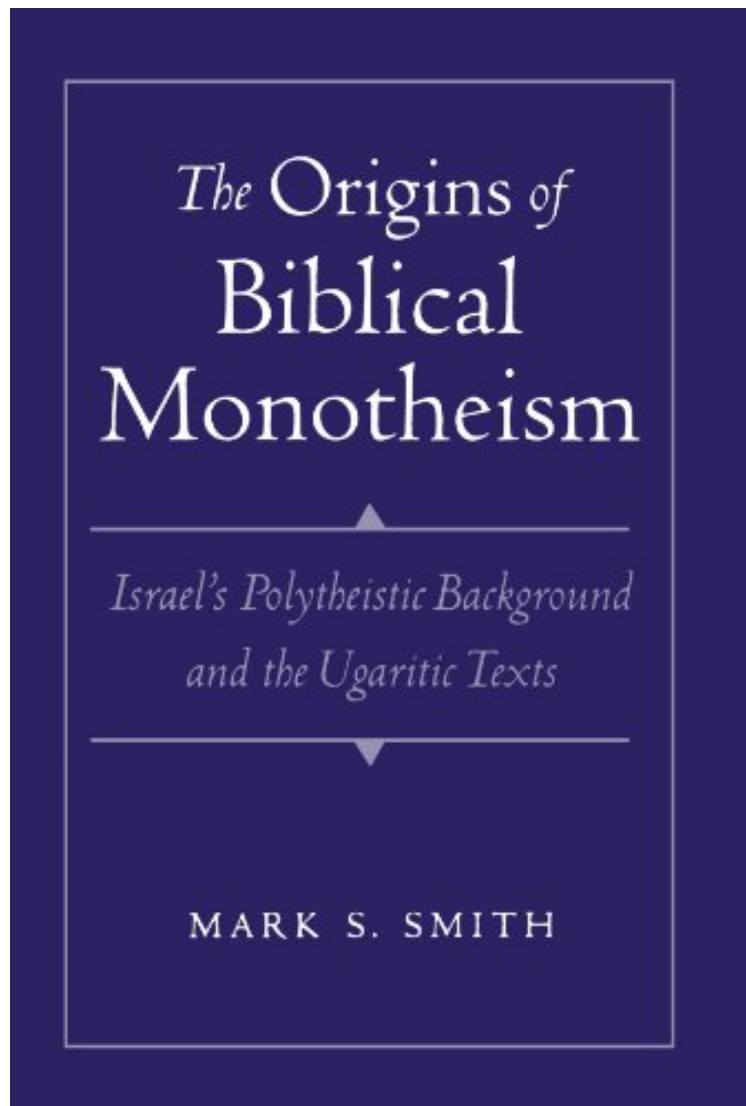


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The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts

Mark S. Smith

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Mark S. Smith : The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Origins of Biblical
Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. This book is not for the novice, but it is a worthwhile read for lay and professional HB scholars. By Doug Well done essay on the origins of Yahwism in the HB and subsequent development of monotheism. However, the author gave me the impression that he was attempting to write for the novice, or at least lay readers with an interest in the field but not much knowledge about the basics of biblical scholarship. It is not for the novice or basic level scholars! At times Smith delves into arcane technicalities of Ancient Near Eastern texts, while at others he gives very basic definitions and descriptions of terms etc. In my opinion, the actual target audience for this book is those individuals with more than an introductory knowledge of the history and development of HB studies and the historical, literary, and theological issues surrounding the Documentary Hypothesis. For those readers, this volume is worthy of careful attention. Smith's focus is to utilize the Ugaritic texts as a primary case study, calling upon other ANE texts through late Iron Age to develop a more nuanced and sensitive depiction of West Semitic (a term he argues for in contrast to the more ambiguous "Canaanite") polytheism than has been heretofore assumed in Western culture, including academe. Within that picture Smith then makes a case for the West Semitic polytheistic character of Yahwism and argues that Yahwist monotheism per se (i.e., Yahweh alone is god, and there is NO other god) is a post-exilic development. In the process Smith also smashes icons in his own right, such as dispensing with the notion that the death-resurrection of a god can be traced to Baal myths. The reader with more than rudimentary knowledge of the field will find this a stimulating read and source of reflection.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I have yet to get much past the first couple ...By Richard Flierman I have yet to get much past the first couple of chapters. Yet already I am in awe of the copious amounts of information that can be gleaned from again and again. I chose Mark Smith's work my last research material for my own upcoming book. To call this work "epic" could be the understatement of the century. A must-have resource for any adept layman or scholar's library. On second thought I may buy a curio to place it in alongside Bill Dever.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great reading to fill in the enormous gaps left by ...By Zach L Great reading to fill in the enormous gaps left by our educational system. Mark takes a while to really premise his conversation but the information is presented in an approachable format even for someone without a background in theology or anthropology.

According to the Bible, ancient Israel's neighbors worshipped a wide variety of gods. In recent years, scholars have sought a better understanding of this early polytheistic milieu and its relation to Yahweh, the God of Israel. Drawing on ancient Ugaritic texts and looking closely at Ugaritic deities, Mark Smith examines the meaning of "divinity" in the ancient near East and considers how this concept applies to Yahweh.

"Brilliant, well-documented, well-organized, and very discomfoting. Biblical scholars now recognize that in the pre-exilic era Asherah worship, infant sacrifice, solar veneration, and other religious practices attacked by biblical authors represented normal Israelite worship, while monotheism was a late development in the Babylonian Exile and subsequent years. Smith and others led the charge in this new scholarly perception of Israelite religion. But with this volume Smith has thrown down a gauntlet to challenge our understandings even more. Smith has produced a seminal work with which scholars must come to grips for years." "This is an important work which will alter the perspectives of many." --The Bible Today "Not only is the text wide-ranging and insightful at every turn, but it is greatly complemented by the endnotes, which resume arguments, develop tangential aspects, and offer a massive bibliography for further exploration." --Journal of Near Eastern Studies "Brilliant, well-documented, well-organized, and very discomfoting. Biblical scholars now recognize that in the pre-exilic era Asherah worship, infant sacrifice, solar veneration, and other religious practices attacked by biblical authors represented normal Israelite worship, while monotheism was a late development in the Babylonian Exile and subsequent years. Smith and others led the charge in this new scholarly perception of Israelite religion. But with this volume Smith has thrown down a gauntlet to challenge our understandings even more. Smith has produced a seminal work with which scholars must come to grips for years." --Journal of Hebrew Scriptures "This is an important work which will alter the perspectives of many." --The Bible Today "Not only is the text wide-ranging and insightful at every turn, but it is greatly complemented by the endnotes, which resume arguments, develop tangential aspects, and offer a massive bibliography for further exploration." --Journal of Near Eastern Studies "Brilliant, well-documented, well-organized, and very discomfoting. Biblical scholars now recognize that in the pre-exilic era Asherah worship, infant sacrifice, solar veneration, and other religious practices attacked by biblical

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About the Author
Mark S. Smith is Skirball Professor of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at New York University. His publications include *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (1997), *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (1994), *The Early History of God* (1990), as well as several other books on the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and West Semitic mythology and literature.