

Graham Hancock with Mauro Biglino: Gods of the Bible – A New Interpretation of the Bible Reveals the Oldest Secret in History

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It is our pleasure to welcome Mauro Biglino, author of Gods of the Bible as our featured author for April. Mauro, a biblical scholar and translator, has supervised the translation and publication of 17 books of the Old Testament for Edizioni San Paolo, Italy's foremost Catholic publisher. In his book, Gods of the Bible, Mauro offers the reader a revolutionary rediscovery of biblical writings and the remarkable insights into the history of humanity these texts contain. In his article here, Mauro explores how his decades-long background as a biblical translator compelled him towards a new interpretation of the Bible, revealing ancient secrets that transform our traditional understanding of the past. ~ Graham Hancock

[Gods of the Bible: A New Interpretation of the Bible Reveals the Oldest Secret in History](#)

by [Mauro Biglino](#), GrahamHancock.com

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I can't help but think of how it all began. As I write at my desk, I have in front of me the first printed copy of *Gods of the Bible*, first on top of a tall pile of books, block notes, and paper sheets. Such crumbling towers take up most of the desk. My books and those of others form a chaos of overlapping memories and voices while the rays of the afternoon sun filter through the window and light some of the covers up.

One of these volumes always holds special meaning for me – a pink notebook with my first interlinear translation of the Book of Genesis, written in pencil. Even today, every time I write, I can't help but think of how it all began. It was more than twenty years ago, twenty-five, almost. I was just a lover of ancient languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. At this same desk, much emptier, I translated the Bible day and night. Then, as in all stories, adventure was born of a mistake, a small, insignificant typo. It was a rather trivial typo that I might have discovered in the edition of the Hebrew Interlinear Bible of the most famous Italian religious publisher: Edizioni San Paolo. That's how it all started – with a mistake.



Photo: Chiara Esposito for Tuthi

It's worth telling the reader that Edizioni San Paolo is Italy's most prominent Catholic publishing house. Its Vatican-approved publications are used in graduate and post-graduate

Biblical Hebrew and Bible studies courses in Catholic universities and departments. I was just a self-taught translator of the Bible. And yet, it was I who caught an error. At first, I questioned my skills. I tend not to jump to conclusions too soon. I have a background in Classics, and my mindset is that of a philologist. I double-checked my grammar books and compared different translations; I read and reread many times the same passage until I was convinced I had found a mistake.

Finding errors, flaws, and typos in books is hardly surprising. In mine, they are there. And in the books of others, too. But we are human beings. The Bible, on the other hand, is a book "inspired by God." That is what we have been taught. It contains the absolute truth – so say the theologians. More than half of humanity bases its existence and life values directly or indirectly on the Bible. As a result, the Bible has become the basis of an immense power structure. Any mistake could raise the suspicion that this monstrous giant was, in reality, a giant on clay feet.

And yet I was there looking at this mistake, like an engineer who finds a small crack in a dam. Little did I know then that that error was the first of many I was about to discover. But at that moment, I shrugged my shoulders without thinking much about it. I wrote a short note to the publisher saying, "Hey, I think I found a mistake; you might want to fix it." A few weeks later, out of the blue, they contacted me and said: "May we see some of your translations?". I sent them my Genesis, a copy of the pink block note I now observe from my chair. It was the turning point. A decade-long collaboration began. Following this partnership, I published seventeen books of the Old Testament in Edizioni San Paolo's Hebrew Interlinear Bible.¹



Since the beginning of my professional career as a Bible translator, I have never stopped finding errors in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament. Not just minor typos and mistakes but downright forgeries and tendentious mistranslations. My last work, *Gods of the Bible*, just came from print and smells of glue and fresh paper. It's my latest effort in this twenty-five years long research, but I still feel that the *fil rouge* with that first pink block note was never broken. The same spirit moved me. Understanding how such a fragile text as the biblical one could become the foundation of a monstrous power system and religions followed by billions of people. Few books in the history of humanity have been written, rewritten, added to, corrected, changed, and censored as often as the Bible. The text of the Bible, mainly fixed after the sixth century BC, but based on older oral and written traditions, is one of the most fragile, unreliable texts in human history. What should surprise us is not so much that someone is looking in it for traces of an ancient advanced civilization, but the fact that someone – theologians

– could build absolute truths on such text, with a dogmatic approach that has often become in history and often still becomes fanaticism.

I may have anticipated a theme that could frighten more cautious readers. Still, there is no way to prepare a traditional readership for the hypothesis I seek to test in *Gods of the Bible*, starting precisely from the Hebrew translations and the demystification of theological, spiritualizing readings. But I have to start somewhere, and I have no better option than playing cards face up. Therefore, let me declare right off that the Bible is not a holy book. In antiquity, the term “holy” was understood as everything “reserved” for the deity. This term has by no means the spiritualistic value we ascribe to it today. The protagonists of the biblical accounts all move within a materialistic and immanentist horizon, very concrete and tangible.

The Old Testament is just the story of the alliance/relationship between Yahweh and the family of Jacob-Israel, and such a tale is deprived of any universalistic perspectives (a later invention of Christianity). This alliance, which did not even involve all the descendants of Abraham’s family but only one of its branches, that of Jacob-Israel, is not a universal but a particular account of events that happened at a specific time in history in a specific place: today we would perhaps label it as a local history book. Yahweh, the protagonist of the Old Testament, was just the leader of the family of Jacob.

Other families, peoples, and nations had their leaders; only they did not take the pain to write an accurate account of such relationships. Or maybe they did, and the books went lost. But the question is: who were these “leaders” that the ancient people considered “deities” and referred to by different but equivalent names? The Sumerians called them “Anunnaki,” the Egyptians called them “Neteru,” and the Babylonians called them “Ilanu.” The Bible calls them

“Elohim.” Who were the Elohim, then?

Ten or so years ago, when I started voicing my doubts about the correctness of translating the term “Elohim” with “God,” Edizioni San Paolo’s bosses began to worry about my heterodox ideas, and our collaboration came to a halt after seventeen books were published together. What made them so mad? The extraterrestrial hypothesis, to be fair, was not the main problem, as the Catholic Church does admit the possibility of extraterrestrial intelligence. Rev. Jose Gabriel Funes, ex-Vatican’s chief astronomer, avers that there is no conflict between believing in God and the possibility of “extraterrestrial brothers,” perhaps more evolved than humans.²

The main problem was my methodology and its profound implications. To be clear, I propose a literal interpretation that allows me, and all those who adhere to it, to read the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, from the advantage point of distancing myself from the theological filters that have buried the “sacred text” for thousands of years, making it unreachable and unusable.

Monotheistic theology has deprived us of the possibility of treating the Bible like any other ancient source to be studied objectively. If treated as any other ancient source, the Bible could say much about the history of humankind before saying anything about God. But here lies the problem. Nobody knows anything about God, yet priests and theologians claim the right to interpret the Bible according to their theological schemes. It is frankly unbelievable that the literal reading of the Bible could represent such a Copernican revolution in biblical and anthropological studies. This circumstance says much about theology’s deforming, obscurantist power when applied to an ancient book.

As is well known, at least until the 16th century, the Catholic Church forbade reading the Bible without the mediation of an official interpreter. The reason behind this

prohibition is apparent today to anyone. If you read what is written without interpretative filters, without theological lenses on your nose, the Bible becomes an exciting source of knowledge, not about God, but about human history. The readers of the Bible will experiment with the regenerating feeling of discovering something left unseen in plain sight. This is what I experienced when I started translating the Bible. The literal reading is as subversive as it is simple. A new reality, at the same time revolutionary and familiar, materializes in front of the reader in the same way a small child discovers a unique gelato flavor and realizes that the world is an inexhaustible source of surprises.

I certainly am not the first one to endorse such methods. With appropriate differences, this is the same methodological approach that Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890) successfully adopted. The history of archeology has taught us that much good can come from questions asked by independent researchers who view reality with a divergent thinking approach. One must ask how Schliemann, who was not a professional archaeologist, succeeded in finding the lost city of Troy, whereas professional archeologists, firmly entrenched in academic circles, failed in the task. Free of preconceived notions, Schliemann believed that the story of the Trojan War, as told in the *Iliad*, was *true*, or at least contained much truth, and was not merely a product of Homer's imagination. Schliemann decided to *believe* the ancient sources. The groundbreaking premise of his work was to "pretend" that the *Iliad* contained actual historical events. He took Homer's account as a starting point for his research. Accompanied by sarcastic ridicule from the academic world, he pursued his research with extraordinary tenacity and eventually found Troy on Hissarlik Hill in western Turkey.³

Using this method, Schliemann made some of the most significant discoveries in the history of archeology. For any unbiased observer, this method is logical; still, the

archeologists of his time amazingly could not see its value. Not because their eyesight was weak but because they wore blinders and did not even know it.

I pretend that the Bible is *true in its literal sense*. I say, "Let us pretend that the Bible is true." Opinable as it can be, this methodology has the advantage of not arbitrarily resorting to hermeneutical categories (allegories, symbols, metaphors, and so forth) to explain "difficult" passages. The Bible is straightforward and can be understood easily through literal reading. When I see theologians and biblical exegetes swim in a sea of confused and confusing interpretative devices, to which they inevitably must resort to making sense of problematic passages, I wonder how they could reconcile their arbitrary interpretative method with the claim that the Bible is "word of God." However, I know the answer. How can you explain Yahweh's craving for the smell of burnt flesh, if not allegorically?

If you read the Bible, literally everything becomes understandable and plain because the biblical authors did not feel the need, as we do, to advocate for a precise monotheistic theological perspective or a moral authority of religious order. The biblical authors wrote what they experienced, saw with their eyes, or heard with their ears, even when the image of Yahweh from those reports was all but flattering. As a theologian of a loving God, how do you explain that Yahweh orders the extermination of men, women, and children and claims for himself 675 sheep, 72 oxen, 61 donkeys, and 32 virgins after a battle against the Midianites (Numbers 31:32-40)? This portion of the spoils was not for the service of the tabernacle, as Numbers 31 explains: it was for Yahweh's personal use. One only wonders why a spiritual and transcendent "God" would need 32 virgins – or 61 donkeys, for that matter.

Such disturbing passages were not intended as metaphors or allegories to be interpreted 2,000 years later by some

theologians in their Vatican libraries but reflected what the writer had heard or seen. Similar examples are found throughout the Bible, and I don't want to assume that the authors of the biblical text misrepresented their ideas or the facts they wanted to convey and describe. I take the text seriously.

From the necessity of harmonizing the biblical text with the theological and monotheistic conception of God of Western culture arises a whole series of falsifications and mistranslations, in view of which that first innocent printing typo I had discovered twenty-five years ago really seems like a "speck in the eye of the brother." Instead, here we talk about massive logs that have remained in our eyes for hundreds and thousands of years, so long that we even ignore our blindness. In *Gods of the Bible*, I have tried to remove at least some of these logs, addressing subjects such as the story of creation, the origins, and evolution of humankind, the existence of angels, the nature of cherubim, the identity of Satan, the meaning of the name of Yahweh and many more.

Mainly I focused on the identity and character of Yahweh and the meaning of the term "Elohim." To make a long story short, when we read the term "God" in the Bible, this usually comes from the Hebrew term "Elohim." However, at least when I worked for Edizioni San Paolo, the term "Elohim" was left untranslated into the interlinear edition of the Bible that we prepared for scholars and academia. In the Bibles available to the public, the same term was translated as "God." Therefore, where people read "God" and believe that the biblical authors wrote the equivalent of the word "God," scholars read the term "Elohim." This was to alert them that this word is problematic, to say the least, for the unbiased translator.

Furthermore, Yahweh is just one of the many individuals who comprise the group of the "Elohim." As shown, this term is the equivalent of the Sumerian "Anunnaki" or the Egyptian "Neteru," which described a pantheon of a multiplicity of

deities. Monotheism arose quite late on the roots of a previously widespread polytheism that affected all the peoples of the ancient Near East, including the Israelites. This fact is now recognized even in Bible study circles. Professor Mark Smith of Princeton Theological Seminary has written extensively on the polytheistic roots of the Bible and the long development of monotheism from an earlier polytheism.⁴

Often, however, these findings remain isolated. They certainly do not penetrate the realm of doctrine, except in a form purified of its most radical consequences, and therefore do not influence popular piety and practiced religion. Scholars in this field tend to defuse their most controversial results to avoid conflicts between theology and biblical scholarship. On the contrary, I think one of the greatest hindrances to reading the Bible is theology. In 2016, I held a conference in Milan with four theologians of different backgrounds: Ariel Di Porto, Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Turin; Mons. Avondios, Archbishop of the Orthodox Church of Milan; Daniele Garrone, Biblical scholar, and Protestant pastor, Old Testament expert; Don Ermis Segatti, priest and professor of Theology and History of Christianity at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy – this was at times a very heated meeting.⁵

At any rate, nobody who is intellectually honest can be sure of what “Elohim” means, but there is substantial evidence that “Elohim” does not mean “God” at all. Our very idea of God as a transcendental, omniscient, omnipotent being has nothing to do with the idea the ancient Biblical authors had in mind when employing the term “Elohim.” The Bible mentions several other “Elohim” besides Yahweh, of whom we even know the names, such as Chamosh, Milcom, Astarte, Hadad, Melqart, and many others. The “Elohim” was thus a group.

We could also add that the Old Testament tells the story of how Elyon, the most powerful of the Elohim, the commander-in-

chief, would divide the lands and peoples of the earth among all the various Elohim leaving some of them satisfied and others dissatisfied.⁶ Yahweh was one of them, and he received only the people of Israel, who were still landless. As the Bible says, "Yahweh alone led him; no foreign El was with him" (Deuteronomy 32:12). In a very significant passage, the Bible also describes an "assembly" of the "Elohim." To be an assembly, they must have been more than one. Traditional translators argue that "Elohim" here means "judges," but they are contradicted by the Bible itself, which always uses a different word for "judges." Also, this is an entirely arbitrary affirmation. I wonder on what ground can we say that "Elohim" at times means "God" and at times mean "judges." What criteria are we following? In Psalm 82, Elyon rebukes the assembly of the gathered "Elohim" and reminds them that although more powerful than humans, they also "die like Adam," thus emphasizing a clear distinction between the "Adamites," the descendants of Adam, and the group of the "Elohim."

It won't be surprising that the term "Elohim" has a grammatical plural ending. "Elohim" is a grammatical plural. Translating "Elohim" in the singular as "God" would be nothing more than a simplification of monotheistic theology. Therefore I think it should be left, to be safe, *untranslated*.

Yahweh's character is also worth investigating. When not violent, Yahweh's behavior often seems bizarre, extravagant, and arbitrary. Yahweh's words demonstrate his eagerness for the smell of the smoke of burnt flesh, prescribing elaborate rituals for the holocausts and commanding that violation of pedantic rules for the sacrifices be punished by death. Yahweh also moves and intervenes in human businesses in peculiar ways; for example, at times, he literally arrives "flying riding on a cherub" (Psalm 18:10) or aboard flying machines called "ruach" or "kavod," which I discuss extensively in *Gods of the Bible*. Yahweh destroys cities with terrifying weapons, crushes villages, and demands his share of the spoils.

In my view, biblical scholarship and theology hopelessly oppose each other. However, I don't deny the existence of God in general; I only say that God is not present in the Bible. Luckily so! This supposedly loving God theologians have come up with shows himself in the Old Testament as a cruel, sadistic, manipulative, and narcissistic individual.

Yahweh was undoubtedly endowed with unique qualities that made him superior to man in power and knowledge, but he was not superior in morals and ethics. It is enough to remember Yahweh's exterminations, cruel rules, and bizarre behaviors, like sniffing the smoke of burned flesh, which he needed to relax. This matter was so important that any violation of the ritual could result in the death of the sacrificer. I detail this in *Gods of the Bible* and propose my interpretation of the sacrificial rituals occurring in all ancient religions, including Greek and Roman cults.⁷

The Bible does not speak about the origin of the Elohim. There is no hard evidence about the provenance of this group. Still, the comparison with the Adamites points to their clear and overwhelming biological and technological superiority. I, however, suggest and discuss in my book the possibility that something like the "cargo cults" might have occurred in the ancient past, not only among the people of Israel but among all the peoples of the world, from the Middle East to the Far East and the Americas.

During World War II, the inhabitants of Melanesia in the Pacific Ocean first encountered the white man and saw airplanes. The U.S. Army occupied their islands scattered across the Pacific as logistical bases for war operations. The natives saw the American soldiers coming from the sky and taking off from the ground with their aircraft. They saw them equipped with powerful weapons, high-speed air vehicles, and means of communication that defied understanding. They thus started considering them as deities. The natives began to

develop rituals, prayers, and cults in anticipation of the return of the American soldiers.

I use the paradigm of “cargo cults” to speculate on the arrival in antiquity of civilizations that were much more advanced than ours. Our ancestors would then develop rituals, myths, and narratives that today we consider fairy tales but perhaps hide a very different reality, the reality of an extraordinary encounter with a superior civilization.

All the people of the Earth tell us the same thing. They tell us about superior beings who came from the sky, who created humankind and gave them knowledge, teaching them how to grow crops, write, predict the course of the stars, build incredible structures, and work metals. Is it possible that all the peoples of the Earth, independently from each other, developed the same stories, the same narratives about their past?

Gods of the Bible is just my last attempt to bring some light to our ancient past through the narrative found in the Bible. I aim to narrate, understand, and describe in detail the reasons and habits of that group of individuals called “Elohim,” of whom Yahweh was part, one of many. Yahweh was the Elohim of the family of Israel – and only of them and their descendants. I deny the universality of the Bible. The Old Testament records Israel’s covenant and relationship with Yahweh. Other Elohim, as we have seen above, had inherited other peoples, families, and nations.

The Elohim of other peoples are mentioned and addressed several times in the Old Testament. These passages suggest that these “foreign Elohim” were similar to Yahweh and had identical abilities and habits. The Elohim had advanced technology unavailable to our ancestors; lived longer than humans but were mortal; had weapons and tools that could do wonders; they were more powerful and knowledgeable, and yet they could be abandoned, betrayed, and deceived, just like

humans, because they knew a lot but were not omniscient.

The space of a short article would only allow for briefly summarizing some of the aspects of the Elohim that I have detailed in this new book and all my previous works.⁸

Still, perhaps it is not superfluous to end by mentioning something about the fascinating biblical term “ruach.” This term has always been translated as “spirit” through the influence of the Greek culture and the so-called Septuagint version of the Bible, which renders it with “pneuma.” The Ancient Hebrew term “ruach” actually had a very definite and concrete meaning as it stood for “wind,” “breath,” “moving air,” “storm wind,” and, in a broader sense, “that which moves quickly through the air space.” In modern biblical translations, the term “ruach” is always rendered as “spirit” because it responds to monotheistic theology’s spiritualist needs.

In the Old Testament, however, this “ruach” appears to be flying through the air, making noise, and taking people from one place to another, with a loud clangor and visible manifestations, taking off and landing in specific geographical locations – in very concrete ways.

The two following passages illustrate what has just been said.

“The [ruach] lifted me and brought me to the gate of the house of Yahweh that faces East. There at the entrance of the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah, son of Azzur, and Pelatiah, son of Benaiah.” (Ezekiel 11:1)

“Look,” they said, “we, your servants, have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps, the [ruach] of Yahweh has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or valley.” “No,” Elisha replied, “do not send them.” But they persisted until he was too embarrassed to

refuse. So he said, "Send them." And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find him. (2 Kings 2:16-17)

I left the word "ruach" untranslated, as the reader can see. If you follow monotheistic exegesis and replace "ruach" with "spirit," the passages become incomprehensible. But it is difficult to interpret the term "ruach" spiritually without distorting the text's meaning. I give countless similar examples about "ruach" and other words and biblical passages in *Gods of the Bible*, always underlining the concreteness and realism of the Ancient Hebrew language and the ancient Semitic culture, which was the culture of a pastoral people that Yahweh had found in the desert, landless.

I began and ended *Gods of the Bible* with the same spirit that moved me twenty-five years ago when I first picked up my pink notebook and then discovered the little mistake that began my professional career as a translator of the Old Testament with Edizioni San Paolo. Since then, I have found many more errors in the Bible – and not all were done in good faith. The list is long and cannot be continued here. But I hope at least to have been able to open a dialog with all those who, with an open mind, are interested in learning more about humankind.

I am not looking for absolute truths but for a glimmer of reality. As I gaze into the impending sunset, the peaks of the Alps, silhouetted against the evening sky, glow pink. A mountain peak is all I hope for. I leave the climb to heaven to others.

I take *Gods of the Bible* from its stack and open it in the last light of day. I find the best summary of what has been said on the page that opens before me. It is good never to ignore the authoritative voices of the past whose intentions are free from the controversies of the present. I find the voice of a great historian of antiquity who had no reason to lie or embellish. And I realize it is not for heretics like me to explain the meaning of such words, but for the "guardians

of the discourse” that exclude apriori hypotheses they cannot accept. I pretend what I read is true.

“Armies clashed in the sky, swords blazed, and the temple shone with sudden flashes. The doors of the sanctuary were suddenly torn open, and a superhuman voice cried out that the gods were fleeing, and at the same time, there was a great uproar as if men were fleeing.” (C. Tacitus, Histories, V 13)

1 Biglino, Mauro. *Cinque Meghillôt. Rut, Cantico Dei Cantici, Qohelet, Lamentazioni, Ester*. Edited by Pier Carlo Beretta, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan), San Paolo Edizioni, 2008; See also *Il Libro Dei Dodici*, San Paolo Edizioni, 2009.

2 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-extraterrestrials-idUKL146364620080514>

3 Cfr. Ceram, C. W., *Gods, Graves and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*. Revised, Vintage, 2012. Ceram provides a brief but very clear account of how Scliemann came to the greatest archaeological discovery of the century.

4 Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Oxford University Press, 2003. Mark Smith's presentation of his work can be found at: <https://youtu.be/8FZ2BdHmCNw>

5 The meeting between Mauro Biglino and the theologians can be found: <https://youtu.be/nCEG9Znl6Lc>

6 **“When Elyon gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For Yahweh's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.** In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste.” (Deuteronomy 32:8-9)

7 Cfr G. M. Corrias, *Prima della fede. Antropologia e teologia del culto romano arcaico*, Tuthi, 2022.

8 Many of Mauro Biglino's conferences and videos can be found on his youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@MauroBiglinoOfficialChannel>. Available books in Italian and English are: Biglino, Mauro, and Lorena Forni. *La Bibbia non l'ha mai detto*. Mondadori, 2017. Biglino, Mauro, and Giorgio Cattaneo. *La Bibbia nuda*. Tuthi, 2021. Biglino, Mauro, and Giorgio Cattaneo. *The Naked Bible*. Tuthi, 2022. Biglino, Mauro. *La Bibbia non parla di Dio. Uno studio rivoluzionario sull'Antico Testamento*. Mondadori, 2016. Biglino, Mauro. *Il Falso Testamento. Creazione, miracoli, patto d'allenza: l'altra verità dietro la Bibbia*. Mondadori, 2017.

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