

Unmasking Hegemonic Monotheism: An Africalogical¹ Assessment via Indigenous Afrikan Cosmology

by

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Abstract

This essay comparatively examines the monotheistic conception of the Judaeo-Christian god Yahweh and West Afrikan conceptions of The God and of the divinities or gods. Patterned after Akhenaton's (Amenhotep IV) construction of the neter Aton, the Judaeo-Christian Yahweh possesses the characteristics of a divinity and not The God, according to priestly authorities and scholarly evidence in the Yoruba, Akan, Ewe, Ga, Kemetic, and Judaeo-Christian traditions. The evidence examined further suggests that a proper definition of both Judaeo-Christian and Islamic monotheism in Kemetic and West Afrikan terms is one-divinityism. This term signifies the promotion of a single divinity as superior to all other divinities, which are dismissed as false gods. One-divinityism (monotheism) also contends that the championed divinity is, in actuality, the universal supreme force, or The God, as comprehended within the West Afrikan priestly traditions.

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¹ Molefi Kete Asante has argued that the discipline of Africalogy (or Africana Studies) is by definition "the Afrocentric study of phenomena, events, ideas, and personalities related to Africa." Importantly, he observes, the "mere study of phenomena of Africa is not Africalogy but some other intellectual enterprise. The scholar who generates research questions based on the centrality of Africa is engaged in a very different research inquiry than the one who imposes Western criteria on the phenomena." See Molefi K. Asante, "Afrocentricity and the Quest for Method," in *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*, ed. James L. Conyers, Jr. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997), 78.

Introduction

The monotheistic tradition arises out of ancient Afrikan thought and can be conceived as an error in Afrikan thought insofar as the entire tradition owes its beginnings to the heresy of Akhenaton, or Amenhotep IV, a pharaoh of the 18th dynasty.¹ The heresy or error centers in the king's doctrine concerning the worship of the divinity Aton, which in its simplest interpretation symbolized the radiant energy of the sun.²

E. A. Wallis Budge states the "origin of this god is wholly obscure, and nearly all that is known about him under the Middle Empire is that he was some small provincial form of the Sun-god which was worshipped in one of the little towns in the neighbourhood of Heliopolis, and it is possible that a temple was built in his honour in Heliopolis itself." But Akhenaton's interpretation of Aton's worship significantly diverged from the divinity's historical and traditional worship in two major respects. First, Akhenaton championed Aton as superior to all other *neteru* ("gods" or divinities) within the Kemite cosmological order. Second, and more significantly, Akhenaton's new doctrine declared the elimination of all other *neteru* in the Kemite cosmology.

Akhenaton's new doctrine "ascribed to the god a monotheistic character or oneness" distinguished by the fact "it denied the existence of any other god." In the king's new formulation, Aton's worship took on a character alien to indigenous Afrikan cosmological thought, for the worship of the *neter* Aton "could neither brook nor tolerate the presence of another god, still less of other gods." This new and unconventional posture meant something quite alien and hostile to indigenous Afrikan cosmology: "the new religion could neither absorb or be absorbed by any other; similarly, Aton could neither absorb nor be absorbed by the other gods of Egypt, because he had nothing in common with them." Hence, Budge concludes, "In so far as it rejected all other gods, the Aton religion was monotheistic."³ Adds Stephen Quirke: "Only once, before the arrival of Christianity and Islam, did a line of development lead to a demand that the king avoid all other views, all other beliefs, and, in the case of some cults, even persecute them. This occurred during the 14th century BC, at the height of Egyptian wealth, in the reign of Amenhotep IV, famous under his revised name as Akhenaten."⁴

Miriam Lichtheim notes that while Kemetic culture had always manifested the tendency to recognize a supreme divinity, Akhenaton's attempted doctrinal innovation was "a radical break with the past. His doctrine was profoundly uncongenial and gave great offense."⁵ Indeed, observes Jan Assmann, "The radical monotheism of Akhenaten's hymn [song or psalm to Aton] negates other gods; indeed, it avoids the use of the very word 'god' whether singular or plural. ... All traditional cults were closed; the only worship permitted was that of the new god, the Aton."⁶ Indeed, Akhenaton, adds David P. Silverman, "purposely removed any rivals to the Aton."⁷

The extent of this king's religious totalitarianism is striking and, according to the Judaeo-Christian text, would only be rivaled by Moses' and Yahweh's ruthlessness in punishing the apostasy of his newly found worshippers, as will be discussed below. Assmann notes that:

Police and military ranged through the country in a bid to erase all the inscriptions of the hated [by Akhenaton] god Amun (the precise reason for this hatred is unknown) from the face of the earth. The old religion was to be reduced to utter silence, and this objective was pursued with the same thoroughgoing radicalism as the new religion itself was to suffer only a few years later. The enormous number of traditional temples and cults, rites and festivals, myths, hymns, and images were replaced by a handful of hymns celebrating the new religion.⁸

In short, this effort to eliminate the recognition and worship of more than one divinity was the beginning of the monotheistic—or, in reality, one-divinity—tradition.

Distinguishing “The God” from “the gods”

By contrast, indigenous Afrikan spiritual consciousness, writes the Ghanaian Ewe high priest Kwakuvi Azasu in *Afrikania: African Traditional Religion, A Brief Exposition*, accepts the idea that a person may be a devotee of many divinities and that “the origins of the various divinities do not matter. Divinities may come from Gikuyuland [in Kenya, East Afrika], Ovamboland [in Namibia and Angola, Southern Afrika], or Dahomey [in Benin, West Afrika],” but the Afrikan of indigenous spiritual consciousness “does not see any contradiction in his devotion to them even if the various divinities impose different prohibitions on him.” According to indigenous Afrikan thinking, Azasu maintains, “the variety of life forms and creatures exemplify the various ways through which God may be perceived and revered.”⁹

The significance of this discussion may be gathered from an examination of the cosmological order summarized in Table 1. The central point is that in indigenous Afrikan cosmology, there is no confusion between The God and “the gods” or divinities. Thus, too, their characteristics are not confused.¹⁰ The Ewe high priest Azasu states that adherents of indigenous spirituality “are sure that *Abosom* is not synonymous with *Nyame* in Akan. Neither is *Jema Woloi* in Ga synonymous with *Ataa-Naa-Nyongmo* nor is *Trowo* in Ewe synonymous with *Mawu*. The most appropriate interpretation of the various African ethnic words for these creatures of God may at best be *divinities* ... divine viceroys of God on earth.”¹¹

The Akan priests Kwame Agyei Akoto and Akua Nson Akoto of Washington, DC, note that in the Akan system The Creator, Odumankoma, “is expansive beyond human cognition. What humanity perceives of Odumankoma is facilitated through the Abosom (deities), the emissaries of Odumankoma.” Further, they continue, the “Abosom, deities, exist in part to maintain order throughout creation, and otherwise to expedite the will of Odumankoma.”¹²

Similarly, explains Chief Fasina Falade, Olubikin Agbaya of Ile-Ife and Oluwo of Ara Ifá Ijo Orunmila of Los Angeles, California,¹³ in the Yoruba spiritual system called Ifá:

The Irunmole are known as the primordials. These were the first beings sent to the world with specific tasks to complete by Olodumare and it’s also important to know that the Irunmole were not human beings. The Irunmole are the lieutenants/servants of Olodumare which act as intermediaries between the creator and us. Each Irunmole was assigned a specific duty to assist us in completing our destinies and are not considered gods. Remember, there is only one creator and the Irunmole are Its assistants.

The Orisa are our Elevated ancestors, the crowned ones, those “human beings” who completed their destinies, were elevated by their community, and now serve as role models for all of us so that we may do the same. The Orisa just like the Irunmole are not gods! There is only one God and its name is Olorun, Eledaa, Olodumare, Akamara, just to give a few names for the creator.

God is the source (Olorun), God is all spirit/energy unconditioned by matter (Eledaa), and God is all spirit/energy conditioned into matter (Olodumare). The Irunmole and the Orisa are the lieutenants/servants of God and were assigned the task of acting as intermediaries to assist us in completing our destinies.¹⁴

TABLE 1

THE INDIGENOUS AFRIKAN COSMOLOGICAL ORDER¹⁵

| ENGLISH | YORUBA | TWI | EWE | GA |
|---------------------|----------------|--------|-------|--------|
| The God | Olodumare | Onyame | Mawu | Nyonmo |
| Divinities (“gods”) | Irunmole/Orisa | Abosom | Trowo | Wodzi |
| Ancestors | | | | |
| Spirit Beings | | | | |
| Humans | | | | |
| Nature | | | | |

“The God” Concept in West Afrikan Spiritual Thought

Besides fundamental distinctions in terminology used in Afrikan languages to distinguish what in the English language can be called “The God” from “the gods” or divinities, there are also distinctive characteristics the divinities do not share with The God. They include the fact that in indigenous Afrikan cosmology The God is without gender. It is neither male nor female, nor is It personal, because It is too vast for such finite characteristics. Second, The God is too vast for human intermediaries; It, therefore, has no priesthood. Third, The God is too vast for sacrificial offerings. Fourth, The God is too vast for human-made habitations, such as a church, temple, mosque, or shrine. Fifth, and not without significance, The God does not condone or encourage humans to commit evil against other humans, including conquest, dispossession, and genocide.

Kofi Asare Opoku, an authority on West Afrikan culture, notes “God has unique names and attributes that are not shared by the other spiritual beings in the spirit world. God is placed *outside the pantheon* as its creator and there is no notion of equality in terms of being or power with the other spirits” (added emphasis). As a result, “the absence of shrines, temples, priests and priestesses who have a private extension to God all go to show the limitlessness of God. God is everywhere, and the whole universe is the temple of God, who is essentially a spirit, the Great Spirit, below whom are lesser spirits.”¹⁶

Among the Akan, Opoku further explains, this absence of priests especially appointed to the worship of The God is due to the fact that the indigenous Afrikan spiritual system holds “there is no priest or priestess who alone has access to Onyame and can manipulate [It] to comply with human wishes, as is the case with the minor gods. Every person, it is believed, has direct access to Onyame.” In the same way, to West Afrikans The God is perfect and so sufficient unto Itself that It does not need sacrifices made up of things It has made.¹⁷

Chief Falade states that in Ifá, Olorun (The Ruler of Heaven) is “the all encompassing it, that which everything has within. The source of everlasting being and existence. The Creator of all things. The life giver. The Alpha and Omega. That which was in the beginning and has no end. All things comes The Power. Beyond comprehension.”¹⁸ He adds Olorun is “neither male or female, but the container of both within itself, the source of all creation in the universe. Humankind, in deadly arrogance, foolishly attempts to describe Olorun or God in the English understanding. No one has that right of sanction.”¹⁹

Likewise, HRG Odunfonda I. Adaramola in a pamphlet titled *Obatala: The Yoruba God of Creation* makes the same observation. At the time of the pamphlet's authorship she was the chief priestess of the Obatala Temple at the Oyotunji Village in Sheldon, South Carolina, and was in charge of the Priest College (which trains the divinity priests), as well as headmistress of the Yoruba Royal Academy there. She stated that the Yoruba:

believe that there is a universal cosmic energy, called Olorun, which permeates everything and which is the first order of existence. This FORCE is too refined and exalted to be called a God (*because all Gods have human characteristics*), but it is from this primordial energy that the different orders of the Gods (with their anthropomorphic characteristics) are descended. This FORCE is neither masculine nor feminine. Therefore, there is no direct worship, no temples or offerings or priesthood for the Olorun. There is only an acknowledgment at the beginning of prayers such as 'I praise Olorun' in which the worshipper acknowledges that this is the first order of existence (added emphasis).²⁰

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOD IN INDIGENOUS AFRIKAN COSMOLOGY

- ◆ The God is without gender. It is neither male nor female. It is not personal. It is too vast.
- ◆ The God is too vast for human intermediaries. The God has no priesthood.
- ◆ The God is too vast for sacrifice.
- ◆ The God is too vast for human-made habitation, such as a church, temple, or shrine.
- ◆ The God does not condone or encourage humans to commit evil against other humans, including conquest, dispossession, and genocide.

Similarly, according to Idowu B. Odeyemi, professor of applied geology at Nigeria's Federal University of Technology, president of the International Council for Ifá Religion, and Balogun Awo Agbaye, The God in Ifá is far beyond the simplistic falsifications common in Eurocentric anthropological literature. Rather, he maintains:

It is the ultimate, the supreme, the most powerful THING, sometimes (oftentimes!) unconceivable, the ultimate cause of all things—existing and created. It is the causal sphere. Olodumare is spaceless and timeless. It is also formless. It is the non-created, the incomprehensible, the indefinable.

Some various religions have given it the name God, Allah and so on, although they have, out of inability to comprehend its meaning and essence, attached essentially human, finite and mortal attributes to it. Olodumare is the fifth power, the original power. Everything was created by it and is being kept in balance by it. It is the origin and the purity of all thoughts and intentions, it is the causal world upon which the whole of creation subsists, beginning from the highest spheres to the lowest ones. The quintessence of the alchemists, it is the all in all.²¹

TABLE 3

PRAISE NAMES (ORIKI) FOR THE GOD IN THE IFÁ SYSTEM²²

| ORIKI | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | SOURCE IN IFÁ SCRIPTURE (ODU IFÁ) |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Oba adedaa | The Creator | Osa-Ogunda |
| Oba aterere | The Omnipresent | Eji Ogbe |
| Oba asedaa | The Maker of Humans | Ogbe-Oyeku |
| Oba Asekanmaku | The All Encompassing | Eji Ogbe |
| Oba Ologojulo | The Praise Worthy | Eji Ogbe |
| Oba mimo julo | The Most Pious | Ogbe-Oyeku |
| Eleti gbo aroye | The All Listening | Eji Ogbe |
| Oba aseyiowuu | The Discretionary God | Iwori Meji |
| Olorun | King/Ruler of Heaven | Ogbe-Irete |
| Awmaridii | The Unfathomable One | Ofun Meji |

In contrast with The God, on the most basic level of understanding (for there are more profound dimensions to the comprehension of these spirit forces) in indigenous Afrikan cosmology the divinities are male and female and have characteristics of persons. They have human intermediaries called priests, accept sacrificial offerings, and have shrines and temples dedicated to them. Further, in indigenous Afrikan cosmology, the divinities are not, and cannot possibly be, in competition with The God. As has been established above, they are created by The God and are the servants of The God. "The fact remains," writes Budge of the indigenous Afrikan cosmology of ancient Kemet, "gods ... were created by God ... The main point to keep in view is that the gods of Egypt were regarded by the Egyptians generally as inferior beings to the great God who made them, and that they were not held to be equal to him in all respects."²³

TABLE 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINITIES IN INDIGENOUS AFRIKAN COSMOLOGY

- ◆ The divinities are male and female. They have characteristics of persons.
- ◆ The divinities have human intermediaries called priests.
- ◆ The divinities accept sacrifice.
- ◆ The divinities have shrines and temples.
- ◆ The divinities are created by The God and are the servants of The God.

Cosmological Identity of the Judaeo-Christian Yahweh with West Afrikan Divinities

By applying the indigenous Afrikan cosmological framework to an investigation of the supreme force in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it becomes immediately apparent that Yahweh shares none of the characteristics of The God in indigenous Afrikan cosmology, but he does share most of the characteristics of the divinities—except with respect to moral character, a matter in which the differences become enormous. Like the divinities, which are male and female and have characteristics of persons, Yahweh, too, is male and personal.²⁴ In the psalms “God is spoken of in unapologetically anthropomorphic terms, as if he were a human being,” observes the biblical scholar Alexander Ryrie. The Hebrew psalmists “were determined at all costs to preserve the sense of God as a person, and were prepared to speak of him in human terms in order to emphasise his personal nature.”²⁵ The Christian theologian Ted Peters agrees. “God, according to Christian theology, ... is personal. We speak of the Trinity as made up of three persons. In fact, in Western civilization our concept of a human person is in large part derived from the Christian understanding of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as persons.”²⁶ Christian monotheism, echoes the Christian theologian A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, entails the belief in “an absolute, singular, personalistic God.”²⁷

Further, like the divinities, Yahweh had human intermediaries called priests. Moreover, as Yahweh is chiefly responsible for establishing a cult for himself, the Judaeo-Christian text explores in often minute detail the necessary procedures for establishing his proper worship. Accordingly, Yahweh created a priesthood for himself, personally supervising the priests’ selection, the design of their sacerdotal dress, the methodology of sacrifice, and procedures for divination. Thus, to begin, Yahweh commanded Moses: “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.”²⁸

Just as the divinities accept sacrificial offerings, Yahweh, also, demanded and prescribed sacrifice for himself, specifying their types, how they should be offered, the required materials (animals, birds, oils, foods, money, and other items), the occasions on which they should be offered, and Yahweh's preferences and taboos in sacrificial offerings. Again, Yahweh directed Moses: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy *burnt offerings*, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine *oxen*."²⁹ (added emphasis)

Of interest is the fact that the sacrifices were in some instances identical with those offered to the *neteru* of ancient Kemet. Illustrative of this is a passage from Kemetic fiction, the story of the shipwrecked traveler, who found himself stranded on an island filled with edible foods. Joyful at the discovery, "I then dug a hole in the ground and made a fire, and I prepared pieces of wood and a *burnt-offering for the gods*," he narrates.

Later, the protagonist encounters a *neter* in the form of a serpent who prophesies he would eventually return home. In response, he gratefully pledges that when he returns to his own country "I will cause to be brought unto thee [the *neter*] the unguent and spices called *aba*, and *hekenu*, and *inteneb*, and *khasait*, and the incense that is offered up in the temples, whereby every god is propitiated. ... *I will slaughter bulls for thee, and will offer them as burnt-offerings*."³⁰ (added emphasis) Budge notes the Kemites offered to the *neteru* "sweet-smelling incense, oils, meat, flowers, fruit and vegetables, beer and wine, and the presentation of such things formed one of the principal acts of worship of any and every god at all periods in Egyptian history."³¹ Not surprisingly, then, Akhenaton's sacrificial offerings to Aton included bread, beer, cattle, calves, fowl, wine, fruit, incense, and green plants.³²

Yahweh was also like the divinities in indigenous Afrikan cosmology with respect to shrines and temples. Here, again, Yahweh directed, with considerable attention to detail, the building of his temples (first a tent under Moses's regime and generations later a stone sanctuary constructed by Solomon, according to the biblical text³³) for his dwelling place and a shrine (the ark of the covenant) for communion and divination. The Judaeo-Christian text explains: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they may bring me an offering: ... And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. ... And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat."³⁴

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ... For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.³⁵

Some 480 years later, according to the Judaeo-Christian text, Israel's King Solomon built a permanent temple, the construction of which lasted seven years. On the day of its official opening, Solomon ordered that Yahweh's shrine, the ark of the covenant, be brought into it from the tent in which it had been housed since the time of Moses. Once the priests installed Yahweh's shrine in the temple's inner sanctuary, "it came to pass, when the priests were out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." Solomon, affirmed by Yahweh in his efforts, was then moved to triumphantly declare to the assembled nation: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in forever."³⁶ It is perhaps ironic, as shall be discussed shortly, that Yahweh did not permit Solomon's father, King David, to build the temple because "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight."³⁷

Yahweh's status as a divinity is even more emphatically demonstrated in the Judaeo-Christian narrative that introduces him, the biblical scholar Gene Rice explains. Yahweh's presence and influence were originally limited to a specific geographical territory; a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula constituted his home! It was a home, moreover, from which the god was reluctant to depart, despite sacral enticements by the Hebrews to host his presence in the human-constructed sanctuaries noted above.

Moses came to know God by the name Yahweh ... in a remote region far to the south of Canaan at a mountain that had long been home to Yahweh. The site of Moses' call was Mount Horeb (also called Mount Sinai), "the mountain of God" (Exod. 3:1; 18:5; 1 Kings 19:8)/"the mountain of Yahweh" (Num. 10:33), traditionally identified with Jebel Musa ("Mountain of Moses") in the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. *Yahweh was thought either to be enthroned upon or to descend from time to time to Horeb/Sinai from heaven* (Exod. 19:11, 18, 20; 24:10; 34:5; cf. Deut. 33:16). *As the special place of Yahweh's presence, the mountain was holy, so that Moses had to take off his sandals* (Exod. 3:5; cf. 19:12-13, 21-24).

Yahweh continues to be associated with Horeb/Sinai long after the departure of the Israelites. Moses asks Yahweh to accompany the Israelites to Canaan (Exod. 34:9), *but Yahweh declines Moses' request and instead sends an angel* (Exod. 32:34; 33:1-3; 23:20; cf. 33:12-17). *More than a century after the covenant at Horeb/Sinai, when the newly settled tribes were suffering from Canaanite oppression, Yahweh came to their aid from "the region of Edom ... yon Sinai"* (Judg. 5:4-5). When Elijah fled from Jezebel in search of spiritual renewal, he made a pilgrimage to "Horeb, the mount of God" (1 Kings 19:8) and *this was some four centuries after Moses*.

With the building of the temple in Jerusalem, Yahweh's sacramental presence came to be located at the temple and Mount Zion (1 Kings 8). In the course of time an elaborate theology was developed affirming and celebrating Yahweh's presence in Zion (1 Sam. 6; Pss. 132; 46; 48; 76; 84; 122; Amos 1:2; Isa. 8:18, etc.). *Yet the new theology of Yahweh's presence in Zion never completely supplanted Yahweh's association with Horeb/Sinai. Yahweh continued to be identified as "the God of Sinai" (Ps. 68:8 NRSV) who "came from Sinai ... from Mount Paran" (Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3; Ps. 68:7-8; cf. Isa. 63:1; Zech. 9:14).*³⁸ (added emphasis)

TABLE 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF YAHWEH AND DIVINITIES COMPARED

- ◆ *The divinities are male and female. They have characteristics of persons.*
Yahweh is male and personal.
- ◆ *The divinities have human intermediaries called priests.*
Yahweh created a priesthood for himself.
- ◆ *The divinities accept sacrifice.*
Yahweh demanded and prescribed sacrifice for himself.
- ◆ *The divinities have shrines and temples.*
Yahweh commanded the building of temples and a shrine for his dwelling place: tabernacle, temple, ark of the covenant (shrine).
- ◆ *In Afrikan cosmology, with respect to The God, "there is no notion of equality in terms of being or power with the other spirits." The divinities are created by The God and are the servants of The God.*
Yahweh is jealous and feels competitive with other divinities, demonstrating he is their equal.
- ◆ *The divinities strictly adhere to the moral directives of The God and bring about goodness and blessing in the world.*
Yahweh encouraged genocide.

As established above, with respect to The God “there is no notion of equality in terms of being or power with the other spirits” in indigenous Afrikan cosmology. By contrast, Yahweh is jealous and feels competitive with other divinities—the most compelling evidence that Yahweh perceives himself to be their equal—and warns his followers of the dire consequences of ignoring that fact. “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”³⁹ As one of the Ten Commandments, Yahweh also commanded: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ... Thou shalt not bow thyself down to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”⁴⁰ Remarkably, this commandment—a central tenet of the Hebrew faith—meets the definition of henotheism, not monotheism as traditionally understood in European culture. That is, henotheism “is polytheism [the belief in the existence of many gods] with an emphasis on loyalty to only one of the gods, or in the superiority of one’s own god over the gods of foreigners.”⁴¹ In short, Yahweh generally—except with respect to moral character—displays the characteristics of “gods” or divinities in indigenous Afrikan cosmology, not The God.

Interestingly, Budge maintained “Yahweh was identified with the gods of the polytheistic period of the ancient Hebrew religion. ... Elohim ... originally ... meant a collection of sacred or divine beings.”⁴² Yosef ben-Jochannan asserts Yahweh was a divinity within the indigenous Afrikan cosmology of Kemet. He traced one of his manifestations to the 26th dynasty (663-527 BCE), where the name was represented in *medu neter* (or hieroglyphics), and wherein the first four letters mean divinity and the last, or fifth, letter was a representation of the divinity himself. “Note that this Egyptian God was adopted by the Haribu (Hebrews, colloquially ‘Jews’) in their own mythology about the creation of the world. YWH was the name of a very minor God.”⁴³

The Distinguishing Moral Imperatives of West Afrikan Divinities and Yahweh

Finally, unlike The God in indigenous Afrikan cosmology, Yahweh commanded his adherents to invade other peoples’ lands, to dispossess them, and to commit genocide against them, threatening his worshippers with destruction if they equivocated in their compliance. By contrast, such actions would be inconceivable of The God—and its servants, the divinities—in indigenous Afrikan cosmology.

The Ifá scholar and priest Chief Solagbade Popoola of Lagos, Nigeria, writes that the most important thing for humans on earth—more important than religion—is to practice good character. “Religion ‘per se’ is not what is needed but good character,” he explains. “Ifá is against all forms of evil intentions and/or deeds.”⁴⁴ In Ifá the relentless cultivation of good, clean, pure, truthful, honest, sincere, just, righteous character is the main way a person can progress on his or her spiritual journey and be successful in achieving his or her destiny in life. Ifá also teaches that without the dedicated practice and cultivation of good character, a person cannot know Ifá and cannot seriously follow this sacred spiritual path.

In Ogunda-Meji, a chapter in Odu Ifá (Ifá's sacred scripture), Ifá teaches that "Good deeds never go unrewarded. Evil deeds never remain unsanctioned. Constant good deeds without visible results may appear as a loss. Good deeds are beneficial. Evil is not."⁴⁵ Chief Fasina Falade adds Ifá teaches a person's "character is of supreme importance and it is this which Olodumare judges. Thus the demands which Olodumare lays upon man are purely ethical. Man's well-being here on earth depends upon his character ... good character must be the dominant feature of a person's life."⁴⁶

Not only must a person practice a life of truthfulness, goodness, and peacefulness, but Ifá requires that those who follow this path must commit themselves to doing good as a way of life that constantly seeks to improve human existence and to make the world a better place in which all beings can live. "The tenets of Olodumare," Chief Falade explains, "are to leave goodness in this world and to right the wrongs that exist here."⁴⁷

The Ghanaian Ewe high priest Kwakuvi Azasu comments that in indigenous Afrikan spirituality, which he calls Afrikania, "bringer of light or civilization" in the Twi language, "Uprightness is the most important quality demanded by Afrikania in her adherents. ... Some people shy away from Afrikania because of its insistence on uprightiness and truth." Every action "which hurts others severally or collectively and disharmonises society is regarded as a grievous sin in Afrikania. ... Afrikania is a religion of love, peace, social cohesion and tolerance." In addition, unlike one-divinityism's characteristic intolerance of other spiritual systems, sectarian feuds are unknown in indigenous Afrikan spiritual systems "because Afrikania regards its various denominations and sects as the various aspects of devotion to the same Supreme Being. ... Afrikania is the only religion in the world which has never declared war on any other religion. It is the most tolerant religion in the world."⁴⁸

The late His Holiness Osofo Kofi Ameve added that indigenous Afrikan spiritual systems teach that doing good "is the highest sacrifice one can offer to God. ... The Afrikan religion teaches that those who can find the way to God are those who have attained purity in their hearts and actions. For, every individual is accountable to God for what ever life he had led on this earth." He continued: "The Afrikan religion teaches that the way to God is the life of Truth and Righteousness, set in the heart of man by God."⁴⁹

Consistent with these observations is one of many passages in Ifá scripture, which states the following about The God, the divinities, and humans:

I behave according to how Olorun [The Ruler of Heaven] created me. I do no evil; neither do I harbor evil thoughts, lest I die wretched. For whatever we perfect in our youth will persist throughout our lifetime. These were the declarations of Ifá to the 401 Irunmole [divinities] when coming from heaven to earth. Ifá also declared the same to Orunmila [a divinity] when he was coming from heaven to earth. Olodumare [The God] declared that upon the earth to which they were traveling they must not indulge in acts of wickedness, nor must they indulge in evil deeds. They must be truthful at all times so that their lives would be prosperous.⁵⁰

In this passage from Eji Ogbe the word evil is the word *ika* in Yoruba and it means wickedness and cruelty, a coldness of the heart. So Ifá teaches that The God directs that neither human beings nor divinities be cruel and cold-hearted. In short, according to Ifá scripture, The God created neither human beings nor divinities to be cold-hearted and cruel inwardly or to behave with cruelty and cold-heartedness outwardly toward humanity.

Further, the idea of uprightness on the part of both divinities and humans is reiterated in another passage of Eji Ogbe, where it reads: “Ifa enjoins us to be honest. The Deities would not allow us to compromise the Truth. They were asked to always offer sacrifice so that there would be many upright men in the world.”⁵¹

Interestingly, however, according to the Judaeo-Christian text, upon his descent from Mount Sinai after receiving the ten commandments (conceived and written on two stone tablets by Yahweh himself)—one of which, perhaps ironically, enjoined the Israelites not to murder each other—Moses ordered and supervised the massacre of 3,000 Israelites who had in his absence strayed from the worship of Yahweh. The text explains Moses had flown into a rage when he discovered the people had despaired of his return from communion with Yahweh on the mountain’s top and had pressured his brother, Aaron, Yahweh’s high priest, to construct an image of one of the Afrikan divinities or *neteru* of ancient Kemet, a golden calf, and engage in its worship.⁵² While the text alleges the people danced and sang while naked, and that their activity was the product of boredom and fickleness, what is especially revealing about the story is Yahweh’s tacit approval of Moses’s actions. After Moses returned again to Mount Sinai to commune with Yahweh and consult with him about the people’s apostasy, not only did Yahweh not rebuke Moses for slaughtering 3,000 people—declaring “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him shall I blot out of my book”—but he endorsed Moses’s actions by striking the massacre’s survivors with a plague. Of further significance is the disclosure that Moses had enlisted the members of Yahweh’s priesthood to carry out the murders. To these actions, Yahweh uttered not a single disapproving word.⁵³

Clearly, the people were not followers of Yahweh, as the divinity was essentially unknown to all except Moses, with whom he directly communicated. It is apparent that even Aaron, Moses's brother, had limited understanding of Yahweh and his cult of worship, which, in any event, had yet to be meaningfully founded. The circumstances make more comprehensible the people's worship of Afrikan-Kemite *neteru*, Yahweh's repeated violent threats and deadly punishments,⁵⁴ and Moses's murderous repression. For the new socio-religious order to have a chance of success, Moses and his divinity believed they had to nurture it in bloody, ruthless imposition upon the children of Israel. In other words, they felt they had, through terror, to create devotees and adherents where none had existed. Said another way, Moses was forcing a foreign and unfamiliar religion upon them.⁵⁵

Further, during his successful war of conquest, dispossession, and genocide in the progressive Israelite occupation of Canaan, Moses—under Yahweh's direction—ordered the murder of an untold number of Israelite men. Their crime, according to the Judaeo-Christian text, was to sleep with the native women of one of the nations in Canaan and to join in the worship of one of their divinities. All told, between the summary executions Moses ordered and deaths by the plague Yahweh brought against the people, some 24,000 were killed.⁵⁶ Indeed, the Judaeo-Christian text records that Yahweh was quite accustomed to exacting a tremendous level of slaughter against his "chosen people," killing tens of thousands of them. In II Samuel 24:1-25 KJV, Yahweh is reported to have killed 70,000 Israelites as punishment for a violated taboo for which David, the king, was solely responsible.

Yahweh's disapproval of Moses's reign of terror, therefore, would have been highly unlikely, whether one follows the logic of the premise of the Judaeo-Christian text (that they were sinful and deserving), or holds to the more critical and secular notion that Moses had determined to lead and to shape a new polity under the dictatorship of an unknown divinity. As the Israelites journeyed for Canaan, before the launching of their war of conquest, annihilation, and occupation, Yahweh—always chronically fearful of competition with other divinities—commanded that they utterly destroy the sacred shrines and emblems of the divinities of the peoples whose lands they were to invade and occupy. For those, however, who may have suffered in that task the sting of moral scruples, Yahweh ominously warned: "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; ... it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."⁵⁷

In addition to invasion, occupation, and dispossession, Yahweh also directed the Israelites to mercilessly slaughter the inhabitants, ordering "thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." For any who survived, Yahweh forbade the Israelites to marry them or establish anything less than continuing hostile and inimical relations.

His chief rationale for this policy centered again in his perceived need for the preservation of his fledgling cult: “For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.”⁵⁸ For all of these reasons, consequently, Yahweh under Moses’s regime directed the Israelites engage in a merciless war of extermination against the peoples of Canaan.

And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee: thine eye shall have no pity upon them: ... And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee little by little: *thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.* But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.⁵⁹ (added emphasis)

Akhenaton’s Atonic One-Divinityism: The Template for the Judaeo-Christian Yahweh

That there is a correspondence between Aton and Yahweh is supported by a number of observations. One is that the time of Akhenaton’s reign, during which he introduced the doctrine of one-divinityism, preceded Moses’s alleged birth and life. According to ben-Jochannan, Moses, allegedly a historical figure, purportedly lived from 1316-1196 BCE,⁶⁰ a substantial portion of that time in ancient Kemet for the formative years of his life. This included, according to the Judaeo-Christian text, an advanced Afrikan university education. Hence, his advocacy of the one-divinity doctrine would have been adapted to Yahweh from Akhenaton’s example. The Egyptologist William Kelly Simpson notes that Akhenaton took on the role for the worship of Aton that Moses later assumed with respect to Yahweh’s cult. Not only did Akhenaton assert the international supremacy of Aton, a claim that would later be assigned to Yahweh in the Judaeo-Christian text, but Akhenaton, like Moses after him, “interposed himself between the Aten and the people, with his worship directed to the Aten and the people’s attention focused upon him as the son and interpreter of the Aten.”⁶¹ John G. Jackson, who seems to accept Moses’s historicity, maintained the priest, trained at the Temple at Heliopolis, became a disciple of Akhenaton’s doctrine of one-divinityism, subsequently leading an exodus of dissidents from Kemet to establish Yahweh’s one-divinity (monotheistic) cult in an independent religious community.⁶²

Moreover, there are clear correspondences between the Hymn (or psalm) to Aton by Akhenaton and Nefertiti and the 104th Psalm (or hymn) to Yahweh of the Judaeo-Christian text in wording, thought, and sequence of ideas.⁶³ The Hymn to Aton was composed during Akhenaton's reign, whereas Psalm 104 succeeded it by several centuries, indicating the praise to Yahweh in the biblical text was patterned after the attributes and powers of Akhenaton's Aton. Indeed, the practice of assigning to Yahweh the worshipful attributes claimed by other divinities is commonplace in ancient Hebrew biblical literature.⁶⁴ Further, in both the Aton and Yahweh approaches to one-divinityism there is a similar hostility to and intolerance of other divinities. Thus, the cult of Yahweh, like the cult of Aton that preceded it, claimed supremacy over all other divinities and the non-existence of all other divinities.

The Nexus of One-Divinityism (Monotheism) and Religious Intolerance

Ultimately, Akhenaton's one-divinityism unleashed more destruction than good into the world, for his intolerance in cosmological terms meant that adherents of the new one-divinity doctrine would pursue a course of belief and behavior that would leave no possibility for peaceful coexistence with other peoples, their ideas, cultures, and ways of worship. Akhenaton—perhaps inadvertently and with the best of intentions—inaugurated a spirit of fanaticism and intolerance that has wreaked havoc on humankind.⁶⁵ Contrary to the ethos that arises from indigenous Afrikan cosmology, as the Ewe high priest Azasu has noted, the one-divinity disposition cannot abide the existence of a different (which it unfortunately perceives as a competing) idea.

This problem of intolerance, as has become evident in this discussion, rests in the inherent weakness of the one-divinity cosmology. Because in its origins it framed the recognition of other divinities as a mortal threat to its own fledgling emergence, continued existence, and effective recognition, it felt compelled to deny the reality and legitimacy (and evidence of the same) of any divinity other than itself. In short, the examples of ancient Kemet and ancient Israel demonstrate one-divinityism's insecurity was so fundamental that to exist it felt compelled to eradicate any cognizance of the existence of all other divinities, which existence it could only conceive as irreconcilable with its own.

Islamic One-Divinityism (Monotheism)

A cursory examination of the origins of Islam underscores the basic logic of this observation. Malise Ruthven notes in *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* that the Prophet Muhammad's message was a reformation of age-old and contemporaneous Arab beliefs. In Mecca, three female divinities of the Arabs were viewed and worshipped as powerful forces alongside al-Lah (Allah): al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat. Ruthven argues this fact “suggests to the student of religion, if not to every believer, that an evolution may have occurred in Muhammad's perception of God—from the High God of the Arabian pantheon to the Unique God without partners, associates, or ‘daughters.’”⁶⁶

In *A History of God*, Karen Armstrong asserts that prior to the practice of the new revelation called Islam, which the Prophet Muhammad introduced to the Arabs, al-Lah was merely “the High God of the ancient Arabian pantheon, whose name simply means ‘the God’” and that the sacred stone, the Ka’aba, was “the House of al-Lah.” Indeed, she notes that the Arabs during the first three years of the Prophet Muhammad’s mission “probably imagined that they could go on worshipping the traditional deities of Arabia alongside al-Lah, the High God, as they always had.” Three of the most significant of these Arab divinities were al-Lat (“the Goddess”), al-Uzza (“the Mighty One”), and Manat (“the Fateful One”).⁶⁷

Wayne B. Chandler in “Ebony and Bronze: Race and Ethnicity in Early Arabia and the Islamic World” writes that before Islam, Arabia was an area in which the worship of female divinities was more than a thousand years old. Quoting Amaury de Riencourt, author of *Sex and Power in History*, Chandler observes: “The land’s original Allah was Al-Lat, part of the female trinity along with Kore, or Q’re, the Virgin, and Al-Uzza, the Powerful One, the triad known as Manat.” In fact, Chandler disagrees with Armstrong regarding al-Lah’s relationship to the Ka’aba in ancient Arabia. Instead, Chandler writes that the Ka’aba, the sacred black stone, was originally dedicated to female divinities. Again, quoting another scholar, Chandler says that the Ka’aba was “formally dedicated to the pre-Islamic Triple Goddess Manat,” and that Manat was traditionally “worshipped by Muhammad’s tribesmen, the Koreshites or ‘Children of Kore,’ the hereditary guardians of the Kaaba at Mecca.” In fact, Chandler writes that the sacred stone was historically “a feminine symbol.”⁶⁸

Clearly, it was because of the closeness in identity of both Yahweh and Allah with other divinities of various other peoples both within and without the Arab and Hebrew cultures that the Arab, Hebrew, and Christian religions strictly and rather harshly forbade their followers to acknowledge any other divinities. Thus, writes Armstrong, “shirk (idolatry; literally, associating other beings with al-Lah) became the greatest sin of Islam.”⁶⁹ This explains why the first of the Five Pillars of Islam is the declaration that “There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”⁷⁰

In other words, then, the aggressiveness and arrogance of the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions toward other, and especially indigenous Afrikan, spiritual systems is due to the fact that their “Gods” were originally and historically male divinities among numerous other male and female divinities, all of them quite distinct from The God. At some point the followers of these particular divinities began to argue that the divinity they worshipped approximated what would in indigenous Afrikan cosmology be The God. Because they had to fight for prominence and primacy for their divinity over against the prestige of numerous other divinities, their adherents strictly forbade the recognition of these other divinities as equal to their own.

This is the true nature and origin of monotheism in the non-Afrikan world of Western Asia and, later, Europe. In sum, drawing their inspiration from Akhenaton, monotheism is, in actuality, nothing more than the error of one-divinityism that emerged in ancient Afrika. It is the Hebrew, Christian, and Muslim belief that there is only one divinity and that their divinity is the only one, with the added claim that the one divinity is also what in indigenous Afrikan cosmology would (blasphemously, it would seem) be identified as The God.

Conclusion

European chauvinism has conditioned its proponents and its victims to accept as legitimate—without critical reservation or examination—a host of extravagant claims. In this, their religion and the touted virtues of the one-divinity tradition are not exempted.⁷¹ What becomes immediately apparent from the vantage of indigenous Afrikan cosmology, however, is that monotheism, or one-divinityism, is a peculiar form of atheism, for within this system is comprehended no conception (in indigenous Afrikan terms) of The God. The implications of this atheism are striking in the foregoing examination of the cult of Yahweh, for it explains the absence of a superintending moral authority to effectuate moral constraints upon that system's founding practice: its imperialistic commitment to eradicate and replace other spiritual systems; its totalitarian character as seen in its hostility to peaceable coexistence and its unremitting quest for hegemony; the primacy of the materialist/economic motive that informed its drive to conquest; and its routine use of methods of threat, terror, and bloodshed, which permeated its nature and assured itself of the compliance of its "faithful." Wherever its adherents are found, this ethos generally manifests in varying degrees. More importantly, this ethos has also penetrated into the core of the human cultures that have embraced and assimilated the atheistic premise that informs one-divinityism. This can be explained by the fact that the logic of the absence of The God in cosmological terms points to an anarchy exemplified by the supremacist claims of lesser forces (divinities) accountable only to themselves. Because divinities within this schema are ultimately susceptible to human manipulation, the god concept in one-divinityism allows itself to become merely the extension or tool of the worst aspects of flawed human character and motives. This is one important and hitherto unexamined aspect of the one-divinity tradition when seen from the cosmology, epistemology, and axiology of indigenous Afrikan spiritual thought.

These brief observations offer a confirmation of two of the conclusions implied in this essay: (a). that the serious interrogation of indigenous Afrikan culture will yield critical lessons in the conduct of human affairs that can instruct and inspire all of humanity,⁷² and (b). that W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of double-consciousness, or Eurocentrism in Afrikan consciousness, is an outmoded approach to the human quest for knowledge.⁷³

Thus, while European supremacist propaganda has endlessly reiterated that one-divinityism is the highest form of religious and cultural expression, it is clear it can also be viewed, in indigenous Afrikan cosmological terms, as a truncated and inadequate spiritual system born of insecurity and which chief manifestation is intolerance. From this alternative perspective, war, social disharmony, and totalitarianism logically emerge as key human problems and challenges in cultures under its influence.

Cheikh Anta Diop rightly called Afrikans suffering from double-consciousness to a critical awareness “that most of the ideas used today to domesticate, atrophy, dissolve, or steal his ‘soul,’ were conceived by his own ancestors. To become conscious of that fact is perhaps the first step toward a genuine retrieval of himself; *without it, intellectual sterility is the general rule.*” An all important task that remains, therefore, is to “restore the historical consciousness of the African peoples and reconquer a Promethean consciousness.”⁷⁴ (added emphasis)

The late Afrikan psychologist and revolutionary theorist Amos N. Wilson, always stressing the strategic importance and interconnection of culture, knowledge, and consciousness, agreed with Diop, maintaining:

Culture and tradition are intellectual tools. When we rediscover our culture and tradition, when Afrikan culture and tradition become a part of us, we are going to have an intellectual explosion such as this world has never before witnessed. When we rediscover ourselves, our creativity is released. ... When we re-internalize our culture we’re going to gain our genius again; we will regain our analytical skills and use them in our interest.⁷⁵

Notes

¹ There are disagreements among scholars as to the dating of Akhenaten's reign. Yosef ben-Jochannan dates his reign from 1370 to 1352 BCE. See Yosef A. A. ben-Jochannan, *Black Man of the Nile and His Family* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1989; originally New York: Alkebu-lan Associates, 1970, 1972), 104, 159. Erik Hornung, *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001) establishes the dates, similar to ben-Jochannan, from 1375-1358 BCE. Similarly, the dates 1377-1360 BCE are offered by Sheldon Avery, "Akhenaten (c. 1396-1360 B.C.E.), King of Egypt," in *Great Leaders, Great Tyrants?: Contemporary Views of World Rulers Who Made History*, ed. Arnold Blumberg (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 1-6.

Others offer later dates. Dominic Montserrat, *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy, and Ancient Egypt* (New York: Routledge, 2000), viii, dates Amenhotep III's reign from 1391-1353 BCE and Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten's reign from 1353-1335 BCE. Likewise, in general agreement are the following: *1358-1340 BCE*, Asa G. Hilliard III, "Waset, The Eye of Ra and the Abode of Maat: The Pinnacle of Black Leadership in the Ancient World," in *African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge*, ed. Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris (Los Angeles: Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, 2002), 149; *1353-1336 BCE*, David P. Silverman, Josef William Wegner, and Jennifer Houser Wegner, *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun* (Philadelphia: UPenn Museum of Archaeology, 2006), xi, and David P. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128; *1353-1336 BCE*, Gay Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 8; *1352-1338 BCE*, Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Ian Shaw (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), 392; *1352-1336 BCE*, Morris L. Bierbrier, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008); *1360-1343 BCE*, Aidan Dodson, "Akhenaten: Egyptian Pharaoh," in *Encyclopedia of African History*, vol. 1: A-G, ed. Kevin Shillington (Fitzroy Dearborn, New York, 2005), 62-64.

For additional discussions of Akhenaten, the worship of Aton, and Kemetic monotheism, see Silverman, Wegner, and Wegner, *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*; Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Tutankhamen: Amenism, Atenism and Egyptian Monotheism* (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1971; originally 1923), 55-152.

² See James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, The Graduate School, Yale University, 1988), 11. Allen notes that Aton means disk "and refers essentially to the visible sun; only under Akhenaten does it fully achieve the status of a deity in its own right." For a brief but interesting summary of Akhenaten, see Molefi Kete Asante, *The Egyptian Philosophers: Ancient African Voice from Imhotep to Akhenaten* (Chicago: African American Images, 2000), 99-104.

³ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians: Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 1969; originally Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1904; London: Methuen, 1904), 68, 72, 73, 74, 80. See also James P. Allen, "The Celestial Realm," in *Ancient Egypt*, ed. David P. Silverman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 128-129, who states Aton, unlike the other divinities, was impersonal and without pictorial depiction. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. Ann E. Keep (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 146-150, argues Akhenaton introduced a trinitarian conception that excluded recognition of all other divinities and which trinitarianism continued after Akhenaton's reign in the worship of other divinities, notably Amon, Ra, and Ptah. Interestingly, James P. Allen, "The Natural Philosophy of Akhenaten," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. William Kelly Simpson (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, The Graduate School, Yale University, 1989), 89-101, following Jan Assmann's arguments, proposes that Akhenaton's worship of Aton can be seen as a philosophy of nature with monotheism or religion *per se* being deemphasized.

⁴ Stephen Quirke, *The Cult of Ra: Sun-Worship in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 144. Quirke's assertion ignores the experience of the Hebrew faith, as related by its scriptures, which was guilty of Akhenaton's excesses and more, as we shall see below. Quirke (on page 155) offers an explanation of Akhenaton's one-divinityism. He argues it was tied to the worship of his father, Amenhotep III, as the divine sun king, to whom Akhenaton served as co-regent and intermediary on earth. David P. Silverman, "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt" in *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, ed. Byron E. Shafer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 74-75, notes that Akhenaton's approach to the worship of Aton was part of a progressive elevation of the divinity that began with his father's attention to the neter. On this point also see Werner Forman and Stephen Quirke, *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 180.

⁵ Miriam Lichtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume II: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 89.

⁶ Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, trans. Andrew Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 216.

⁷ Silverman, "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt," 82. On pages 81-87 Silverman discusses the king's monotheism and his proscription of the worship of Amun.

⁸ Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt*, 217. See also Forman and Quirke, *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife*, 122-124.

⁹ Kwakuvi Azasu, *Afrika: African Traditional Religion, A Brief Exposition* (Accra: Afrikan Renaissance Books, 2003), 24-25.

¹⁰ See Monica A. Coleman, "From Models of God to a Model of Gods: How Whiteheadian Metaphysics Facilitates Western Language Discussion of Divine Multiplicity," *Philosophia* 35 (2007): 329-340. Coleman, a Christian theologian, presents in language the conceptual confusion created by the hegemonic monotheistic tradition. Using the Yoruba model, she notes there are distinctions between the divinities and the supreme force in Yoruba cosmology. Thus, she recognizes that the monotheistic ascription of polytheism does not fit Yoruba cosmology. In short, she acknowledges that Afrikan thought, as far as the Yoruba are concerned, does not fit the categories and definitions common to European Protestant Christian conceptualization.

Still, her effort to explain the inadequacy and parochialism of the monotheistic theological lens also illustrates conceptual problems. For example, she associates Afrikan tradition with "certain religious traditions [that] do not have a singular image of God, but a belief in a plurality of divinities." Thus, she remarks, "My particular concern is African traditional religions, and other religions, that complicate the issue of religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue, because their understanding of the divine is so radically different from the God of Muslim, Jewish and Christian traditions" (330-332).

Apparently, the Judaeo-Christian cosmology, which includes angels, the Devil/Satan (which in some domains of Judaeo-Christian thought suggest this rebel angel is a polar oppositional and near equal entity with The God concept), demons, saints, and Mary, Mother of God, seem to pose no similar problems of "divine multiplicity" with a singular image of The God.

To this must be added another observation. Afrikans held captive in the Americas by Catholic Christian enslavers were able to successfully mask the worship of Afrikan divinities under the guise of Christian saints. This achievement undermines the notion of radical differences between the two systems according to Coleman's criteria. If the saints and Mary, the Mother of God, are not The God, why would the divinities (orisa/orisha/oricha/orixa), which are analogous to the saints, be considered The God? The notion that the divinities and The God are identical in Afrikan theology is either a Christian assumption or a deliberate Christian obfuscation. Clearly, enslaved Afrikans, whose beliefs and practice were informed by Afrikan cosmology, understood and determined the relevant connections between their belief system and the alien one forced upon them and made what they deemed the appropriate equivalences.

¹¹ Azasu, 10-11. Contrast this with the contention by A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), 14, that “the problem of God with Capital G and gods with small letters is an English linguistic problem and has become an African problem mainly by imposition.” Ogbonnaya (pages 14-21) argues the distinction is contrived as a reaction by Christianized Afrikan scholars to the negative conceptions extant in European theology examining Afrikan cosmology. Here we have offered evidence from those initiated, trained, and practicing in Afrikan priestly traditions—that is, Afrikan theologians proper—in addition to Afrikan scholars examining Afrikan cosmology. The key problem here is an epistemological one grounded in the Christian insistence that The God can only be understood as a supreme *personal being*. Not only is this a conception peculiar to Judaeo-Christian theology, but it is also, this study argues, modeled upon the characteristics of what in Afrikan cosmology would be called a divinity.

Because The God in Afrikan cosmology fails the Judaeo-Christian definition of monotheism (a singular, supreme, personal, spirit being), and equally fails the criteria of what he calls a “separationistic polytheism,” Ogbonnaya offers (pages 21-30) the notion that The God in Afrikan cosmology is “a community of gods who are fundamentally related to one another and ontologically equal while at the same time distinct from one another by their personhood and functions.” This he calls “Divine Communalism.”

¹² Kwame Agyei Akoto and Akua Nson Akoto, *The Sankofa Movement: Reafrikanization and the Reality of War* (Washington, DC: Oyoko InfoCom, Inc., 2000), 15. Both the Akotos, who are based in Washington, DC, are high priests in the Akan tradition and leaders of a faith community in that city.

¹³ Chief Falade’s title indicates he is the protector or defender of the sacredness of Odu (the mystical powers or principles of the religion) and that this title emerges from Ile-Ife, the center and headquarters of Ifa in the world. He is on the council of high priests of the Araba Oluisese Agbaye, Chief Aworeni Adisa Makanranwale, the chief high priest of Ifa in the entire world. The fact that Chief Falade is on the Araba’s council of high priests indicates he is among the highest ranked Ifa priests in the world.

¹⁴ Chief Fasina Falade, “Character Attributes of the Irunmole and Orisha with a Short Description of Ori,” in Ara Ifa Ijo Orunmila website; available from http://ayodele_falade.tripod.com/id13.html. See also F. A. M. Adewale-Abayomi, “Difference Between Irunmole and Orisa,” 3 *Orunmila* (June 1987): 39-41.

¹⁵ The author acknowledges Professor Elom Dovlo of the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, for his illuminating lecture (which provides the basis of this schema) on the subject of indigenous Afrikan spirituality on 12 July 2004 at the University of Ghana, sponsored by the Ghana Summer International Study Program, African American Studies, University of Houston. Professor Dovlo noted that Mawu, the Ewe name for The God, means “That which is greater than everything else,” while the Akan name for The God, Onyame, in Twi means “That which outshines everything else.”

¹⁶ Kofi Asare Opoku, ed., *Hearing and Keeping, Akan Proverbs: African Proverbs Series*, vol. 2 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 1.

¹⁷ Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra, Ghana: FEP International Private Limited, 1978), 30. Chief Falade wrote in a teaching given to the author that confirms Opoku’s explanation of the accessibility of The God to all humans: “One can give salutation to Olódùmarè daily after cleaning oneself and going outside, facing the east, and blowing iyerusun powder into the east, then asking for the assistance for the day, calling upon one of the many names of the Creator. Absorbing the attributes into one’s life is very important, as opposed to making Olódùmarè unattainable. Olódùmarè exists within all things and is very accessible. All one has to do is ask and have faith.”

¹⁸ Fasina Falade, *Ijo Orunmila* (Lynwood, CA: Ara Ifa Publishing, 1998), 2.

¹⁹ Falade, 11. See also Coleman, “From Models of God to a Model of Gods,” 332.

²⁰ HRG Odunfonda I. Adaramola, *Obatala: The Yoruba God of Creation* (Sheldon, SC: no date).

²¹ Idowu B. Odeyemi, a statement given to the author, 18 August 2003.

²² The author acknowledges receipt of this information by the Ifa priest and scholar Chief Solagbade Popoola of Lagos, Nigeria, from Chief Odunfa Bukola Aworeni Popoola of Williamstown, New Jersey, who is president of Yoruba Olodumare Ile, a national organization promoting Ifa among Afrikans in the United States. Chief O. B. A. Popoola is Otun Iyanifa Awo Agbaye Obinrin Ile Ife. Her title indicates she is a member of the Araba Oluisese Agbaye’s council of high priests.

²³ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians: Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1969; originally Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1904; London: Methuen, 1904), 141. See also Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 146-150, who, among other things, argues that the notion of a single and supreme God emerged in ancient Kemetic religious worship independent of Akhenaton's cosmological innovation. Morenz characterized this as henotheism or "monolatry" rather than monotheism. Hilliard, "Waset, The Eye of Ra and the Abode of Maat," 149-151, argues by contrast that Akhenaton merely introduced "a new form of monotheism." He notes that Kemetic religious texts disclose "unmistakable proof that monotheism predates Akhenaten by at least fifteen hundred years." Interestingly, Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity*, 33-47, proposes the notion of "Divine Communalism" in Kemet, arguing against the applicability of Judaeo-Christian theological categories of monotheism and polytheism.

²⁴ In Yahweh-Elohim's role as the creator, *he* made man in *his* own image. See Genesis 1:27; 2:2-3; 5:1-2 King James Version, hereafter KJV. Further, as shall be seen below, he is jealous, insecure, vengeful, angry, ruthless, displaying the worst traits of human character.

²⁵ Alexander Ryrie, *Deliver Us From Evil: Reading the Psalms as Poetry* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2004), 116-129.

²⁶ Ted Peters, "Models of God," *Philosophia* 35 (2007): 282.

²⁷ Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity*, 13.

²⁸ Exodus 28:1 KJV. The details of the priesthood are well covered in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. See also Gene Rice, "Africans and the Origin of the Worship of Yahweh," *Journal of Religious Thought* 50, no. 1-2 (Fall 1993/Spring 1994): 27-44. Rice notes that Moses, in his initial encounter with Yahweh, is completely ignorant of the god's identity. He argues that Moses, Aaron, the Hebrew priesthood, and the Hebrews as a whole were initiated into Yahweh's worship by Midianite/Kenite priests. The Yahweh-worshipping Midianites and Kenites had their homeland in "northwestern Arabia east of the Gulf of Aqabah," he writes on page 28. They "lived a nomadic existence and made their home at times in Moab (Gen. 36:35), the Jordan Valley (Num. 25:1, 6-7; 31:2-3; Josh. 13:21), Canaan (Judg. 6:1-6, 33; 7:1), and Sinai (Num. 10:29), the site of the traditional location of the mount of revelation."

²⁹ Exodus 20:24 KJV. The Book of Leviticus goes into great detail regarding sacrifices to Yahweh.

³⁰ E. A. Wallis Budge, *An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997; originally London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1914), 209, 211. Other translations include Adolf Erman, ed., *The Ancient Egyptians: A Sourcebook of Their Writings* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 29-35; William Kelly Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 50-56; Miriam Lichtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 211-215; John L. Foster, ed. and trans., *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 8-16; R. B. Parkinson, ed. and trans., *The Tale of Sinhue and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems, 1940-1640 BC* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 89-101; Stephen Quirke, *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC: Questions and Readings* (London: Golden House Publications, 2004), 71-76.

³¹ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Dwellers on the Nile: The Life, History, Religion and Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* (New York: Dover Publications, 1977; originally London: The Religious Tract Society, 1926), 203. See also Emily Teeter, "The Life of Ritual," in *Ancient Egypt*, ed. David P. Silverman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 148-151.

³² Silverman, Wegner, and Wegner, *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 46.

³³ I Kings 5:1-18; 6:1-38 KJV.

³⁴ Exodus 25:1-2, 8, 21-22 KJV.

³⁵ Exodus 40:34-35, 38 KJV.

³⁶ I Kings 6:37-38; 8:1-13 KJV.

³⁷ I Chronicles 22:8 KJV.

³⁸ Rice, "Africans and the Origin of the Worship of Yahweh," 27-28. Coleman, "From Models of God to a Model of Gods," 332, notes (in wrestling with Afrikan conceptions of the divine in light of the monotheistic lens) that in the Yoruba tradition the orisa (or divinities) have "geographical ... associations." The significance of this is immediately evident. Karl W. Luckert, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire: Theological and Philosophical Roots of Christendom in Evolutionary Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 124, also notes the Hebrew divinity, Yahweh, was understood as having his dwelling place—that is, geographical association—in the Sinai desert.

³⁹ Exodus 34:14 KJV.

⁴⁰ Exodus 20:3, 5-6 KJV.

⁴¹ Peters, "Models of God," 283. This is a rather striking confession of belief in the existence of other divinities. It can be illuminatingly contrasted with Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 8 on the significance of Christians eating food sacrificed to divinities, which he calls "idols." Paul argues there is no sin for Christians in doing so because the divinities do not exist. Rather, his concern is with those Christians who believe in the existence of divinities and whose Christian faith would be weakened by seeing fellow Christians eating foods offered to them. Paul, who is clearly dealing with cultural issues peculiar to non-Hebrew converts, cautions that Christians who are secure in their understanding of cosmology remain sensitive to the impact this might pose for the faith of their co-religionists who believe in the existence of other divinities.

⁴² Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. 1, 141.

⁴³ ben-Jochannan, *Black Man*, 159, 344.

⁴⁴ Solagbade Popoola, "Life, Its Purpose, and Hereafter," *Orunmila* 3 (June 1987): 16, 13.

⁴⁵ Popoola, 14.

⁴⁶ Falade, *Ijo Orunmila*, 22.

⁴⁷ Falade, 24.

⁴⁸ Azasu, *Afrikania*, 7, 24, 29, 32-33, 36, 39.

⁴⁹ Kofi Ameve, *The Divine Acts: Holy Scriptures for Sankofa Faith* (Accra: Afrikan Renaissance Mission, no date), 23, 108, 109-110. In accord with the high priest Osofo Ameve's teaching, a passage in the Ifa scripture called Oyeku-Ogbe given to the author by Chief O. B. A. Popoola states: "Earth is the marketplace, while heaven is home. This was the declaration of Ifa to Olodumare, the King that created a perfect world. If humans get to the earth, do not forget that you shall all return to heaven. For the earth is but a market place, while heaven is the home. You shall all account for all your deeds."

⁵⁰ Given to the author by Chief O. B. A. Popoola.

⁵¹ Ayo Salami, *Ifa: A Complete Divination* (Lagos, Nigeria: NIDD Publishing and Printing Ltd., 2002), 4.

⁵² Perhaps it was Het-Heru, or Hathor, which was one of the oldest *neteru* of Kemet and was symbolized in the form of a cow from great antiquity. See Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. 1, 428-438.

⁵³ Exodus 32:1-35 KJV.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Numbers 11:1-3; 16:25-50; 21:4-6 KJV.

⁵⁵ Rice, as noted above, arrives at this point by means of a critical examination of the Judaeo-Christian text, positing the Hebrews were initiated into the worship of Yahweh by Midianite/Kenite priests during the time of Moses. Prior to this time, Yahweh was completely unknown to them. See Rice, "Africans and the Origin of the Worship of Yahweh," 27-44.

⁵⁶ Numbers 25:1-18 KJV.

⁵⁷ Numbers 33:50-56 KJV.

⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 7:1-4 KJV. Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism: Biblical Criticism From Max Weber to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press; New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), xi, offers an entertainingly euphemistic explanation for the foregoing when he asserts: "Israel, then, as the other party to the covenant mediated by Moses, owed *a lasting debt of gratitude* to serve and to worship the lord of the universe and to follow his laws strictly. This *rational relationship*, unknown elsewhere, created *an ethical obligation so binding* that Jewish tradition regarded 'defection from Yahweh as *an especially fatal abomination*'." (added emphasis)

⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 7:16, 22-24 KJV.

⁶⁰ Yosef A. A. ben-Jochannan, *We the Black Jews*, vols. 1 and 2 (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1993; originally New York: Alkebu-lan Book Associates, 1983), xlv, lxxxii. Whether there was ever a Moses is a matter for debate in some circles. Certain aspects of his supposed life are subject to historical doubt, including the Exodus, for which there is no historical evidence. There are also the accounts of his life in the Judaeo-Christian text that are drawn from the mythology of Aseru, Aset, and Heru. In the text, an infant Moses was allegedly hidden in the papyrus swamps to protect him from being killed by the Kemite king, who, according to the biblical story, sought to kill the first born males of the Hebrew people.

Thousands of years before this composition, however, ancient Kemetic myth told a story of the divinity Aset hiding with her infant son Heru in papyrus swamps, successfully escaping her husband's (Aseru) murderer Set, who sought to kill the infant son to prevent him from growing up to take revenge for his father's murder. There is also the alleged parting of the Red Sea by Moses through the power of Yahweh and the drowning of the Kemite troops who sought to prevent the Hebrew escape, according to the Judaeo-Christian text. The notion of the parting of the Nile by Kemite magicians had long been part of Kemetic fictional literature. The drowning of enemy troops, including upturned chariots, is recorded by the Kemites to commemorate some of their military victories. Finally, there is the fact that Moses, which means "child of" or "born of," is only a partial Kemetic name. Collectively, the issues raised, and many others that have been neglected in this brief discussion, suggest the story has largely been fictionalized. What is clear, however, is that to impart to the character Moses the aura of a hero divinely called to destiny, the writers of the Judaeo-Christian text borrowed from indigenous Afrikan mythology, which in Hebrew culture was evidently understood to render powerful and authenticating effect.

⁶¹ Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 289. Already observed above is the establishment of Yahweh's cult and the nature of Moses's role as its creator and interpreter. See also Luckert, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire*, 107-109. Luckert argues Akhenaton's monotheism was an extremist form of selfishness in which the theology surrounding the enthronement of the divinity Aton was solely concerned with the king and his wife. Silverman in "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt" notes on page 83 that under Akhenaton's formulation "The Aten could be worshipped only through the king." In fact, he adds (page 85), Akhenaten, his wife, the queen Nefertiti, and Aton "constituted the divine triad. The hymns that were sung and the liturgies that were performed focused on the Aten and Akhenaten." According to Silverman, Wegner, and Wegner, *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun*, 31, Akhenaton assumed the role "as the sole high priest of the Aten, and he required his own high priest." That is, the king was the only person permitted to directly worship Aton.

⁶² John G. Jackson, *Man, God, and Civilization* (Chicago: Kushena Books, 2000; originally Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press; New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1972), 232-233. Luckert, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire*, 122, admits that "Apart from partial Hebrew scriptures we have no evidence that Moses, the leader of Israel's 'Exodus,' ever lived. A self-serving cult document is not the best possible source for historical proof."

⁶³ James Henry Breasted, *A History of Egypt: From the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (New York: Bantam Books, 1964; originally New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 312-316; Simpson, *Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 289; Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 160-161; Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt*, 219-222.

⁶⁴ A cursory examination of biblical scholarship reveals the Israelites had an established practice of borrowing, or in some instances, copying from the religious literature of both the Canaanites and the Kemites, among others. Further, what consensus there is with respect to dating Psalm 104 indicates it is well after Akhenaton's reign. Evidently, it is common knowledge that the psalm is simply a plagiarized version of Akhenaton's Hymn to Aton. Supporting this conclusion is the observation that many of the arguments offered by biblical scholars as to the supposed "significant" differences between the two compositions are, to be plain, silly and/or disingenuous.

Ryrie, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 7-8, notes that the Psalms in some instances were adapted from the worship of other divinities against whom Yahweh warred. "It is likely that Israelite psalmists took over some pagan or Canaanite poems and re-interpreted and re-applied them to their own culture and religious understandings. Thus Ps. 29 is probably an adaptation of a psalm about the god Baal, and Ps. 19 appears to be an enlargement and re-interpretation of an original poem about the sun." Again, this demonstrates Yahweh's competitiveness with other divinities. On the Canaanite and other influences and origins for the Psalms that predate the Hebrews, see the brief discussion by William L. Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 17-25.

With respect to Psalm 104, John Paterson, *The Praises of Israel: Studies Literary and Religious in the Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 180, 181, observes it is qualitatively better than most Hebrew literary achievements, possessing "a wealth of imaginative insight and a depth of pathos that are rarely found in Hebrew literature." Indeed, he admits, "Only in Egypt, however, do we find anything comparable to the present poem. Some scholars are agreed that Ikhnaton's *Hymn to the Sun-god*, which may be dated about 1370 B.C., has many ideas and expressions in common with this song, and it may have exercised a real influence upon the poet of this psalm." His reaction to the extent of that influence is more or less typical of other reactions. "That such external influences did play a part in the formation of Hebrew literature is not to be denied, but such influences need not be over-estimated. All that the Hebrew borrowed he made his own and stamped it with his peculiar genius."

On the question of the relations between Akhenaton's hymn and Psalm 104, also see H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969; originally The Warburg Press, 1959), 722-723; Holladay, *The Psalms*, 26, 39-40; W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated With Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes* (London: S. P. C. K., 1953; originally 1939), 440; and Moses Bittenwieser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with New Translation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), 158.

As for dating the psalms, Ryrie, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 132, note 29, speaks to the fact of the great divergence in scholarly opinion on the dating of the psalms as a collection, estimates ranging from slightly before 400 to 100 BCE and on the other end no later than the seventh century BCE. In either case, that means Psalm 104 was written several centuries after Akhenaten's hymn to Aton. Paterson, *Praises of Israel*, 3, 13, dates the Psalms at 537-37 BCE, although he acknowledges some scholars hold they were composed somewhere between the eleventh and fourth centuries BCE. Holladay, *The Psalms*, 26, 39-40, speculates Psalm 104 may have been written during Solomon's reign, which ended 922 BCE.

⁶⁵ Of interest are Silverman's comments in "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt," 82, where he writes "Akhenaten's religion went further toward monotheism than any of the world's religions had previously attempted. In fact, some scholars state that Akhenaten's beliefs introduced monotheism to the world. Perhaps Akhenaten did pioneer a concept that was to have a profound effect on the development of the world's religions." Further, Jan Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. William Kelly Simpson (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, The Graduate School, Yale University, 1989), 67, n38, remarks on the totalitarian character of Akhenaten's religion, stating "the claim of the king being the only one to 'know' the god and the intolerance typical of an orthodox interpretation of knowledge are dominant features of Amarna religion."

⁶⁶ Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35-36.

⁶⁷ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 135, 142, 146, 147. See also Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

⁶⁸ Wayne B. Chandler, "Ebony and Bronze: Race and Ethnicity in Early Arabia and the Islamic World," in *African Presence in Early Asia*, ed. Runoko Rashidi and Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 272. Chandler was quoting Amaury de Riencourt, *Sex and Power in History* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1974) and Idris Shah, *The Sufis* (London: Octagon Press, 1964).

⁶⁹ Armstrong, *A History*, 148.

⁷⁰ Ruthven, *Islam*, 147.

⁷¹ An example of this is Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism*, x-xii, citing arguments advanced by the German political economist and sociologist Max Weber, who claimed the Hebrew religious tradition originated the tendency in European culture to break “the hold of magic over people’s minds and engendered a ‘rational’, this-worldly ethic. ... This ethic ‘was free of magic and all forms of irrational quest for salvation.’” The notion of the Hebrew origination of the materialist/rationalistic ethos characteristic of the European cultural complex is debatable, but that is not the core of the matter. The extravagance with which we are concerned lies in Weber’s assertion that Hebrew religious materialism “‘created the basis for our modern science and technology, and for capitalism.’” Admittedly, there is evident in the Judaeo-Christian tradition a rapacious materialistic ethos that lends itself to a mentality characteristic of the anti-human and anti-nature uses of science, technology, and economics of which peoples across the globe are victim. Nonetheless, Stanford Lewis’s rejoinder in *The Falsification and Fabrication of Ancient Egypt, 3400 BCE to 500 BCE: A Survey of the Literatures* (Jackson, MS: Four-G Publishers, 2002), 121, is quite apt in this instance: “Zeitlin cannot, of course, point to the science, mathematics, engineering, medicine, scientific theory, etc. that the ancient Hebrews produced based on their system of thought. In marked contrast, the ‘superstitious’ Kemites have produced it in abundance, magnificently and incomparably.”

⁷² Maulana Karenga has observed that Africalogy in its most basic essence “is an ongoing dialogue with African culture. That is to say, continuously asking it questions and seeking from it answers to the fundamental questions of humankind.” Africalogy “is a contribution to humanity’s understanding of itself, using the African experience as a paradigmatic human struggle and achievement.” See Maulana Karenga, “Black Studies: A Critical Reassessment,” in *Dispatches From the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, ed., Manning Marable (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 164, 165.

⁷³ Du Bois defined the problem of Eurocentrism in Afrikan consciousness more than a century ago in his classic *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). He observed that the Afrikan lived in a world that “yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Writings: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade, The Souls of Black Folk, Dusk of Dawn, Essays and Articles*, ed. Nathan Huggins (New York: The Library of America, 1996), 364.

⁷⁴ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, ed. and trans. Mercer Cook (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), xx.

⁷⁵ Amos N. Wilson, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness: Eurocentric History, Psychiatry and the Politics of White Supremacy* (Brooklyn, NY: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1993), 59.