



ONE GOD

Many Names

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In the turmoil of current events and talk of clashing civilizations, people often want to know what Muslims worship. Many Jews, Christians, and Muslims correctly assert that each of their religions invokes the God of Abraham, but many among America’s religious right increasingly make a point of denying this common ground. For the Christian Coalition’s Pat Robertson, the world’s troubles turn on the question of “whether Hubal, the moon god of Mecca known as Allah,¹ is supreme or whether the Judeo-Christian Jehovah, God of the Bible, is supreme.” Franklin Graham—son of Billy Graham and prominent evangelical who led the invocation at George W. Bush’s 2001 presidential inauguration—insists that Christians and Muslims worship different Gods. In the same vein, William Boykin, a top Pentagon general, brought himself international notoriety by proclaiming his God to be a “real God” and “bigger” than the Muslim God, whom he deemed a mere “idol,” inflammatory remarks for which the Bush-Cheney administration has refused to hold him accountable.²

The fact that *Allāh* and the Biblical God are identical is evident from Biblical etymology.³ From the standpoint of Islamic theology and salvation history,⁴ it is simply unacceptable to deem the Biblical God and that of the Qur’an to be anything but the same, despite the fact that, in recent years, many English-speaking Muslims have developed an ill-ad-

vised convention of avoiding the word “God” under the mistaken assumption that only the Arabic word “*Allāh*” carries a linguistic guarantee of theological authenticity.

Beautiful names for God are not unique to the Bible or the Qur’an nor to any religion or group of human tongues. Semitic languages—like Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic—possess rich glossaries of divine names, but those who invoke them have never possessed a monopoly on God. At a most fundamental level, all humanity shares in a legacy of knowing the Supreme Being and being able to designate him by appropriate names, which—from an Islamic point of view—reflect humankind’s inborn knowledge of God, bolstered by its remote association with the primeval legacy of universal prophecy. As for our English word “God,” it reflects such primordial roots, belongs to the treasury of ancient divine names, and is among the most expressive designations of the Supreme Being. The continued aversion on the part of many English-speaking Muslims to admit “God” into their vocabulary serves only to reinforce the groundless claims of the religious right. It is urgent for English-speaking Muslims to communicate coherently, and embracing the word “God” is an important step in that direction.

Symposium of Abrahamic Faiths

Today, it has become part of the generally accepted ecumenical lexicon to speak of the “Abrahamic faiths,” since the expression accurately reflects that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam invoke the God of Abraham and share a host of monotheistic beliefs and values. The Qur’an calls Islam the religion of Abraham (*millat Ibrāhīm*): “Then we revealed unto you (Muḥammad) that you follow the religion of Abraham, who did not belong to those associating false gods with God.”⁵ The thesis that Muslims worship the God of Abraham is so central to Islam that

even Muslim school children know it well. Muslims invoke salutations upon Abraham and his family in their daily prayers, and the annual rites of pilgrimage to Mecca and the House of Abraham (the *Ka‘ba*) are tied to the Abrahamic story at every point. Islamic scripture repeatedly asserts the belief that Islam represents a pristine model of the Abrahamic dispensation.⁶ It instructs Muslims to declare their allegiance to Abraham’s God and his primordial teaching: “Say (all of you): ‘We believe in God and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes of Israel and what was given unto Moses and to Jesus and what was given to all the prophets from their Lord. We draw no distinctions between any of them, and we are a people who submit themselves (willingly) to God.’”⁷

From the Qur’anic standpoint, Muslims, Christians, and Jews should have no difficulty agreeing that they all turn to the God of Abraham, despite their theological and ritual differences. Historical arguments between their faiths have never been over what name to *call* Abraham’s God. As for Muslims, the Islamic concept of salvation history is rooted in the conviction that there is a lasting continuity between the dispensation of Muḥammad and the earlier ones of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the Biblical and extra-Biblical prophets. The Qur’an instructs Muslims to acknowledge openly and forthrightly that their God and the God of the followers of Biblical religion—Jews and Christians—is the same: “Do not dispute with the people of the Bible (the Book—Jews and Christians) but in the best of manners, excepting those of them who commit oppression, and say (to them): ‘We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one, and we are a people in (willing) submission to him.’”⁸

Allāh and Biblical Names of God

The Arabic word *Allāh* is the most common divine name in the Islamic scriptures and has unique sanctity not just for Muslims but also for Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians, who have used “*Allāh*” for God from time immemorial. For Muslims, *Allāh* is the most inclusive of God’s names, embracing all his other names and attributes. In accordance with conventional Arabic usage, *Allāh* can be applied only to the Creator and cannot be assigned to any other being, angelic, human, animate or inanimate, real or imaginary.

Even in idolatrous pre-Islamic Arabia, *Allāh* was revered as the creator of the heavens and the earth and lord of the worlds. In distinction to the cults of hundreds of lesser pagan gods, pre-Islamic Arabian worship of *Allāh* was never associated with an idol, including *Hubal*—Pat Robertson’s “moon god of Mecca,” whom he erroneously associates with *Allāh*. *Hubal* was the chief idol of pagan Mecca but had no historical or theological connection with *Allāh* or, for that matter, even with the moon. *Hubal* was venerated as a god of divination, and its cult was relatively new, having been introduced to Mecca only a few generations before Muḥammad’s time, probably originating among the ancient Moabites or Mesopotamians.

Arabic is an ancient and exceptionally rich form of Semitic speech, closely related to Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac.⁹ Etymologically, *Allāh* comes from the same root as the Biblical words *Elōhîm*, *hā-Elōhîm*, and *hā-Elôh* (all meaning “God”) invoked by the Hebrew prophets and the Aramaic and Syriac *Alāhā* (“God”) used by John the Baptist and Jesus. *Elōhîm* derives from *elôh* (Hebrew for “god”), and *Alāhā* is an emphatic form of *alāh* (Aramaic/Syriac for “god”), while *Allāh* is connected to *ilāh* (Arabic for “god”). All three of these Semitic words for “god”—*elôh*, *alāh*, and *ilāh*—are etymologically

equivalent. The slight modifications between them reflect different pronunciations conforming to the historical pattern of morphological shifts in each tongue. They are akin to the variations we find, for example, between the Latin, Spanish, and Italian words for God (*Deus*, *Dios*, and *Dio*) or the English and German (*God* and *Gott*). *Elōhîm*, *Alāhā*, and *Allāh* are all cognates—sister words—deriving from a common proto-Semitic root, which, according to one standard view, was the root *’LH*, conveying the primary sense of “to worship.” The fundamental linguistic meaning of the three Abrahamic cognates for God—*Elōhîm*, *Alāhā*, and *Allāh*—is “the one who is worshipped.”

Elōhîm occurs over two thousand times in the Old Testament and is customarily rendered “God” in English translation. Like the Qur’an, the Bible has a plurality of divine names: “God of preexistence” (*Elôhî qedem*), “Living One of eternity” (*Ḥay hā-’ôlam*), “God of eternity” (*Ēl ’ôlam*), “Holy One of Israel” (*Qadôsh Yisra’el*), “Great King” (*Melek Râb*), “God All-Powerful” (*Ēl Sheddâi*), “God the Overwhelming” (*Ēl Gebbôr*), “God the Most High” (*Ēl ’Elyôn*), and so forth. The Tetragrammaton (Greek for “four letter word”), *YHWH*, is the most common word for God in the Hebrew Bible but is generally rendered in translation not as “God” but as “the Lord” and occasionally as “Jehovah.”

The insistence among elements of the religious right on the “Judeo-Christian Jehovah” as a dichotomous opposite to the Arabic *Allāh* is, at best, a parochial interpretation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, since few Jews and certainly not all Christians would be content with rendering the Biblical “Lord” as Jehovah. “Jehovah,” as such, does not occur in the Bible but is a tentative philological construct of the Tetragrammaton, *YHWH*, which modern scholarship generally renders as *Yahweh*—“he who is, or he who gives being”—from an Old Hebrew verb “to be.” Rabbinic tradition, however, regarded the

Tetragrammaton as so sacrosanct that it was glossed as “Lord” without being spoken aloud or consigned a given pronunciation.¹⁰ In any case, the Bible declares that “YHWH is himself *hā-Elōhîm*” (Deut. 4:35); so, from the standpoint of the Bible, there is no theological distinction between YHWH and *Elōhîm*, which, as shown, is a linguistic cognate of the Arabic *Allāh*.

Beautiful Names of the God of Abraham

It is axiomatic in Islamic scripture that the God of Abraham has many names: “God: there is no god but him. His are the most beautiful names.”¹¹ His many names have great efficacy and constitute a special channel of spirituality. In congregate, they affirm God’s supreme perfection and cultivate deeper understanding of his beauty and majesty. They are powerful instruments of invocation and facilitate one’s approach to the divine: “God’s are the most beautiful names. So call upon him by means of them.”¹² His beautiful names constitute an eternal theological treasure:

He is God, other than whom there is no god: Knower of the unseen and the manifest. He is the All-Merciful, Bestower of special mercy. He is God, other than whom there is no god: the King, the Holy One, the Perfect Peace, Granter of security, Giver of protection, the Omnipotent, the Overwhelming, the Imperious: Glory be to God against whatever is (falsely) associated (with him). He is God: the Creator, the Originator (of all things from nothing), Giver of forms. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and earth proclaims his glory, and he is the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.¹³

It is commonly remarked that Muslims believe God has ninety-nine names, based on an authoritative saying of the Prophet Muḥammad: “God has ninety-nine names—one hundred less one—which anyone who protects (their sanctity) will enter the Garden. God is singular and loves what is singular.”¹⁴ But the authentically attested names of God in Islamic scripture are many more than ninety-nine. Traditional

commentators note this fact and point out that the prophetic Tradition of the ninety-nine names was not intended to delimit the divine names to a particular number but to indicate that, among God’s innumerable names, there are ninety-nine distinctive ones, which, if learned by heart and guarded in sanctity, are a key to salvation. Another Prophetic Tradition reveals unequivocally that God’s names are not numerically restricted but include undisclosed names and others known only to God or to special segments of his creation. According to that Tradition, the Prophet would invoke God, saying: “I ask you by every name that is yours, by which you have named yourself, sent down in your book, taught any of your creation, or kept its knowledge exclusively in your presence in the knowledge of the unseen that you make the Qur’an the springtime of my heart, light of my sight, healing of my heart, and the removal of my anxiety and sadness.”¹⁵

Humanity’s Legacy of Countless Divine Names

In the Qur’anic conception of the world everything in the heavens and on earth is imbued with knowledge of God and proclaims his glory; similarly instinctive knowledge of the Supreme Being is embedded in each human soul as an inborn part of human nature.¹⁶ Moreover, all peoples on earth have received divine messengers at some time in the course of human history or pre-history.¹⁷ Consequently, God and his names are part of a universal human legacy. They are hardly unique to anyone, nor are the Abrahamic religions the sole residuaries of divine names expressing the Creator’s perfection and glory.

The world’s many micro-religions (i.e., primitive religions) contain hundreds of names for God, bearing witness to his oneness, preexistence, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, goodness, and justice. There is an observable pattern in the micro-religions to regard the Supreme Being as the source

of all vital knowledge, moral norms, and essential social conventions. Like pre-Islamic Arab paganism, micro-religions associate deified human beings, lesser spirits, and intermediaries with God, although they consistently lack the full-blown pantheons typical of the polytheistic religions of many ancient civilizations. Numerous micro-religions commemorate a primeval time of the “old religion,” when harmony existed between the Supreme Being and their forebears, an age of pristine happiness which was brought to an end through wrongdoing, estrangement, and alienation.¹⁸

The micro-religions reflect instinctive common-sensical knowledge of God without the intricate metaphysical theologies of civilized peoples. As with the pre-Islamic Arab cult of *Allāh*, micro-religions refrain uniformly from associating the Creator God with idols, images, or pictures, for they insist that he cannot be seen with physical eyes nor touched by human hands. The Nilotic tribes of southern Sudan, for instance, share an ancient belief in “the Great God, who created humankind,” and, although they associate intermediaries with him, they acknowledge that he is eternal, without origin or likeness, all-knowing and all-powerful, upholding the moral order.

Around 1906, a European anthropologist studied the Shilluk, one of these Nilotic tribes, and once asked a six-year old boy from the tribe who had created him. Without hesitation, the little boy answered, “*Dywok* (God) created me.” The anthropologist pressed further, asking what *Dywok* was like and where he came from. With childlike self-assurance, the boy quickly replied that he did not know, but his father surely would. To his astonishment, neither his father nor immediate kin had an answer, but the child kept inquiring until he finally brought the question before his tribal elders. They replied:

Dywok, we only know that he exists. We know he made the sky that you see above, the stars, all the animals, and even people—both black and white—but

who *Dywok* actually is, no one in Shilluk can say. For no one has seen him. What we know is this: *Dywok* is there and made everything. Even if you cannot see him, yet he is there...like the breeze that blows. Even if no one can see the breeze, yet it blows. No one has doubts about that.¹⁹

The micro-religions are filled with telling names of God. “Creator” and “Maker” are virtually universal. Native Americans had many names for God. The Cheyenne called him “Creator of the universe” and “Lord of the entire heaven and earth.” The Californian Maidu called him “Ruler of the world.” The Fox called him “the Guide” and “the Good Spirit.” The Lenape called him “Our Creator,” “You to whom we pray,” “Pure Spirit,” and “You to whom we belong.” Some South African Bushmen and the pygmies of Gabon called him “the Lord of all things.” The Siberian Samoyeds knew him as “the Creator of life.” The Ainu of Japan called him “the Divine Maker of the worlds,” “the Divine Lord of heaven,” “the Inspirer,” and “the Protector.” The Wiridyuri of Australia called him “the Eternal,” and several Aboriginal tribes designated him as “the Great Builder” and “the Great Maker,” although certain Aborigines and African Bushmen held the Creator’s name to be inviolable (taboo) and imparted it only to adult male initiates, while concealing it from women, children, and outsiders.

Ancient civilizations also bear witness to a primordial knowledge of the One. Although the pharaonic Egyptians were highly polytheistic, their language contained abundant names and attributions for the Supreme Being distinct from the personified gods of their pantheon. Ancient Egyptian was replete with seemingly endless synonyms for God (*Neter*, *Sha’*, *Khabkhab*, *Hephep*, *Shesa*, *Sedga*, *Saj*, *Nethraj*, *Nekhbaj*, *Khetraj*, *Itnuw*, and so forth). There were names for “the Creator” (*Kewen*, *Kun*, *Nehef*), “Creation’s God” (*Nebirut*), and “the Giver of forms” (*Nebi*). They invoked “the High God” (*Neter* ‘A), “the

Lord” (*Nebu*), “the Divinity from preexistence” (*Nun*, *Hahū*), “the Divinely Merciful” (*Hetefi*), “the Divine Destroyer” (*Hetem*), “the God of truth and balance” (*Sema Ma’at*), “the God of humankind” (*Itmu*), and “the Lord of all” (*Neberdher*).²⁰

The ancient Chinese worshipped a personalized “Creator” (*Tsao wu chē*), “the Ruler of heaven” (*Shang Ti*), “Heaven’s Lord” (*Ti’en Ti*), and “the Lord” (*Ti*), although “Heaven” (*Ti’en*) later became the most common Chinese name for God and sometimes reflected astral beliefs. But an ancient Chinese dictionary says of “Heaven” (*Ti’en*): “The exalted in the highest of his exaltation. His ideogram combines two symbols, which mean ‘the One, who is the most great.’” Some ancient Chinese scholars wrote that “Heaven” (*T’ien*) had been substituted for “the Ruler of heaven” (*Shang Ti*) in the ancient past, because “it is not permissible that the name *Shang Ti* be taken lightly. Therefore, we call him by the name of the place where he abides, which is ‘heaven,’ that is, *ti’en* on the analogy that ‘the court’ signifies ‘the emperor.’”

The Sanskrit Vedas of ancient India contain a notable vocabulary for the Supreme Being: “the Creator” (*Dhâtr*), “the Lord of the creatures” (*Prjâpati*), “the Maker of all things” (*Vishvakarman*), “the Regulator of things” (*Vidhâtr*), “the Manifest One” (*Dhartr*), “the Protector” (*Trâtr*), “the Guide” (*Netr*), “the Giver of forms” (*Tvashtr*), and “the Animator” or “Reviver” (*Savitr*). One of his names was simply “Who” (*Ka*), signifying the one who is ultimately unfathomable and beyond finite description. In later times, *Ka* was frequently used to designate the Supreme Being.

God, the Most Beautiful Word in English

The English word “God” is a unique linguistic and theological treasure. It is pre-historic, extending into the Neolithic period and deriving from the proto-Indo-European root *gheu(ǵ)*, meaning “to invoke” or “to supplicate.” “God” is a past participial construction,

meaning “the one who is invoked” or “the one who is called upon.” Like Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, and most of the European languages, English belongs to the Indo-European family. Our word “God”—proto-Indo-European *Ghuto*—corresponds linguistically to the Sanskrit past participle *būta* (“invoked” or “called upon”), which appears in the Indic Vedas in the divine epithet *purubūta* (“much invoked”). Etymologically, “God”—“the one who is invoked in prayer”—is remarkably close in meaning to the Biblical *Elōhîm* and *Alāhā* and the Qur’anic *Allāh*, which, as we have seen, convey the sense of “the one who is worshipped.” “God” is also virtually identical in connotation to the Native American Lenape word for the Supreme Being “You to whom we pray.” Supplication and worship are closely interrelated. The Prophet said in a well-known Tradition: “Supplication is the essence of worship.”

The English word “God” in its present form is ancient and pre-Christian, having no hidden or implicit link with Trinitarian theology. Its earliest documented historical use is in the poem *Beowulf*, the oldest poem in the English language and the earliest European vernacular epic. *Beowulf* relates pre-Christian events from the early sixth century, a generation or so before the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad. Western scholars often find *Beowulf* paradoxical, because it lacks distinctive Christian references but speaks constantly of God’s grandeur, taking every occasion to praise God and give him thanks. “God” in its present form is the most common word for the Creator in the epic, but the poem also contains scores of other magnificent divine names, which are so deeply embedded in its fabric that they cannot have been interpolated later by medieval monks.²¹ Although *Beowulf* refers to the creation, Adam, Noah, the Flood, the resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell, it contains no references to Mosaic or post-Mosaic Biblical events or to Christ, the crucifixion, Trinitarian dogma, saints, relics, or similar ele-

ments that one would expect to find, if there had been any subsequent medieval editing. The poem declares God's oneness explicitly and extols his wise and merciful governance of the world and its people; it rejects and ridicules paganism as the work of the devil, and the epic's hero, Beowulf—a brave and mighty but truly humble man of God—engages in constant combat with the diabolical forces of evil and destruction.

Not just in its many words for God but in general, the religious vocabulary of *Beowulf* expresses with exactitude the crux of the spiritual and theological vision which Muslims find so precisely expressed in the Arabic language. *Beowulf* is a testimony to the English language's unique richness and should inspire us, as English-speaking Muslims, with a deeper respect for our language and its inherent power to express not only our concept of the divine but the entire repertoire of primordial prophetic teaching.

Conclusion

It is natural for English-speaking Muslims to have a special attachment to the word *Allāh*, with which we have an intimate connection, invoking it daily in Arabic prayer formulas and recitation of the Qur'an. For us, *Allāh* has a direct emotional and spiritual efficacy which no other word for God can replace. But it rarely has that same effect on non-Muslim, non-Arab listeners, and few of them will develop our sensitivity for the word merely by being constantly bombarded by it. For some, even despite honest efforts to remain open-minded, "*Allāh*" continues to evoke a wide range of deeply ingrained cultural prejudices and negative associations, conscious or subconscious. On the other hand, "God" creates an immediate associative response in most non-Muslim native speakers of English that would be virtually impossible for "*Allāh*" to evoke even after years of positive exposure.

Just as our attachment to *Allāh* does not distract us from invoking God's other beautiful names in Ara-

bic, so should our love of the word and the Arabic language not impel us to degrade the ancient English word "God" with its unique and illustrious history among humanity's legacy of divine names. Nor, for Persian or Urdu-speakers, should fidelity to the use of *Allāh* lead them to disparage the ancient Indo-European *Khodā* (God), which, like "God," has monotheistic roots and which great Muslim scholars, mystics, and poets have found perfectly suitable for more than a thousand years.²²

When we speak English, let us speak it intelligently, respectfully, and reverently. Our witness of faith, for example, is effectively and concisely translated as: "There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is God's messenger." Some insist, however, on translating everything but the most important word: "There is no god but *Allāh*...". This partial translation is likely to create unwarranted barriers for the non-Muslim listener and induce a multitude of negative connotations. Such a translation will inevitably require further explanation that the word *Allāh* actually means "God" anyway. Yet shunning "God," even in the light of such commentary, needlessly gives the impression that "God" is somehow inadequate.

Christians and Jews are justified in wondering why—if *Allāh* and "God" do mean the same thing—Muslims systematically avoid using "God," an ornament to the English language, which both Christians and Jews have fittingly used for generations to translate the Biblical *Elōhîm* and *Alāhā*. We have no one but ourselves to blame, if, as the result of a misplaced attachment to our sacred language, we create the impression that we do not really worship the same God, after all, or that we believe our *Allāh* trumps the Biblical God, the God of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes of Israel, Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets.

Use of "God" emphasizes the extensive middle ground we share with other Abrahamic and universal

traditions and provides a simple and cogent means by which Muslims may act upon the Qur’anic injunction to stress the similarities between us. Failure to use “God” conceals our common belief in the God of Abraham and the continuity of the Abrahamic tradition, which are fundamentals of our faith. We must overcome our misgivings about “God” both because of the word’s intrinsic, historical merit and because it empowers us to communicate with our Jewish, Christian, and other English-speaking neighbors in a meaningful way.

Notes

1. As discussed below, *Hubal* bore no theological or historical connection to *Allāh*.
2. These and similar references are readily accessible on the Internet. I am indebted, however, to an excellent *New York Times* editorial (January 28, 2004) by John Kearney, written on the occasion of the Muslim pilgrimage, an Islamic ritual intimately linked with Abraham. John Kearney rebuked the religious right’s denial of the shared Abrahamic belief in the Biblical God and their disparagement of Muslim theology and insisted that such obscurantism was as dangerous as it was inexcusable.
3. Etymology is the study of the linguistic history of words, tracing their development in a particular language and often using comparisons with cognate words in related tongues and dialects. The Semitic words *Allāh* (God in the Qur’an), the Old Testament *Elōhīm* (God), and the Aramaic/Syriac New Testament *Alāhā* (God) are etymological cognates, as John Kearney’s editorial noted and as is further illustrated below.
4. I use “salvation history” to refer to the religious conception of how God brings about salvation in the course of human history. For Jews, salvation history centers on the ramifications of God’s special covenant with the Children of Israel. In Christian theology, salvation history culminates in Christ’s crucifixion. Islamic salvation history is predicated on the belief in the primordial message of universal prophecy, culminating in the prophethood of Muḥammad, elucidating and vindicating all that came before.
5. Qur’an 16:123.
6. See Qur’an 6:161; 16:123; 22:78; 2:130, 132, 135; 3:67-68, 95; 4:125.
7. Qur’an 2:136.
8. Qur’an 29:46.
9. Linguists classify Arabic as ancient Semitic and Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Ethiopic as middle Semitic, even though the latter languages were written down long before Arabic. The reason for this linguistic classification is that Arabic preserves virtually all the distinctive features of proto-Semitic—like inflection, systematic dual endings, and full consonantal distinctions—which have generally been lost or merged in middle Semitic.
10. Orthodox Jews carefully avoid vocalizing the Tetragrammaton and substitute *Adonāi* (my Lord) instead. Judaic tradition refers to *YHWH* as “the Name” (*hāsh-Shem*), since it was believed to represent God’s most holy name, the pronunciation of which was a sacrosanct and carefully guarded secret. Knowledge of “the Name” was a distinctive legacy reserved for the high priest. On the Day of Atonement, he would invoke the Tetragrammaton at the Temple, and, at its mention, the congregation of Israel would fall down in prostration before God.
11. Qur’an 20:8.
12. Qur’an 7:180.
13. Qur’an 59:22-24.
14. Transmitted in Bukhari and Muslim, Islam’s most rigorously authenticated *ḥadīth* collections. The verb translated here as “protects (their sanctity)” is *ḥafīza* in the original and *ahṣā* in other narrations. It means to keep them in memory and not neglect or forget them but also to believe in them, have knowledge and understanding of them, and to live in accordance with that awareness: to have God-consciousness, doing what the servant of such a God ought to do and avoiding what ought to be shunned. The actual ninety-nine names are listed in an “acceptable” (*ḥasan*) transmission by Tirmidhi and other sources with slight variations.
15. Transmitted in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal.
16. See Qur’an 59:22-24 and 30:30.
17. See Qur’an 35:24.

18. My references to the micro-religions are taken primarily from Wilhelm Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, 12 vols., (Münster i. W.: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1949).
19. Wilhelm Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, 8:193-194.
20. See Adolf Ermann and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 13 vols., (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971). In all, I was able to collect over one hundred and twenty Old Egyptian names and attributions for God, the Creator, from this dictionary.
21. The following are among the names of God in *Beowulf*: God, Holy God (*hâlig God*), Wise God (*wîtig God*), Mighty God (*mihtig God*); High Lord (*Drihten*), High Lord God (*Drihten God*), Eternal High Lord (*êce Drihten*) (*Drihten* also occurs with the adjectives holy, wise, and mighty); Creator (*Scyppend*); the Lord of life (*Liffrêa*); Regulator of destiny (*Metod*), Preexistent Regulator of destiny (*Ealdmetod*), Glorious Regulator of destiny (*scîr Metod*), True God, Lord of destiny or True God (*sôð Metod*); Lordly Master of all (*Alwealda*); the One

Lord and Master (*Anwalda*); Powerful Lord (*Wealdend*); Powerful Lord of Glory (*wuldres Wealdend*); Lord of men (*ylða Waldend*); Lord of humankind (*Waldend fîra*); Lord of victories (*sigora Waldend*); King of majesty (*Cyninga wuldor* and *Wuldurcyning*); True King (*Sôðcyning*); True King of victories (*sigora Sôðcyning*); the Father and the Father Omnipotent (*Fæder* and *Fæder Alwalda*); Lord of all things (*Frêa ealles*); the Protector of mankind (*manna Gebyld*); Glory's Guardian (*wuldres Hyrde*); the Almighty (*se Ælmihtiga*); Judge of deeds (*dæda Dêmend*); Heaven's Guard (*heofena Helm*); and the Wielder of the heavens (*rodera Rædend*). See Fr. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1950), pp. xlviii-li and 1-120.

22. *Khodā* comes from the Old Iranian (Indo-European) *Hwa-Taw*, meaning literally "self-able" or "self-powerful," that is, "Ruler" and "Lord." It is a name of majesty, indicating that God is self-sufficiently omnipotent. Although the English "God" and Persianate "*Khodā*" are both Indo-European and give the appearance of being cognates, they are actually derived from different roots.

