

Word *Allah* used for *God* in the modern standard Arabic translation of the Bible

Modern Arabic translations of the Bible produced by Christian scholars and missionaries represent the word *God* as found in the English Bible by the Arabic name *Allah*.

1. The Bible begins with the following well-known words in the book of Genesis:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

In the ‘Modern Standard’ Arabic translation of the Bible this appears as:

فِي الْبَدءِ خَلَقَ اللهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

The word *God* is here represented by the word *Allah*.

(For the Modern Standard Arabic translation of the Bible, see [this webpage](http://www.ibs.org/bibles/arabic/index.php) on the website of the International Bible Society: www.ibs.org/bibles/arabic/index.php)

2. In Exodus 3:13–14, we read:

“Then Moses said to God, Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I am who I am.”

We have underlined above those two occurrences of *God* which are translated as *Allah* in the Arabic translation. That translation is as follows:

فَقَالَ مُوسَى لِلَّهِ: «حَيْثَمَا أَقْبَلُ عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَقُولُ لَهُمْ:
إِنَّ إِلَهَ آبَائِكُمْ قَدْ بَعَثَنِي إِلَيْكُمْ وَسَأَلُونِي: مَا اسْمُهُ؟ فَمَاذَا أَقُولُ لَهُمْ؟»
فَأَجَابَهُ اللهُ: «أَهْيَهُ الَّذِي أَهْيَهُ»

Many critics of Islam in the West are labouring under the misconception that the Being Whom Muslims call *Allah*, and Whom they worship, is someone different from the Being known in the English Bible as *God*. By the above translation, the Christian translators are in fact telling their Arabic readers, both Christian and Muslim Arabs, that the word *Allah* in Arabic refers to the same Being Whom the Jews and Christians recognise as God. The Holy Quran had declared the same most forcefully, telling Muslims in one such passage to say to believers in the Bible:

“Our God and your God is one.” — 29:46

Belief in Unity of God as reflected in modern Arabic translation of the Gospels

The belief in the Oneness of God, highly emphasised by Islam, also appears in the Gospels here and there, contradicting the Christian doctrine that God comprises the three co-equal beings of the Trinity.

1. According to Matthew 4:10 Jesus said to the devil:

“For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

In the modern standard Arabic Bible referred to above, the translation is:

فَقَالَ لَهُ يَسُوعُ: اذْهَبْ يَا شَيْطَانُ! فَقَدْ كُتِبَ: لِلرَّبِّ إِلَهَكَ تَسْجُدُ، وَإِيَّاهُ وَحْدَهُ تَعْبُدُ

Compare this with the following words of the Holy Quran from verse 9:31:

“They take their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah, and (also) the Messiah, son of Mary. And they were enjoined that they should serve one God only — there is no god but He.”

The Arabic text of the words “they should serve one God only” in this quotation from the Quran are the same as the words “serve” (root: *bd*), “God” (*ilah*) and “only” (root: *whd*) in the Arabic translation of the Bible.

2. According to Mark 12:29, Jesus repeated to the Israelites the first commandment they had been given:

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

The translation in the above Arabic Bible is:

اسْمَعْ يَا إِسْرَائِيلُ، الرَّبُّ إِلَهَاتُنَا رَبٌّ وَاحِدٌ

Compare this with the following words of the Holy Quran from verse 16:22:

“Your God is one God”.

Again, the Arabic originals for the words for “God” (*ilah*) and “one” (*wahid*) here in the Quran are exactly the same as in the Arabic translation of the Bible.

Thus when the Christian translators of the Gospels translate into Arabic those passages of the Gospels that refer to the oneness of God, they have to use exactly the same terms as found in the Quran.

— Compiled by Dr. Zahid Aziz
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