

NAMES AND TERMS FOR 'GOD' IN BIBLE TRANSLATIONS IN ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

Some General Thoughts

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But I had pity for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations whither ye went. And I will hallow my great name, which was profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be hallowed in you before their eyes. (Ez 36:21-23 J.N.Darby)

This paper is focusing only on the general problems and principles of the matter of translating the name and the terms for “God” and “gods” in Bible translation in countries under (still or former) strong Islamic influence, as a basis for further studies of details.

1. To Differentiate: *Proper/Personal Name vs. Generic Name*

1.1 Basic Terminology

e.g.: Robert, Wiliam, John → proper/personal names – individual
Man → generic name of a group or category of beings

God: As well “god” and “God” are not *proper /personal names* but *generic names!*

- “god” any deity (category: deities, gods)
- “God” a certain unique deity – without mentioning his name

1.2 The Twofold Dilemma

What terms should be used in order to follow etymological facts (not allegations) and principles of translation?

(a) Proper/personal name of God

In Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament), the eternal *proper/personal name* of the one and only true God is YAHWEH יהוה,

In Arabic scriptures (Al-Qur'an), the name for the supreme deity is ALLAH.

(b) Generic name of the “category” of deities / gods / God

“The God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” - This quote from Exodus is one of many examples for a generic name of YAHWEH.

Focusing on Arabic and Malayu / Indonesian language, we have to decide what generic name(s) to use for YAHWEH, the God of the Bible:

- Is “Allah” a proper term?
- Is “Allah” both a proper/personal name and a generic name?

2. Names & Terms for the Supreme Deity in Bible and Al-Qur'an

2.1 The God of Al-Qur'an

- ◆ The common generic name for a god in Arabic language is إله "ilaah", both any deity (a god) and for the One and Only true God. It is the name for the category of "gods"
- ◆ The commonly accepted proper/personal name for the one and only deity of Islam, the God of the Al-Qur'an, is الله "Allah". There are two main opinions regarding the etymological root of the word "Allah":

- (a) "Salah satunya mengatakan bahwa kata Allāh (الله) berasal dari gabungan dari kata al- (sang) dan ilāh (tuhan) sehingga berarti "Sang Tuhan". Namun teori ini menyalahi bahasa dan kaidah bahasa Arab. Bentuk ma'rifat (definitif) dari ilah adalah al-ilah, bukan Allah. Dengan demikian kata al-ilah dikenal dalam bahasa Arab. Penggunaan kata tersebut misalnya oleh Abul A'la al-Maududi dalam *Mushthalahatul Arba'ah fil Qur'an* (h. 13) dan Syaikh Abdul Qadir Syaibah Hamad dalam *al-Adyan wal Furuq wal Dzahibul Mu'ashirah* (h. 54).

Kedua penulis tersebut bukannya menggunakan kata Allah, melainkan al-ilah sebagai bentuk ma'rifat dari ilah. Dalam bahasa Arab pun dikenal kaidah, setiap isim (kata benda atau kata sifat) nakiroh (umum) yang mempunyai bentuk mutsanna (dua) dan jamak, maka isim ma'rifat kata itupun mempunyai bentuk mutsanna dan jamak. Hal ini tidak berlaku untuk kata Allah, kata ini tidak mempunyai bentuk ma'rifat mutsanna dan jamak.

Sedangkan kata ilah mempunyai bentuk ma'rifat baik mutsanna (yaitu al-ilahani atau al-ilahaini) maupun jamak (yaitu al-alihah). Dengan demikian kata al-ilah dan Allah adalah dua kata yang berlainan."¹

- **Theory:** The term Allāh is derived from a contraction of the Arabic definite article al- "the" and 'ilāh "deity, god" to al-lāh meaning "the [sole] deity, God".
- **Conclusion:** Etymologically, both terms are two totally different words – Allah is not a derivation from the common term "al-ilah".¹

- (b) "Teori lain mengatakan kata ini berasal dari kata bahasa Aram Alāhā. Namun demikian, sebagian yang lain mengatakan bahwa Allah tidak untuk diterjemahkan, dengan berargumen bahwa kata tersebut khusus dan agung sehingga mesti dijaga, tidak memiliki bentuk jamak dan gender (berbeda dengan God yang memiliki bentuk jamak Gods dan bentuk feminin Goddess dalam bahasa inggris). Isu ini menjadi penting dalam upaya penerjemahan Al-Qur'an."¹

- **Theory:** The term Allāh is a derivation from the Aramaic word "Alāhā" which is also the root for the common name (category term) for deities in other religions. No reasonable etymological proof yet.

- ◆ However, theories which are proposing a common etymological origin of the term "Allah" with terms for "God" used by early Christians or Jews² mostly lack etymological accuracy.

Both the Hebrew language as well as the Hebrew Old Testament indeed contain a term very close to the Arabic term "Allah": אלה "allāh", a variation of אלה "ēlāh"! Both terms

¹ Ahmad Husnan, *Meluruskan Pemikiran Pakar Muslim*. Al Husna, Surakarta; Cetakan Pertama, Muharram 1425 H / Mei 2005 M. h. 25-27; quoted in: WIKIPEDIA Bahasa Indonesia, ensiklopedia bebas, "Allah" (10.01.2010).

² like theory [b] above does

(the Hebrew "*allâh*" and the Arabic "Allah") are pronounced identically; the only difference is an additional letter "L" in the Arabic term.

If we look for some etymological descent or affinity of the term "*Allah*", we should do it honestly without abandoning the most apparent, closest etymological affinity to terms used by the original language of the Holy Scriptures of Jews and Christians.

However, if we do so, we will realize that the Hebrew term "*allâh*" means something like "oak(-tree)" or "terebinth(-tree)", see Josua 24:26 – which is very unlikely related with the Arabic term "Allah". Besides that, Hebrew "*allâh*" is a feminine noun.³

- ◆ Although there is a difference in opinion regarding the origin and the feature of that term, there is no discussion regarding what the *proper/personal name* of the Islamic deity is: الله "Allah" is his proper personal name. He presents himself with this name and expects mankind to address him with this name.
- ◆ Edward William Lane in his most renowned 8-volume Arabic-English Lexicon⁴ says that – according to Arab grammarians teaching, the word الله "Allah" is a proper/personal name of an individual being, not a generic name of a certain category of beings (Gods / deities).
- ◆ Abdul Manan Omar in his famous "Dictionary of the Holy Quran (Arabic Words - English Meaning)"⁵ confirms that the word الله "Allah" is not a generic name, but a proper personal name (page 28,29). Omar also translated the Al-Qur'an into English language and is publisher of an Islamic Encyclopedia.

2.2 The God of the Bible

He reveals Himself both with a proper/personal name and with different generic names.

(A) The God of the Bible – Some of His common Generic Names

Some of many of His common generic names used in the Bible – used to mark Him as the most prominent, highest One or even as the only true One in the category:

- Lord
- God
- Creator
- Savior
- Anointed One ("Messiah", "Christ")
- King

Two other generic names, used in the Bible, are *ELOHIM* or *EL*:

3 Notice also that in the same verse (Josua 24:26) two other terms are used to refer to the God of the Bible, *ELOHIM* and *YAHWEH*.

4 First complete 8-volume edition 1863-72; modern editions 1992, 1997, 2003, 2004. "Every serious classical Arabic scholar, for the last hundred years and more, has been indebted to Lane's work [*the Lexicon*]." (Arberry, A.J. *Oriental Essays*. London: George Allen & Unwin.) A free PDF-version is available online at: <http://www.studyquran.co.uk/LLhome.htm>.

5 "The Real, Classical, and Root Meaning of all the Quranic Words. All root-words of the Holy Quran with their derivatives have been included."

Deut 10:17 (J.N.Darby Translation)

for Jehovah² your God³ – He is God³ of the gods³, and Lord¹ of the lords¹; God³, the great, the mighty, and the fearful...

Deut 4:24 (J.N.Darby Translation)

for Jehovah² thy God³ is a fire consuming - a zealous God⁴.

(1)	ADON	אדון
(2)	YaHWeH	יהוה
(3)	ELOHIM	אלהים
(4)	EL	אל

(B) The God of the Bible – His Proper/Personal Name

Ex 3:13-15 (J.N.Darby Translation)

(13) And Moses said to God³, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God³ of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say, **What is his name? what shall I say unto them?**

(14) And God³ said to Moses, **I AM THAT I AM⁵**. And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: **I AM⁶** hath sent me unto you.

(15) And God³ said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: **Jehovah²**, the God³ of your fathers, the God³ of Abraham, the God³ of Isaac, and the God³ of Jacob, hath sent me unto you. **This is my name for ever**, and this is my memorial **unto all generations**.

(2)	YaHWeH	יהוה
(3)	ELOHIM	אלהים
(5)	Hayah Asher Hayah	
(6)	Hayah	

Ps 96:5 (J.N.Darby Translation)

For all the gods³ of the peoples are idols⁷; but Jehovah² made the heavens.

(2)	YAHWEH	יהוה
(3)	ELOHIM	אלהים
(7)	EL IYL	

The God of the Bible contrasts His *proper/personal name* – YAHWEH – with the *generic name* (category) of all the other gods – including the god with the *proper/personal name* الله “Allah”.

The Islamic god with the *proper/personal name* الله “Allah” never claimed to be “the God³ of your [Israel] fathers, the God³ of Abraham, the God³ of Isaac, and the God³ of Jacob”.

(C) Additional In-depth Readings

A more in-depth explanation for why we should not use the term “Allah” for the God of the Bible can be found in Al Gharib's Book “*Investigating Allah*”⁶. That investigation was not written by any foreign kind of “expert”; Al Gharib is a multilingual Arab linguist and insider expert on Islam and Arabic language. His family was part of Islam for many centuries, before Al Garib became a Christian. (As many readers probably will not find the time to read his book, I put his summary as *Appendix I* at the end of this paper.)

6 Free download under: <http://www.answer-islam.org/ShowLetter.htm>

3. What Terms should we use in our translations?

The main task and responsibility of a translator is to honor YAHWEH most by transferring the text from the original language into the target language as reliable as possible by taking a word of the original language and replace it with an adequate counterpart (equivalent) in the target language.

(I) *Whenever the original texts use the proper/personal name of God* (JHWH - יהוה)

Whenever the original language uses a *proper/personal name*, this fact has to be reflected in the translation.⁷

When the proper/personal name of the God of the Bible – YAHWEH – appears, we should respect and honor this fact either by using an adequate equivalent – if there is one – or by just using a transliteration of the original proper/personal name.

Jewish tradition

In the Jewish “Scriptures” - our “Old Testament” (*Miqra* or *Tanakh* with its three subdivisions, the *Torah*, the *Neviim* and the *Ketuvim*), the Jews never changed the proper/personal name YAHWEH to ADONAI (Hebrew for: *Lord, Master, Owner, Sovereign*)! However, when reading a portion from the scriptures, they read “*Adonai*” wherever there is written “*Yahweh*”.

In the beginning, this was just in fear of dishonoring the name of God – later it became a Tradition. In stead of ADONAI, they often use the plan term *HA SHEM* – “*that name*”.

Septuaginta (LXX)

The “Septuaginta” (LXX) is a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) into ancient-Greek everyday language (Koine). It was mainly done in Alexandria (Egypt) in the time between 280 and 132 B.C. It was known as a kind of standard OT all over the former Roman Empire. Most of the Jews during the time of the New Testament were familiar with the LXX.

- ◆ For the *proper/personal name* of God, YAHWEH they used *Kurios* (κύριος) – which means *Lord, Master, Owner* – as the Jewish replacement for reading the name of God – ADONAI – does.
- ◆ The *generic name* for God or for the category of deities (Hebrew: *ELOHIM* or *EL*) they used the Greek equivalent *theos* (θεός).

Theos as well as the English *God* can either refer to any imagined deity anywhere in the world, or it can refer to the one only true One.

Most remarkable regarding that decision is the fact, that the translators did *not* use a *proper/personal name* of a certain God for translating a *generic name* for the category of God(s). (Hardly anybody would translate the generic name *ELOHIM* or *EL* (God, gods) with a locally common proper/personal name of a specific God, like Ba'al, Zeus, Jupiter or others).

⁷ See also: Nico Daams, “Translating YHWH,” *Journal of Translation*, Vol. 1:1 (2005): 47-55.

- ◆ The translators basic rule for translating generic name *ELOHIM* (*EL*) is:
Use a common term or name for the “God” / “god” - but never use a proper/personal name of a specific God in this or a related culture! The proper/personal name of the God of the Bible is revealed in the Bible forever: *YAHWEH* – replacing it with the name of any other god (*ELOHIM* / *EL*) would be blasphemy!

New Testament

As the LXX was widely known all over the Roman Empire, the writers of the New Testament – also in Greek language – followed the same principles.

Luk 10:27 (J.N.Darby Translation)

But he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord^A thy God^B with all thy heart...

(A)	kyrios	κύριος
(B)	theos	θεός

Bible Translations (OT & NT)

Most Bible translators followed that example and exchanged the Hebrew tetragrammaton⁸ יהוה JHWH to an equivalent expression, written in capitals, like LORD (English), DOMINI (Latin), HERR (German or TUHAN (Indonesian).

Roman Catholic Church

The Vatican has ruled first in 2001 (*Liturgiam Authenticam*) and more clearly confirming that ban in 2008 that the tetragrammaton *YAHWEH* is banned from public use in worship, songs and prayers.⁹

Translations in Bahasa Indonesia (YAHWEH)

<i>Bible</i>	<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
ITB: ¹⁰	TUHAN	Tuhan
ISH: ¹¹	TUHAN	Tuhan
ITL: ¹²	TUHAN	Allah
KS-ITL: ¹³	Yahweh	Yahweh

8 “tetragrammaton” just means a word with four letters – here JHWH

9 29.06.2009, Letter to the bishops of the *Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments* and to the *Episcopal Conferences* around the world; http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=28949

10 ITB – Terjemahan Baru; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, modern edition

11 ISH – Kabar Baik Di Zaman Baru Dalam Bahasa Sehari-Hari; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

12 ITL – Terjemahan Lama; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

13 KS-ITL – Kitab Suci – Indonesian Literal Translation; Yayasan Lentera Bangsa Indonesia

Some historical aspects

- ◆ In 1733, M. Leijdekker translated the KITAB SUCI into Malayu language, transliterating the name YAHWEH to *HUWA*.¹⁴
- ◆ In 1879, H. C. Klinkert again translated the KITAB SUCI into Malayu language, transliterating the tetragrammaton to *HOEWA*, *JEHOEWA* or *TOEHAN HOEWA*.
- ◆ In 1906, P. Janz translated the Bible into Javanese language, transliterating the tetragrammaton to *YEHUWAH*.
- ◆ In 1927-29, W. G. Shellabear again translated the KITAB SUCI into Malayu language, changing the term for YAHWEH to *ALLAH*.
- ◆ In 1952, a conference for translators of the Bible in Bahasa Indonesia decided, that the terms *HUWA*, *HOEWA*, *JEHUWA* and *JEHOEWA* – which had been in use at that time – have to be changed to *TUHAN*.
- ◆ In 1954, foundation of the “Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia”¹⁵ on the basis of the 1952 decisions.
- ◆ On the basis of Klinkert's Old Testament and Bode's New Testament translations, they published the Alkitan Terjemahan Lama, still using the transliterations *HUA* . *Toehan HUWA* dan *JEHOEWA*.
- ◆ In 1974, the LAI published their new Alkitab Terjemahan Baru, using only *TUHAN*, *Tuhan* and *Allah*.

(II) *Whenever the original texts uses the generic name*
(*EL* or *ELOHIM* – אֱלֹהִים, אֵל)

Whenever the original language uses a *generic name*, this fact has to be reflected in the translation as well

When a generic name of the God of the Bible appears – mostly *ELOHIM*, sometimes *EL* –, we should respect and honor this fact as well, either by using an adequate equivalent – if there is one – or by just using a transliteration of the original generic name.

Septuaginta (LXX)

In ancient Greek language, a common generic name for deities (gods) was *theos* (θεός). The Greek LXX used that common term for translating the common generic name *ELOHIM*.

Theos as well as the English *God* can either refer to any imagined deity anywhere in the world, or it can refer to the one only true One.

On the other hand, *theos* never gets used as a proper/personal name for anybody – neither for any god or deity nor for any human being.

Most remarkable regarding that decision is the fact, that the translators did *not* use a *proper/personal name* of a certain God for translating a *generic name* for the category of God(s).

¹⁴ At that time, the comon pronounciation of the tetragrammaton was *YeHoWaH* insteadt of *YaHWeH*.

¹⁵ LAI – Indonesian Bible Society

(Hardly anybody would translate the generic name *ELOHIM* (God, gods) with a locally common proper/personal name of a specific God.

A name of “first choice” in the Greek speaking world might have been *Zeus* – the King of gods and ruler of the mount of Olymp. However, the translators of the LXX resisted that temptation and stuck to the basic rule for translating a generic name like *ELOHIM*:

Use a common term or category name for “God” / “god” - but never use a proper/personal name of a specific God in this or a related culture! The proper/personal name of the God of the Bible is revealed in the Bible forever: *YAHWEH* – replacing it with the name of any other god would be blasphemy!¹⁶

The difference between the reference to any deity or god on the one side and the one and only God of the Bible on the other side just got shown by an article:

“*Theos*” refers to any deity, while “*ho theos*” the God of the Bible means (see Acts 17:24).

New Testament

As the LXX was widely known all over the Roman Empire, the writers of the New Testament – also in Greek language – followed the same principles.

Luk 10:27 (J.N.Darby Translation)

But he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord^A thy God^B with all thy heart...

(A)	kyrios	κύριος
(B)	theos	θεός

Translations in Bahasa Indonesia (EL, ELOHIM)

<i>Bible</i>	<i>Old Testament</i>		<i>New Testament</i>	
ITB: ¹⁷	Allah,	allah, dewa	Allah,	allah, dewa
ISH: ¹⁸	Allah,	ilah, dewa	Allah,	dewa
ITL: ¹⁹	Allah,	berhala, dewa	Tuhan,	berhala, dewa
KS-ITL: ²⁰	Elohim,	ilah, dewa	Elohim,	ilah, dewa

All Indonesian Bible translations are not consistent in translating the generic name *Elohim*:

- If it refers to *YAHWEH*, they mostly use *Allah*, some use *Tuhan* or the transliteration *Elohim*.
- If it refers to other gods or deities, they use different terms, like *allah* (no initial capital), *ilah*, *dewa*, *berhala* etc.

¹⁶ *THEOS* also is etymologically not in any way related to the name of the god *ZEUS*!

¹⁷ ITL – Terjemahan Baru; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

¹⁸ ISH – Kabar Baik Di Zaman Baru Dalam Bahasa Sehari-Hari; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

¹⁹ ITL – Terjemahan Lama; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

²⁰ KS-ITL – Kitab Suci – Indonesian Literal Translation; Yayasan Lantera Bangsa Indonesia

- The mentioned rule or principle for translation got violated in three of four nowadays Bibles: They are using a *proper/personal name (Allah)* for translating a *generic term* (category name: *ELOHIM* or *EL*). See above “2.2 The God of the Al-Qur'an”.

Some historical aspects

- ◆ In 1629, Albert Corneliz Ruyl translated the Gospel of Mathew into Malayu language, using the term *ALLAH* for *Theos*.
- ◆ In 1733, M. Leijdekker translated the KITAB SUCI into Malayu language, using the term *ALLAH* for *Elohim* or *THEOS*.
- ◆ In 1879, H. C. Klinkert again translated the KITAB SUCI into Malayu language, using the term *ALLAH* for *Elohim* or *THEOS*.
- ◆ In 1927-29, W. G. Shellabear again translated the KITAB SUCI into Malayu language, changing the term for *YAHWEH* to *ALLAH*. *ELOHIM* became *Tuhan*.
- ◆ In 1952, a conference for translators of the Bible in Bahasa Indonesia decided, that the terms *ELOHIM* and *THEOS* have to be translated as *ALLAH*.
- ◆ In 1954, foundation of the “Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia”²¹ on the basis of the 1952 decisions.
- ◆ In 1974, the LAI published their new Alkitab Terjemahan Baru, using using *ALLAH* for *ELOHIM* and *THEOS*.

(III) *Whenever the original texts uses the generic name ADON or ADONAI*
(אֲדֹנָי, אֲדֹנָי)

ADON and *ADONAI* mean *sovereign, controller, lord, master, owner*.

ADONAI is an emphatic form *ADON*. It is – although being a *generic name* – mostly used in the funktion of another *proper name* of *YAHWEH*.

Psa 136:3 (J.N.Darby Translation)

Give thanks unto the Lord^A of lords^B, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever.

(A)	ADONAI	אֲדֹנָי
(B)	ADON	אֲדֹנָי

LXX uses *kyrios* for both expressions.

The NT writers just used the same expression as LXX (*kyrios*).

Luk 10:27 (J.N.Darby Translation)

But he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord^A thy God^B with all thy heart...

(A)	kyrios	κύριος
(B)	theos	θεός

21 LAI – Indonesian Bible Society

Translations in Bahasa Indonesia (ADONAI)

Bible	Old Testament		New Testament
	ADONAI	ADON	
ITB: ²²	Tuhan	tuan	Tuhan
ISH: ²³	Tuhan	tuan	Tuan
ITL: ²⁴	Tuhan	tuan	Tuhan
KS-ITL: ²⁵	Tuhan	tuan	Tuhan

4. Conclusion

Many honest and beloved believers have been worshiping God by using the term ALLAH. The Lord knows their honest hearts desires and their love to Him. They are not to blame!

However, we are living in view of the future. Don't let us continue in being content with "the good" and neglecting "the better" - just because of "tradition" or because of fear of possible consequences.

If the Lord is making people aware of the fact, that there might be a better, a more God-honoring way to translate and express His precious name and appellations, let us return to them. Our responsibility is to obey and honor Him the best way we can – we don't have to care for, or t fear, possible consequences.

Following the Lamb always has been a brutal breaking with all "accepted" religious systems on this earth – be it the Jewish religion in former times, the Roman-Catholic System, Atheism, Islam – or even the popular socially accepted form of "Christianity-light" in many parts of this world. But isn't that exactly what the Lord means with *taking up our cross*, following His steps, being ready for being unpopular, despised or even persecuted – as He was? "*And all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*" (2Tim 3:12).

Should we really fear consequences when returning to a more accurate and – according to my understanding – more God-honoring terminology regarding our God?

On the one side, the few persecuted Christian believers in Turkey have been strongly refusing the use of "Allah" - although it is not forbidden to them. Arabic speaking Christians are pursuing the project of a new Arabic Bible translation "freed from Islamic influence" (see Appendix 2 – Literature NR. 1 & 2). Similar projects are being pursued in other countries in order to get rid of the term "Allah". On the other side, in Malaysia, Catholics and Christians are fighting for the right of using the term "Allah" (and Muslims are opposing them violently); the headline in a Christian Magazine in Europe recently said, "Al-Ilah in court – The Catholic Church in Malaysia is fighting for its right for idolatry"²⁶

Each of us has to decide for himself – and follow his conclusions and his conscience, without fearing any consequences in this world, just being ready to meet our Lord and Savior.



"we shall follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is assured as the morning dawn; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain which watereth the earth." (Hosea 6:3, Darby)

22 ITL – Terjemahan Baru; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

23 ISH – Kabar Baik Di Zaman Baru Dalam Bahasa Sehari-Hari; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

24 ITL – Terjemahan Lama; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia

25 KS-ITL – Kitab Suci – Indonesian Literal Translation; Yayasan Lantera Bangsa Indonesia

26 <http://www.geiernotizen.de/al-ilah-vor-gericht>

Appendix 1

This summary is quoted from Al Gharib's 66-pages book "Investigating Allah" (www.answers-to-islam.org; see: Appendix 2, Nr. 3). Al Gharib is a multilingual Arab linguist and expert on Islam and Arabic language. His family was part of Islam for many centuries, before Al Garib became a Christian. The straight forward statements may sound offensive for some South-East Asian cultures but have to be understood on the cultural background of the author (Middle East).

Al Gharib – Reasons why we oppose Allah as name for Yahweh God

Al Gharib, Investigating Allah, 1st ed.

Free download at: <http://www.answer-islam.org/ShowLetter.htm>

“Summary: Reasons why we oppose Allah as name for Yahweh God

The following is the list of reasons why we oppose the use of Allah as term for God, whether as a proper name or a common one or whatsoever:

1. *Theologically*, Allah as described in the Quran, can't be possibly the same as God of the Bible. Instead it matches perfectly the devil as described in the Bible. Why would we lower our God's name to such an abominable name of cursed creature. What would any Christian feel if some other ignorant of English Christian and refer to God as Lucifer, Abaddon, Zeus... Wouldn't we feel offended? That is how we feel when a person call God, Allah. We feel insulted and our God's name has been dishonored!
2. Allah is a type of Baal and Zeus in the Bible. Those terms have been avoided by the prophets, scribes and early translators of the Septuagint. Baal was even condemned and rejected by God Himself, although it means Master and Husband, two attributes that are proper for God. It was rejected because of the context of its use as a proper name for a heathen god. For similar reasons (which are actually worst) and out of the same principles, the name Allah is to be rejected also. It is to be rejected because it is too Islamic. Whether Allah might be genuinely the contraction of al-ilaah (the-deity) or one of the possible derivations of the verb alaha (to deify), that is not so important but only a second class issue. The most important thing is the context of the use of the term and what does it mean to the majority and what is the first thought come to the mind of a listener while the term is used in communication. If we insist to keep using it so each time we communicate with others we should define it according to our use of it and that is absolutely not practical at all. Besides, what would a Christian feel if some of us would call God by names like Buddha, Krishna, Shiva, Matsu...? Wouldn't that be repulsive and abominable?
3. From the Islamic teaching, it is obvious and crystal clear that Allah is the reflection of the spirit of the anti-christ. A destructive force, which aim is to make and keep people blind and hostile toward the Gospel. Can we say that Jesus is the Son of the antichrist? Isn't that a contradiction and heresy?
4. *Linguistically*, there is a general misunderstand regarding the term allaah (Allah), which is a proper name of a specific god and al-'ilaah (the-god), which is a generic name, applicable both for false gods and the true God. It takes a lot of study to be able to distinguish between the similarities and the differences between those two terms. It is a waste of time and energy to educate every Christian to come to a place where s/he can understand the technical difference. Wouldn't it be easier to just use the term al-'ilaah which clear and undisputable and leave allaah to the Muslims? Afterward, Allah has never been used in the original languages as term for God, not even once. So why to bother?
5. In the Hebrew Bible, the word Allah is explicitly used to refer to oak trees. So why should we insist in using it and mixing up our God's name with oaks? Wouldn't that cause a stumbling block to Christians who try to study the Bible in Hebrew and where taught, formerly or later, that Allah is God's name? Notice the fact that both Hebrew and Arabic language are both from the same family languages, both are Semitic.
6. *Etymologically*, the name of Allah has been originated and deeply rooted in paganism and there is no clear evidence to link it to God or one of his generic Semitic names. Why should we try to force it to be so? Isn't that a twisting of truth and a rope that can be used by other enemies of the Bible and its God to give them a chance to accuse Christianity of being originated from paganism?

7. The biography of Muhammad, his life and circumstances, give us clear evidence that Allah is a fabricated god, which was created according to Muhammad's desires and molded in the form of the demonic spirits that were possessing him. Allah is a mere idol like any other man made idols, except it was not made out of material things, but out of imaginations and ideas. Is God a man made god or is He the God who made man? If He is our maker, so He can't possibly be a creativeness of a hallucinated man.
8. *Historically* and according to its own law, Allah and its religion of Islam have been a force of destruction and violence, throughout the last 1400 years and continuing to do the same throughout the world. Allah's entrance to the churches has been always a disaster and a source of weakening. Wouldn't it be wise to at least try something else and see what would happen?
9. *Statistically*, Allah is a too Islamic term. Its use has always served Islam and Islam alone. It has never served the spread of Christianity in the Muslim dominated world, but vice versa. Most, if not all, of supposedly Christians, who converted to Islam, have been thought by their church leaders that Allah is God. Separating Allah from God, wouldn't it help many not to fall into the temptation of looking for a 'replacement' religion and turning to a substitute rather than pressing on forward toward Jesus Christ, the only way, the truth and the life, which they need?
10. In demonology, Allah and its number is key name to invoke while calling upon demons. Its demonic attributes clearly show that the person behind it is indeed the devil. The name Allah in itself is strongly related to Satan, Haylel in the OT and Abaddon in the NT. Such terms were and should never be used for God so does Allah, which is just another masqueraded form of theirs. What would anyone of us feel if a brother, a friend or a son would call us by the name of an unclean animal or by an insult? Even if we foreknow that the person didn't mean to offend and disrespect us, would we be happy about it inside?
11. *Technically*, the use of Allah by both Christians and Muslims causes cross communication and confusion among people and leads them to fall into making false conclusions. Is it our role as Christians to expose the devils schemes as the Bible (Eph.5:11) urges us or tolerate and spread a lie among ourselves and others?
12. In evangelism and witnessing to Muslims, avoiding the use of the name Allah is a wise tactic to indirectly and clearly communicate to them that we do not worship the same God and that we do not recognize their Allah as a true God. This tactic would help avoiding some arguments over the issue from one side and perhaps raise Muslims curiosity to ask why we don't use the term Allah from the other.
13. *Tactically*, Christians have failed to evangelize the Muslim world for centuries, especially because they were copying from their style. Wouldn't be worth to try some new methods, one of them is by using more specific, scientific and modern terminologies, which differ from the Islamic ones and perhaps can be better and more effective in communication and sharing the Gospel powerfully. Replacing Allah by some other term can be one of the main most powerful elements to improve our rational tactics to evangelize Arabs and Muslims.
14. For converts from Islam to Christ and especially in defense of their new faith, avoiding the term Allah can spare them from some troubles and trials, explicitly vis-à-vis the so called blasphemy laws. If converts would deny that Jesus is the Son of Allah (the Muslims god), they wouldn't be denying their faith but affirming it. Since Allah is not the true God, so Jesus is not its son either. This kind of tactic based on choosing their terminologies very carefully is very identical to what Jesus and the Apostles (i.e. Paul) used in their self-defenses in front of the leaders and authorities. Such tactic is actually hanging the enemy with its own rope. When a convert confesses that He is a Christian and denies that Jesus is the son of Allah, wouldn't he be shaking the foundations of the Muslims beliefs beyond what they could expect and putting them behind the bars as accusations and causing them embarrassment in front of the audience? Lets also be aware that 3isa of the Quran is not the same as Jesus Christ of the Bible. Besides, Jesus' name in Arabic is Yasu3 (Yeshua/Iasous), not 3isa (3esaw/Esau) which refers to the patriarch of the Edomites.

Getting rid of the term Allah would cause absolutely no damage to Christianity, but rather helps refine at least one corner of the Christian Church and clean it from traditions of men which have sucked it into a long period of stagnation and deadliness. We are otally convinced that such move can be a blessing to the Church and a gain. Meanwhile, all the lost will be poured upon Islam by isolating its god and therefore exposing its falsehood. This can be a chance for us to effectively apply Jesus law of binding and loosing (Mat.18:18) and a beginning to pull out weeds from the field in preparation for the greatest ever harvest of souls among the Muslims and Arabs so that many may come out from Satan's captivity and become full members of His Kingdom (Mat.13:37-43). It is all gain for us, those whom have been called to be God's children and a lose for the enemy, Islam and the demonic powers behind it! If none of those reasons would have been able to convince or challenge you to seriously consider the matter, then we would to hear from you and ask you to give us a detailed explanation why you object and still insist that Allah is a valid name for God, Yahweh Elohim of the Bible. And may the God of truth and all wisdom lead us all to do what is best for the spread of the Gospel of His Son among the Arabs and Muslims."

Appendix 2 – Literature

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