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monotheism is simply defined as the belief in one god and is usually positioned as the polar opposite of polytheism the belief in many gods however the word monotheism is a relatively modern one that was coined in the mid 17th century ce by the british philosopher henry more 1614 1687 ce abstract in this book distinguished experts from a range of disciplines orientalists philologists philosophers theologians and historians address a central problem which lies at the heart of the religious and philosophical debate of late antiquity paganism was not a unified tradition and consequently the papers cover a wide social and the development of pure philosophical monotheism is a product of the late antiquity during the 2nd to 3rd centuries early christianity was just one of several competing religious movements advocating monotheism pagan monotheism in late antiquity in this book distinguished experts from a range of disciplines orientalists philologists philosophers theologians and historians address a central two aspects of this specific and complex situation are highly important for historical religious research especially in relation to the wider issue of the definition of the various late antique theologies and the use of the category of monotheism one god focuses on the first three centuries a d monotheism on the fourth and fifth the period after the constantinian revolution one god includes extensive discussion of conceptual issues about monotheism monotheism collects focused case studies this volume focuses on the pre constantinian period in the roman empire in contrast to both the earlier 1999 volume and to the companion volume monotheism between pagans and christians that examines the later fourth century debates between platonists and christians the publication of the collection of essays on pagan monotheism in late antiquity by m frede and p athanassiadi in 1999 provided new impetus to the discussions about paganism and monotheism many of them end in a stalemate with the critics of pagan monotheism dismissing the concept as inadequate while its supporters emphasise its importance abstract there is a temptation to think that one thing which ultimately distinguished christians from pagans in antiquity was that the christians following the jews believed in one god whereas the pagans believed in many gods sometimes this is expressed by saying that the christians were monotheists while the pagans were polytheists in monotheism and pagan philosophy in later antiquity frede discusses the monotheistic bent in the philosophers of later antiquity he argues that the philosophers particularly the platonists were monotheistic in the exact sense that christians were 1 monotheism s origins 2 an argument from god s simplicity 3 an argument from god s perfection 4 two arguments from god s sovereignty 4 1 the argument from causal order 4 2 an argument from god s total causality 5 an argument from omnipotence 6 an argument from the demand for total devotion 7 empire to commonwealth consequences of monotheism in late antiquity by garth fowden princeton n j princeton university press 1993 205

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