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Correct translation of la ilaha ill Allaah

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

QUESTION: Muslims affirm that ‘la ilaha ill Allaah.’ What is the correct translation of this in English, because we see Muslims and non Muslims translating it in many different ways?

ANSWER:

The correct translation is: ***There is none worthy of worship except Allaah.***

However we see very commonly in the books, on posters, on the TV or in the newspapers that it is translated as: There is no god except Allaah.

This second translation (there is no god except Allaah) is incorrect.

A god or deity is ANYTHING that is worshipped – and there are many things which are worshipped other than Allaah. For example, the Hindu gods like Ganesh, Brahma, etc; Jesus is worshipped by the Christians, etc; the Parsees in Iran worship Fire, which is their god, and so on.

So la ilaaha ill Allaah is explained using another Arabic phrase:

La ma’booda bi haqqin ill Allaah.

To break this sentence down.....

La ma’booda (there is no object of worship)

bi haqq (which DESERVES to be worshipped)

ill Allaah (except Allaah).

- meaning: there is nothing taken as a god by the people which actually deserves to be worshipped except Allaah.

Correct translation of la ilaha ill Allaah

QUESTION: The phrase 'la ilaha ill Allaah' has been divided into 2 parts by the scholars of the past: an affirmation and a negation. What does this actually mean?¹

ANSWER:

This phrase, known in Arabic as the Shahahdah, can be divided into two parts.

A NEGATION (la ilaha – there is none who deserves to be worshipped).

So here we negate and deny that anyone or anything has the right to have any worship given to them...

....'ill Allaah' - except for Allaah alone. So this is the AFFIRMATION part of the Shahahdah; we affirm that Allaah has the right to be worshipped.

So the Shahahdah consists of a negation followed by an affirmation.

¹ Refer to '*Aqeedah ut Tawheed* p51 of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan for more information