

20. Defining the “Oneness” of God (Deuteronomy 6–8, 15, 18, 29–30, 34)

The watch cry religious Jews recite daily, “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4)—variantly translated in the KJV—has served Jews as a defense against the false gods of the “nations round about” just as God intended: “Thou shalt fear the Lord (Hebrew *yhvh* or “Jehovah”) thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; For the Lord [Jehovah] thy God is a jealous God among you lest the anger of the Lord [Jehovah] thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 6:13–15).

Remembering that the Israelites who came out of Egypt had grown up among an idolatrous people—had made and worshiped a Golden Calf, and were consequently denied the higher law God had written on stone tablets—their coming to worship a single God was indeed a historic achievement. Unfortunately, because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, the Jews’ singular definition of monotheism put Jesus among the false gods of the nations!

If later in the history of the Jewish people, however, their single God could be shown from their own scriptures to be their Savior Jesus Christ, who again offered them the higher law, and if that God introduced them to his Father—the Father of all mankind—would not their comprehension expand far beyond merely abandoning false gods for the true God, which the Law of Moses was intended to point them to? Would they not begin to perceive a more profound reason for their existence than the endless observance of rituals whose purpose was symbolic of greater things? Would they not learn that they themselves could become an integral part of God’s oneness—that in the act of worshiping God and keeping his higher law they could partake of his divine nature?

When we unlayer the idea of God’s oneness, moreover, we discover that it doesn’t imply singleness in the sense of denoting only one divine being. Rather, biblical accounts commonly define oneness in the sense of two or more persons or things being or becoming “one.” Examples include Adam and Eve being “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24); the two dreams of Pharaoh that Joseph interpreted in reality being “one” (Genesis 41:25–26); the two trees/sticks of Ezekiel’s prophecy becoming “one tree/stick” in the prophet’s hand (Ezekiel 37:15–22); and Jesus’ prayer that his disciples might become “one” in him as he is “one” in the Father (John 10:30; 17:21–23).

The idea of God’s being a plural entity, therefore, appears in these scriptures themselves. Jehovah, for example, is called a “God of Gods and Lord of Lords, a great God [*’el*]” among the Gods (Deuteronomy 10:17; cf. Joshua 22:22; Psalm 136:2–3). That agrees with the premise that “God [*’elohim*] stands in the assembly of the mighty [*’el*], he judges in the midst of the Gods [*’elohim*]” (Psalm 82:1); and with the intent of David’s psalm: “I will acknowledge you with my whole heart; before the Gods [*’elohim*] I will sing your praises” (Psalm 138:1). Evidently, the above-mentioned “Gods” don’t refer to the idolatrous gods of the nations or these passages would be defamations, not salutations.

As Paul observes, “Though there are those who are called Gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as there are Gods many and Lords many—to us there is but one God [with whom we have dealings], the Father, from whom all things are, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus the

Messiah, by whom all things are, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:5–6). While Paul here purports to identify two distinct divine beings, one of whom is senior to the other, it is evident that these heavenly personages are one in the sense of operating in concert for the good of all creation. In a similar vein, Jesus declares, “This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus the Messiah, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Again, two distinct beings, each of whom it is imperative to *know* personally, not merely to *know of*. Stephen, too, testifies, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). Once again, two divine beings—“God,” and also the “Son of Man.”

The Judeo-Christian concept of monotheism thus paradoxically accommodates the implicit fact of a plurality of Gods who, by their very nature, act as one for the benefit of humanity under the auspices of the Father. That divine Father, moreover, is synonymous throughout holy writ with *‘el ‘elyon*, the “Most High God” (Genesis 14:18–20; Deuteronomy 32:8; 2 Samuel 22:14; Psalm 57:2; Isaiah 14:14; Daniel 3:26; Mark 5:7; Acts 16:17; Hebrews 7:1), which title itself implies that there exist less high Gods. The title “Son of Man,” on the other hand, which Jesus applies to himself (Matthew 9:6; 12:8, 32, 40; 20:18, 28; John 6:27; 12:23; 13:31), holds a mystery all its own. For if Jesus, the Savior of humanity from its mortal or fallen nature, is also a “Son of the Most High God” (Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32; 8:28), then the name “Son of Man” implies that the Most High God is that “Man” (Matthew 11:27; 16:13–17; John 3:13; 5:26–27; 12:34–50).

(Much of this material is taken from *Endtime Prophecy: a Judeo-Mormon Analysis*, 10–12.)

How do these things typify our day—of which the scriptures predict that because of his people’s idolatry “the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 6:15)? Is it not because we have gone back to worshipping false gods, the idols of materialism, the works of men’s hands that have distracted us away from worshipping the true God? Content with only the basic principles of the gospel, moreover, we have called them the fulness of the gospel, our eyes being blinded by worldliness.

Didn’t the angel say to Nephi, “Thou hast beheld that if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them; and thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish” (1 Nephi 14:5)? And didn’t Jesus say of the Ephraimite Gentiles—of us—that “if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (3 Nephi 21:6)? Repent of what? And what are the true points of his doctrine that we need to comprehend? I leave you to ponder these things.