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## Who is God: Biblical analysis and perspectives

**Dr. Aloumedjo Zam Thierry Farrel**

Department of Business Administration, Swiss School of Business Administration, Switzerland

\* Corresponding Author: **Dr. Aloumedjo Zam Thierry Farrel**

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the nature of God as the supreme being of the universe and the source of every existing things and beings. To achieve that goal, the methodology used is based on critical literature review, phenomenology and Biblical methodology which is a method that seeks to shed light upon the historical processes which give rise to the biblical texts. It proceeds from textual criticism to redaction criticism, operating with the help of scientific criteria. The objective of our study is to answer a number of questions useful to shed more light on the understanding of God's nature, His features, His will and the impact of knowing Him on the physical, psychological and spiritual lives of people and ultimately to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. The interest of this work is spiritual, philosophical and social. The results of our analysis show that Knowing God helps us with a better understanding of our own identity. Before we can appreciate who we are, we need to know who made us and why we are here on. Identifying God is a herculean task as there seems to be various gods as we are living in a polytheist environment. Based on the Bible God is three in one (Adonai) that is the Father (Yahweh), the son (Christ Jesus) and the Holy Ghost (Spirit of God in action). He is the maker, king and master of the cosmos, of the universe, the truth, the light, the right path.

**Keywords:** God, universe, creation, humankind, happiness, destiny

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### 1. Introduction

Etymologically the word » god » refers to a supreme being or a deity. It is a title therefore and not a name. Usually it refers to the one we invoke to, we sacrifice to. A god is one who brings good and is supposed to know everything. It can be a super human being or spirit worshiped as having power over nature or human fortunes. Sometimes it tends to be an image, animal, or other object worshiped as divine or symbolizing a superior entity. The word god can also be used as a conventional personification of fate, a greatly admired or influential person, a thing accorded the supreme importance, it can be an expression of an extremely important emotion in joy, amazement, anger, etc.

The concept of god appears as such polysemous and polyvocal. It is usually mobilized in the spiritual and religious domains. Concerning religions, it is important to underline the most influential ones and major esoteric trends as a sample and their understanding of God. The world's principal religions and spiritual traditions include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, buddhism, taoism, voodoo, confucianism, paganism, etc. While the major hermetic and esoteric groups refer to rosucricianism, freemasonry, the church of Satan, the illuminati, etc. Over three-quarters of the global population adheres to one of these four – Christianity (31%), Islam (24%), Hinduism (15%), and Buddhism (7%).

From the abovementioned, it would be relevant to explore the understanding of the concept of god according to various religious back ground. Considering the fact that christianism is the dominant religion in the world and Jesus Christ the reference of time in the universe. It would be logical to analyse God according to the holy scriptures, the difference between God and other gods, before drawing perspectives.

## 2. Who is god according to religions and human beliefs

Christianity is considered the world's largest religion practiced by approximately 2.4 billion out of 8.2 billion people in the world making almost one third. The country with the highest number of practicing Christians is the most powerful in the world i.e. United States, with a Christian population of 253 million.

Christianity comes from "follower of Christ" meaning anointed one or belonging or owned by Jesus Christ the messiah, son of God to save humanity from sin. In Romans 10:9, it is said that If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-36 NIV).

Christianity is defined<sup>1</sup> as a major religion stemming from the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth (the Christ, or the Anointed One of God) in the 1st century. Christianity is the faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Christians believe that God sent his Son to earth to save humanity from the consequences of its sins.

According to christianity, God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of earlier covenants. Christianity is a monotheistic religion. This means that the Christian faith believes in only one, all-powerful God who is the creator of the universe. The central doctrine of christianity is that of Trinity meaning the nature of God existing in three co equal, co eternal, consubstantial divine persons who are God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit, three distinct persons (hypostases) sharing one essence/substance/nature (homoousion).

With an estimated population of almost 1.9 billion followers as of 2020 year estimation, Muslims comprise around 25% of the world's total population. For Islam, the religion of the Muslims, a monotheistic faith regarded as revealed through Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah. The word "Islam" means "submission to the will of God." Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Muslims are monotheistic and worship one, all-knowing God, who in Arabic is known as Allah. Followers of Islam aim to live a life of complete submission to Allah. But is Allah and Yahweh the same God since both religion have the same roots through the patriarch Abraham? In other words is the God of the Bible the Same as the God of the Quran?

Islam sees Jesus as human, sent as the last prophet of Israel to Jews with the Gospel Scripture, affirming but modifying the Mosaic Law. Islamic traditions have rejected any divine notions of Jesus being God, or begotten Son of God, or the Trinity. From that ground it is difficult to see any similar identity between christianity based on Jesus as the son of God, God himself and second figure of the Trinity compared to Islam that rejects the idea of a one God into three with Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.

It appears that, in Christianity, the most common name of God is Yahweh. In Islam, the most common name of God is Allah, similar to Eloah in the Old Testament. Christians and Muslims have different view about the Holy Spirit. Most Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is God, and the third member of the Trinity. In Islam, the Holy Spirit is generally believed to be the angel Gabriel. If Muslims revere Muhammad as the embodiment of the perfect believer and

take his actions and saying as a model of ideal conduct. It is different from Christians who believe Jesus is God's son, notwithstanding that both religions are Abrahamic and monotheistic, having originated in the Middle East. Around 25.8 percent of the global population identify as Muslims, followed by 15.1 percent of global populations<sup>2</sup> as Hindu.

Hinduism is a major religious and cultural tradition of South Asia, which developed from Vedic religion<sup>3</sup> characterized by a belief in reincarnation as well as in a supreme god or entity called Brahman who has multiple manifestations as a variety of deities. Hinduism has monotheistic (one God) as well as polytheistic (many Gods) elements: the one Ultimate Reality or Supreme Being (Brahman) also exists simultaneously in the deities of the Creator (Brahman), the Sustainer (Vishnu) and the Destroyer (Shiva).

Hinduism has no established set of beliefs and thus no universal or common view of Jesus. However, a lot of Hindus, including religious and political leaders, tend to variously venerate Jesus as either a Āchārya, Sadhu or Avatar.

Even though the Hindu religion believes there was one God in the beginning Brahman, they believe he sent lots of other Gods to help people, so there are many gods in the Hindu faith. Unlike Hindus, Christians only believe in one God. Hinduism has only one God who is manifested infinitely. The universe is God itself, God is All and All is God.

Judaism is an Abrahamic, one of the oldest monotheistic and ethnic religions that was founded over 3500 years ago in the Middle East. Jews believe that God appointed the Jews to be his chosen people in order to set an example of holiness and ethical behaviour to the world. Judaism believe that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is only and true God. Judaism does not accept Jesus as a divine being and an intermediary between humans and God. They don't believe either in Trinity and their belief is contrary to many christian tenets. Still Judaism believe in a coming Messiah. Jesus is limited in judaism as a mere rabbi and nothing more.

Buddhism is one of the world's largest religions and originated 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhists believe in reincarnation of the soul, and that, by following the teachings of Buddha, or dharma, people can reach an enlightened state called nirvana and stop the cycle of reincarnation. The basic beliefs of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths, which teach that life is suffering, suffering is caused by desire and attachment, and that suffering can be ended by following the Eight-Fold Path. The Eight-Fold Path teaches finding the "right" way in all things, like speech and action, by seeking moderation.

Followers of Buddhism don't acknowledge a supreme god or deity. They instead focus on achieving enlightenment state of inner peace and wisdom. When followers reach this spiritual echelon, they're said to have experienced nirvana. The religion's founder, Buddha, is considered an extraordinary being, but not a god.

Voodoo as a religion come from the ancient practices of ancestor worship and animism, believing that spirits inhabit all things, including animals and plants. Voodoo practitioners believe in a supreme god named Bondye<sup>4</sup> who is all-powerful yet remains detached from human affairs. Vodou teaches the existence of a transcendent creator divinity, Bondye, under whom are spirits known as lwa.

Blending polytheistic spirit worship with a superficial form of Christianity, Voodoo has effectively denied the primacy of

Jesus Christ. Voodoo is more polytheistic than it claims to be and that its practices, worship, and way of life are incompatible with the Christian faith. The practices and beliefs of Voodoo are prohibited in the Bible. Its god and gods are not associated with the God of the Bible.

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese belief system, which focuses on the importance of personal ethics and morality. It is also known as Ruism or Ru classicism. Confucian teaching rests on three essential values: filial piety, humaneness, and ritual. Confucius is the first teacher who established ethical, moral, and social standards that formed the basis of a way of life known as Confucianism. There is no deity worshiped in Confucianism, though the worship of ancestors and of Confucius himself as a sage master and teacher are practiced. Paganism is a term first used in the fourth century by early Christians for people in the Roman Empire who practiced polytheism, or ethnic religions. Paganism is therefore a Christian term used to designate those religions that do not worship the God of Abraham. It is a group of contemporary religions based on a reverence for nature, including origins and history, rituals, devotions. The meaning of paganism is spiritual beliefs and practices other than those of Judaism, Islam, or especially Christianity. Pagans believe that nature is sacred and that the natural cycles of birth, growth and death observed in the world around us carry profoundly spiritual meanings. Paganism is a quickly growing spiritual movement, consisting of various groups practicing nature-based polytheistic religions.

While the major hermetic and esoteric groups refer to Satanism (the church of Satan), In theistic Satanism, Satan is considered a deity who is either worshipped or revered. In LaVeyan Satanism, Satan is a symbol of virtuous characteristics and liberty. According to Rosicrucianism, Jesus Christ was born of Gentile parents, did not die on the cross and did not ascend to heaven and retired to the monastery in Carmel to carry on secret missions with His apostles. Freemasonry has no specific "Supreme Being", it is the individual member's choice what that is. Masonry excludes all particular biblical teachings about Christ, such as His Incarnation, redemptive mission, death and resurrection.

### 3. Jesus as the reference of time worldwide

Independently of beliefs, religions and philosophies, Jesus Christ is the reference of time and seasons worldwide. According to scientists, we use the count from the alleged year of the birth of Christ because the people who first defined our calendar did believe in Jesus and his salvation. It would be complex to reorganise the calendar, and there seems obviously not a correct start year to replace it with. This goes in line with the fact that Jesus who is also God is the beginning and end of every creation.

The Bible says that Jesus came into our world "in the fulness of time" in God's program. The years and the centuries of human history are divided by the great event of the birth of Jesus Christ. The beginning of the Third Millennium comes not only two thousand years after the birth of Christ, but also at a time when astrologers believe that the Age of Pisces known to them as the Christian age is drawing to a close.

According to Coolman, and Owen Jarus the terms "A.D." and "B.C." have their roots in Christianity. "A.D." stands for *anno domini* (Latin for "in the year of the lord"), and it refers specifically to the birth of Jesus Christ. "B.C." stands for "before Christ." The system labels years based on a

traditional notion of when Jesus was born with the "A.D." denoting years after his birth and "B.C." designating the years that predate his birth.

Time is key to our existence. The evidence is that creation was made according to a specific calendar by the creator. In Mark 1:15, it is clearly revealed that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." God created everything including time. In John 1, it is said that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

### 4. God's names and features according to Holy scriptures

In the Bible, God is revealed to us through various names representing his features and characters. God reveals not only who He is by His many names but also what He wants for humanity.

1. **Yahweh (the Lord God):** it is considered to be too holy to be even spoken aloud (Exodus 20:7 NRSV). It is derived from the Hebrew word "I am".
2. **Adonai (Master):** *Adonai* comes from the plural form of *adon* (Lord). Hence, *Adonai* is a reference to the Trinity.
3. **Elohim (God, the creator):** In *Genesis 1:1*, *Elohim* reflects the sovereignty and absolute power of God. He is mightier than any other gods or false idols that govern the world today.
4. **Abba (Father):** It reflects the deep and personal relationships with God. It is one of the most intimate names for God as revealed in *Mark 14:36*.
5. **Jehovah Jireh (The Lord will provide):** In *Genesis 22:14*, the name *Jehovah Jireh* is used by Abraham to name the place on Mount Moriah where God provided him with a ram to sacrifice as a replacement for his son, Isaac.
6. **Jehovah Rapha (The Lord who heals):** As shown in *Psalms 147:3*, It is a name that reveals the power of God to heal, repair, and rejuvenate the areas of our lives that are not working.
7. **Jehovah Nissi (The Lord is my banner):** There are numerous instances where God spread His hand of protection over His people and kept them safe from their enemies as was the case of Exodus.
8. **Jehovah Shalom (The Lord is peace):** The name *Jehovah Shalom* appears only once in the Bible in *Judges 6:24*. And yet, this characteristic of God is both powerful and essential to our daily existence.
9. **Quanna (Jealous God):** "For you shall worship no other god, because the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." In *Exodus 34:14*.
10. **El Roi** "The God who sees me". The name El Roi says to us that God is watching over all, that He sees the affairs of people, and knows when we feel lost and unloved.
11. **El Shaddai** "God Almighty". El Shaddai, reminds us that He is all-powerful, He is the Mighty One.
12. **El Elyon** "My Redeemer lives". El Elyon is a name used through the Old Testament revealing God is above all gods, that nothing in life is more sacred.
13. **Attiyq Youm** (The ancient of days). Only God can tell in ancient times the things that are not yet done.
14. **El Chay** (living God). The Living God, El Chay, transcends culture and time. He speaks to you through

- His word and walks with you through your struggles.
15. **El Chuwl** (the God who gave you birth). God has made you for a purpose And He's going to take care of you.
  16. **El Deah** (the God of knowledge). Think about God's omniscience. He knows everything. God is the God of all knowledge.
  17. **Yeshua Shamash** (The greatest at the service of others). "No servant is greater than his master" (John 13:16) and "the greatest among you must be the servant of all" (Matthew 20:26; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:26). Likewise, the shamash (servant) is the one to give of himself or herself for the good of the others.

We cannot list all God's names such as El Gibhor (the mighty God), El Olam (the everlasting God), Emmanuel (God with us), Jehovah (the self-existent God), M'Kaddesh (the Lord who sanctifies), Bore (the Lord who creates), Rohi (the Lord our Shepherd), Sabaoth (the Lord of Hosts), Tsidkenu (Lord of righteousness), Tsur (the Lord our rock), Logos (the word), Ma'on (the Lord our dwelling place), Messiah (anointed one). In a nutshell he is the only Almighty God, creator of everything who deserves exclusively all praises and worship.

### 5. Difference between God and other gods

In the book of Exodus 20: 3-5, the Lord God says that we shouldn't have any other gods before him. This implies that the people of Israel to whom he was referring to and in extension to the rest of the world such as the Egyptians and other nations were worshipping other divinities. Therefore it is important to clarify the notion of god, what were the other gods for instance worshipped by the Egyptians, the Israelites, the Samaritans, the Philistines, Niniveh, the Medianites, the Babylonians, the Greek, the Romans and today modern world. It is not an easy task to define what is a god, however we may refer to it as that which is invoked, given priority, what we rely on, what thanks to which we define our lives, what constitutes the source of our happiness and fulfilment, what we believe is supreme, what we consider as being the source of what is good or the reference of our existence. Based on this intellectual approach and heathen way of seeing things, it appears that we may have several gods or none at all depending on our convictions. This approach contrast with the Hebrew that define no more god with small « g » but God in capital « G » as Elohim meaning all powerful God. This approach correlates more with the Christian approach that we advocate for.

The Egyptians worshipped and invoked several thousands of gods, we will only cite 07 of the major ones such as Osiris (god of the deceased), Isis (goddess of the moon), Horus (sky god), Anubis (deity of cemeteries), Sekhmet (goddess of war and healing), Bastet (goddess of pleasure and good health), Ma'at (goddess of truth, justice and balance) and Hathor (goddess of love).

### Against Yahweh will, the Israelites though the chosen people of God used to worship other gods and goddess such as

- Asherah: Canaanites associated Asherah with sacred trees, an association also found in the Israelite tradition;
- Baal: In the Bible, Baal is the name given to several different deities who are designated as false gods or idols. However, it is most often used to describe the specific Canaanite-Phoenician god of fertility and rain.

Additionally, Baal is associated with Beezlebob, demons, and the devil.

- Yarikh: arikh or Yaraḥum: was a moon god worshiped in the Ancient Near East. He is best attested in sources from the Amorite city of Ugarit in the north.
- Astarte: Astarte/Ashtoreth is the Queen of Heaven to whom the Canaanites burned offerings and poured libations (Jeremiah 44). Astarte, goddess of war and sexual love, shared so many qualities with her sister, Anath, that they may originally have been seen as a single deity. Coins found at one of the ancient Phoenician sites have a Mermaid on them and this is believed to have been a representation of Astarte.

It should be noticed that each of these gods and goddesses had their own priests and prophets and numbered royalty among their devotees. This situation was qualified as an abomination then attracted calamity and wrath of God.

Concerning the Philistines, Dagon was characterized as the chief god of the Philistines, who lived in the Canaan region, which is the location of modern-day Palestine, from about the 12th century BCE to 600 BCE. The gods and goddesses of the Philistines included Baal, Astarte, Asherah.

The people of Nineveh who were very hostile to Yahweh and his prophets, worshiped "the goddess Inanna of Nineveh" and Nina was one of the Sumerian and Assyrian names for that goddess. The Assyrian cuneiform for Ninâ is a fish within a house. What we call today marine spirits, sirens or mermaid. Marine spirits are found in oceans, rivers, streams, pools of water and in the human body, etc. These are tough demons that always resist deliverance. They are highly deceptive and possess spiritual capacity to ruin human lives and nations.

According to Karel van der Toorn, "By the 14th century BC, groups of Edomites and Midianites worshipped Yahweh as their God. Midianite, in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), were member of a group of nomadic tribes related to the Israelites and most likely living east of the Gulf of Aqaba in the northwestern regions of the Arabian Desert. The Midianites were the descendants of Midian and therefore children of Abraham. They settled in "the land of the east" (Genesis 25:6). The Midianites themselves were later depicted at times in non-Biblical sources as dark-skinned and called Kushim, a Hebrew word used for dark-skinned Africans.

Babylonia mainly focused on the god Marduk, who is the national god of the Babylonian empire. However, there were also other gods that were worshipped such as Ishtar, Nabu, Apshu, Shamash, Ea, Tiamat, Nergal, Marduk, and Adad. Marduk was the ancient Mesopotamian god of creation and the supreme god of the pantheon. He is also credited as the patron god of the city of Babylon and the divine creator of humanity.

In ancient Greek religion and mythology, there were 12 gods called Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Hermes, and either Hestia or Dionysus.

The three most important gods worshipped by the Romans were Jupiter (protector of the state), Juno (protector of women) and Minerva (goddess of craft and wisdom). Other major gods included Mars (god of war), Mercury (god of trade and messenger of the gods) and Bacchus (god of grapes and wine production).

Nowadays, there are an estimated more than 2500 Gods or deities currently worshiped by people on earth, from the most

ancient gods of polytheistic societies such as Hittite, Sumerian, Mesopotamian, to the most contemporary gods of the major monotheistic religions like Allah, God, Yahweh. In a nutshell we are living in a polytheist world from ancient times to the modern era where we are living in. But it appears clear that Yahweh has shown superiority to other deities from Canaanite, Hittite, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Ammonite, Edomite, Philistine, greek, romans, satanism, etc. He is indeed the only true living God, creator of the universe, Almighty, all knowing and master of the world and every creation seen and unseen.

### 6. Importance of knowing the true God

God wants to be known out of love for mankind (see Acts 17:27). The reason for that as revealed in the Bible are as follows:

- Knowing God helps us with a better understanding of our own identity. Before we can appreciate who we are, we need to know who made us and why we are here on.
- Knowing God is the way to have true peace and eternal life.
- True knowledge of God, the kind that transforms lives and hearts, goes beyond intellectual understanding. It dives deep into personal experience and intimacy with our creator.
- Knowing God is synonym of protection and provision.
- Knowing God gives wisdom and understanding. There is no wisdom apart from God. In Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”.
- Knowing God saves us from other false gods which are there to mislead us into hell on earth and beyond.
- To know God is to be drawn to those who are righteous.
- To know God is to avoid being troubled by sin.
- To know God is to be joyfully content.
- To know God is to be faithfully guided.
- To know God is to claim Jesus’ future as my own.

### 7. Where did God come from ?

It is an herculean task to identify the origins of God as the Holy scriptures say that He is the beginning of everything and moreover has always been there for ever and ever (1 Chronicles). About that the Bible says that God does not change, does not move and didn't come from anywhere (Hebrews 13:8). He always was, is, and is to come. It appears thus that only a creature has a beginning and an origin but not the creator. For Yahweh is the creator of what we call origins and starting point. He is everything, everywhere and beyond our limited intelligence and imagination that we owe all to him. The Bible says that the wisdom of men is folly to God.

Something must reveal us when we were born, how, where, etc but the fact is that God revealed himself to us not the other way round. In clear, God has always been there, and no one created him. But he did create us. We can see his fingerprints on everything. God is the energy that holds the universe together.

### 8. Conclusions and perspectives

Human knowledge and intelligence most often is based on logic and what is rationale or simply said scientific. Once an issue is beyond understanding or material evidence, we tend to dismiss it or regard it as it is not real. Therefore what is real seems a constant questioning. The fact that we cannot prove something does not mean that it does not exist. When people

enter a hall or a building they think with their eyes and senses minimizing the emptiness, the vacuum that is everywhere and as such witness and knowing everything. Among one of the most important and central problematic in science and religion is the question about the identity of God. If some deny the identity of one God into three for reasons best known by them, it appears from our own point of view that is Jesus is Lord and Yahweh is the true and only real God, creator of everything. God gives all men life and breath and everything else (Acts 17: 24-28).

The word » god » refers to a supreme being or a deity. It is a title therefore and not a name. Apart from scientific approaches, the subject of God is mostly analyzed on a religious background where the main important religions are Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Christians represents the most powerful religious and spiritual trend in the World. According to them Christ is the saviour and son of God based on the Trinity made of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit. God created everything including time. Time is key to our existence and the reference to it is Jesus Christ from whom it originates the symbols » AD » and « BC » i.e Year of the Lord or before christ or again after Christ's birth. The evidence is that creation was made according to a specific calendar by the creator as is revealed by the Holy Scriptures. In clear, there is only one and Almighty God, creator of everything, who deserves exclusively all our praises and worship. This is notwithstanding the fact we are living nowadays in a polytheistic environment with an estimated number of more than 2500 Gods or deities currently worshiped by people on earth, from the most ancient gods to recent ones.

The importance of knowing God by Man is manifold as it permits him to discover who he is himself and ultimately to attain full joy and contentment as well as reaching his destiny. It is logical then that God is the fingerprints we see in everything, He holds the whole universe in His hands. He is the King and Master of all and every.

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