"MUCH MADNESS IS DIVINEST SENSE": THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF YAHWEH'S PARASOCIAL IDENTITY

Davis Hankins

ABSTRACT

The historical development of Israelite theology must be understood in relation to the social antagonisms that shaped the contexts in which people spoke about God. This article brings recent research on the historical development of different institutional forms in ancient Israelite society into conversation with recent arguments regarding the origins and evolution of the worship of Yahweh in the southern Levant. My aim is not to reduce theology to an epiphenomenal reflection or a direct expression of social realities, but to grasp it as creatively engaged with such realities. Yahweh appears to have originated among mobile bands on the social and geographical margins with respect to the centers of political and economic power in southwest Asia. Israel’s emergent monarchic state adopted this popular family god as its patron deity. The real social antagonisms between extractive state regimes and sustainable systems of allocation shaped—in various, indirect, and surprising ways—Israel’s speech about God. This article argues that the conflicted historical development of Israel’s speech about Yahweh takes its shape in relation to the evolving social regimes and antagonisms that marked Israel’s history.

FULL TEXT:

PDF

It's hard to read "Much Madness is the divinest Sense—" and not think that it was directly inspired by Dickinson's rebel life style. It's all about how people who seem bonkers to the majority might actually be geniuses with god-like insight. Hmm. Wondering why a lady who spent all day writing revolutionary poems in self-imposed seclusion might write something like this? Yeah, there's a good chance this might be Emily's justification for her radical life choices. It's thought that she wrote the poem in 1862, and the poem wasn't published till after h