

Studies in
Theology and Religion
(STAR)

Edited on behalf of the
Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in
Theology and Religion (NOSTER)

Editor

Jan Willem van Henten

Associate Editors

Herman Beck, Meerten ter Borg,
Kees van der Kooi, Daniela Müller

Assistant

Ingeborg Löwisch

Editorial Board

Marcel Sarot, Ruard Ganzevoort,
Gerard Wiegers, Henk Vroom,
Wim Drees, Ellen van Wolde

VOLUME 13

R-2.-172

The Boundaries of
Monotheism

Interdisciplinary Explorations into the Foundations
of Western Monotheism

Edited by

Anne-Marie Korte
Maaike de Haardt



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2009

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The boundaries of monotheism : interdisciplinary explorations into the foundations of western monotheism / edited by Anne-Marie Korte, Maaïke de Haardt.

p. cm. — (Studies in theology and religion, ISSN 1566-208X ; 13)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-17316-3 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Monotheism. I. Korte, Anne-Marie, 1957- II. Haardt, Maaïke de, 1954- III. Title. IV. Series.

BL221.B68 2008

201.4—dc22

2008041635

ISSN 1566-208X
ISBN 978 90 04 173163

Copyright 2009 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing,
IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Chapter One A Unique Instability? Exploring the Boundaries of Monotheism. Introduction.....	1
<i>Anne-Marie Korte (Tilburg University & Utrecht University)</i>	
Chapter Two The Boundaries of Israelite Monotheism.....	9
<i>Bob Becking (Utrecht University)</i>	
Chapter Three The Divine Messiah. Early Jewish Monotheism and the New Testament.....	28
<i>Patrick Chatelion Counet (Amsterdam University)</i>	
Chapter Four Monotheistic to a Certain Extent. The 'Good Neighbours' of God in Ireland.....	53
<i>Jacqueline Borsje (University of Amsterdam & University of Ulster)</i>	
Chapter Five The Return of the Gods. The Clash between Monotheism and Polytheism in German Romanticism	83
<i>Bert Blans & Marcel Poorthuis (Tilburg University)</i>	
Chapter Six The Unity of God	106
<i>René Munnik (Tilburg University)</i>	
Chapter Seven The Whole of Life. Beyond the Boundaries of Monotheism?	129
<i>Maaïke de Haardt (Tilburg University & Radboud University Nijmegen)</i>	
Chapter Eight One Unique God for All Parts of Life. Reconsidering an Exclusive Tradition	154
<i>Kune Biezeveld (Protestant Theological University, Location Leiden)</i>	
Chapter Nine Dialogical Theology as an Answer to the Aporias of Monotheism.....	174
<i>Akke van der Kooi (Protestant Theological University, Location Kampen)</i>	

Chapter Ten God Judging “in the Midst of the Gods” (Psalm 82:1). Confessing to One God after Cultural Monotheism... 192 <i>Erik Borgman (Tilburg University)</i>	
Chapter Eleven The Boundaries and Gifts of Monotheism.	
Epilogue	211
<i>Anne-Marie Korte (Tilburg University & Utrecht University)</i>	
Bibliography.....	223
Contributors	241
Name Index	244

CHAPTER ONE

A UNIQUE INSTABILITY? EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF
MONOTHEISM

INTRODUCTION

Anne-Marie Korte (Tilburg University & Utrecht University)

The attacks on the Babylonian symbols of Western culture on September 11, 2001 not only caused devastation, fear and social strain; they also sparked new political and scholarly interest in monotheism as a banner, or for others as a phantom, of the religious heritage of the Abrahamic religions. That the significance and public presence of the great monotheistic faith traditions again would become prominent as well as disputed, is a scenario few expected to encounter in twenty-first century Western society. In the Netherlands we have become embroiled in this situation very directly through the religiously motivated murder of journalist and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004 in reaction to his provocative statements on Islamic faith and culture.

One of the most obvious questions raised by this new public and political appeal to traditional faith traditions, is whether the monotheistic religions and their truth claims regarding religious uniqueness and moral superiority can be held responsible for unleashing and sustaining the contemporary “clash of civilisations.” In this state of affairs, theologians—who reflect systematically on their own religious tradition—seem to have inherited the thankless task of warding off attacks on monotheistic religion and defending its *raison d’être* to believers and disbelievers alike.

A less apologetic and theologically more challenging task, however, is the exploration of the significance of monotheism in modern Western culture, taking into account both its problematic *and* promising aspects. In the past two decades, theologians and scholars of religion have shown a growing interest in the origins, historical forms and contemporary heritages of monotheism. There have been several catalysts for this, including ongoing developments and new findings in religious and biblical studies, the impact of late twentieth century movements such as