Younger. The younger version, inspiring the Roman equivalent in Cupid, is widely portrayed as the son of Aphrodite, who might have been born pregnant or was possibly instead impregnated by Ares. The younger incarnation is not necessarily a later development, as even Hesiod seems to recognize two manifestations, one the primordial god figuring in Creation (*Theogony* 116–138), the other a divine presence at the birth of Aphrodite (*Theogony* 176–206). Ironically, despite being the driving force in procreation, neither incarnation of Eros has progeny in Hesiod. Nor are contrary accounts abundant elsewhere. The sole exception in the case of the elder god seems to be in the *Birds* (685 ff.) of Aristophanes, who presents the entire species of birds as descending from Eros through Chaos. An exception for the younger god appears in the *Metamorphoses* (6:24) of Apuleius, who gives him a daughter, Hedone (Pleasure), born to Psyche (Soul).

Although these four divinities are primordial forces, they are not eternal. They have at least a beginning. Having come into being, they cannot have existed before that. It may be objected that since nothing at all, or nothing in particular, not even time, existed prior to their emergence, the Protogenoi can, in this sense and context, be taken to have existed forever. Yet this is a moot point, partly because it cannot be checked against original sources, and partly because it would work only, if at all, for Chaos as the first Protogenos, but largely because it would not even establish that this first divinity had always been present, a position directly contradicted by its having come into being, which implies its prior absence. As for the other end of eternity, although coming into existence is not a guarantee of never fading out of existence, that advantage is inherent in the separate predication of immortality.

No matter how long they have been around, and no matter how long they last, the Greek gods are here with us on earth, as part of our phenomenal experience, though they also dwell in the heavens. They are not outside space and time. Even if the primeval gods are everlasting, their temporal orientation, and arguably also their spatial configuration, both firmly anchored to the process of creation, confirms that they are not transcendent. They are immanent through and through, each one operating in space and time. The same holds for their anthropomorphic descendants ruling the universe and interacting regularly with everything and everyone in it.

The first four gods are not the only Protogenoi. Various divinities over the next few generations, depending on what counts as a generation, are also listed among the primeval gods, considered distinct, both in time and in essence, from later gods. The distinction is neither arbitrary nor inscrutable. But it is not well-defined either. There are easy cases: Chaos is primeval, Athena is not. Among those in between, many can be classified one way or the other, but some remain indeterminate. For example, the Erinyes, the Gigantes, and the Melinae – the offspring Gaea conceives from the blood of the wounded Uranus as he is castrated by his own son in the first power struggle of the universe – are hard to place because they descend from one of the original Protogenoi and her own firstborn, though they are not classified as proper gods, nor therefore as primeval ones.

Apart from such anomalies, Creation proceeds in three stages blending into each other in points of transition but standing apart as distinct processes: The first is the commencement of the entire operation through the apparently spontaneous creation of four forces. The second is the transition to the parthenogenetic reproduction stage ushering in the second generation of Protogenoi. The third is the expansion into the sexual reproduction stage responsible for the third generation, as well as all successive ones, with some exceptions springing up here and there.

These correspond to the divisions in the table outlining the Hesiodic genealogy of the primeval gods (Table 1). A marked deviation in this context is the case of Typhon, representing an aberration in both the second and the third generations. As the son of Tartarus and Gaea, Typhon is an exception to the parthenogenetic reproduction responsible for the entire second generation of Protogenoi. Coincidentally, as the parthenogenetic progenitor of the Anemoi Thuellai (Storm Winds), pro-

ducing them upon being hurled into Tartarus, he also poses an exception to the origination of the third generation in sexual reproduction. Nevertheless, the stages do not constitute rigid categories, instead delineating the inception and greatest prevalence of the mode of reproduction associated with each.

Although competing accounts tend to be vastly different, none that fully contradicts Hesiod can be more representative than Hesiod, representative, that is, of the most enduring set of beliefs defining ancient Greece. This is not because Hesiod is particularly reliable but because only so much of an underlying truth can be captured through a loose collection of jointly inconsistent sources.

A common thread uniting most perspectives is the exalted position of Gaea as the cosmic locus of reproductive activity. Demonstrating boundless fecundity with or without a mate, Gaea is the primary source of life, most notably of life that is either sentient or sapient or both, but also of other forms of life (Table 2). She is the single most influential force in all of Creation, giving parthenogenetic birth to the first king of the universe, Uranus, with whom she mates afterwards to produce the next king, Cronus, whose son, Zeus, later becomes the final ruler, thus making Gaea the supreme matriarch of all time.

4. Ruler Gods

In contrast to the Protogenoi, who keep a relatively low profile while setting an entire universe in motion, their most flamboyant offspring, namely the Titans (Table 3) and the Olympians (Table 4), rule over their legacy with a dramatic flair inspiring poets and storytellers for millennia. The Titans rise to power when their leader and youngest family member, Cronus, castrates and overthrows his father, Uranus, the son and mate of Gaea, herself a central figure among the creator gods. The Olympians take over with a violent revolution when Zeus, again the leader and youngest of divine siblings, in this case, of those making up the first generation of Olympians, later dethrones his own father, Cronus.

The Titans reign during the Golden Age, the fabled period of peace, prosperity, and happiness, with the subsequent Olympian coup marking the advent of the Silver Age, followed by three other periods, all under the same administration. Olympian dominion subsists thereafter, not necessarily without end for all time, but certainly without further turnover in government, as the history of the world continues to unfold within the parameters of the mythological setting. This is the status quo of divine rule both from the perspective of Hesiod (*Works and Days* 109–201) and from that of his reception for several centuries.

Designation as Titan or Olympian is apposite to any divinity of the relevant descent, though exactly twelve in either case were recognized at any one time as canonical rulers. Titans are products of the union between Uranus and Gaea, excluding the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires, but including the offspring of the original twelve led by Cronus (Table 3). Olympians are, with the exception of later induction scenarios, direct descendants of Cronus and Rhea, including their five

children and successive generations (Table 4). Hence, all Olympians are technically Titans, the difference being political and generational rather than racial or ancestral. The appellation Olympian is a reference to their empyrean palace in Olympus, commonly associated with Mount Olympus, peaking at nearly 3,000 meters in a mountain range between Thessaly and Macedonia, roughly 80 km from Thessaloniki.

The heavenly transition from Titans to Olympians, like all such legends, evinces actual sociopolitical upheaval on the order of military conquest, with the vanquished aligning their own theology and theogony with that of the victors. The inspiration for this particular legend is lost to us, as it evidently was to Hesiod and Homer as well. It might not have even had a specific inspiration, given the universality of the theme. The story itself is an ever-present fixture in the cultural history of the ancient Greeks. Records do not show a period of Titan worship followed by a period of Olympian worship. They show one long period of Olympian worship where the reign of the Titans serves as backstory in religious education rather than shaping liturgical practice. The same holds for the Hellenic presence of the Protogenoi, who were always revered alongside the reigning gods, but never worshipped instead of them, at least not as far as historical records are concerned.

The Protogenoi and the Titans, whether one or the other, or both at once or in succession, may have been worshipped as principal deities somewhere, sometime, but not by the Greeks who worshipped the Olympians. We do not know of any Greek society that switched from, say, Titan worship to Olympian worship. Even if the ancient world at one time actually witnessed a sociocultural shift or religious conversion from the Protogenoi to the Titans to the Olympians, this would have been before any of the past masters inaugurating western literature ever made an impression on a tablet. The Greeks inherited the older divinities together with the history attached to them. The time before Zeus was already the distant past in the transmissions of Hesiod and Homer, while the likes of Herodotus and Thucydides, or Sophocles and Aristophanes, were even further removed from the source.

Olympian sovereignty is more animated than that of predecessors. This is consistent with the relatively dormant status of the Protogenoi and the Titans, both representing a fixed and finished past in terms of dominion, in contrast to the Olympians, who despite coming with a history of their own, continue to be in charge with an appetite for adventure. The most memorable highlights are about conflict among the gods, or between them and outsiders, either depicting an emerging power's rise to divinity or tracking a fading icon's decline into public neglect and eventual oblivion, often as a mirror for sociopolitical developments in the real world. Power struggles of this sort are a metaphor for the human condition, both driving and reflecting the transference of customs, values, and idols within the Greek world.

The making of history as such reveals periodic adjustments to the officially sanctioned classification of the twelve principal deities, usually on a local basis but with a tendency to generate a wave of reformation throughout the Balkans and on both sides of the Aegean, occasionally even pushing into the far reaches of the

Mediterranean. Any such pressure was also liable to stimulate reactionary sentiments in the same territory in the form of a backlash of conservatism. Modifications in either direction were piecemeal rather than wholesale, diligently preserving the total number of deities in the ruling collective known as the Dodekatheon (from *dōdeka theoi* [δώδεκα θεοί], literally “twelve gods”).⁹ Far more than a dozen gods have been honored as part of the Olympian Dodekatheon, but not all at once, keeping the active total fixed at twelve (Table 4).

Among the figures included in the Dodekatheon at one time or another, ten stand out as permanent members and four boast a grand yet temporary presence with significant staying power, while an untold many have no better than a fleeting regional claim to deification at this level. The ten perennial members are: Zeus, Poseidon, and Hera, among first-generation Olympians, joined by Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis, Apollo, Ares, Hephaestus, and Hermes, among the children of Zeus. The four figures honored in the Dodekatheon for an impressive stretch of time short of the full duration of the institution are Hestia, Demeter, Hades, and Dionysus, thus including half of the children making up the original family of Zeus, plus a newcomer. These four can be found replacing one another in fixed combinations, as Dionysus fills in for Hestia, while Demeter and Hades take turns in connection with another seat on the council. Succession is not confrontational in either case: Legend has it that Hestia steps down willingly to make room for Dionysus, whereas Demeter and Hades appear in place of each other without explanation, apparently in reflection of the changing preferences of the times.

An element of voluntarism is inherent in the latter case as well, due to the special status of Hades. According to tradition, after defeating the Titans, the powerful sons of Cronus, namely Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus, drew lots to divvy up the universe, demarcating a domain of sovereignty for each, with Hades receiving dominion over the underworld, Poseidon the sea, and Zeus the heavens, the earth being common to all three. While this arrangement gave Hades a prominence comparable to that of his brothers, it left him at a considerable distance from the center of administrative activity at Olympus, where his permanent or regular presence would have otherwise created a vacuum of authority among the dead. Dwelling as he does, therefore, in the underworld instead of Olympus, Hades is usually left out of the list of twelve Olympians, with Demeter taking his place, but some scholars still include Hades and leave out Demeter (cf. Hamilton 1942: 25).

The rise of Dionysus is a perfect example of mass movements and shifting allegiances in organized religion. The replacement of Hestia with Dionysus comes not merely with an academic explanation attached to it in hindsight outside the universe of reference but with an internal storyline accounting for the transition. Dionysus was an unlikely candidate for induction into the Dodekatheon, if only because he had a mortal mother, a liability requiring his deification prior to assimilation. He was commonly taken to be the son of Zeus and Semele, hence a cross between the king of gods and a mortal (Hesiod: *Theogony* 940–949), though alternative accounts enjoying less currency do mention a divine mother. Apollodorus

(*Bibliotheca* 3:4.1–4.3), relating the standard account, identifies Semele as the third daughter of Cadmus, the legendary founder of Thebes, thereby linking her with a proud heritage, but leaving her a mortal nonetheless.

The glass ceiling of a mortal mother was not the only obstacle Dionysus had to overcome in his rise to the upper echelons of divinity. He was also said to have been born prematurely when a jealous Hera, knowing the overwhelming appearance of gods for humans, tricked Semele into convincing Zeus to allow a direct encounter with her, appearing before Semele in his full glory as a god, as opposed to an understated earthly manifestation toned down for human benefit. With Semele dying on the spot, this version of the story has the prematurely born baby sewn into the thigh of Zeus, who then, in a sense, carries his own son to term.

Orphic tradition replaces the premature birth of Dionysus with the alternative scenario of his being murdered as a child by the Titans only to be resurrected afterwards. The resurrection story, itself coming in two different versions, overlaps with mainstream plot elements in certain details. According to one version, Dionysus is reborn when Zeus impregnates Semele, which is consistent with the Hesiodic account pairing Zeus with Semele, but departs from it by naming Persephone as the original mate of Zeus giving birth to the first incarnation of Dionysus murdered as a child. According to the other version, the reincarnation of Dionysus proceeds with the implantation of the heart of the murdered child into the thigh of Zeus, who then recreates the demigod and carries it to term, with obvious parallels to the main story, where the miscarried fetus rather than the heart of the dead child undergoes the same procedure.

Widely known for his extensive travels, including a notable spell in Egypt and spanning a total area extending as far east as India, Dionysus was even said to have made it to hell and back, so to speak, in his heroic descent into the netherworld, where he supposedly snatched his mother from the clutches of death and took her with him to Olympus, depending on the source, possibly also recovering his wife during the same rescue operation. These and other feats of daring and strength facilitated his recognition as a god, but it was ironically his assistance to Hera during her time of need that eventually cleared him for a seat among the ruling elite. Bound to a rigged chair of gold, so the story goes, with the chair sent by her indignant son Hephaestus as a trap in the guise of a present, Hera remained captive as the uncompromising son rejected the appeals of the gods, denying an audience to all but Dionysus, who befriended the angry god, got him drunk, and convinced him to release the celestial queen.

These biographical details represent an assortment of lore originating in different places at different times as opposed to a standalone legend springing up spontaneously. Hesiod and Homer have little to report on Dionysus, largely because they both precede the god's burgeoning popularity in later times. One of the most extensive treatments is in Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 3:4.3, 3:5.1–5.3), though his compendium leaves out the aid Dionysus provides to Hera, a story immortalized in art, particularly in Athenian vase paintings. While his service to Hera was instru-

mental in his rise to the top, as the act turned a lifelong adversary into an ally, what effectively clinched a position for Dionysus in the Dodektheon was, according to some accounts, the decision of Hestia to relinquish her own position on the ruling council. The induction of a new member would have indeed required an actual opening among the rulers of the universe, not just an endorsement by the queen among them.

Such grand modifications in mythology – as with two prominent goddesses promoting the ascension of a lesser god – rarely came about without a corresponding motivation in reality. The most important historical development inspiring these changes to the storyline must have been the growing popularity of wine among the ancients, with the Hellenic colonization of the Mediterranean region creating new opportunities for production and trade. A myriad of favorable circumstances, both imagined and real, thus seem to have converged to make Dionysus the best example, arguably outside Jesus Christ, of how the most impressive legends of the time can all come to be attributed to the most popular deity of the time even if the stories do not hang together as a coherent whole.

The story of Hera's intervention on behalf of the helpful Dionysus reveals another episode of unconventional reproduction, that of her son Hephaestus. Although Hephaestus is widely acknowledged to be the offspring of Zeus and Hera, stories regarding a fatherless birth to Hera were comparably popular. Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 1:3.5) reports both traditions regarding the god, identifying Homer as the source of the assignment of paternity to Zeus, but himself evidently favoring, without citation or allusion, the fatherless version found in Hesiod (*Theogony* 924–929). Records of the conception of Hephaestus without the aid of Zeus, or more accurately, without sexual intercourse with anyone at all, describe the event as Hera's retaliation for the similarly suspicious birth of Athena, born of Zeus but not through Hera, nor through any other mother, instead coming to life, fully grown, directly from the forehead of Zeus (*Theogony* 924–929). The enmity between mother and son is attributed, on that count, to the frailty of the newborn Hephaestus, born a cripple and a cause of distress for Hera, who then hurls her son down from Olympus. Alternative accounts have Zeus doing the hurling, with Hephaestus being crippled as a result of the fall, a punishment for rushing to the aid of Hera, bound at the time by an angry Zeus for attempting to kill Heracles. The two versions of the fall or banishment of Hephaestus from heaven have been confounded from antiquity and even reported side by side in the same source as discrete episodes in a single biography. Both versions are compatible with a birth attributed to Hera alone.

Perhaps the most striking of the unconventional Olympian births is that of Aphrodite, the wife of Hephaestus (*Odyssey* 8:264–369). Aphrodite's origin is a matter of contention. Relating the most dramatic account, Hesiod (*Theogony* 188–206) chronicles her miraculous birth from the sea-foam surrounding and preserving the genitalia of the castrated Uranus. Skipping several generations and a couple of dynasties, Homer (*Iliad* 5:370–384; *Odyssey* 8:305–320) identifies her as the daughter of Zeus and the Titan goddess Dione. Both accounts were evidently authoritative,

and concurrently so, alongside less memorable alternatives, throughout a vast area for a long time. Yet there was also room for picking favorites, or taking sides, as evidenced by the incompatible stories we get from Hesiod and Homer as well as the opposite allegiances demonstrated by posterity. Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 4:521 ff.), for example, follows Hesiodic theogony, while Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 1:3.1) adheres to Homeric tradition.

As is generally the case in a plurality of narratives accounting for the same phenomenon, abundance is a mark of popularity, whereby each story fills a need not met by others. This is especially true of Greek mythology. Hesiod's graphic description has the advantage of symbolism, with the goddess of love aptly originating in genitalia, specifically the genitalia of the original king of the universe, fatefully mutilated by his son, successor, and nemesis. Homer's relatively pedestrian version, on the other hand, is more consistent with Aphrodite's membership of the Olympian Dodekathēon, given her royal birth as the daughter of Zeus and Dione, which traces her line of descent to the prevailing king of the universe. Attesting to the currency of both stories, Plato (*Symposium* 180d) assigns two separate deities to the two origins, as he distinguishes between the Heavenly Aphrodite (Urania) and the Common Aphrodite (Pandemos), the former a tribute to Hesiod, the latter to Homer.

The opposite of creating two separate deities to account for two different stories is to pick one story and discard the other. And the opposite of doing that for every deity is doing it for just one, in other words, either repudiating all the rest or reconciling them all in the same deity. Something to that effect was accomplished, or at least attempted, during the course of transition from polytheism to monotheism. As Homer reminds us: "No good thing is a multitude of lords; let there be one lord" (*Iliad* 2:204): "*ouk agathon polykoiraniē: heis koiranos estō* [οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη: εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω]."

5. Progressive Synthesis

The replacement of Greek polytheism with institutional monotheism(s) comes down to the unification of the functions of the creator gods and the ruler gods in a single deity. That synthesis seems to have taken place gradually despite popular misconceptions of immediate tribal conversion in response to divine revelation. Evidence suggests that the transition from polytheism to monotheism was a protracted process, permanently incomplete in scripture, though long complete in practice.

The evidence in question is the profusion of passages affirming the existence of gods other than the one in favor with the author(s) and the audience. The Old Testament – and therefore both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Bible (hereafter simply "Bible" in reference to either one, or to both at once, except where the distinction is relevant) – is riddled with ambiguity between monotheism (the acknowledgment and worship of only one god) and monolatry (the worship of one god despite the acknowledgment of many).¹⁰ It is only in practice that we either

ignore or try to explain away such passages, which would not have been there to begin with had they troubled the early authors, editors, compilers, custodians, or patriarchs. This may not render the Bible ambiguous as a whole, but it does require interpretive management of the bits and pieces.¹¹

Although we have been enormously successful in how we handle such discrepancies, that is a testament to our ingenuity, not evidence of scriptural integrity without exegetical intervention. There is no shortage of solutions in an institutional tradition dating back thousands of years with the best minds in successive generations dedicated to the study of such problems. It also helps that the Bible has many passages solemnly denying the existence of any and all gods other than the one true God. But the question here is not a quantitative one: Are there more passages affirming the existence of other gods or denying the existence of other gods? It is a qualitative one: Why are there any passages at all affirming the existence of other gods? Rapid transition from polytheism to monotheism would have come, and indeed should have come, with scripture free of any passages acknowledging the existence of other gods, as opposed to a canonical corpus hosting a good many such passages against a great number of those denying the existence of other gods.¹² The point is not that monolatric passages vitiate the monotheistic nature of the Bible but that they show the conversion from polytheism to have taken some time, enough at least to suggest that the process unfolded through stages of cultural religious development rather than with a swift and sweeping response by a spell-bound audience.

The most obvious biblical counterexample to there being only one god is the First Commandment: a categorical directive from a self-proclaimed “jealous” deity prohibiting the worship of other gods (Exodus 20:2–4 [= Deuteronomy 5:6–8]; Exodus 34:14). The same restriction also has a prominent place in the Quran (Al-Isra 17:22).¹³ A typical response is that an injunction against the worship of other gods, given that the attendant jealousy does not require actual competitors, just a deficit of attention on the part of misguided subjects, is not necessarily an acknowledgment of the existence of other gods. The one true God, even if there are no other gods, could conceivably be jealous when people worship as gods things that are not gods, either complete fabrications that do not even exist or things (including life forms) that do exist but not as gods. The spin here rests on the absence of a self-contradiction in forbidding the worship of other gods without admitting (or while positively denying) that there are other gods. This is obviously a possibility. There may indeed be no other gods and possibly even no intention to acknowledge any. But there are plenty of scriptural references to them. And not all such references seem to have been intended without a correlative referent as in the regulation of worship to exclude gods that supposedly do not exist, not as gods anyway, and therefore not at all, since the reference is to gods.

Some scriptural passages come close to outright acknowledgment of the existence of other gods. This is particularly true of the Old Testament, largely corrected in that regard by the New Testament, where Jesus identifies as the Greatest Com-

mandment a form of the First Commandment without reference to any other gods, emphasizing only the love of the one true God (Matthew 22:36–38 [= Mark 12:28–30]; cf. Luke 10:25–28). Yet the concept of a triune Godhead is itself controversial in its tendency to conceal a plurality through logic that is nowhere near as compelling outside the Christian faith. The doctrinal explanation of unity in plurality – basically as different forms of a single essence or substance and thereby as distinct persons in a single being – may be impeccably satisfactory within the framework of Christian dogma, but what outsiders get out of it is not what John the Elder (= John the Presbyter), or John the Evangelist (= John the Apostle), reveals when he explains that “there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (1 John 5:7 KJV) but what John the Beatle concludes when he reckons that “one and one and one is three” in the comparably cryptic “Come Together,” the opening track of *Abbey Road* (1969).

Any semblance of insolence in this comparison is a direct reflection of the demands placed upon reason by the faith calling for its subjugation if not suspension. In the absence of restrictions on rational inquiry, one wonders why a carefully compiled collection of scriptures held sacred by those believing in the unity of God contains so many references to so many other gods. A good number of them are even identified by name, including Zeus (Acts 14:12, 14:13, 19:35), Artemis (Acts 19:24, 19:27–28, 19:34–35), and Hermes (Acts 14:12), among others.¹⁴ Prohibiting the worship of other gods collectively may not count as a commitment to their existence, but mentioning them by name individually and repeatedly does seem to recognize that possibility and perhaps also an underlying reality.¹⁵ The transition from polytheism to monotheism thus appears to have gone through some form or degree of monolatry, where the God of Abraham initially distinguished himself as the highest of gods among a great many in existence, later coming to be embraced as the only god worthy of worship among others that were still acknowledged to exist but no longer worshipped, and finally gaining recognition as the one true God worshipped exclusively where no others were even thought to exist.

Developmentalism is indeed a plausible scenario.¹⁶ It is consistent with the biblical portrayal of a supreme god who exists and functions alongside other gods (Psalms 82:1, 89:6–8) while surpassing them all (Psalms 86:8, 97:7, 135:5) as the “king of gods” (Psalms 95:3) rightfully commanding reverence above the rest (Psalms 96:4). It may be objected that the references in the preceding sentence are cherry-picked from the Book of Psalms. But such an objection is best directed at those who planted the cherries. A concentration of inconsistencies in a part of the whole is still inconsistency in the whole. It is impressive enough that so much evidence of monolatry fits into a single book of the Bible. Anyone who is not duly impressed must still face a plethora of examples elsewhere.¹⁷

Especially relevant to the possibility of a transitional monolatry are passages where the God of Abraham seems willing to tolerate at least the acknowledgment and perhaps even the worship of other gods, so long as it is in the context of a hierarchy where the God of Abraham is both recognized and venerated as the

highest of gods: “Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye 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” (1 Samuel 6:5 KJV). This is consistent with passages requiring “the Lord” to be feared above all gods, not instead of them (e.g., 1 Chronicles 16:25; Psalms 96:4). And note the edict against reviling the gods: “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people” (Exodus 22:28 KJV), though the plural reference here to “gods” (*elohim* [אלהים] or *theous* [θεούς]) is also translated rather resourcefully, albeit still correctly, as “God” in the singular, and occasionally even as “judges” in the plural.

All this must have been familiar to Abraham himself, the first patriarch of Judaism, whose very own father (Terah) worshipped not just one god among many, which would have been monolatry, but out-and-out many, which is unmitigated polytheism (Joshua 24:2). Yet polytheism was on its way out, as evidenced by a forceful push toward monolatry, where the God of Abraham promises to “execute judgment” on the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12), a promise confirmed to have been fulfilled (Numbers 33:4), which would have been difficult to do without any gods against which to execute judgment.

Such passages – and there are more – have at least one thing in common: They can all be treated as metaphor, or more perspicuously, as language apposite to reference to things (whether material objects, living beings, or conceptual constructs) erroneously thought to be gods by the unconverted masses of the relevant era and region. Executing judgment against other (“nonexistent”) gods could refer to condemnation of the practice, including action against the practitioners, without implying actual interaction with genuine gods. There is no way to prove otherwise with just the references contemplated. The possibility of theological opposition, or of divine condemnation, without ontological commitment, however probable or improbable, makes it difficult to hold the God of Abraham to recognize the existence of other gods just because the God of Abraham forbids the worship of other gods. And this holds not just for the passages specifically mentioned above but for all references to other gods as shorthand for the empty beliefs of misguided pagans worshipping false gods.¹⁸ The deciding factor here is not that there are many references to deities other than the one true God but that there are none that cannot be explained away (whether or not the explanation is satisfactory outside its doctrinal framework).

What this rules out, however, is a biblical intention to acknowledge other gods and not a biblical predisposition to mention other gods. The other gods in question may never have existed but devotion to them obviously did. The references are still there for all to see. And this points to another aspect of the transition from polytheism to monotheism: the similarity of the legends of the Abrahamic religions to those in pagan traditions. While the comparison in this paper is specifically between Greek mythology and the various parables common to Abrahamic faiths (thus silently including Islam here through the Quran’s duplication of much of the

Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian tradition), the analogy is representative rather than definitive or exclusive.¹⁹ Abrahamic lore cannot be reduced to Greek mythology, certainly not as a body, but some of its more prominent legends may well be derivative in just that way, given that many of the stories are found everywhere in the cornucopia of regional traditions – ranging from the Egyptian to the Sumerian to the Assyrian to the Akkadian to the Babylonian – making it difficult to identify the precise origin of any particular legend and unreasonable to nominate a single source for any particular compilation, especially where the nomination is based on nothing more than scriptural or traditional authority. This then leaves no room to claim originality for the entirety of the supposedly revealed truth embraced by the monotheism(s) gradually replacing pagan beliefs.²⁰

The presence of Greek themes in Abrahamic scripture is neither established nor precluded by the relative chronology of the recognized inception of one tradition versus the other. For one thing, it is difficult to say which came first. While Abraham predates Hesiod and Homer, the epic output of the two poets is not fiction originating with them but a record of legends of unknown origin (lost at least to us), possibly handed down in part through Mycenaean oral tradition before Moses, or even coming down as vestiges of the Minoan civilization predating Abraham and conceivably exerting a shared influence on Jewish tradition through Minoan representation in Canaan, the central setting of the Old Testament. For another thing, a frustrating subtlety of historical research is that older traditions can come to incorporate elements of newer developments, which are later misread as having originated with the older tradition, due solely to the relative chronology of the two systems of belief, bodies of knowledge, or schools of thought. It rarely comes as a surprise, for example, to discover that a certain Pythagorean concept actually originated with Plato (or with Platonism) only to be adopted later by Pythagoreans and attributed subsequently to Pythagoras (or to Pythagoreanism) simply because Pythagoras predates Plato.

The flood described in the Book of Genesis, to take one such case, is a universal motif which is practically impossible to date or place with any certainty, wherefore the biblical account competes at least with Greek, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Hindu narratives, even if we restrict the scope of consideration to regional possibilities. The Epic of Gilgamesh is often favored as predating the rest, but even there, it is not certain that the story of the flood was included from the beginning, the alternative being interpolation at a later date following origination elsewhere. Zeus (Jupiter) himself was known to wreak aquatic havoc on a diluvian scale, from time to time, as we learn from Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 1:7.2) and Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 1:244–252, 253–312, 313–415).

Scriptural and traditional similarities of this sort and to this degree reveal significant outside influence, much of which may well have been Greek, and any amount of which detracts from the claim or possibility of divine revelation, if by that is understood disclosure of what was not before known or otherwise unknowable. This is because demonstrable duplication confirms common knowledge of the

purportedly revealed truth prior to the actual revelation and thus independently of the emerging faith.

One avenue of defense that cannot be dismissed offhand is the possibility of a prior (and now lost) revelation corrupted over time by tribes developing various different interpretations predating the subsequent (and not lost) revelation whose collection of stories is then mistakenly thought to have been inspired at least in part by pagan legends. The reason that this cannot be ruled out without further argument is that any critic opposing the various divine revelations of Abrahamic tradition solely on the grounds that the revealed truth in each case was already largely familiar, namely as the common cultural denominator of the region, is not opposing the metaphysical possibility of a divine revelation but denying the originality of the message, which is fully restored through the postulate of a lost prior revelation degenerating into pagan legends later misidentified as pagan creations.²¹

However, this still leaves the postulated prior revelation open to question on other grounds. The defense considered above works only against an objection to the originality of the message, as all it does is to relocate first-contact revelation to a point in time where it can only be an inspiration for whatever else we have on record. Any other objection, especially to the metaphysics, requires some other defense.

As intimated earlier, there can be no proof, in the strictest sense of the term, that anything ever happened in contradiction of scripture and tradition, certainly not both at once. The strongest challenge to the former can be handled through adjustments to the latter.²² No matter the problem, the license to proceed beyond the limits of verifiable facts or observable phenomena will always trump the obligation to protest within those limits. But this is not so much a strength as an evasion. There is no victory without engagement, no vindication without discussion.

6. Nostalgic Reminders

Regardless of the nature and duration of transition from polytheism to monotheism, all three Abrahamic faiths currently stand at the monotheistic end of the continuum of cultural religious development. With the transition process long complete, ancient divinities now amount to little more than relics of a cultural synthesis blending together different legends from various traditions. This is a fact, neither good nor bad. And its acknowledgment is hardly a sensitive issue today, with Athena, Aphrodite, and company being worshipped in relative obscurity at best. The Olympians stand at present as quaint artifacts, nostalgic reminders of pagan naïveté, while the Titans and the Protogenoi do not even fare that well, living on mostly through the works of classical scholars and in the hearts of comic book enthusiasts.

Participants in the ongoing revival of Greek polytheism, also known as Hellenism or Hellenismos, may perchance take offense at this assessment, but their protests are sure to remain weak and localized if heard at all. On the other hand, tensions flare up in mass indignation as soon as any analogy is drawn with the more popular religions. The insult occasioning the outrage is that any such analogy makes what

we now have imitative rather than original. We know, to the contrary, that all truth is anchored to whatever we happen to believe now. Any similarity with the past must be due to divine insight or poetic inspiration at that end as opposed to derivative development or outright plagiarism at this end.

Simone Weil (1957) is a good example of the tendency to find Christian paradigms in Greek thought, or as she puts it, to recognize “intimations” of Christianity among the Greeks. What makes her a good example is not that she is a classicist (which she is not), nor that she is a theologian (which she is not), but that she is a philosopher probing the intersection of the corresponding two fields with erudition and enthusiasm.

Weil’s guiding light is the Passion of Christ. Love being the *raison d’être* of Christianity, she is particularly meticulous in her efforts to explore the theme of love among the Greek classics, along with the leitmotif of suffering as its mystical complement, not just in mythology, as in the loving sacrifice of Prometheus prefiguring the loving sacrifice of Jesus (Weil 1957: 58–59, 60 ff.), but also in philosophy, including Plato’s *Symposium* (pp. 106–131), where love is both divine and transcendent yet also very human, as well as Plato’s *Republic* (pp. 132–150), where the central analogies (sun-line-cave) are more about love (or perhaps more demonstrative of it) than they are about metaphysics or epistemology, at least as far as Weil is concerned. The connection she makes between these two dialogues emphasizes the prominence of love as a bridge between Greek and Christian cultures as reflected in their art, literature, and philosophy:

The principal image which Plato uses in the *Republic*, notably in the passage about the cave, the image of the sun and of sight, shows exactly what love is in man. One would make a complete mistake in believing that the metaphor of the cave relates to knowledge and that sight signifies the intelligence. The sun is the good. Sight is then the faculty which is in relationship with the good. Plato, in the *Symposium*, says as definitely as possible that this faculty is love. (Weil 1957: 134)

Weil does not claim that the presence of Christian values in Greek thought constitutes proof of the universal validity of Christianity any more than I claim that the same correlation considered from the opposite perspective constitutes proof of the derivative nature of Christianity. The confidence she draws from her faith must not be mistaken for confusion regarding what counts as proof and what does not in proper philosophical dialectic: “Christ likes us to prefer truth to him because, before being Christ, he is truth” (Weil 1951: 69). Her Christological reading of Greek texts is not an attempt to validate Christianity, which is already perfectly valid, but an endeavor to illustrate Christianity combined with an invitation to appreciate it.

Having herself found Christ, not through perusing the classics, but through a direct encounter, Weil does not expect anyone to find him in, say, Sophocles, though she personally has no doubt that Christ is indeed in Antigone, who “perishes for having loved beyond reason” (1957: 10). Shaped largely by a series of mystical experiences responsible for her conversion from agnosticism (inherent in her

upbringing but always with the rudiments of a personal connection with the divine), the hermeneutic program of Weil represents her own return to Plato's cave as an enlightened former prisoner, one who has seen the sun and found the true meaning of love: "After this I came to feel that Plato was a mystic, that all the *Iliad* is bathed in Christian light, and that Dionysus and Osiris are in a certain sense Christ himself; and my love was thereby redoubled" (1951: 70).

It is precisely the presence or absence of such spiritual awakening, subjective though that may be, and not the superiority or inferiority of any reasoning, that determines why, when confronted with more or less the same data, Weil sees Christian patterns in Greek thought where I see Greek archetypes in Christianity. This difference between her perception and mine is why we are all still debating the matter.

To focus on the most obvious example, the legend of Jesus Christ is anticipated in an abundance of lore, eventually attracting a new audience through a monotheistic platform. But the enduring success of Christianity as a religion presents a strong motivation, at least among its adherents, for rejecting or minimizing the impact of syncretism in its development. While the same holds for other Abrahamic religions, Christianity is a particularly good example of derivation from established belief systems, given that it carves out a direct and personal role for God among mortals, a hallmark of ancient tradition not as conspicuous in Judaism or Islam.

This is not to say that Jesus is a collage of the Olympians, with hints of the Titans and traces of the Protogenoi, all adorned with the Judaic motifs adopted during the transformation of the legend into a new religion. Yet elements of the central concept, for example, the miraculous virgin birth, or the divine father-son relationship, are far from novel, instead being firmly rooted in a tradition embracing not just the Olympians or the Titans in particular, nor even the Greek pantheon in general, but the common repository of myth throughout the region, that is, the collective wisdom of the ancient world. Retaining elements of the old has always been good policy for recruiting followers for the new, which is nowhere more evident than in the preservation of the Old Testament as a springboard for the New Testament in the Christian Bible (Matthew 5:17–19).²³

Jesus is not a far cry from Dionysus, who also had a mortal mother and was himself promptly resurrected after an unjust and violent death at the hands of powerful conspirators. Again, this does not prove that the gospel of Jesus is a myth, but it does show that whatever is true about the story is immersed in myth, from which pure fact is difficult to extricate, even about the historical person and certainly about the god present therein. Jesus, of course, had the advantage, compared to pagan gods, of an ecumenical council (first convening in Nicaea in AD 325) where problems could be addressed, questions settled, and the most inconvenient signs of syncretism, namely internal inconsistencies, weeded out. What remains is still spectacular, just not as random.

Chief among the dogma surviving doctrinal reconciliation, the legend of the virgin birth makes its greatest, not its first, appearance in Jesus Christ (Matthew

1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38).²⁴ A virgin birth is not even that impressive a trick against a regional background where the king of gods (Zeus) gives birth to his own son through his thigh (Dionysus) and to his own daughter through his forehead (Athena).²⁵ The father-son template is not peculiar to Christianity either, except for its trinitarian instantiation with supreme and everlasting power shared as one (Matthew 28:19; John 1:1–14; 1 John 5:7), which makes it stand out from anything notable preceding it, particularly from the typical plurality in conflict and competition.

However that may be, the basic formula of a trinitarian approach to divinity predates Christianity in various ways, none perfectly analogous but all sufficiently indicative, as in the division of authority between Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, a loose union with tighter analogs in other cultures, including many where the three favored gods are united in one rather than just working as one, as seen in certain Babylonian, Egyptian, and Indian traditions.

Any religious emphasis on a trinitarian power structure has its philosophical counterpart in a fascination with triadic interpretations of the world. The most famous of these is Plato's model of the soul as composed of three psychological elements in correlation with the city as composed of three social classes, an analogy developed in the *Republic* (4:436a–444a), though the configuration of the tripartite soul also comes up in the *Phaedrus* (246a–257a) and the *Timaeus* (41c–d, 44d–e, 69b–72d, 89d–90d). Perhaps even more relevant to the present context of a trinitarian worldview is Plato's vision of the universe as composed of triangles (*Timaeus* 51b–57d), particularly right triangles (54d–56c), the ancient correlates of what we now think of as subatomic particles. Aristotle goes a step further in acknowledging the religious dimension of the triad:

For, as the Pythagoreans say, the universe and all that is in it is determined by the number three, since beginning and middle and end give the number of the universe, and the number they give is the triad. And so, having taken these three from nature as (so to speak) laws of it, we make further use of the number three in the worship of the Gods. (Aristotle: *On the Heavens* 1:268a9–14)

Not even the briefest historical survey, however, can be complete without reference to the metaphysical outlook of Plotinus (*Enneads*) in his exposition of Platonism through three “principles” (*archai* [ἀρχαί]), also regarded as hypostases (though note the reservations of Gerson 1994: 2–3): the One (*to hen* [τὸ ἓν]), Intellect (*nous* [νοῦς]), and Soul (*psuchē* [ψυχή]). Plotinus does not precede Jesus, nor therefore the emergence of Christianity, to be precise, but he does precede both the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire (AD 380). His thought was a great influence not just on the subsequent course of Christianity but also on Jewish and Islamic traditions.

Yet none of these anticipatory developments – neither the religious creeds nor the philosophical explorations – is quite the same as a trinity of one god in three

persons as introduced through the corresponding Christian doctrine, which thus remains unique but not too far to reach from all that precedes it. Even the integrated trinities of ancient Egypt, such as Amon-Ra-Ptah, were three different gods together representing unity in plurality (having come together after centuries of independent existence, each with its own followers) as opposed to one god manifested as three persons. Despite independent origination, the sun trinities of Egypt came close, with the triune godhead serving as one god in the morning (Khepri), another at noon (Ra), and another in the evening (Atum), but that is still not the same as one god as three persons all at once. While the final step required to bridge the distance between the two models does not seem to call for a great deal of imagination, the fact that a step is required at all does confirm a difference supporting the distinction.

Godhood otherwise routinely runs in families, where gods beget gods, with divine dynasties forever ruling the world, as all Olympians are essentially Titans. Even Pythagoras and Plato are said, in numerous ancient texts, repeated in various medieval sources, to be sired by Apollo, through immaculate conception at that. As for the resurrection of Jesus, that overworked paradigm is all too common, not just among gods, as in the story of Dionysus, but also among mortals resurrected by gods, including at least three people brought back from the dead by Jesus himself (Matthew 9:23–26 [= Mark 5:35–43 / Luke 8:49–56]; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:1–44), not to mention the untold hordes rising from their graves upon the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 27:52–53).

Still, none of the divine rulers of antiquity, neither Uranus nor Cronus nor Zeus, nor any of their cosmic predecessors, is analogous to the God of the Abrahamic religions. And all Greek deities fall short of the God of the philosophers, often called the “supremely perfect being,” the being considered, for the sake of argument, to be perfect in every possible way. Greek gods are neither omnipotent nor omniscient, and they have absolutely no claim to moral perfection. They rank somewhere between humans and the almighty God of monotheism.

The metaphysical calling card of the ancient gods, the one characteristic that decisively sets them apart from humans, is immortality, a projection of the most primal and alluring of human fantasies. Thus, the common contrast between “gods” and “mortals.” Any and all gods are, in addition, physically superior to humans, especially in brute strength, as vividly illustrated through the more prominent gods, but also in other ways, including but not limited to agility, stamina, beauty, and general constitution. Moreover, they all wield special powers unique to each, or at least to each member or incarnation of a certain class or type of deity, as in the prescience of Apollo, the wisdom of Athena, and the guile of Hermes.

Their limitations reflect the organizational requirements of the polytheistic setting into which they are born or inducted and in which they operate. The main methodological constraint is that unlimited power is not compatible with polytheism, wherefore dominion over the rest cannot reasonably be attributed to each of a multitude of gods. A being than which nothing greater can be conceived, to invoke

Saint Anselm's definition of God in the ontological argument, must by that very definition be greater than any other being, actual or possible, in which case, no more than one such being can exist, and, in fact, no more than one such being can even be conceived to exist. Evidently, this rather sensible limitation had occurred to the ancients long before Saint Anselm employed it with brilliant insight in what still stands as one of the most famous proofs for the existence of God (who not only must be unique but also must exist).

Saint Anselm was able to maximize the supremacy of God in a setting without divine competition, the absence of which naturally precludes systematic constraints on postulated perfection. The Greeks, in contrast, had preferred to preserve religious pluralism, opting thereby to dilute any attribute of supremacy to the level of formidable power that can nevertheless be challenged. This is why the abilities, achievements, and prospects of the Greek gods are not infinite, remaining subject to the limits of permanent coexistence if to nothing else. They are immortal but not invulnerable, powerful but not indomitable, and, in short, grand but not unrivaled. They boast excellence rather than perfection. Even Zeus is fallible, much as his father was before him, and his father before him.

Their basic psychological and sociological function is the same as the one in currency today, aptly characterized by the complementary conceptions of piety and holiness presented and challenged in Plato's *Euthyphro* (14b–15b): prayer and sacrifice in return for present and future blessings.

- SOCRATES: Once more then, what do you say that piety and the pious are? Are they a knowledge of how to sacrifice and pray?
- EUTHYPHRO: They are.
- SOCRATES: To sacrifice is to make a gift to the gods, whereas to pray is to beg from the gods?
- EUTHYPHRO: Definitely, Socrates.
- SOCRATES: It would follow from this statement that piety would be a knowledge of how to give to, and beg from, the gods.
- EUTHYPHRO: You understood what I said very well, Socrates.
- SOCRATES: That is because I am so desirous of your wisdom, and I concentrate my mind on it, so that no word of yours may fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this service to the gods? You say it is to beg from them and to give to them?
- EUTHYPHRO: I do.
- SOCRATES: And to beg correctly would be to ask from them things that we need?
- EUTHYPHRO: What else?
- SOCRATES: And to give correctly is to give them what they need from us, for it would not be skillful to bring gifts to anyone that are in no way needed.
- EUTHYPHRO: True, Socrates.
- SOCRATES: Piety would then be a sort of trading skill between gods and men?
- EUTHYPHRO: Trading yes, if you prefer to call it that.

SOCRATES: I prefer nothing, unless it is true.
(Plato: *Euthyphro* 14c–e, Grube translation)

The spirit of “trading with the gods,” as it were, is captured perfectly by the dialogue between Apollo and the protagonists in “Who Mourns for Adonais?” – the *Star Trek* episode inspiring both the title and the allegorical opening of this paper:²⁶

APOLLO: I want from you that which is rightfully mine:
your loyalty, your tribute, and your worship.
MCCOY: May I ask what you offer in exchange for this worship?
APOLLO: Life in paradise. As simple and as pleasurable as it was
those thousands of years ago on that beautiful planet
so far away.
(*Star Trek* 1967: “Who Mourns for Adonais?”)

Whether we are reading Plato or watching *Star Trek*, or praying to God in real life, the telling constant in the exchange is blessings, which have always been sought primarily because we cannot attain them for ourselves, at least not without the grace of God. The value of external blessings is inversely correlated, and perfectly so, with our ability and willingness to meet our own needs and to satisfy our own desires. We would never have felt a need for divine assistance or intervention had we been able all along to shape the world to our liking.

The reason for suspicion regarding divine covenants and eschatological scenarios, including the heavenly blessings awaiting those who beg in slavish submission, is that they promise the justice and the social conditions so painfully lacking in our phenomenal experience. Religion is a response to our existential frustrations. It always has been. It still is. Any religion may, of course, happen to be right about everything while at the same time responding to our existential frustrations. But divine revelation makes for a more extravagant metaphysics than does its reduction to the systematization of self-serving projections of wishful thinking.²⁷

Religious dogma has nothing to substantiate it beyond the leap of faith motivating it. The alternative is science, with the assistance of philosophy, though priests and theologians see no particular conflict there, at least none undermining the corresponding dogma.²⁸ Any apparent contradiction is easy to play down because what we take seriously is not so much that God created the world in six days, or any of the other scriptural accounts we are quick to rationalize as metaphor, but that our personal existence does not come to an end with the termination of our bodily functions here on earth. That assurance is so important to us that we are prepared to accommodate just about any oddity, inconsistency, or plain falsehood attached to it as a package deal. We accept the wildest fantasies in unbridled storytelling in exchange for the promise of immortality. Such flexibility in reasoning is what helps us make it through the night without screaming in despair in anticipation of our inevitable and impending expiration already in progress.

The basic motivation here, particularly for the requisite suspension of disbelief, is once again illustrated effectively in “Who Mourns for Adonais?” where Apollo

(played by Michael Forest) delivers a soliloquy outlining what he can do for mortals, as Lieutenant Carolyn Palamas (played by Leslie Parrish) listens in palpable awe with adoration in her eyes:

APOLLO: Fools! I offer them more than they could know. Not just a world, but all that makes it up. Man thinks he's progressed. They're wrong. He's merely forgotten those things which gave life meaning. You'll all be provided for, cared for, happy. There is an order of things in this universe. Your species has denied it. I come to restore it. And for you [here addressing Carolyn Palamas directly], because you have the sensitivity to understand, I offer you more than your wildest dreams have ever imagined. You'll become the mother of a new race of gods. You'll inspire the universe. All men will revere you almost as a god yourself. And I shall love you for time without end, worlds without end. You shall complete me, and I you.
(*Star Trek* 1967: "Who Mourns for Adonais?")

Even with all the promises in this promotional pitch for a new cult, Apollo is certainly not all talk, neither on television nor in proper mythology. The incarnation in the *Star Trek* episode demonstrates superhuman abilities, not the least of which is stopping a starship cruising through space, as described in the opening paragraph of this paper. The one in Hesiod and Homer is no less impressive. But no incarnation of Apollo, nor that of any other Olympian, measures up to God almighty, whose miracles, accepted by all Abrahamic faiths, go well beyond the cliché of thunderbolts and lightning epitomizing Olympian power.

The relatively limited power of the gods of polytheism is why James T. Kirk, the captain of the USS Enterprise, has the audacity to defy the one seeking redemption on a distant planet: "Apollo, we're willing to talk, but you'll find we don't bow to every creature who happens to have a bag of tricks" (*Star Trek* 1967: "Who Mourns for Adonais?").

The more familiar "bag of tricks" in current monotheism(s), on the other hand, has absolutely no limitations. If God almighty cannot do something, it is not something that can be done at all, or to be perfectly clear, not something that is even conceivable, and hence, not a limitation of power. Immortality being quite conceivable, however, an eternal existence for believers is a sure thing under the auspices of the God of Abraham. The stronger the deity, the greater the benefits.

The simpler and more natural explanation for all the goodies in such an oversized "bag of tricks," especially in comparison with what is open to observation and experimentation, is that the metaphysical framework of any religion, and particularly the widely shared doctrine of personal immortality, is first constructed to our exact specifications for existential pacification and then adopted as divine revelation.²⁹ To postulate the truth of the supernatural principles otherwise required

to account for the same framework is to introduce extraneous assumptions. Ockham's razor, if we care to use it here, directs us to the simpler explanation.³⁰

Ockham's razor is admittedly not a requirement for good science. It is entirely possible to overstate its importance in scientific explanation (as well as its relevance to religious explanation). But that is no excuse to ignore it altogether every time it threatens a pet theory, for the razor is always reliable, just never definitive. Simplicity is a standard virtue of scientific theories, widely acknowledged as a predictor of success in deciding between competing theories that are corroborated or falsified on other grounds. As for those that cannot be sorted out on other grounds, typically because one or more of the theories is not falsifiable, the razor remains just as sharp, albeit not as safe.³¹

The problem here is not so much that the apparent simplicity is ignored as it is that the consequent complexity is suspicious. The absence of external checks and balances, that is, the observational and experimental void precluding the falsifiability of theological positions, can quickly degenerate into a delusive liberty to preserve a central theory with the ad hoc introduction of elaborate hypotheses that are internally consistent yet entirely contrived, much like the Ptolemaic model accounting for eccentricities in the orbits of heavenly bodies in the geocentric system preceding the Copernican Revolution. One may consistently hold, given limited information, that everything revolves around the earth, which enjoys a stationary position at the center of the universe, but that does not make it true. Even if it matches what we see around us, it is just a story that fits the evidence at a superficial level rather than an explanation that exposes the underlying truth. This is the kind of story that confronts us in religion.

The same may perhaps be said of science, and not altogether unreasonably, but only in regard to particular scientific theories, and not with respect to the scientific method itself, nor therefore in connection with science as an enterprise. The history of science is replete with unscientific attachment to faltering theories. But science itself is nevertheless progressive. Bad theories are sooner or later abandoned in favor of better ones. This is because science is built on failure, and indeed thrives on it, whereas divine authority positions itself outside the realm of correction. Notwithstanding the obvious advantage to exemption from revisability, only so many axiomatic truths can be asserted as evidence, explanation, or justification, before a system of belief begins to lose credibility.³² Stipulation is no substitute for substantiation, nor imagination for intellection. We are long past either shortcut with the Olympians but not with the monotheism(s) for which we have abandoned the former rulers of the universe.

The cardinal attraction of religion is the convergence of what we want and what we get. Heaven holds an inexhaustible supply of all that we want but do not get here on earth, while purging everything that we hate, or fear, yet cannot avoid here on earth. The way we most passionately want things to be, so we are told, is exactly how they really happen to be from a cosmic perspective, despite any appearances or indications to the contrary from a mortal perspective, presumably to be enhanced

upon death. Putting together a system built on utopian promises cannot be all that difficult with theory-construction protocols whose only requirement is internal consistency.

To be fair, any religion could conceivably be fully consistent with objective reality, which we do not grasp well enough to invoke as an arbiter of truth in the first place. What remains suspicious, however, is that they all claim privileged access to universal truth, the revealed version of which is happily coordinated with our deepest desires and reassuringly inimical to our greatest fears. This coincidence between universal truth and our existential best-case scenario has been a blessing for theists throughout history.

Religious ideologies have always been accorded a greater connection with objective reality than attributed to their predecessors, thus placing those at present far ahead of the ones dominating the world in ancient times. Yet all religion being based on faith, the difference between now and then lies not in the strength of the faith but in the currency of it. Even if faith is its own proof, or defies proof, or does not require proof, none of that is sufficient, nor even relevant, for elevating one faith above another, given that faith is the common denominator. The ancients seem to have had it no less than we do. Their only disadvantage is in not being around anymore.

Religion, like history and politics, caters to current conceptions and prevailing predilections. No matter where or when we may happen to be born, we embrace the local web of belief at that time, including the religion promoted therein, as the only tenable one in the world, a shared advantage justifying the wholesale rejection of alternative approaches anywhere in our common intellectual history. The confidence we thus inherit uncritically as a birthright helps us rest assured that the ancients had it all wrong.

The irony of the evidence that such unquestioned confidence is a universal tool freely available to every community with a group identity is somehow lost on each congregation in each generation, which then claims a closer relationship with God than ever before, the ancients being relegated thereby to a state of ignorance. This doxastic swagger is complemented and sustained by the open reception of any internal developments as an improvement in insight, at least from the perspective of the developers, and very likely also from that of other members of the same congregation and generation. Current opinion is always right even if it is never the same.

What we have learned through the centuries, admirably well in our management of organized religion, is how to preserve our most cherished beliefs against outsiders while modifying them freely as insiders. We are not bothered by the fact that we cannot all be right when we contradict one another with mutually exclusive visions of reality, demonstrating an arrogant lack of concern for the truth, the doctrinal relativity of which never turns out to be a problem for anyone at all, because it is always a problem for someone else.

What we really fear, however, and do not want to hear, is that we could all be wrong. That is when we finally think to assign any validity to other creeds, insisting that surely not everyone would be wrong in such widely shared insight into

the fundamental nature of reality. But we are always quick to switch afterwards to championing our own religion as the only one that gets it right while all others remain oblivious to the truth. It is, no doubt, the greatest testament to the power of faith that this works so well for everyone.

7. Requiem for Adonais

The primary purpose of this paper, and its only claim to achievement so far, has been to demonstrate a meaningful continuity between Greek polytheism and the monotheism(s) replacing it. A preliminary qualification announced at the outset was the repudiation of any illusions that such continuity would in itself validate the Olympian pantheon (or ancient polytheism in general) or invalidate Abrahamic faiths (or current monotheism in general). Either of those inferences was acknowledged to require further development and argumentation. Yet neither the preliminary qualification nor the attendant acknowledgments have kept the paper from building up to a climax of agnostic undertones surfacing without apology in the previous two sections to overshadow the objectivity promised at the beginning. That apparent deviation requires an explanation – an apology in the classical sense – perhaps a requiem for Adonais.³³

The gradual disclosure of an underlying viewpoint, or rather, of a motivating suspicion, reflects the doctrinal transparency of the paper. The approach here is not just historical but also, and indeed more so, philosophical, where it is ordinarily acceptable and often expected to take a position on the topic of discussion. While the study itself is not concerned with the establishment of any such position, its author's affinity for one, namely for agnosticism, is a catalyst that is both difficult to ignore and pointless to conceal. It is more productive to acknowledge and explicate this inherent predilection than to deny any manifestation of it in the paper or to gloss over it as purely accidental with no influence on the conclusions reached. And it is therefore better, by way of conclusion and for the sake of discussion, to clarify rather than to downplay any remarks offered in the manner of a devil's advocate in pursuit of fruitful dialectic without a subversive agenda.

The most conspicuous of such remarks scattered throughout the paper revolve around a tension between either science or philosophy or both, at one end, as representatives of an investigative approach to knowledge proceeding with defeasible theories, and religion and theology, at the other end, as representatives of an exegetical approach to knowledge proceeding from revealed truth.³⁴ The tension in question concerns epistemic reliability, focusing specifically on evidentiary confirmation, without denying that epistemic warrant, broadly construed, may reasonably be claimed at both ends (see nn. 2–3). Perhaps the most pressing clarification to be made at this point is an open admission that logic and reason are no closer to science than to religion, or to philosophy than to theology, except insofar as the evidence favors one more than the other(s), which is to recognize that logic and reason merely serve their starting points.

Science and philosophy certainly do not have a duopoly on rational thought, leaving none for religion and theology. I do not deny, for example, that opposing parties are on an equal footing with respect to aptitude for logical analysis and rational discourse when Bertrand Russell (1948) is debating Frederick Copleston or when Antony Flew (1976; 1998) is debating Thomas B. Warren (1976) or William Lane Craig (1998). What I deny, rather, is that scientists and philosophers (striving to shape our understanding of the world on the basis of observation and experimentation) are on an equal footing with rabbis or priests or imams (aspiring to shape our understanding of the world on the basis of scripture and tradition) in regard to the evidentiary foundations on which they base their conclusions, recommendations, and instructions.

The evidentiary mismatch here is not so much about God as it is about religion. The cumulative evidence may, in fact, turn out to support the existence of God. That is why, Antony Flew, cited above, converted publicly in 2004 from atheism to deism: not because he had a mystical experience, sometimes also adduced as evidence, but because he was perplexed by complexity, particularly by the complexity manifested in the emergence of biological life, which he found statistically impossible, or very nearly so, to have developed through a random sequence of events without purpose (Flew and Varghese 2007: 65, 123–132). Intelligent design, according to Flew himself, impressed him as the most reasonable conclusion on the basis of the available evidence, which then convinced him to change his position in the manner of a Socrates following the argument wherever it leads (Flew and Varghese 2007: 89; cf. *Republic* 3:394d; *Crito* 46b; *Phaedo* 107b; n.b. the warning against misology at *Phaedo* 89d–91c). His conversion being grounded in evidence, however, Flew reports taking it only so far as to affirm the existence of God, without consequently (or even just subsequently) restructuring his personal life around the worship of a particular deity.

While Flew's conversion from atheism to deism on the basis of "the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements needed to produce life" (Flew and Varghese 2007: 175) is indeed a rational change of view, as opposed to a spiritual change of heart, that does not make the evidence adduced conclusive or the argument it supports decisive. The complexity compelling Flew to acknowledge the existence of God has not made the same impression on Richard Dawkins (1986; 2006), for example, to cite a scientist addressing the same question at the same time yet coming up with a different answer.

Attesting to the sensitivity of the issue, the dispute between Dawkins (2006) and Flew (2007; 2008) is more animated than the typical academic discussion. The exchange appears to have been initiated by Dawkins, who compares Flew unfavorably with Bertrand Russell in a footnote censuring him for changing his mind: "We might be seeing something similar today in the over-publicized tergiversation [apostasy] of the philosopher Antony Flew, who announced in his old age that he had been converted to belief in some sort of deity (triggering a frenzy of eager repetition all around the Internet)" (Dawkins 2006: 82 n). Flew is no less pug-

nacious in his formal reply, branding Dawkins a “secularist bigot” and citing the note comparing Flew with Russell as “that monster footnote to what I am inclined to describe as a monster book – *The God Delusion* [Dawkins 2006]” (Flew 2008). Flew’s direct response follows his already negative estimation of Dawkins as one of “the exponents of a look-back-in-anger, take-no-prisoners type of atheism” (Flew and Varghese 2007: xiv), having dedicated a section of his own book (*There Is a God*) to “Dueling with Dawkins” (2007: 78–80; cf. 161–183 for a critical appraisal of the “New Atheism,” including Dawkins, by Flew’s coauthor Varghese).

Neither the debate between these two scholars nor its acrimonious execution by them is in fact limited to these two scholars. Alvin Plantinga (2007), for one, describes *The God Delusion* (Dawkins 2006) as an “extended diatribe against religion in general and belief in God in particular” and flunks Dawkins in *Philosophy 201*: “You might say that some of his forays into philosophy are at best sophomoric, but that would be unfair to sophomores; the fact is (grade inflation aside), many of his arguments would receive a failing grade in a sophomore philosophy class.” Examples can be multiplied indefinitely to strengthen the obvious point that the opposing sides to the debate are not just in disagreement but also in outrage and up in arms, jointly demonstrating the generally disputatious attitude and easily offended sensibilities reported in the opening paragraphs of section 6 of this paper.

The tension is par for the course. Note the disparity between Weil’s conversion from agnosticism to Christianity based on spiritual experiences (as discussed above in section 6) and Flew’s conversion from atheism to deism based on rational considerations. Direct insight into the existence of God through a mystical experience is not the same as the reasoned recognition of the existence of God through evidence and argument. The former runs deeper than the latter. Spiritual converts are on board with the whole story once they find God, while rational converts have more thinking to do, which is already the reason for their discovery of God and therefore a condition of assent to anything further.

A rational agent compelled to affirm the existence of God on the basis of evidence and reasoning might not be compelled to affirm the validity of scripture or tradition on the same grounds in one fell swoop. Scripture and tradition, both severally and jointly, venture far beyond a simple affirmation of any kind. They come with a comprehensive account of reality, annexed to a detailed presentation of God, including His relationship with the universe as well as His expectations from us, the latter being tightly regulated and fiercely enforced by a system of reward and punishment in accordance with compliance, which requires the uncritical acceptance of everything precisely as stipulated. Organized religion is an *ipse dixit* affair managed by vigilant administrators for the benefit of impressionable adherents, all of whom, leader and follower alike, readily and instinctively take offense at the suggestion that evidence may be in short supply where faith is in high demand.

Both sides to the debate tend to lose sight of the truth that intellectual development is not the enemy of established wisdom. Nor is it the other way around. Not every advancement in science or philosophy presents a challenge to scripture

and tradition. Some progress, arguably even most, takes place in elaboration of scripture and tradition rather than in contradiction of either. But this still leaves room for opposition to indoctrination through proclamation. That is the part to worry about since proclamation, as it is invariably grounded in revelation, is not open to falsification, which is always more telling than confirmation. A single negative finding in scientific inquiry is sufficient to overturn a theory supported by countless corroborating observations and experiments (notwithstanding the tendency, acknowledged in section 6, to introduce ad hoc hypotheses in an initial attempt to save the affected theory).³⁵ Refutation in philosophical discourse tends to work in roughly the same way. But no amount of recalcitrant experience in religious matters ever proves sufficient to overturn anything supported by scripture or tradition. The difference between the two extremes comes down to faith, which is why I deny (as in nn. 2–3) that institutional religion has anything to do with evidence.

The difference is not that there is nothing in science, or in philosophy, that requires a leap of faith in some manner and to some degree (as I have yet to peek through a wormhole, or stare into a black hole, even though both are staples of contemporary physics) but that there is nothing in science, or in philosophy, that is guaranteed to survive the next leap of faith, or even the pedestrian progress between such leaps. Despite the oversimplified albeit ultimately fair and correct juxtaposition of facts with stories in the typical contrast between science and religion, the underdetermination of theory by evidence is just as damning in scientific discourse as it is in religious doctrine.³⁶ The world I construct through science and philosophy is only relatively less imaginary, perhaps even marginally so, than the world the faithful construct out of scripture and tradition. But the one in science and philosophy is forever in progress, whereas the one in religion and theology is deceptively stable, having reached maturity a long time ago in accordance with the universal truth adopted through the relevant revelation. While scientists and philosophers may not be more logical and reasonable, what they do with their logic and reasoning is more productive and on firmer ground than what preachers and theologians do with theirs. This is not because the evidence is conclusive in one area but because faith is indispensable in the other.

I do not see subatomic particles, I admit, any more than I see God. My inclination to accept either one is grounded in the nature of the explanation given. Scientific theories provide adequate explanatory power and high testability, while religious doctrines offer superior explanatory power without testability. Put differently, scientific theories are seldom conclusive yet typically verifiable and sometimes wrong, whereas religious doctrines are typically conclusive yet seldom verifiable and never wrong. Science tests explanations, while religion rests on them. The driving wedge between scientific theories and religious doctrines, then, and the principal reason why evidence is the cornerstone of the former, but not of the latter, is that the former is, while the latter is not, open to revision upon falsification.³⁷ That which cannot be falsified, nor thereupon revised, is not evidentiary information.

If further scrutiny turns out to contradict the existence of certain theoretical particles, cosmic strings, or stable wormholes, out they go like the luminiferous aether once believed to permeate all regions of space.³⁸ Yet when we discover anything in contradiction of scripture or tradition (as in how the world started, how old it is, and so on), the part that is contradicted is metaphorical, the rest, still strictly literal and perfectly veridical.³⁹ When we pray in vain without an answer, God is still there, but He has a reason we do not understand for not granting what we want. Where we witness unspeakable suffering among the innocent, again God is still there, and He is still all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving. He just has a reason we do not understand for letting us suffer in pain despite the possibility of divine intervention to make it go away. And if we find that stoning adulterers to death, as commanded by scripture and demanded by tradition, no longer feels quite right, we might best move on, in silent reverence, to more sensible passages (as we do in ignoring Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22–24 in favor of John 8:1–11) instead of disparaging the collective wisdom of the prophets for a message that no longer coincides with the considered moral judgments of competent moral judges.

What I am skeptical of, in the end, is not the existence of God, or of gods, but the existence of God exactly as portrayed in scripture and precisely as promulgated through tradition. Consequently, what I am denying we have evidence for is not so much God as a possibility as it is God as the superhuman character revealing Himself on several occasions to adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, not unlike Zeus in his habitual tendency to visit mortals, usually on a whim, sometimes just to have sex with his audience. The conflict I see between science and religion, therefore, is not between the facts of nature, or the dictates of reason, and the possibility of God, but between intellectual discovery and divine revelation as the ultimate sources of appeal in their respective webs of belief. The leap of faith is always longer in religion and theology than it is in science or philosophy. And there is practically no turning back in religion or theology as there is in science and philosophy. The more impressive the story we adopt in the beginning, the harder it is to revise or retract as it diverges from the reality unfolding through further consideration. And where further consideration is not an option, what we have is just another story.

Neither science nor philosophy is antithetical to the existence of God as established through rational discourse based on evidence. But they are both opposed to the complacency of inheriting God as imagined by our ancestors before rational discourse was based on evidence. Our efforts to find God, and to understand the world in which we exist, ought not to be restricted to what was concluded about the matter thousands of years ago by people who have *ipso facto* missed out on thousands of years of dialogue and discovery, at least some of which is bound to be decidedly important to developing a proper understanding of this perennial problem, regarding which we sheepishly defer to the judgment of the ancients, or what is the same, to their transmissions, despite the accretion of evidence to the contrary. This is not to say that we cannot reasonably consult the judgments of the ancients in formulating our own, just that we cannot reasonably surrender to the judgments of the

ancients as if we had none of our own. We can certainly continue to benefit from ancient wisdom. What is not wise, however, not just in religion but in any subject, is to settle for truth by convention without bothering to investigate truth by nature.

The conviction that all the important questions were put to rest a long time ago is at best counterproductive. Continuing to explore and explain the world through the mindset of our ancestors – not just scientifically but also ontologically, cosmologically, ethically, and aesthetically – can do little more than to hold us back. The explanation that any aspect of reality, or indeed the world itself, as a whole, is the way it is because God wanted it that way (“Let there be this and that!”) is in the same epistemic league as an explanation attributing the same thing to magic (“Salagadoola mechicka boola bibbidi-bobbidi-boo!”). This is not because neither one is believable but because neither one is debatable. Neither one even says anything in terms of information that enhances our understanding of the subject matter by enabling us to make reliable predictions based on what we have learned. Ruling out verifiability, falsifiability, and revisability leaves little room for further inquiry.

Deference to ancient wisdom in our religious orientation might not prove so disruptive an anachronism if the corresponding questions were a matter of dispassionate curiosity, but as it happens, the answers, whatever they are, serve as strict codes by which we must organize and conduct our lives, usually so passionately as to embrace an afterlife where those who disagree with us are either excluded from rewards or singled out for punishment, and occasionally even so passionately as to attack and vanquish those who disagree with us, showing dissenters hell on earth before the already unconscionable torment supposedly awaiting them in the afterlife.

Yet the appeal to God, even as an ultimate causal explanation, need not be so vacuous and dictatorial, especially if it is kept distinct from the doctrinal platform of institutional religion. The problem is not the rational consideration of God as a possibility, or as a reality, or even as a necessity, but the unconditional and comprehensive assent to the scripture and tradition handed down with any conception of a personal deity. On the other hand, there is no good reason why we may not do both science and philosophy as they ought to be done, without preconceptions of an extraneous nature, while either seeking out or believing in God, independently of any allegiance to those who found Him millennia ago. But when we regard all that as having been settled for us definitively, thousands of years ago, by people reporting unicorns (Isaiah 34:7) and dragons (Psalms 74:13) roaming an earth resting on pillars (Job 9:6), then not only are we not doing science or philosophy but we are also not taking God very seriously.⁴⁰

Of course, anyone invoking unicorns and dragons in a biblical world resting on pillars must be prepared for charges of either ignorance or willful misrepresentation, for a scholar in the know, particularly one with a modicum of goodwill, would recognize these things for what they are: The unicorns are wild oxen, buffalo, or cattle, depending on the translation; the dragons are either jackals or serpents, or failing that, political metaphors, sometimes even the devil himself; and the pillars of the earth are nothing other than the physical forces keeping the planet where it is

relative to other celestial bodies.⁴¹ Nary a unicorn and not too many dragons are to be found outside the King James Bible, which has long since been corrected in regard to terminology that was either mistranslated in the first place or has become obsolete in the meantime.

Is it not unreasonable, then, to fault scripture for predating, among other things, the combination of philological developments and scientific evidence that eventually helped weed out the infelicitous translations and mistaken interpretations giving us what we now recognize as mythical beasts (unicorns and dragons) and bad science (earth on pillars)? But that is precisely the point: If we must keep reinterpreting scripture in the light of new evidence and new developments, why not just set scripture aside and focus on the evidence and the developments? Sifting through the evidence, and seeking out more, seems to be a better use of our time and energy than recycling old stories as profound allegories forever reconcilable with reality. There are unicorns in Aristotle as well (*Historia Animalium* 2:499b18–19; *De Partibus Animalium* 3:663a20–34), but the Aristotelian corpus is no longer where we get our information about the world.⁴² Why keep consulting scripture as if it were still (or ever at all) definitive?

The standard answer is that the Bible (or the Quran) is not a scientific treatise but a largely allegorical invitation to righteousness. Yet this platitude of a response not only contradicts the widespread tendency to quote scripture to pontificate on every scientific development (as in church resistance to the Copernican Revolution invalidating the geocentric model of the universe) but also underestimates righteousness itself, as an ideal, with the hollow and obsolete metaethical orientation of divine command theory.⁴³ As our ultimate guide to righteousness, the God of Abraham – and thereby of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, collectively making up at least half the world’s population at present – kills people and destroys villages for various transgressions (including a global flood sent to eradicate decadence and corruption) and requires that good people do likewise in His name (including the execution of adulterers and homosexuals).⁴⁴ An exception must be noted for the Christian God, who is supremely amiable (a gentle Father, a devoted Son, and the loving Spirit that binds them together) compared to the God of Judaism and Islam – ironically all the same God. But praising the Christian God for the relative difference, which comes down to successful anger management, is like praising a man for not hurting or killing his children.

As for the love that is the hallmark of Christianity, it is actually God’s love for humanity, which speaks to His moral character, not ours, ostensibly making God a better role model than what we had been accustomed to until Jesus.⁴⁵ Admittedly, we, in turn, are commanded to love each other in the name of God: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34–35 KJV). But the moral basis of this new commandment is the same as the one questioned by Plato before ordered by Christ: “Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is

being loved by the gods?” (*Euthyphro* 10a). If we cannot be good to one another, and indeed love one another, without being coerced into doing so under duress and with the threat of punishment – whether through having our immortality withheld or through facing God’s wrath directly (John 3:36; cf. n. 45 in this paper) – then by all means, the science and philosophy available in the holy books should be more than enough for our purposes.

It was not too long ago that Plato’s *Timaeus* was hailed far and wide as holding the key to the secrets of the universe. The only reason we are where we are now, though we are still nowhere near where we could be, is that we felt free to move beyond the *Timaeus* (and beyond comparable positions and expositions throughout the history of ideas) whenever we discovered something that made more sense. There is still much in the *Timaeus* that is consistent with current paradigms in physics and metaphysics, just not to the last detail. What still works is still acknowledged as such, what no longer works is still a benchmark for finding or developing something that does. That is the proper perspective for all ancient wisdom.

The words of the prophets must be questioned no less than those of the philosophers, unless we prefer metaphor to reason, favor prophecy over reality, and seek inspiration rather than enlightenment. The unexamined life will never be worth living. And examinations will always come with questions. We can no longer afford to respond with allegories. The Socratic injunction to “follow the argument wherever it leads” (*Republic* 3:394d; *Crito* 46b; *Phaedo* 107b) is, after all, for our own good, as Plato reminds us in the words of the master in his final hours: “There is no greater evil one can suffer than to hate reasonable discourse” (*Phaedo* 89d).

Plato is at pains here to make sure we appreciate this point as he places it at the dramatic center of the last day on earth for the first martyr of truth. Among all the arguments for immortality in the *Phaedo*, it is the interlude against misology (aversion to reason) that claims the pedimental spotlight of the dialogue (89d–91c), thus elevating rational discourse above personal immortality, and declaring the resentment of reason a greater threat (or “folly”) than the resentment of death.⁴⁶ This is an emphasis we seem to have lost in our development of religious traditions promising eternal life in the presence and under the protection of an omnipotent and benevolent God (cf. section 6). We have succeeded in reducing the number of gods to one, but we still think of the remaining one in terms of what is in it for us.

No one seems to be mourning for Adonais anymore, but one still wonders where all the gods have gone. The answer given in the *Star Trek* episode referenced throughout the paper is that they have withdrawn from our plane of existence in response to neglect by the mortals who once worshipped them:

PALAMAS: What happened to the others: Artemis, Hera?
APOLLO: They returned to the cosmos on the wings of the wind.
PALAMAS: You mean they died?
APOLLO: No, not as you understand it. We’re immortal, we gods. But the Earth changed. Your fathers changed. They turned away until we were only memories. A

god cannot survive as a memory. We need love,
admiration, worship, as you need food.
(*Star Trek* 1967: “Who Mourns for Adonais?”)

The gods of *Star Trek*, then, are not dead, “not as you understand it” anyway. This is the same bittersweet consolation Shelley invites us to share in celebrating the life of Adonais. The approach of the television series, with its emphasis on memory and remembrance, serves as a tribute to the same emphasis in the poem from which the episode gets its title. Shelley likewise associates living with remembering, and dying with forgetting, as he weeps for Adonais while embracing the memory that survives his death:

I weep for Adonais – he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!
(Shelley 1821: *Adonais* 1:1–9)

One difference is that the gods of *Star Trek* are forgotten though not dead (“as you understand it”), whereas Shelley’s Adonais is dead but not forgotten. Yet the difference is entirely superficial, the message, exactly the same, as Shelley, too, makes immortality conditional upon recollection: “till the Future dares / Forget the Past” (*Adonais* 1:7–8). While Shelley’s Adonais (Keats) is no god, the fate awaiting gods and mortals alike is the same: an existence requiring validation by others. After calling on us repeatedly to mourn with him for Adonais, Shelley takes comfort in the survival of his friend’s immortal soul:

He lives, he wakes – tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. – Thou young Dawn
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
(Shelley 1821: *Adonais* 41:361–365)

We must “cease to moan,” urges Shelley, simply because there is nothing to mourn, nor anything to fear for ourselves. The spirit of Adonais lives on, as shall we upon our own departure from this world. Shelley is confident enough in his resolution to tell us how to face “the world’s bitter wind”:

Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?
(Shelley 1821: *Adonais* 51:458–459)

This confidence enables Shelley to end his elegy with a message consistent with his stature as one of the finest poets of the Romantic era:

The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.
(Shelley 1821: *Adonais* 55:494–495)

But we have already been told in somber meditation that the light of Adonais can only shine “till the Future dares / Forget the Past” (*Adonais* 1:7–8). The kind of immortality – existence through acknowledgment – Shelley celebrates while mourning the death of his friend is the kind of immortality the mimetic episode of *Star Trek* attributes to the gods. The episode thus ends on a poignant note as Apollo joins his fellow Olympians upon being spurned on Pollux IV by the descendants of those who rejected them all on Earth:

APOLLO: Zeus, Hermes, Hera, Aphrodite: You were right. Athena, you were right. The time has passed. There is no room for gods. Forgive me, my old friends. Take me. Take me.
(*Star Trek* 1967: “Who Mourns for Adonais?”)

The ending of the episode is picked up in the beginning of this paper where human passion is identified as the deciding factor in whether or not even gods live or die (section 1). We have done away with dynasty after dynasty, and species upon species, of gods. The most resilient one so far, judging by the number of followers at present (even with different conceptions), seems safe from neglect for quite some time. Yet there is still a lesson to be learned from where all the gods have gone, not just in the make-believe worlds of poetry and television, but also in the make-believe world we construct for ourselves.

Is there any reason to mourn for Adonais? Perhaps in the manner of Shelley. But there is certainly a reason why the theme is still a favorite among poets and storytellers: They are the ones who came up with it. That is where it all started. We keep insisting that God’s existence is a matter of fact, all the while building entire religions around a collection of stories. It is no wonder, then, no one mourns for Adonais, repeatedly inherited as someone else’s reality in someone else’s story, yet embraced by everyone all the same. Our most promising prospect for discovering something worth mourning in common, without ever encountering an occasion to mourn it, lies in collaborating on a story of our own, this time through science and philosophy instead of parables and promises.

NOTES

1. Written by Gilbert Alexander Ralston and Eugene Lee Coon, and directed by Marc Daniels, "Who Mourns for Adonais?" (episode no. 31 [= 2x02], production code 60333) originally aired on the NBC television network in the United States, on 22 September 1967, as the second episode of the second season of the science-fiction series *Star Trek* (later: *Star Trek: The Original Series*). The title of the episode is an allusion to Shelley's *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats* (1821). The reference is specifically to line 415 (the first line of stanza 47): "Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth." The title of the poem, in turn, is a metaphorical synthesis of Adonis and Adonai, the first, the handsome lover of Aphrodite and Persephone in Greek mystery religions, the second, one of the names of God in the Hebrew Bible.

2. The reference in the main text to belief without evidence is not about epistemic warrant. I am not denying that faith can be reasonable or sensible or warranted, just that faith is based on evidence and that faith itself counts as evidence. I concede, for example, that any religion may be supported, among other things, by appeals to authority (apostles, saints, clerics, etc.), unexplained phenomena (miracles), unverifiable testimony (prophetic messages from God), unfalsifiable assertions (declaring God to be everywhere, identifying God with the universe, associating God with love, and so on), subjective experiences (feeling God's presence), and circular reasoning ("God exists because it says so in this book, which is reliable because it is the word of God"). While these may all promote belief, they do not constitute evidence. I do not know of any kind of evidence that must always be accompanied by faith in order to induce belief. No evidence can be sufficient where faith is necessary, no evidence necessary where faith is sufficient. Revealed religion regards faith as both necessary and sufficient, which then makes evidence irrelevant. Even those who maintain a looser conception of evidence under which they subsume all such appeals as listed above have to admit that our evidentiary standards are much higher with respect to scientific reports on how the world started and where it is headed than they are in connection with religious sermons on exactly the same thing. We would not think to relax the necessary or sufficient conditions for evidence as we lend an ear to a physicist drawing conclusions from smashing subatomic particles to figure out how the world works, but we become more flexible in that regard when we listen to a preacher consulting scripture to tell us how the world works and what all God wants us to do. Faith has nothing to do with evidence unless we redefine the latter beyond recognition. If faith were an evidentiary matter, it would not even exist. People would just adopt a religion, or decide against doing so, upon review of the evidence. It is because there is no evidence validating dogma, certainly not without a double standard, that faith comes into play at all.

3. I make no pretense to having solved the thorniest of epistemological problems. Nor do I deny that religious tenets may be worthy of belief. To be perfectly clear, though perhaps more forthcoming than required, I myself do not believe any part of what I have encountered in any religion, with the possible exception of some of the moral principles, all of which I already find either sufficiently justified or equally unjustified outside religion, but I also do not deny any of it, especially not in any manner of connection with the express aims of this paper. What this paper sets out to demonstrate is not that religious belief is not warranted but that it is no more warranted now than it was back when Zeus was the center of attraction. It could even be said to be less warranted now, since we should arguably know better by now, with all the scientific and philosophical progress since then, but that argument, appealing as it does to knowing better, begs the question of warrant. In contrast,

the perspective of this paper is equally skeptical, no more and no less, across the board and through the ages.

4. The reflections in the second part of the paper gradually coalesce into an agnostic challenge pursued for the sake of dialogue. Section 7 thus complements the formal and relatively modest claims of the paper with a dialectical engagement with the corresponding issues in the light of certain skeptical suspicions surfacing in sections 5 and 6 yet remaining beyond proof in the proper sense.

5. An expanding theogony does not proceed with revisions to the established cosmogony. Mythological development, despite the momentous revolutions, is cumulative rather than revisionary. There are no prequels or reboots. Any transition of power preserves the timeline. Sovereignty changes hands, but it does not change the past.

6. References to Plato are by Stephanus numbers indexed to the Oxford Classical Texts edition of his opera (1900–1907). Translations of specific passages are from the Hackett edition of his complete works (1997).

7. One translator describes Hesiod’s world as born “not *ex nihilo* but *ex ignoto*, from the unknown” (Athanassakis 1983: 9 [= 2004: 7]). Another scholar expresses “doubt that creation *ex nihilo* was even an issue prior to Parmenides” (Gregory 2007: 203–204), specifically challenging any initiative to saddle either Hesiod or his early interpreters with insight into the possibility of creation out of nothing. Others declare emphatically that “It is out of the question that Hesiod or his source was thinking of the originative substance as coming into being out of nothing” (Kirk and Raven 1957: 29 [= Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 39]).

8. References to Aristotle are by Bekker numbers collated with the text of his opera edited by the Prussian Academy of Sciences (1831–1870). Translations of specific passages are from the revised Oxford edition of his complete works (1984).

9. Charlotte R. Long (1987: 139–143, 144–186, 187–231) can be consulted profitably for a detailed history of the Dodekathēon, Ian Rutherford (2010: 43–54) for a brief overview of its canonization.

10. Monotheism and monolatry both require the worship of exactly one god. The difference is that monotheism denies while monolatry accepts the existence of other gods. Monolatry is also, or sometimes instead, called henotheism. Scholars tend to distinguish between the latter two, but there is no consensus on the difference. Robert Mackintosh (1908: 810–811) traces the terminology back to the second half of the nineteenth century, crediting Julius Wellhausen (1881) with inventing the term “monolatry” and Friedrich Max Müller (1860) with coining the term “henotheism,” though his assessment of the bifurcation is somewhat negative: “Unhappily, there is another term which habitually presents itself as a synonym for monolatry and as rival – henotheism” (1908: 810). While both terms refer to the worship of one god despite the acknowledgment of many, scholarly distinctions vary in subtlety and significance: Bill T. Arnold (2014: 9–10) considers monolatry alone to have a religious dimension, restricting henotheism to an ontological commitment to the supremacy of one god without pious devotion to any. Theophile James Meek (1936: 197; 1950: 201, 205–208, 215–216) interprets monolatry as the strict worship of one god to the exclusion of all the rest and henotheism as the privileged worship of one god through the absorption of all the rest. Friedrich Max Müller introduces the term “henotheism” (with “monolatry” neither in common parlance nor part of academic jargon at the time) in reference to “faith in a single god” (among many) as opposed to “belief in One God” (monotheism): “There is a God” vs. “There is but ‘One God’” (1860: 6 [= 1867: 354]; anticipated in 1859: 532–533). He later elaborates on the one-among-many faith as “a religion in which each god, while he is being invoked, shares in all the attributes of a supreme being” (Müller 1878: 280). This

explanation complements his formal definition: “This is what I call henotheism, a worship of single gods, which must be carefully distinguished both from monotheism, or the worship of one god, involving a distinct denial of all other gods, and from polytheism, the worship of many deities which together form one divine polity, under the control of one supreme god” (Müller 1878: 289; cf. 1860: 6 [= 1867: 351–354]; 1878: 260, 271–272, 280, 285–286, 289–292). Kurt L. Noll (2001: 249) presents monolatry as holding only one god worthy of worship, this always being the same one, and henotheism as holding one god superior to all the rest, which are nevertheless not unworthy of worship.

11. Biblical citations, particularly direct quotations, are from the King James Version unless specified otherwise. Nothing in the newer and more accurate translations, at least in my limited experience, rivals the beauty of the language in the King James Version. And since nothing in this paper, despite all the quotations, turns on a semantic nuance captured by one translation and missed by another, the preference here for literary grace over dynamic equivalence does not affect the main lines of argument.

12. Even denial is indicative in this regard, though not as much as affirmation. Why bother denying the existence of other gods if there are no other gods? Persistent denial confirms widespread recognition, which poses a threat to the emerging religion, which then has to undermine and eventually overcome the entrenched resistance.

13. Many of the biblical references in this paper, especially those from the Old Testament, can be supplemented by correlative citations from the Quran, as done in the very sentence occasioning this note. However, since the paper’s focus on Abrahamic faiths rests on known similarities rather than neglected differences, no special effort is made to compare quotations from the Bible with corresponding passages in the Quran, instead relying on the latter’s sweeping endorsement of the former, repeatedly affirmed in scripture, including the following verses (*āyāt* [آيات]) in the rendition by Abdullah Yusuf Ali: “We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of apostles; We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit” (Al-Baqarah 2:87). “It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus)” (Al-Imran 3:3). “We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: We sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms” (An-Nisa 4:163). “And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear God” (Al-Ma’idah 5:46).

14. Jupiter (Acts 14:12, 14:13, 19:35), Diana (Acts 19:24, 19:27–28, 19:34–35), and Mercury (Acts 14:12), respectively, depending on the translation.

15. A complete list of gods mentioned by name in the Bible would be unmanageable in a footnote or endnote. An annotated list would be unmanageable not just in a discussion note but even in a journal article. There are simply too many gods, so many as to require a separate sourcebook. One such book, a comprehensive catalog just short of a thousand pages, is the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (1995/1999), edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst. The length of the book alone is an indication of the initial distance to monotheism in the Judeo-Christian tradition, where the plenitude of gods is commensurate with the biblical predilection for engagement with rival deities.

16. The designation of developmentalism as a mere scenario, as opposed to something more determinate, is not intended to undermine its strength as an interpretive position. It is just a sober admission of the limits of what is attempted and accomplished specifically in

this paper. While the progressive adoption of monotheism is manifestly more than a scenario, the intention here is not to prove monolatry as a historical fact but to recommend it as an exegetical model with substantial explanatory power. The references offered here in support of monolatry are sufficient for that purpose, but anything more requires a concerted effort to sort through all the evidence. Fortunately, comprehensive studies of the historical, archaeological, and anthropological facts are available in abundance. Theophile James Meek's *Hebrew Origins* (1936/1950) is a classic, best supplemented by a few of his articles: "A Proposed Reconstruction of Early Hebrew History" (1920); "Some Religious Origins of the Hebrews" (1921); "Monotheism and the Religion of Israel" (1942). More recent contributions rewarding study include: Jan Assmann's *From Akhenaten to Moses: Ancient Egypt and Religious Change* (2014); Thomas L. Brodie's *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (2001); William G. Dever's *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (2001); Robert Karl Gnuse's *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (1997); Nathan MacDonald's *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism"* (2003/2012); Juha Pakkala's *Intolerant Monotheism in the Deuteronomistic History* (1999); Thomas Römer's *The Invention of God* (2015); Mark Smith's *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (1990/2002) and his *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (2008/2010); Thomas L. Thompson's *The Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources* (1992) and his *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (1999), the latter published in the United States as *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (1999).

17. A further selection of such passages, still nowhere near exhaustive, includes the following: 1 Chronicles 16:25; Deuteronomy 6:14–15, 10:17, 11:16–18, 12:29–31, 13:6–10, 28:14; Exodus 15:11, 18:11, 22:20, 23:13, 23:32; Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7; Jeremiah 1:16, 7:9, 10:11, 25:6, 32:35, 46:25; Joshua 24:14–15; Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 18:21; Revelation 2:14; 1 Samuel 7:3, 28:13; Zephaniah 2:11.

18. Yet the misguided worship of false gods is still polytheism, the misguided recognition of false gods still monolatry. The God of Abraham need not himself acknowledge the existence of other gods for monolatry to emerge as a transitional stage between polytheism and monotheism. It is enough that his followers do so. Nor must the gods in question actually exist. It is enough that at least some people worship them as if they did. And this seems to be exactly how people carried on. Those who worshipped the God of Abraham continued for some time to recognize the existence of other gods, and at first continued even to worship them, before devoting themselves fully and exclusively to the one true God.

19. See n. 13 above for details of the Quran's endorsement of the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity, particularly in confirmation of the authenticity of the original revelations corresponding to each religion, though not in approval of subsequent developments in either tradition: Al-Baqarah 2:87; Al-Imran 3:3; An-Nisa 4:163; Al-Ma'idah 5:46.

20. A more exclusive study of Greek influence on Judaism is available, among other places, in Cyrus Herzl Gordon's *Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations* (1962/1965). Any insight to be gained there can be enhanced through more recent views in a collection of essays edited by Thomas L. Thompson and Philippe Wajdenbaum: *The Bible and Hellenism: Greek Influence on Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (2014). Three essays in this collection are particularly relevant here: Russell E. Gmirkin's "Greek Evidence for the Hebrew Bible" (2014: 56–88); Philippe Guillaume's "Hesiod's Heroic Age and the Biblical Period of the Judges" (2014: 146–164); Bruce

Louden's "Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Book of Revelation 4, 12 and 19–20" (2014: 258–278). Scholarly interest in the subject is not limited to parallels between Greek mythology and Abrahamic lore. Philosophy also comes into play. Recent work drawing on Plato includes Philippe Wajdenbaum's "Is the Bible a Platonic Book?" (2010) and his "From Plato to Moses: Genesis-Kings as a Platonic Epic" (2016) as well as Russell E. Gmirkin's *Plato and the Creation of the Hebrew Bible* (2017).

21. The distributive reference in the main text to discrete revelations in Abrahamic tradition holds just as well for the general authority of religion as an explanatory and normative source of appeal. As for specific revelations, three in particular stand out among the rest: The God of Abraham is believed, not necessarily by all the same people, to have spoken: first *to* Moses (Torah), later *as* Jesus (New Testament), and finally *through* Muhammad (Quran). This emphasis on speaking renders revelation a speech act, with words serving as the unit of communication, which then makes it all the more meaningful that Jesus is also the Word of God (*logos* [λόγος]). While the sense in which Jesus is the Word of God cannot be reduced to the sense in which words are the constituent elements of sentences, the point is that they both facilitate the expression of meaning, with far greater implications to consider in the context of scripture: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1 KJV). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14 KJV). "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13 KJV).

22. See further n. 32 below.

23. While the characterization of the Old Testament as a springboard for the New Testament hardly needs substantiation beyond a cursory glance at any copy of the Christian Bible, where the two are indeed presented together, the passage cited above in the main text provides explicit confirmation: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17–19 KJV).

24. The most striking precedent is in the Old Testament: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 KJV). This is often interpreted as a prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus, which then removes the discrepancy of a biblical reference to a virgin birth before Jesus. But this still leaves all the references outside the Bible to virgin births before Jesus. Hera, for one, seems to have perfected the practice (cf. n. 25 below).

25. Zeus was no virgin, to be sure, so his ability to produce his own children was not analogous to a virgin birth even if it was more impressive. His wife Hera, on the other hand, may well have been the queen of virgin births, given the regular restoration of her virginity through an annual bathing ritual at a spring called Canathus in Nauplia, a seaport in the Argolic Gulf of the Peloponnesian Peninsula (Pausanias: *Description of Greece* 2:38.2). Depending on the timing, specifically on whether the annual restoration of her virginity took place between copulation and childbirth, Hera may have not only preceded Mary in giving virgin birth to a god but also outperformed her in doing so repeatedly. Even if the timing of the restoration was never right, and there is no reason to suspect that it never was, Hephaestus, at any rate, was a child Hera produced alone (Hesiod: *Theogony* 924–929),

that is, without sexual intercourse with anyone, including Zeus, as discussed above in the main text (section 4).

26. See n. 1 above for details.

27. This is not to deny that religion has functions other than ontological or cosmological explanation. Some of its other functions, to name a few, are moral guidance, spiritual tranquility, social solidarity, and political administration. But these are not contradicted by empirical evidence and rational discourse as clearly and as consistently as the metaphysics offered. Nor are they pertinent, definitely not as pertinent, to the transition from polytheism to monotheism, which is the central focus of this paper.

28. I do not mean to subordinate philosophy to science, not as a rule anyway, but since the two are indeed distinct, and since science is more relevant to the intended contrast with religion, I limit the comparative analysis in this section, for brevity, to science versus religion. The next section invokes both science and philosophy in delineating epistemically significant features that are either absent or deficient in religion and theology.

29. Not all religions promise personal immortality. The reference here, a sweeping one for emphasis, is meant for those that do, which happens to include all of the ones in the scope of consideration, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But even those that do not promise personal immortality, for example, Buddhism, still address our fears regarding death, perhaps not by advertising an afterlife, but certainly, as in the case of Buddhism, by presenting the self as an illusion, thus leaving nothing to survive death as an eternal person, simply because there is no such person to begin with.

30. As a Franciscan friar, William of Ockham was perfectly satisfied with the evidentiary and explanatory value of scripture in and of itself. He not only refrained from seeking external verification himself but also denied the relevance of such attempts in others. Invoking Ockham's razor here may thus contradict the orientation of the man from whom it derives its name, but it nevertheless conveys the scientific principle of parsimony constituting its essence.

31. The razor itself does not become sharper or duller depending on whether it is the only implement available or one of the many tools on hand for choosing between competing theories. But given that it is not foolproof in either case, it cannot reasonably be assigned final authority when used alone.

32. What is exempt from revision is scripture more than tradition, or more accurately, scripture rather than tradition. Yet revision in the latter comes neither easily nor often by any measure. The clearest example is probably the Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church.

33. The title of this section ("Requiem for Adonais") is both a tribute and an allusion to another *Star Trek* episode: "Requiem for Methuselah" (episode no. 74 [= 3x19], production code 60043-76), written by Jerome Bixby, directed by Murray Golden, and first broadcast on 14 February 1969, in the United States, by the NBC television network, as the nineteenth episode of the third season of the series.

34. Citations can hardly be decisive in substantiating the opposition between science and religion, philosophy and theology, or learning and believing. This is not because the difference between the acquisition of knowledge and the dissemination of information (as in "gospel revelation" where "gospel" literally means "good news") is patently obvious without citations (which it is) or because any such citations are ambiguous (which they are not) but because a great many passages corroborating the tension can be controverted by plenty of passages making the prophets out to be progressive sages openly advocating scientific research and philosophical dialectic. The following is a broad sampling of passages corroborating the tension in question, with my implicit concession that the opposite thesis also finds support in scripture: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that

exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV). “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it” (Job 40:2 KJV). “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Luke 10:21 KJV). “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25 KJV). “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5 KJV). “Man’s goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?” (Proverbs 20:24 KJV). “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20–21 KJV). Arguably the strongest evidence consistent with the passages just cited is the story of humankind’s expulsion from heaven for seeking knowledge against God’s wishes: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17 KJV). “But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:3–5 KJV). “And the Lord 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: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:22–24 KJV).

35. The scientific response to falsification is not necessarily an automatic or immediate rejection of the theory thereby falsified. Where possible and reasonable, adjustments are often made to salvage the core construct before giving it up altogether. The point, however, is that giving it up altogether is never ruled out as an option in science.

36. I do not mean that the degree of underdetermination is the same in science as it is in religion but that any amount of underdetermination in either must, by the very nature of underdetermination, be bridged without the benefit of evidence, thus making both susceptible to the underdetermination in question. Hence, it is no less damning in science than it is in religion in the sense that such underdetermination is no less relevant to one than it is to the other.

37. Revision upon falsification is subject to the qualifications in nn. 32 and 35 above and n. 38 below.

38. Scientific revision can be delayed by initial resistance as acknowledged in section 6 and in n. 35 above. But the only difference that makes is in *when* the required revision is made and not in *whether* it is made at all (provided that the falsification is valid in either case).

39. See n. 32 above for revisability in religion and theology. Compare with nn. 35 and 38 above concerning revisability in science and philosophy.

40. The parenthetical references in the main text are, for brevity, representative rather than exhaustive. This note offers a fuller list, still incomplete, but sufficiently demonstrative of the unicorns, dragons, and pillars in the Bible. Unicorns are indigenous to the King James Version, where they now live in captivity, with most other editions favoring alternative translations (typically wild oxen but also buffalo and cattle): Deuteronomy 33:17; Isaiah 34:7; Job 39:9; Numbers 23:22, 24:8; Psalms 22:21, 29:6, 92:10. Dragons can also be found

in the King James Version, but some of them have made it into other editions as well, sometimes as actual creatures, whether of the land (jackals) or of the sea (leviathans), sometimes as altogether different things invoked through metaphor (the regional political order, or the devil, the latter often as a serpent): Isaiah 13:22, 27:1, 43:20, 51:9; Jeremiah 51:34; Job 30:29, 41:12–34; Psalms 74:13, 91:13, 148:7; Revelation 12:3–9, 20:2. Pillars supporting the earth likewise survive various translations as a universal cosmological principle: Job 9:6; Psalms 75:3; 1 Samuel 2:8. Whatever may now seem counterintuitive about any of these references typically has a perfectly plausible explanation, the best that can be sustained as time goes by, ranging from outdated translations, or mistaken references, to allegorical messages. One exegetical prerequisite biblical apologetics have in common with basic mythological frameworks requiring reconciliation is the flexibility to overlook contradictions as discussed in the context of Greek theogony in the main text (sections 2–3). To cite just one example, the biblical world rests on pillars (Job 9:6), which in itself can reasonably be construed as the relevant period’s scientific explanation for the forces of nature required to maintain the planet’s relative position in space – a stationary position (1 Chronicles 16:30; Psalms 93:1, 96:10, 104:5) – but it also rests on nothing at all (Job 26:7), which then undermines the earlier explanation in the same book of the Bible.

41. See n. 40 above for elaboration with documentation.

42. Aristotle speaks of two different animal species (the Indian ass and the oryx) with a solitary central horn (*Historia Animalium* 2:499b18–19; *De Partibus Animalium* 3:663a20–34), hence a unicorn, given the etymology of the word (cf. the Latin *unicornis*, translating the Greek *monokerōs* [μονόκερως]), which literally means single-horned. Aristotle’s unicorns were certainly not magical horses with pixie dust sprinkled on the horn. Nor were the ones in the Bible (cf. *re'em* [רֵאֵם]). The point of the comparison in the main body of the paper is not that Aristotle’s unicorns now appear more realistic than biblical unicorns but that neither reference was ever a flight of fancy to begin with, though the referents are no longer familiar to us, probably because the original reports were mistaken yet propagated without confirmation, or possibly but less likely because the beasts in question once actually existed but have long been extinct. The latter is less likely because of our success in identifying extinct species, which still does not include unicorns of any kind, especially not the magical kind, that can be dated to the relevant era. In either case, we could also be missing something in translation, not merely of words into words but also of ancient scientific standards, including corresponding classification conventions, into modern taxonomic practices.

43. The reference above to “church resistance to the Copernican Revolution” is not an attempt to blame religion or theology for erroneous astronomical paradigms preceding heliocentric recalibration. The geocentric model is certainly not a Christian blunder (nor a Judaic or Islamic one). We may blame Plato, Aristotle, and Ptolemy, among other pagans, if anyone is to blame at all. The relevant question here, however, is who to blame for the persecution and prosecution of Galileo for observational corroboration of Copernican hypotheses contradicting uncompromising ecclesiastical subscription to the Ptolemaic system. Granted, four centuries have gone by since the emerging heliocentrism was declared heresy in 1616. But that is also just about how much time has passed since the publication of the King James Bible in 1611. The operative difference seems to be that we ended up with a better translation of the infallible guidebook we are in the habit of consulting before accepting new developments, currently including stem-cell research and same-sex marriage, among other things.

44. Anyone finding the penalties mentioned in the main text appropriate for the corresponding transgressions (e.g., drowning for decadence and stoning for adultery) may yet find

something objectionable in the plethora of biblical passages joining crime and punishment in disproportionate combinations. Consider the moral basis, for example, of having a group of children torn apart, limb from limb, by killer bears sent by God as executioners because the children made fun of someone in favor with God: “And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them” (2 Kings 2:23–24 KJV). A popular explanation is that the children in question were not actually “little children” but young adults, who were not just making fun of the bald man, Elisha, but at the same time mocking God in taunting the man to “Go up,” which the context reveals to be a reference to his mentor Elijah’s having ascended to heaven, with Elisha himself thus being told in mockery to do the same by the children. This is an appalling apology. It fails miserably as justification for the violent execution of forty-two children (even if they were instead teenagers or young adults) for speaking their mind, which does not warrant capital punishment under any conceivable moral standard. A better approach may seem to be to refrain altogether from defending anything in the scenario, asserting instead that this is not something God actually did but a parable intended to keep people in line and to emphasize just how wrong it is to mock God. Yet even this additional apology for the original apology is not so much about telling right from wrong as it is about learning what sets off a dangerous megalomaniac with a track record of violence. An invitation to righteousness where the alternative is to be slaughtered by God’s assassins is not a morally respectable appeal for a system of ethics.

45. The greatest claim to morality in Christianity is the central importance of love: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16 KJV). While the sacrifice is grand beyond a doubt, the morality therein is dubious, as it takes us right back to the familiar divine wrath, evidently repressed for our benefit, yet to be unleashed immediately should we express any doubts or misgivings regarding all that love and how it works: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36 KJV). This is to say nothing of the pathological relationship where there must be reciprocal sacrifices to the death in a relationship supposedly based on love, with the same God who orders Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Ishmael in Islamic tradition, because of the reference to an “only son,” *ipso facto* taken, though not unanimously, to precede the younger Isaac, despite the absence of any positive identification by name in the Quran) to prove his love for God, in turn, sacrificing His own Son, and by extension also sacrificing Himself in the same act, to demonstrate His love for humanity. Love is a good thing, to be sure, but it would be even better if manifested without anyone having to kill anyone, least of all in the form of filicide or suicide (as discussed in this note), and better still if realized freely by everyone, without a command backed by the threat of punishment (as discussed in the main text).

46. Pedimentality is a compositional feature of dialogues and other literary creations where the philosophical climax is closer to the dramatic center of the work than to the end. Examples in Plato include, not just *Phaedo*, but also *Ion*, *Meno*, *Phaedrus*, *Protagoras*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Theaetetus*. Further discussion of the architectonics of pedimentality in Plato can be found, among other places, in Holger Thesleff (1967: 34, 57–59, 167–168 [= 2009: 28, 46–48, 138–139]; 1993: 18–35; 2012: 140, 149).

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APPENDIX: TABLES

Table 1
Hesiodic Portrayal of the Genealogy of the Protogenoi

First Generation (Spontaneous)	Second Generation (Parthenogenetic)	Third Generation (Sexual)
Chaos ♀ (Chasm)	Erebus ♂ (Darkness) Nyx ♀ (Night)	Erebus & Nyx: Aether ♂ (Light); Hemera ♀ (Day) Nyx (Alone): Morus ♂ (Doom); Ker ♀ (Violent Death); Thanatos ♂ (Peaceful Death); Hypnos ♂ (Sleep); Oneiroi ♂ (Dreams); Momus ♂ (Blame); Oizys ♀ (Misery); Hesperides ♀ (Evening Nymphs); Keres ♀ (Death Spirits); Moerae ♀ (Fates); Nemesis ♀ (Indignation); Apate ♀ (Deceit); Philotes ♀ (Friendship); Geras ♂ (Old Age); Eris ♀ (Strife)
Gaea ♀ (Earth)	Uranus ♂ (Sky or Heaven) Ourea ♂ (Mountains) Pontus ♂ (Sea)	Gaea & Uranus: Titans (6♂ & 6♀); Cyclopes (3♂); Hecatoncheires (3♂) Gaea & Pontus: Nereus ♂; Thaumās ♂; Phorcys ♂; Ceto ♀; Eurybia ♀ Uranus (Alone): Aphrodite ♀
Tartarus ♂ (Underworld)	Typhon ♂ (Cyclone)	Typhon & Echidna: Orthus ♂ (Herd Dog); Cerberus ♂ (Hellhound); Hydra ♀ (Water Serpent); Chimera ♀ (Lion-Goat-Serpent) Typhon (Alone): Anemoi Thuellai (Storm Winds)
Eros ♂ (Love)	None	None

Note: Aphrodite is the motherless daughter of Uranus, according to Hesiod (*Theogony* 188–206), and the Olympian daughter of Zeus and Dione, according to Homer (*Iliad* 5:370–384; *Odyssey* 8:305–320).
Source: Hesiod: *Theogony* 116–163, 211–225 (cf. 901–906), 233–239, 306–332, 820–880.

Table 2
Progeny of the Celestial Union of Gaea and Uranus

Seminal: Conceived through the Sexual Union of Gaea and Uranus

12 Titans		Cyclopes ♂ (Orb-Eyed)	Hecatoncheires ♂ (100-Handed)
Titanes ♂	Titanides ♀		
Oceanus	Theia	Brontes	Cottus
Coeus	Rhea	Steropes	Briareus
Crius	Themis	Arges	Gyes
Hyperion	Mnemosyne		
Iapetus	Phoebe		
Cronus	Tethys		

Hematological: Conceived by Gaea from the Blood of Uranus

Erinyes ♀	Gigantes ♂		Meliae ♀
Alecto	Porphyrión	Pallas	Adrastia
Tisiphone	Alcyoneus	Polybotes	Ida
Megaera	Ephialtes	Hippolytus	Amalthia
	Eurytus	Gratión	
	Clytius	Agrius	
	Mimas	Thoas	
	Enceladus		

Notes:

The offspring Gaea conceives on three separate occasions from the blood of her son and mate, Uranus, when the latter is castrated by his own son, Cronus, are identified only collectively – Erinyes, Gigantes, Meliae – and not individually in Hesiod. A breakdown by name is available in other sources, notably in Apollodorus, who lists the Erinyes (*Bibliotheca* 1:1.4), also known as the Furies, and the most prominent of the Gigantes (*Bibliotheca* 1:6.1–6.2), led by Porphyrión and Alcyoneus, in the order presented in the corresponding columns above. As for the Meliae, who tend to remain undifferentiated outside Hesiod as well, they are sometimes equated with Adrastia and Ida, the nymphs said by Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 1:1.6–1.7) and others to have been charged with rearing the infant Zeus, largely on the milk of the goat Amalthia, sometimes instead recognized as a third nymph.

Sources: Hesiod: *Theogony* 116–206. Apollodorus: *Bibliotheca* 1:1.1–1.7, 1:6.1–6.2.

Table 3
The Twelve Titans: The Original Masters of the Universe

Titanes ♂		Titanides ♀	
Name	Etymology	Name	Etymology
Oceanus	River Ocean	Theia	Sight or Prophecy
Coeus	Query	Rhea	Flow or Ease
Crius	Ram or Ruler	Themis	Divine Law
Hyperion	Above or Over	Mnemosyne	Memory
Iapetus	Hurl or Wound	Phoebe	Bright or Prophetic
Cronus	Time	Tethys	Nurse or Grandmother

Offspring through Titanic Coupling in the First Generation		
Oceanus & Tethys:	Potamoi ♂:	3,000 river gods (25 named)
	Oceanids ♀:	3,000 water nymphs (41 named)
Coeus & Phoebe:	Leto ♀; Asteria ♀	
Hyperion & Theia:	Helios ♂ (Sun); Selene ♀ (Moon); Eos ♀ (Dawn)	
Cronus & Rhea:	Olympians ♀:	Hestia; Demeter; Hera
	Olympians ♂:	Hades; Poseidon; Zeus

Other Titanic Offspring		
Crius & Eurybia:	Astraeus ♂; Pallas ♂; Perses ♂	
Iapetus & Clymene:	Atlas ♂; Menoetius ♂; Prometheus ♂; Epimetheus ♂	
Themis & Zeus:	Horae ♀ (Seasons):	Eunomia (Order); Dike (Justice); Eirene (Peace)
	Moerae ♀ (Fates):	Clotho (Spinner); Lachesis (Dispenser); Atropos (Inflexible)
Mnemosyne & Zeus:	Musae ♀ (Muses):	Cleio; Euterpe; Thaleia; Melpomene; Terpsichore; Erato; Polyhymnia; Urania; Calliope

Notes:

- The Roman names of the twelve Titans were the same as the Greek, except for Cronus (Saturn), Theia (Thea), Rhea (Ops), and Mnemosyne (Moneta).
- Cronus the Titan tends to be confused with Chronus the primeval deity. Cronus (Kronos [Κρόνος]) is the youngest child of Gaea and Uranus, and perhaps more memorably, the father of Zeus, whereas Chronus (Khronos [Χρόνος]) is the primordial god of time. Despite the similarity in name, and sometimes also in function (depending on the context and source), the two divinities are different in both origin and essence. Our primary acquaintance with Cronus is Hesiodic theogony, which ignores Chronus, while our understanding of Chronus is shaped largely by Orphic cosmogony, which is silent on Cronus.
- Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 1:1.3) adds Dione to the list of Titanides, while Hesiod (*Theogony* 346–370) places her in the second generation as a daughter of Oceanus and Tethys, one of the forty-one eldest named as such among a total of three thousand.
- Compare *Theogony* 211–225 and 901–906 on the Moerae (Fates).

Sources: Hesiod: *Theogony* 75–103, 116–206, 211–225, 346–377, 507–543, 901–906. Apollodorus: *Bibliotheca* 1:1.3–1.6, 1:2.2–2.5, 1:3.1.

Table 4
The Twelve Olympians: The Prevailing Rulers of the Universe

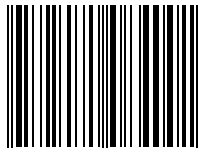
	Name	Origin	Profile
First Generation	Hestia ♀ (Vesta)	Cronus & Rhea	Goddess of hearth and home; rejected both Poseidon and Apollo to remain a symbol of divine chastity; willingly displaced by Dionysus as one of the twelve Olympians.
	Demeter ♀ (Ceres)	Cronus & Rhea	Goddess of agriculture, especially grain and bread; honored together with daughter Persephone in the Eleusinian mysteries.
	Hera ♀ Juno	Cronus & Rhea	Goddess of women and marriage; celestial first lady as wife of Zeus; violently jealous.
	Poseidon ♂ (Neptune)	Cronus & Rhea	God of the sea, sometimes extending to the entire fluid element, including oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, and so forth; controls earthquakes; created horses.
	Zeus ♂ (Jupiter)	Cronus & Rhea	Supreme ruler; specializes in atmospheric conditions, including thunder and rain and anything else to do with the sky; dispenser of justice; husband of Hera.
Second Generation	Athena ♀ (Minerva)	Zeus	Patron goddess of Athens; known for wisdom, warfare, handicrafts; differs from Ares in representing strategic as opposed to violent aspects of war; eternal divine virgin.
	Aphrodite ♀ (Venus)	Zeus & Dione	Goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation; wife of Hephaestus. Hesiod has her as the motherless daughter of Uranus (<i>Theogony</i> 188–206).
	Artemis ♀ (Diana)	Zeus & Leto	Goddess of hunting, wilderness, and chastity, herself being eternally chaste; represented by the moon, parallel to the solar association of her twin brother Apollo.
	Apollo ♂	Zeus & Leto	God of prophecy, healing, music, poetry, archery, truth; associated with the Sun; twin brother of Artemis.
	Ares ♂ (Mars)	Zeus & Hera	God of war; represents brute force and sheer destruction in war rather than strategic aspects of warfare.
	Hephaestus ♂ (Vulcan)	Zeus & Hera	God of fire and forges; master craftsman, especially in metalworking and stonemasonry; husband of Aphrodite.
	Hermes ♂ (Mercury)	Zeus & Maia	Royal messenger, particularly of Zeus; superb oral and written communication skills; god of animal husbandry; master thief; protector of merchants and travelers.
Alternates	Hades ♂ (Pluto)	Cronus & Rhea	Lord of the underworld; god of earthly wealth and treasure, including agricultural and mining products.
	Dionysus ♂ (Liber)	Zeus & Semele	God of wine; patron god of theater; born of a mortal mother, later achieving full deification; replaces Hestia among the twelve Olympians; a.k.a. Bacchus by both Greeks and Romans.

Sources: Hesiod: *Theogony* 116–206, 453–491, 886–942. Homer: *Iliad* 5:370–384; *Odyssey* 8:305–320. Apollodorus: *Bibliotheca* 1:1.3–1.6, 1:3.1–3.6, 1:4.1, 3:4.3.

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