

Islamic Marcionism in Malaysia

(<http://eaazi.blogspot.com/2008/01/islamic-marcionism-in-malaysia.html>)

Is Allah Equivalent to God?

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The *International Herald Tribune* reported on December 21, 2007

(<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/12/21/asia/AS-REL-Malaysia-Catholic-God.php>)

that the *Malaysian Catholic Herald* would not be able to renew its license to publish unless its Malaysian language edition ceased to use the word Allah.

According to Che Din Yusoff, who is a senior official from the publications control unit of the Internal Security Ministry:

"Christians cannot use the word Allah. It is only applicable to Muslims. Allah is only for the Muslim god. This is a design to confuse the Muslim people,"

This dispute over "ownership" of Allah originates in internal Malaysian ethnic and religious tensions.

Unfortunately, because local politics in the age of globalization is global and vice versa, such an ill-considered Malaysian policy can have global repercussions, for it dovetails exactly with Islamophobic and militant Zionist attempts at demonizing Islam in order to create a false American consensus on US ME policy by scare-mongering.

The desire of many Muslims in Malaysia and elsewhere to create a sharp (yet inherently false) differentiation between the true God of Islam and the inferior God of Christianity or Judaism is a twenty-first century reprise of Marcionism, which was a second century CE heresy, which identified the vengeful Hebrew God, Yahweh (יהוה), as a separate lower divinity completely distinct from the all-forgiving New Testament God.

The new Islamic Marcionism is completely understandable. Too many American Jews and a significant proportion of Christians slice and dice Christian and Jewish scripture into God's title registry in order to rationalize or to justify Zionism.

Together militant Zionists and a subset of very un-Christian Evangelicals have recreated the white racist nineteenth century heresy that used the Bible to hierarchize the races in order to prove that Southern Slavery was consistent with Christian values as part of God's plan.

Yet, when Muslims disengage completely from dialogue with Christians and Jews, they

both concede victory in struggle for control of discourse to racists that would plunge the world into centuries of warfare in order to make the Middle East safe for Israel and also in principle abandon the entire Islamic prophetic heritage from Moses through Jesus. It is hard to imagine behavior either more misguided or further from striving in the way of Allah (فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ جِهَادٌ).

Even though some Christians claim just like the Malaysian Internal Security Ministry that Allah is not the God of Christianity, Arab Christians throughout the Middle East and North Africa routinely use the following terminology:

الله الآب , Allah al-Ab, i.e., God the Father,

الله الابن , Allah al-Ibn, i.e., God the Son,

الله الروح القدس , Allah al-Ruh al-qudus, i.e., God the Holy Spirit.

Allah, which is a God-name like Yahweh, is not exactly equivalent to God, which is the English word for a god in the generic sense.

To be specific, the phrase "the God" is perfectly normal English but an Arabic phrase like al-Allah or a Hebrew phrase like ha-Yahweh is neither normal Arabic nor normal Hebrew. (Al- and ha- are definite prefixes in Arabic and Hebrew respectively.)

English and most other European languages do not have a native God-name equivalent to Allah or Yahweh.

The generic Arabic word for god is ilaah (إله or إلهة), which is comparable to Hebrew אֱלֹהִים (eloah) or to Aramaic elah (ܐܠܗܐ) or to Syriac alah (ܐܠܗܐ).

האלה is the definite form in Hebrew.

ܐܠܗܐ is the definite form in Aramaic.

ܐܠܗܐ is the definite form in Syriac.

Targum Onkelos (Jewish Aramaic translation) for Psalms 18:32 contains the phrase:

Leyt elaha (ܐܠܗܐ) ela Yahweh, to wit, there is no god but Yahweh.

La ilaaha illa allahu (لا إله إلا الله) is the Arabic equivalent.¹

Thus, the first half of the Islamic Statement of Faith (the Shahada), "There is no god but God (Allah)," is, in fact, Biblical as long as Yahweh and Allah are the same.

Deuteronomy 4:35 tells us יהוה יהוה הוא יהוה אלהים -- Yahweh hu ha'elohim. Yahweh is the (true) God.

אלהים ('elohim) is the plural of אלוה (eloah) and means gods, but Biblical Hebrew can form an abstract noun by treating the (usually definite) pluralized form of a noun as a singular. In Biblical Hebrew usage אלהים (ha'elohim) means the Divinity or the (true) God.

The alif/aleph of אלהים is weak. In *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, Thomas O. Lambdin points out on p. 53 that the initial aleph becomes completely silent when the Hebrew prefix prepositions b-, l- or k- join to the word אלהים.

During the Greco-Roman period, the form ha'elohim probably changed in Southern Palestinian mixed Hebrew-Aramaic dialects (possibly under the influence of Arabic) into ha'lohim (vowel reduction) and then into ha'lahim because Aramaic influence tends to convert long Hebrew o-sounds in a-sounds.

Eventually the aleph assimilated to the following lam to create a double-l, and a fully closed first syllable resulted in a short l-colored vowel intermediate between a and o. Thus ha'lohim became hallahim. Because this initial he/ha (ה, ה) is elidable just like the alif in the Arabic definite particle al-, the initial he/ha easily changes into an initial aleph/alif, and hallahim became allahim.

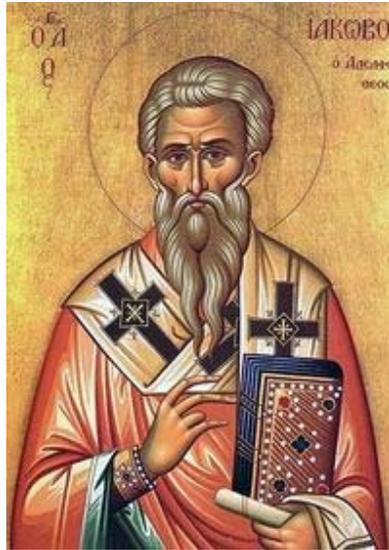
Because later Mishnaic Hebrew and Palestinian Aramaic have no abstract noun formation via pluralization, Palestinian monotheists probably forgot the original abstract significance and modified the word allahim to avoid apparent polytheism or *shirk* into either Allahum (normal i <-> u interchange to remake an apparently plural form as a clearly singular form) or into Allah (stripping off the apparent plural ending entirely).²

Somewhere along the migratory or caravansary path from Southern Palestine into Hijaz, a traveler almost certainly cut the phrase from Deuteronomy into stone either in Aramaic or in Syriac characters as: Yahweh huwa Allah.

¹ *Leyt* (Aramaic for existential negation) requires a nominative with the definite article suffix where *la* (Arabic for *not*) requires a definite accusative without the definite article prefix.

² More than a thousand years later Judeo-Spanish speakers converted dios, which is the Spanish word for God, into il-dyo for exactly the same reason.

As the Roman Empire adopted the Constantinian form of Christianity that defined Jesus as God and that had no tolerance for other beliefs, some Judeans that rejected the divinity of Jesus but followed him as Messiah according to the Jamesian Judean form of Christianity, almost certainly journeyed the route into Hijaz in order to escape Byzantine (Roman) oppression. Eventually at least some Hijazi Arabs joined these followers of Jesus in their faith.



St. James, brother of Jesus, first bishop of Jerusalem

The names of Muhammad (the favored one), Abdallah his father (the servant of God -- a title of James the Just, brother of Jesus), and Abd-ul-Mutallab his grandfather (servant of the chamber or book [of marvels]) look very much like titles that signified a transfer or blending of authority from immigrant Judeans to Hijazi Arabs.

When Jibril/Gabriel brought down the Quran to Muhammad, the prophetic line from Jesus reached its culmination in Arabia and was sealed in Islam.

While the Islamic tradition is complete, it is certainly not independent of Judaism and Christianity.

By cutting themselves off from Christianity and Judaism, Muslims would deprive themselves of a means to enhance their comprehension of scripture just as Jews and Christians impoverish their religious understanding through ignorance of Islam.

Marcion's Christian heresy would have drained Christianity of all meaning. Islamic Marcionism in the Age of Globalization threatens Muslims with irrelevancy and leaves

billions of good people at the mercy of racist heretical Christian extremists, militant Zionists, and genocidal Neoconservatives, who would manipulate the United States into incinerating Muslim and Arab countries one after another. Abandoning the jihad of dialogue places all Muslims and probably the entire human race in peril.

Future Directions

I have put two examples of my attempt to create a framework for universal scriptural hermeneutics online at:

1. [Linguistics, Islam and the Beatitudes](http://eaazi.blogspot.com/2007/04/linguistics-islam-and-beatitudes.html) (<http://eaazi.blogspot.com/2007/04/linguistics-islam-and-beatitudes.html>) and
2. [Connecting Hanukkah, Christmas and `Idu-l-Adha](http://eaazi.blogspot.com/2008/01/connecting-hanukkah-christmas-and-idu-l.html) (<http://eaazi.blogspot.com/2008/01/connecting-hanukkah-christmas-and-idu-l.html>).

In the near future, I will add articles on

1. the Jamu`a (جمعة), the Jewish Sabbath (שבת) and the Christian Lord's Day (κυριακή ημέρα) and
2. Virgin Birth in Islam, Christianity and Judaism.