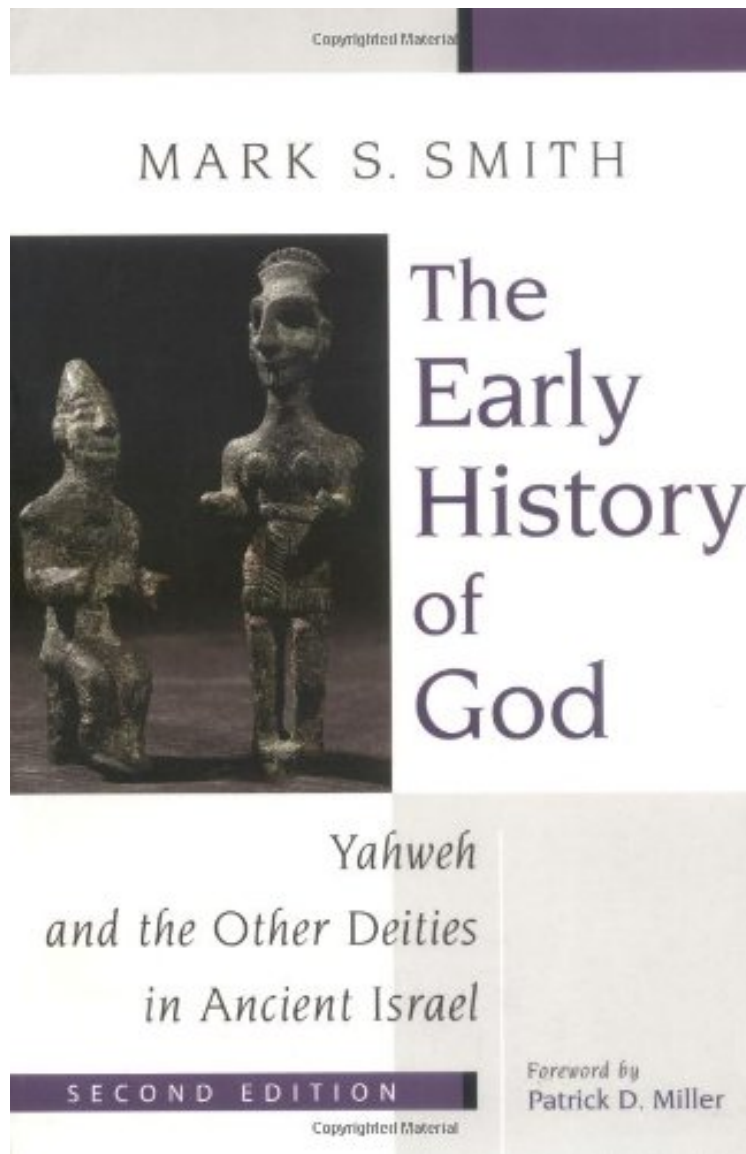


[Library ebook] The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (The Biblical Resource Series)

The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (The Biblical Resource Series)

Mark S. Smith

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Mark S. Smith : The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (The Biblical Resource Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (The Biblical Resource Series):

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Yahweh and his wife and his child sacrifices By Peter S. Bradley In The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel, Mark S. Smith looks at biblical texts and the Canaanite background on a variety of different topics to puzzle out the early development of "Yahwism." According to Smith's reconstruction of the data, early Israel - in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, the period of the Judges - was essentially polytheistic with a limited range of divine beings, including El, Yahweh, In the Judges period, Israelite divinities may have included Yahweh, El, Baal, and perhaps Asherah as well as the sun, moon, and stars. During the monarchy, Yahweh, Baal, Astarte, and the sun, moon, and stars were considered deities in Israel. Then, came the Babylonian exile, and at the lowest ebb of its political fortunes, the Israelite priestly class "morphed" Yahwism from a polytheistic religion with monolatrist tendencies to pure monotheism. The mechanism by which this development was accomplished was the vehicle of writing in which polytheistic references were largely suppressed and monotheistic concepts were promoted. Thus, there is an evolution of sorts from polytheism to monolatry (a devotion to a particular god) to monotheism which denies the existence of gods other than the One True God. This is obviously not the history that the average person gets taught on Sunday, nor is it what the Bible teaches. In the Bible, of course, the Monotheistic Revolution happens with Moses, who learns that there is one God. God enlists Moses to free the people of Israel from Egypt. Thereafter, although there is a creeping temptation of kings and the people to worship strange gods, there is no question that the moral force is against them and in favor of monotheism, as prophets condemn backsliding kings and judges deal harshly with idolatrous foreigners. So, how does Smith turn the Bible on its head? Basically, he assumes that Israel was a Canaanite culture. By knowing what the norms were for Canaanite culture - largely from the texts preserved at Ugarit - he then gleans the Bible for clues and indications of normal Canaanite culture. Then, by reading the text, and the inferences in the text, he finds that Canaanite culture was being practiced in Israel. Thus, for example, condemnations of "high places" and statements about taking the Asherah out of the Temple are indications that Israelites were following Canaanite norms by worshipping at high places and that Yahweh was associated with the symbols of a goddess, the "asherah" - a pole sacred to the goddess Asherah - which then implies that Yahweh may have had a consort, namely Asherah. Smith notes: Biblical texts provide a few indications for the cultic context of the asherah. According to two passages it was a wooden item erected next to the altar of a god. In Judges 6:25-26, Gideon is commanded to pull down the altar of Baal which your father has, and cut down the asherah that is beside it. Deuteronomy 16:21 forbids the planting of any tree an asherah besides the altar of the Lord your God which you shall make.⁴⁶³ The asherah was a religious symbol within Yahwistic cult in both northern and southern capitals. It is indicated in 2 Kings 13:6 that the asherah belonged to the cult of Samaria. The Jerusalem temple was expunged of cultic objects considered unacceptable according to 2 Kings 23. The list includes the asherah, but there is no indication that the asherah was related to a cult of Baal. Smith, Mark S. (2010-04-12). The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (Biblical Resource Series) (Kindle Locations 2015-2022). Eerdmans Publishing Co - A. Kindle Edition. The question of Asherah as an Israelite goddess constitutes a major issue in understanding Israelite religion. Does the biblical and extrabiblical evidence support the view that Asherah was a goddess in pre-exilic Israel and that she was the consort of Yahweh? Or, alternatively, does the data point to the asherah as a symbol within the cult of Yahweh without signifying a goddess? The first position constitutes a majority view, represented by the older works of H. Ringgren, G. Fohrer, and G. W. Ahlstrm, and the studies in the 1980s by W. G. Dever, D. N. Freedman, R. Hestrin, A. Lemaire, and S. Olyan and more recent works by J. M. Hadley, J. Day, M. Dijkstra, O. Keel, and Z. Zevit.⁵⁰⁰ A minority position, held earlier by B. Lang, P. D. Miller, J. Tigay, and U. Winter and recently by C. Frevel and M. C. A. Korpel, maintains on the paucity of evidence that rh neither referred to a goddess nor symbolized the goddess in Israel. Smith, Mark S. (2010-04-12). The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (Biblical Resource Series) (Kindle Locations 2130-2137). Eerdmans Publishing Co - A. Kindle Edition. Sometimes, the indication is a little more direct, such as the case with child sacrifice. Smith observes: Ezekiel 20:25-26 provides a different type of explanation for the otherwise forbidden practice of child sacrifice. In this passage Yahweh describes child sacrifice as divine punishment: Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life; and I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them; I did it that they might know that I am Yahweh. Similarly, Jeremiah 7:21-22 dismisses the divine authority for child sacrifice by denying that Yahweh ever commanded it.

Foreword by Patrick D. Miller In this remarkable, acclaimed history of the development of monotheism, Mark S. Smith explains how Israel's religion evolved from a cult of Yahweh as a primary deity among many to a fully defined monotheistic faith with Yahweh as sole god. Repudiating the traditional view that Israel was fundamentally different in culture and religion from its Canaanite neighbors, this provocative book argues that Israelite religion developed, at least in part, from the religion of Canaan. Drawing on epigraphic and archaeological sources, Smith cogently demonstrates that Israelite religion was not an outright rejection of foreign, pagan gods but, rather, was the result of the progressive establishment of a distinctly separate Israelite identity. This thoroughly revised second edition of The Early History of God includes a substantial new preface by the author and a foreword by Patrick D. Miller.

Journal of Biblical Literature " of the first edition ? Smith deserves a very careful and appreciative hearing. . . This book provides a feast for the attentive reader and concerned scholar."The Christian Century " of the first edition ? Smith assembles and analyzes a tremendous array of archaeological and textual evidence to challenge the notion of Israel's religious distinctiveness. . . The implications of this insight for theological reflection on Judaism are incalculable."Catholic Biblical Quarterly " of the first edition ? It is rare to find a book so steeped in the primary evidence of texts and history and so thoroughly conversant with the nuances of recent scholarly discussion. . . Smith's admirable erudition and discerning judgment will make this book required reading for present and future generations of biblical scholars and students."Journal of the American Academy of Religion " of the first edition ? The notes are a treasury of information and resources for scholars, yet the treatment is one that an informed reader can follow. . . One is left with both respect for Smith's contribution and also a clear awareness of how it cuts against the basic grain of the biblical text itself."