



Type: Journal Article

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Source: *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saith Faith and Scholarship*,
Volume 31 (2019), pp. 245-258

Published by: The Interpreter Foundation

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INTERPRETER



A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Volume 31 · 2019 · Pages 245 - 258

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Offprint Series

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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WAS ADAM A MONOTHEIST? A REFLECTION ON WHY WE CALL ABRAHAM FATHER AND NOT ADAM

Taylor Halverson

Abstract: *The three great monotheistic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) all claim Abraham as father and prototypical monotheist. Though Adam is the putative first father in all of these traditions, he is seldom remembered in Judeo-Christian scriptural, apocryphal, or pseudepigraphic texts as an exemplary monotheist. This essay briefly reviews why Abraham retains the lofty title “Father of Monotheism” while exploring how Latter-day restoration scripture adds to and challenges this ancient tradition vis-à-vis enhanced understanding of Adam’s covenantal and monotheistic fidelity to God.*

Was Adam a monotheist? Though he was the first to know God, Adam is seldom even an afterthought in the topic of monotheism. Why is this so? When we think of the great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it is not Father Adam whom we turn to but rather Father Abraham. Abraham retains the lofty title “Father of Monotheism.”¹ This article briefly addresses (1) several reasons why Abraham, not Adam, is considered the first monotheist, (2) how Latter-day Saint restoration scripture affects this conversation, and (3) the implications that this tradition has for our understanding of the historical development of monotheistic faith.

What is Monotheism?

The term “monotheism” does not appear in or originate from Biblical texts. In fact, as a categorical term, “monotheism” is an invention of the English Enlightenment, coined by Cambridge Platonist Henry More in

1. Abraham is claimed as father by the three great monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christian, and Islam. David Klinghoffer, *The Discovery of God: Abraham and the Birth of Monotheism* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

the 1660s in a treatise attempting to establish a typology of religions,² where monotheism was set up as an antonym to atheism.³ However, I think monotheism is better defined by what it is than by what it is not.

I define monotheism as the belief in, the reverence of, and the faithful commitment to one God, with reciprocal promises or covenants from God offered as rewards to the faithful. We might consider this “covenantal monotheism,” the monotheism at the heart of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Popular and Scholarly Treatments of the Origins of Monotheism

What is being said about the origins of monotheism? Popular works on monotheism assume and perpetuate the idea that Abraham was the first monotheist. Consider the work by Jonathan Kirsch, *God Against the Gods*, where he claims,

The first person to recognize and worship the single all-powerful deity variously known as “Yahweh” or “Lord” or “Allah” was Abraham, whose encounter with the God of Israel in the land of Canaan is memorably depicted in the Book of Genesis.⁴

Or consider the book *The Discovery of God: Abraham and The Birth of Monotheism*.⁵ This book chronicles the life of Abraham but in the

2. Nathan MacDonald, “The Origin of ‘Monotheism’”, in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 204–15.

3. For those who are disposed to slice the conversation more precisely, other terminology extends the typology of religious belief: pantheism (the belief in all gods); polytheism (the belief in many gods); henotheism (the belief that one particular god should be worshipped, though other gods may also be available to worship); atheism (the belief that there is no god); and monolatry (the belief that only one god exists, who should be worshipped). Most of these terms are modern inventions to help us categorize. What we should note here is that the idea of monotheism as popularly conceived today does not reflect with 100% accuracy what it meant at the time of its invention, nor does it purely describe in categories native to ancient Jews, Christians, and Muslims the belief in one God. All of this is to say that we cannot help but use modern eyes to see the past or to use modern concepts or tools to understand the past. As long as we understand how our modern perceptions translate the past, we can proceed.

4. Jonathan Kirsch, *God Against the Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism* (New York: Viking Compass, 2004), 21.

5. These are two valuable introductions to monotheism but none seriously consider Adam in the story of monotheism: Klinghoffer, *The Discovery of God*; Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

process assumes as correct and perpetuates the tradition that Abraham was the first monotheist.

On the scholarly side, treatments of monotheism may pay lip service to the possibility of Adam as the first monotheist, but no pause is taken to explore the idea and its implications.⁶ Typical of this approach is the book *Three Faiths, One God: The Formative Faith and Practice of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*.⁷ In this book, the authors describe how Muslims explain Islam's relationship to Judaism and Christianity:

6. This is a "short" list of important treatments on the origin and development of monotheism, often from the perspective of the origin and development of ancient Israelite religion: Gosta W. Ahlstrom, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Ranier Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, trans. J. Bowden, vol. 1, *OLT* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1994); W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957); Michael David Coogan, "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel", in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. P. Miller, P. Hanson, and D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 115–24; W. Dietrich and M. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, OBO 139 (Gottingen, DE: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. K. Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939); Baruch Halpern, "'Brisker Pipers than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, eds. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest R. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 77–115; Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. M. Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1972); Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979); P. Miller, P. Hanson, and D. McBride, eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); P. Radin, *Monotheism among Primitive Peoples* (New York: Bollingen, 1954); Mark Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); T. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 1992); and John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

7. Jacob Neusner, Bruce Chilton, and William Graham, *Three Faiths, One God: The Formative Faith and Practice of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002). The three traditional monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all claim to be God's people. This tradition derives from the story of God covenanting with Abraham to bless him and his seed in perpetuity. Adherents of these religious traditions believe that they are the physical descendants of Abraham, and therefore have a right and access to God's special covenants, and that by being part of God's covenants, they should do the works of Abraham.

Islam ... is held to be identical with the true monotheism to which humankind was called again and again ever since Adam was created as the first of God's human creatures and the first of His messengers.⁸

Though Adam is credited indirectly as the first monotheist, the authors quickly move on to say, "Abraham [is] the paradigmatic person of faith for all three monotheistic traditions"⁹ and "Abraham's pure monotheistic faith has been the model for ... ages."¹⁰ Based on the way the Bible portrays Adam and Abraham, it's difficult to reach any other conclusion. However, Latter-day Saint scripture and sacred tradition offers a tantalizing twist to the question of who was the first covenantal monotheist.

Adam on the Biblical Stage

I'll briefly review what the Bible presents to us as the story of Adam. According to Genesis 2–3, after God created Adam, he placed him in the Garden of Eden with the command to care for the garden but to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God then brought all the animals to Adam for naming, but no helpmeet (Hebrew: *'ezer k'negdo*) was found for Adam. God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and, withdrawing a rib from Adam, formed Eve. Soon thereafter, the serpent tricked Eve into eating from the forbidden tree; she then shared with Adam, who also ate of the forbidden fruit. In response to the transgression, God cursed Adam and Eve individually.¹¹ God then cast Adam and Eve out of the paradisiacal garden.

Being the first created man in the holy texts of the three monotheistic religions, one would expect Adam to be portrayed as the model monotheist, worshipping the one god who gave him life. And to an extent, Adam behaves in ways fitting this role. Consider that upon God alone is Adam dependent. It is to God alone that Adam is accountable. And it is from God alone that he receives a curse, the inverse of a blessing for faithfulness, a curse that incidentally is interpreted by later generations to have been passed down through Adam's posterity — the curse of death.

8. Neusner, Chilton, and Graham, *Three Faiths*, 101–102.

9. *Ibid.*, 102.

10. *Ibid.*, 102.

11. Specifically, he said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17–19, translation from the English Standard Version bible).

Adam is not portrayed as worshipping other gods, going after other gods, or disbelieving in God, as is the case for later generations of Israelites.

Nonetheless, the story of Adam in the Old Testament does not suggest that he was a covenantal monotheist. There is no mention of Adam's single-minded devotion to God, no mention of God's covenantal promises extended to Adam and his posterity for faithfulness, and no mention of Adam's exertion to faithfully believe God and believe in God in the face of suffering and trial. In a word, as the Bible tells the story, Adam is not a compelling representative of monotheistic belief. Adam is not considered the first monotheist not so much because he didn't worship God,¹² but rather because he failed to be an *exemplary* monotheist.

Adam in Biblical Memory and Tradition

How is Adam remembered in Biblical memory and tradition? He is remembered (1) as the father of humanity and (2) as a transgressor.

Adam as a Father

Remarkably, after the creation and Garden of Eden stories, very few passages in the Old Testament reference Adam. Genesis 4–5 refers to Adam in his role as a father. Then there is silence until the end of the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 32:8 loosely references Adam as the eponymous ancestor of all people.

When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance,
when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of
the people according to the number of the children of Israel.
(Deuteronomy 32:8)

Another reference to Adam as the father of humanity is found in 1 Chronicles, which, appropriately, is a book about genealogies and generations.¹³

12. In Genesis there is no mention or depiction of Adam worshipping God. However, the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price records, "And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord" (Moses 5:4–5).

13. Curiously, 1 Chronicles 1 lists the "righteous" line of Adam's posterity borrowing from Genesis 5. I say "curiously" because there is a general negative sentiment against Adam in the Bible, yet in 1 Chronicles 1, the listing of the

Adam as a Transgressor

Other Biblical passages remember Adam as a transgressor. When arguing for his innocence, Job asks if he has been like Adam, seeking to hide his transgressions. “[Have] I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom [?]” (Job 31:33). Another possible memory of Adam as a transgressor is found in Hosea 6:7. Here Hosea references a geographical place named Adam where the children of Israel transgressed against God. However, the Hebrew could read “like Adam they transgressed” instead of “at [the place called] Adam they transgressed.” The remaining references to Adam in the Old Testament remember him as the father of humanity. Not one biblical reference honors Adam as a monotheist, not one reference speaks of his faithfulness and devotion to God.

In summary, the memories of Adam preserved in the Bible do not portray a compelling record of a covenantal monotheist. Instead we see an eponymous ancestor of all humans who transgressed against God.

Adam in Second Temple Memory and Tradition

What memories are preserved of Adam in Second Temple and Early Christian literature? After the stunning paucity of references to Adam in the Bible, there are a number of writings that mention Adam, some in which he is a major character.¹⁴ These writings convey some diversity of their assessment of Adam. This diversity is likely due to each author’s *Tendenz*, though a majority of the memories concerning Adam relate to themes already present in the Bible: Adam as the father of humanity, Adam as a transgressor, and by extension Adam as the cause of human misery. For brevity sake, I will share only a few representative examples from Second Temple period literature, looking first at negative memories of Adam and then at positive.

righteous generations of his posterity may suggest a subtle approval of Adam, despite his original unfaithfulness to God’s commands.

14. Many of the writings that reference Adam include Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, Jubilees, Josephus, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Life of Adam & Eve, and Paul. For a relevant discussion of how each of these Jewish writers treated the memory of Adam, see John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 1* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988). What is significant about Levison’s work for our discussion is that there is little, if any, attention paid to Adam’s monotheistic character. In other words, whether Adam was monotheistic is never the question; it is not a topic of consideration in Levison’s analysis.

Negative Memories of Adam

Abraham is far more often talked about, referenced, and remembered in ancient scripture and in Second Temple and Early Christian texts than is Adam. The majority of these memories of Adam see him in a negative light. My purpose here is not to be exhaustive, but rather to give a selective taste of the type of negative remembrances of Adam we typically find in ancient texts.

- **Adam’s transgression caused transgression among his descendants:** “For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him.” (4 Ezra 3:21/2 Esdras 3:21)¹⁵
- **Adam brought sorrow to the world:** “I answered and said, ‘This is my first and last comment: it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.’” (4 Ezra 7:116–118 / 2 Esdras 7:116–118)¹⁶
- **Adam brought death and sin into the world:** “Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18–19)
- **Adam was a covenantal monotheist, but he left the covenant:** “And [God] said [to Adam], ‘Since you have forsaken my covenant, I have submitted your body to seventy plagues. The pain of the first plague is affliction of the eyes; the second plague is of the hearing; and so one after the other all the plagues shall pursue you.’” (Apocalypse of Moses 8:2)¹⁷

15. 4 Ezra is also known as 2 Esdras. Translation from New Revised Standard Version bible (NRSV).

16. 4 Ezra is also known as 2 Esdras. Translation from NRSV.

17. *The Apocalypse of Moses* is the Greek version of the pseudepigraphic work *The Life of Adam and Eve*. “Life of Adam and Eve (First Century AD),” ed. M.D. Johnson, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 273.

Positive Memories of Adam

The passages we have shared so far remember Adam in a negative light. However, other Second Temple texts of this period portray Adam more positively, indeed, even as an exemplary figure of monotheistic integrity.

- **Adam is the father of humanity:** “Shem and Seth and Enosh were honored, but above every other created living being was Adam.” (Sirach 49:16)¹⁸
- **Adam made offerings to the Lord after he left the garden:** “And on that day when Adam went out from the Garden of Eden, he offered a sweet-smelling sacrifice — frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and spices — in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day he covered his shame.” (Jubilees 3:27)¹⁹
- **Adam has the same blessings as Abraham:** “Jacob, my beloved son, whom my soul loves, may God from above the firmament bless and may he give you all of the blessings with which he blessed Adam and Enoch and Noah and Shem.” (Jubilees 19:27)²⁰

What is significant about the positive memories of Adam in the post-biblical tradition is the evidence that Adam was considered an exemplary, covenantal monotheist. However, these ideas and traditions did not become dominant, instead losing out to views of Adam as the cause of death and misery in the world, as exemplified in 4 Ezra and Romans, as we saw above in the section on negative memories.²¹

Biblical Memories of Abraham

We return now to the question of why Abraham is considered the first monotheist and not Adam. In contrast to Adam’s failure at faithfulness, as depicted in the Bible, just a few chapters later (Genesis 12) a most

18. Sirach is also known as *Ecclesiasticus* and also as *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. Translation from NRSV.

19. “Jubilees (Second Century B.C.),” ed. O.S. Wintermute, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 60.

20. “Jubilees,” ed. Wintermute, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 93.

21. We should pause to consider briefly Adam’s portrayal in Qumranic literature. Adam is a relatively minor figure at Qumran mentioned in but a few documents, namely the *Commentary on Psalm 37* (1QpPs 37 3.1–2), in the *Community Rule* (1QS 4.23), the *Damascus Document* (CD 3.20), and in *Hymns* (1QH 17.15). His portrayal at Qumran is not significantly different from what we have seen already in other Second Temple Jewish literature.

remarkable story emerges. For no apparent reason, and in what appears to be a capricious act of self-disclosure, God calls out to a most inconspicuous character, Abraham, to offer him the most fantastic and desirable blessings: posterity, property, and protection from enemies — the Abrahamic covenant.²² What was the catch? Simply to worship God with a single heart and mind by obeying His will. As the story unfolds over the next dozen chapters (Gen. 12–25), we see Abraham exercise faithful devotion to God and resilient belief in the promises of God in the face of stark and contrary evidence. Abraham’s monotheistic faithfulness climaxes in the *akedah* (Genesis 22) story where without question he willingly gives up his most prized possession, his son Isaac, as an expression of total devotion to God’s wishes. When put to the most extreme test of devotion, Abraham emerges as the undeniable zenith of faithfulness. The cumulative stories of Abraham’s monotheistic faithfulness are unquestionably dramatic and memorable. Who else can compare to Abraham in exemplary monotheistic faithfulness?

According to the Biblical report, in monotheistic devotion Abraham seems to be everything Adam was not. Adam was given everything from the beginning; Abraham had to give up all he had (his family, homeland, and traditions) to gain God’s blessings. Adam was disobedient to the simplest command: do not eat the fruit of that tree. Abraham was resiliently steadfast in obedience in the most taxing of circumstances (e.g., he nearly lost his wife, his promised land was in a state of perpetual famine, and he nearly executed his own son). Adam was cursed to death by God (a curse apparently passed down through posterity). Abraham was blessed with life, a blessing available through Abraham to all the families of the earth. Adam had the presence of God but lost

22. Fundamentally, we cannot understand the monotheistic tradition of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam apart from Abraham *because* of the covenant he received from God (Genesis 12, 15). In fact, it is God’s covenant to Abraham that is the central pillar for these monotheistic traditions. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam profess that they are the true inheritors of the covenant and promises between God and Abraham. Therefore, to receive the promises of Abraham one must do the works of Abraham and believe like Abraham. For further reading, see Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, eds. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). For another perspective, see R. Oden, “The Place of Covenant in the Religion of Israel,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. P. Miller, P. Hanson, and D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 429–47.

it. Abraham, for no obvious reasons, was brought into the presence of God from the obscurity of a polytheistic homeland. Thus it is no wonder that later tradition remembered Abraham as the first monotheist while considering Adam a blight on human existence.

Latter-day Saint Scriptural Portrayal of Adam

Scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rehabilitates Adam from the general negative thrust of theological history. In the Book of Moses, Adam is portrayed as faithfully worshipping God.

And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. (Moses 5:4–6)

After having been cast out of the Garden for disobedience, we find Adam expressing unstinting devotion and obedience to God, even if he did not understand the reasons. In this regard, he is like faithful Abraham who apparently did not know why God required him to sacrifice Isaac but nonetheless went forward with the intent to commit the unthinkable act.

Moreover, Latter-day Saint scripture affirms there was a powerful positive purpose in Adam's act of disobedience. Additionally, Eve, who is so often marginalized in post-Biblical memories, plays a primary role in expressing devotion to God.

And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy²³ concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known

23. This is a significant departure from tradition as well and deserves attention: the fact that Adam was a prophet, not just the first man. (Thank you to an unnamed reviewer of this article who pointed this insight out to me.)

good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. (Moses 5:10–11)

The Book of Mormon expresses this same sentiment succinctly: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). This revolutionary concept, that Adam’s disobedience to a simple command in the paradisiacal garden was actually a wise step to bring joy to humanity, is a stunning reversal of fortunes for the memory of Adam and for his place in the annals of monotheistic devotion to God. Instead of viewing Adam as the cause of humanity’s curses, Adam, according to restoration scripture, is instead viewed as an exemplary monotheist, as exemplary as Abraham. Adam is the one who set the stage for all humans to receive the promise that is desirable above all others — joy.²⁴

Though it is not as clearly expressed in Latter-day Saint sacred literature, it is significant that in the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Adam and *not* Abraham is the prototype of the soul’s journey back to God (i.e., the covenant ritual and narrative of the temple). In this regard, Latter-day Saint sacred literature honors Abraham for his consistent faithfulness towards God, securing for himself and his posterity great blessings. Yet Adam is also honored as a faithful servant and worshipper of God, one who remained constant and faithful after the initial lapse in the garden, which, incidentally, is explained in Latter-day Saint sacred literature as an absolutely essential aspect of God’s plan for humanity. Instead of seeing Adam’s disobedience as a catastrophe for humans and the created order, Adam’s disobedient choice was a calculated and bold move to protect God’s plan.

Implications

The unavoidable question for us now is “so what?” Even if Adam really was the first monotheist, what value does that have for us in the study of the Bible or biblically related material? Setting aside the enormous challenge of attempting to provide a convincing rationale for the historicity of Adam, according to the current standards and assumptions of Biblical scholarship, if Adam truly was the first monotheist, how does that change the conversation? It does so in several ways.

24. More restoration scripture that relates to this theme of joy are: Suffering can lead to joy (2 Nephi 2:11; Alma 7:11–12; D&C 29:39; D&C 121:7–8; Moses 6:55); we are in this life to grow and develop (Alma 34:32; Abraham 3:25; D&C 101:5); we needed the Fall so we could practice being like Jesus and God (3 Nephi 27:27; D&C 122:5–8); but ultimately the Greatest of all suffered for all (D&C 19:16–19).

If Adam is the first monotheist, we'd have to account for a much more complex history of monotheism that did not develop in some evolutionary format but perhaps in waves of revolutionary reintroduction. We would have to ask why more of Adam's story — his devotion and faithfulness *after* the expulsion — is not present in the biblical account. Why are these elements of Adam's experience with God excluded from the story as we now have it in the Bible? Did Second Temple literature (such as Jubilees, which portrays Adam in a much more favorable light) have access to other memories and traditions about Adam? Where did they receive these traditions? How might early Christian theology have been expressed differently had Adam not been remembered as a failed monotheist?

Conclusion

Monotheism requires complete, faithful devotion to one God from whom promises and rewards are received. Given this definition in the context of the current Biblical texts, there are clear and sustainable reasons Abraham is remembered as the first monotheist instead of Adam. Abraham had a covenant and Abraham was an exemplary monotheist.

Outside of restoration scripture and interpretation, Adam is typically remembered for his disobedience, expulsion from the garden, curses against him and his posterity, and loss of God's presence and the glorious garden. On the other hand, Abraham is remembered for his righteousness and his faithfulness. Abraham exercised courageous fidelity to God and trust in his promises. Instead of bringing curses to his posterity, as did Adam, Abraham brought blessings. Instead of losing the presence of God, Abraham was brought into the presence of God. Abraham is the prototype of the righteous soul wending its way through fidelity on the path of life back to God. Adam, on the other hand, is remembered as having squandered humanity's opportunity to remain forever in the presence of God and instead to be condemned to a life of toil, suffering, and ultimately death.

Latter-day Saint scripture challenges the Biblical depiction and received interpretation of Adam. According to restored scripture, after his initial transgression, Adam faithfully worshipped God, made covenants with God, taught his posterity faith in God, and lived in honorable, faithful, covenantal monotheism through the end of his days. If these Latter-day Saint traditions are taken seriously, contemporary models of the origin and development of monotheism must be reconsidered.²⁵

25. As one reviewer of this article insightfully noted, the definition of monotheism may need "reconsidering, away from the belief in one God, into the

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