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Dear Associates and Friends,

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The article this month is “[The Origin and Goal of Western Civilization, Part 2](#)” by Dr. Ernest L. Martin. Like Part 1 from last month the material is from a 1986 audiotape, along with written material from 1995. This month’s information carries forward the historical narrative about the recognition of YHWH’s supremacy as the only God that matters. This concept is obvious only to us in our current day and age.

Ancient peoples of the past commonly understood a multiplicity of gods existed and influenced events. So how can we reconcile statements of Scripture that talk about there being only one God when there are many other beings called gods (termed Elohim) also mentioned in Scripture? The answer is not as difficult as it may appear to be. The prophet Isaiah seems to be particularly insistent that there is only one God and no others exist. A careful reading shows that Isaiah himself acknowledged the existence of other gods, but that compared to YHWH, the other gods were as nothing. They were “gods” only in relation to man, not in relation to YHWH.

Only YHWH was to be worshipped. In fact, this is exactly God’s complaint against both the northern kingdom of Samaria (also called Israel) and the southern kingdom of Judah. They continually worshipped YHWH, but they also worshipped other gods along with YHWH which was strictly forbidden in Israel’s covenant with God at Mount Sinai (Exodus 15:11, 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7, 6:14; Jeremiah 25:6, 35:15).

Pagan Acknowledgement of One God above Others

As Dr. Martin points out in Part 1 and this month’s Part 2, God made it clear that pagan rulers of the known world in ancient times were forced by events to acknowledge the supremacy of YHWH among others so-called as gods. As I wrote in my article “[Elohim and the Son of God, Part 1](#)” (footnote #25):

“Occasionally the pagan philosophers understood the true nature of the Godhead, although we should not go to them for information. Whether they are informed by the Old Testament (as Christian historian Eusebius believed) or by observation of nature, as the apostle Paul speaks about in Romans chapter 1, cannot be determined.”

Perhaps they were informed, as Dr. Martin puts forth, by the revelations of Nebuchadnezzar and those who succeeded him. Consider what the pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes said in about 530 BC, just a few decades after Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. He is quoted by Christian apologists of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD as one example of a pagan monotheist:

“There is one god, supreme among gods and men; resembling mortals neither in form nor in mind. The whole of him sees, the whole of him thinks, the whole of him hears. Without toil he rules all things by the power of his mind. And he stays always in the same place, nor moves at all, for it is not seemly that he wander about now here, now there. But mortals fancy gods are born, and wear clothes, and have voice and form like themselves.”

• [“Xenophanes, The Fragments” 1–6](#)¹

¹ “[Xenophanes, Fragments and Commentary](#),” Arthur Fairbanks, ed., and translator in *The First Philosophers of Greece* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1898), pp. 65–85.

This was the supreme God that the apostle Paul spoke about in Acts chapter 17. Paul connected the true God with what the Athenians of the 1st century AD regarded as “**the Unknown God**”:

“I found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.’ Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands.”

• **Acts 17:23–24**

In the 2nd century AD the platonic pagan philosopher and writer, Maximus of Tyre, said the same thing as Xenophanes and Paul. Maximus wrote several decades after New Testament times. Read this carefully:

“You will see one according law and assertion in all the earth, that

**There is one God, the king and father of all things,
and many gods, sons of God ruling together with him.**

This the Greek says, and the barbarian says, the inhabitant of the continent, and he who dwells near the sea, the wise and the unwise.”

• **Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertation 1***²

What Maximus is admitting is that people of his day know and understand that there is a supreme God over man and other beings that are called gods. He says this understanding is common knowledge in the 2nd century AD. His statement may be an accommodation to the rise of Christianity, but at that time the Christian faith had not yet been victorious and no one knew that it would prevail politically and religiously (but with a mass of non-biblical teaching mixed with biblical truth).³

Thank You

We firmly believe that ASK provides unique information of the biblical truths of God. This is done primarily through the work and research of Ernest Martin. The work we do is worthy of your financial support so that we can put out the most complete teaching of the Gospel of God.

We are thankful for your support and we want to encourage you to provide ASK material to those who might be interested. Direct them to the ASK website. Print out articles and give them to others to read. Loan Dr. Martin’s book to those who are interested. Recommend *Byte Show* presentations on the ASK website. Many of you have told us you find those shows extremely helpful for your understanding, even after you have read the articles. Just as many people enjoy listening to the Bible being read (and we have audio bible links on our [ASK Web Links](#) page), many of you enjoy listening to the articles being read by me. We have select presentations by Dr. Martin so you can hear his voice, inflection, and emphasis while you follow along reading the article.

All this is done for your sake so you can read, listen, and learn God’s thoughts from the Holy Scriptures and have them planted deep within you so that God’s Holy Spirit can guide you to live as God wants you to live — with love toward your neighbor, here, now (Romans 13:10 and Galatians 5:14). Again, thank you all.

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² This was Maximus’ understanding of what Plato taught about God, not what Plato taught the “common” people. From “Dissertation 1, What Is God According to Plato,” in *The Dissertations of Maximus Tyrus*, vol. 1, Thomas Taylor, trans. (London: 1804), p. 7. This volume is a Google Books scan accessed March 10, 2011.

³ See my article based on Dr. Martin’s sources “[The Pagan Immortal Soul and ‘Double Doctrine’](#),” which gives evidence on how philosophical, religious, and political leaders taught the common people one set of teachings, yet a different set of teachings of “truth” (as they understood it) was given to those who needed to know that truth. This was how leaders could control the uneducated masses. This “double teaching” continues today in government and religion. For example, only recently has the Catholic Church begun to openly teach universal salvation. See my article “[Modern Recognition of Universal Salvation](#).”