

Why non Muslim cannot use the word Allah.

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1-There is no nas qat'i (conclusive/definitive evidence) from the Qur'an and the Sunnah on this matter. All the evidences put forward by those who permit it, do not show that it is permissible for non-Muslim to use the word Allah. Since there is no conclusive evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, this matter falls under zanniyyat, something which is based on human discretion. Muslim scholars need to base their argument on historical, epistemological, theological and semantic analysis. There will be right and wrong opinions depend on who has the strong argument. Definitely wisdom and in-depth analysis must be stressed, and not just literal interpretation. Although there is no conclusive evidence this does not mean that we cannot reach certainty in dealing with this issue. In this short but concise paper I will provide conclusive arguments which will demonstrate that non-Muslim should not be permitted to use the word Allah in any ways to refer to their God even in their publication for their own community. As long as they live in Muslim country they have to respect their Muslim neighbors.

2-Epistemologically, many words, including Allah, solat, wahyu, baytullah etc., that were used before Islam went through the process of Islamization. By giving new meaning to them. The fact is that the word Allah even though it was used before Islam, it has been Islamized. That is the meaning of it is no longer the same as before. By permitting non-Muslim to use it we will be responsible for deislamization of this word. We will be reverting the course which was done by our Prophet. Hence, we will be responsible for making more Muslims become confused. Before Islam the name of God (or gods) is not only Allah, there is a lot of gods during the jahiliyyah period. Allah was a general word. The specific names for their gods are al-lata, al-uzza, al-manat etc. when Islam came it gives new meaning to Allah. Islam did not introduce new word so that it will be easier to teach people about God. The word Allah before Islam is no longer the same compared to the one used after Islam has been established in the Arab country. Allah became the proper name and official name of the true God. Just as the word Islam, although literally it means submission it became the official name of a religion. Professor Wan Mohd Nor says that the context of Arabs and the Malay world is different, non-Muslim in our land especially did not use the word Allah before this. There is no such word in their language before, in the original work they called their God Yahweh. So why not they call it in Malay Tuhan Yahweh? Therefore, it is evident that this issue is brought to confuse the Muslim community. They wanted Allah become the name of other gods as well. The fact is that the nature of God in Islam is not the same as the nature of God in Christianity. For instance God in Christianity can have son. Such attribution is unacceptable in Islam.

3. When we analyze the use of the word Allah in the Qur'an there are two forms: general and specific. The verse in surah al-Tawbah: 30 states that Christians say messiah is the son of God and the Jews say that Uzayr is the son of God. It cannot mean that they are the son of Allah because in surah al-Ikhlâs it states "He begetteth not, nor is He begotten". Other oft-quoted verse regarding this issue is: "if indeed thou ask them who it is that created the heavens and the earth, they would be sure to say, "Allah." (al-Zumar, 39:38). Here the word Allah cannot mean the true God because they don't know who Allah is simply because no prophet was sent to them. Therefore, the use of Allah here is to mean God in general. Therefore there are two usages of Allah in the Qur'an, the general one and the specific one. The specific use such as that "verily the religion before Allah is Islam" (innadina indaLlahi al-Islam), (Ali Imran: 19). Allah here is not just god but the true God. The Qur'an uses both forms because it is beyond any boundaries. We live in period of Islam and not in Jahiliyyah. Inasmuch as we cannot exchange dua with solat, although solat literally means doa, we also cannot use (or let others use) the word Allah to refer to other god other than Allah.

4-The spirit behind this issue is religious pluralism. They are saying that Muslim God is the same as God in other religion. They wanted to convey that we, Christians and Muslims, have the same God. This is against Islamic creed. Our Aqidah tells us that other god is not the true God (La ilaha ghayruh). When Muslims renounce religious pluralism, it does not mean that we also reject religious tolerance and religious diversity. In fact Muslims are the one who introduce these concept to the world. The charter of Madinah is the conclusive evidence on this.

5-Prof. Wan Mohd Nor also said that there is limit of meaning for each word we use, the word wahyu is not the same as revelation, we cannot say that I receive wahyu, but you can say that in English. "I got revelation last night". Obviously they don't differentiate between wahyu and ilham (intuition). Every word that has been Islamized is understood in the framework of Islamic worldview. Words such as Allah, masjid, salat, wahyu, rasul, ulama, are some words that cannot be used by other religious community and vise versa. Therefore we cannot call our ulama as paderi and masjid to become temple. In masjid you don't just ask from God, and you don't worship idol in it. So what we do in a masjid is substantially different from what they do in their holy place. The main reason that you came to masjid is to submit yourself, to obey Him. Therefore, sujud (prostration) is a symbol of submission, this is what sujud means of which the name masjid is derived from.

6- We cannot equate God with Allah. Because the word God is generic and the word Allah is a proper name. There is no plural of Allah as there is plural of God (gods). And you cannot change it to a common noun to become allah (with small a) instead of Allah and yet this is possible to the word god. Therefore when we say la ilaha illallah it does not mean there is no god but God, this does not make sense, rather it means there is no god but Allah. In Islam the word Allah has a very profound meaning. And its definition has been given in surah al-Ikhlâs: "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him." Therefore any Deity which does not have the qualities mentioned in this surah is not Allah and should not be called Allah. By equating Allah with God we will make the word Allah shallow in meaning. It is true that ontologically Allah is God for all humanity. This ontological dimension should not be confused with theological and epistemological explanation. It is the use of the word Allah by non Muslim and not the status of Allah itself that of our concern. Non Muslim may acknowledge that God is the Creator, at the Rububiyah level, but they deny the Uluhiyyah part when they commit shirk and believe in polytheism. A Muslim is the one who submit to Allah in the level of Uluhiyyah. At this level only Muslims recognize that Allah is the one and only true God. And this is the message of tawhid, the message that was corrupted by religions before Islam.

7. If Muslims in other country permit non Muslim to use the word Allah it is a mistake. Muslims in these countries usually do not have the power to stop it. In Indonesia, liberalization of Islam and secularization of Muslim community has long been in place. We in Malaysia are lucky to have a government that takes this matter seriously. Therefore, we must strive hard to prevent the use of Allah by other religious community. And the non Muslim community must understand it is not a quarrel for the sake of a name, but it is about the protection of the Islamic Creed (Aqidah), and this has nothing to do with religious tolerance or intolerance. This is about respecting other religion. Muslims should avoid literal approach of understanding the Qur'an that is to jump to conclusions base on rough look at some verses in the Qur'an which seem related with the matter in question. Many extremist groups use some

of the Qur'anic verses to jump into general conclusion that "killing non Muslim is legitimate". Such approach will cause a grievous mistake. A serious matter like this issue of the name of Allah needs more than just literal interpretation, it should be based on in-depth analysis and profound research. This method was discussed at some length by al-Ghazzali, al-Shatibi etc. Malaysian Government and its subsidiaries are put on pressure if they do not allow the use of Allah by the Christians. The government will be accused of violating freedom of expression. Evidently, freedom of expression becomes the highest principle, above all considerations including religious and the interests of the people.

The question is do we have to submit to the liberal values propagated by the West? As an independent and sovereign state, we should disregard what others will say if we can prove academically that what we do is the best for our community. As Muslims we should base our values on our religion. Why should we let the West dictates their values on us? Certainly they are not superior in matters such as values, ethics and morality. Even if they do, we have the right to have our own values, our own identity.