

## Lowalangi Deity in Nias Community Traditions Reviewed from the Perspective of Christian Faith

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### Abstract

Understanding God's name is a sacred thing for Christians, so placing God's name in Christian life gives it different meanings without eliminating its substance. One example is the change of God's name in the Nias ethic, which became an event and was a grafting of a name from a cultural perspective to a theological one. This is related to the name of God from Deitas Lowalangi which is one of the names of ethical figures on the island of Nias who is used as a synonym for the name of God. If you look at it, there are actually many other name deities that are choices for God's name. And this is the topic of discussion in this article and its application to the lives of the people of Nias today. This research was carried out by means of literature studies and interviews with several Nias ethnic figures who were sources, both intellectuals and traditional figures and servants of God. The aim of writing this article is that the essence of the name Lowalangi is not just changing the name to God but has a deep meaning without any interference from the name of the god worshiped by the Nias ethnic group, as well as strengthening the faith of the Nias Christian people in actualizing the name of God in religious and cultural life. Through understanding the name of God from the Nias ethnic perspective, that the true name of God is implemented correctly and on a Biblical basis. The connection between the name of God in the Nias ethnic group is only limited to the name adopted by missionaries to straighten out the faith of Christians on Nias Island. Because no other Lowalangi name is misused by Christians in any worship. Because what must be worshiped is the real Lowalangi in the Bible, not Lowalangi because it is based on the name of a traditional figure, god or ancestor.

*Keywords:* Lowalangi Deity, God, Nias Ethnicity or Culture, Christian Religious Education.

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Nias people are one of the ethnic groups that inhabit the island of Nias in Indonesia. The Nias people have rich and unique traditions, beliefs and culture. One important aspect of Nias culture is the belief in the Lowalangi Deity, which has interesting theological depth. In this article, we will explore the Lowalangi Deity in the traditions of the Nias people from a Christian theological perspective. The Lowalangi Detas is synonymous with discussing the name of God. It should be understood that the Name of God is an important topic in theology. The name of God in Christianity refers to Yahweh, which is God's proper name in the Old Testament. However, there are many other names used to refer to God in Scripture, such as Elohim, Adonai, and Allah. The use of the word Allah in Christianity has become controversial, especially in Indonesia, because some groups believe that the use of the word Allah should only be used by Muslims. However, the use of the word Allah in Christianity has been carried out since the 16th century in Indonesia (Rumbekwan 2020) . In addition, God's names also have deep and mysterious meanings, and each

name of God provides additional revelations about His nature. For example, the name Yahweh refers to God's eternal and eternal existence, while the name Elohim refers to God's power and majesty. Therefore, learning God's name is important for everyone to understand God's existence in their personal life.

Understanding the meaning of God's name in each region has its own meaning, so introducing God's name into local languages is a challenge for missionaries who spread the Gospel to various regions. The challenge for evangelists is how to introduce God's name accurately; but on the other hand, missionaries must be able to make God's name easy to understand in the thinking concepts of local people who have their own sociocultural construction. This means having their own understanding of fundamental local beliefs, therefore this creates difficulties for both parties, because the essence of God's name cannot change with time and place because it has been ingrained from the beginning. However, at the same time, local people who receive the preaching of the Gospel often have strong and established ways of thinking that are difficult to change or reconstruct. As a result, every missionary must grapple with this conflict (Zaluchu, 2021).

Lowalangi is the name of an ethnic religious figure that has been adapted as a name for God in some Christian communities. The term Lowalangi is still a polemic in Christian circles, especially among followers of Jehovah's Witnesses (Roni, 2019), a belief sect that is growing rapidly in Nias and strongly opposes the use of the term Lowalangi in Nias Christian beliefs. And they did not know that Bōrōta wa'atua-tua fangata'ufi Lowalangi; that is, the fear of God is the source of knowledge; meaning: put first, submit, fear and submit to God Almighty (Lase, 2022) For them, the use of the term Lowalangi in worship, prayer and worship indicates that Nias Christians still worship the god because Lowalangi was the pre-Christian god of the Nias people. In short, Lowalangi is a name that has been adapted from ethnic religious figures to the name of God in some Christian communities. This adaptation strategy has been successful in communicating the Gospel to people of the Nias ethnicity and has implications for Christian education, especially in the context of contextual theology. Some scholars have explored the use of Lowalangi in non-propositional theological approaches, such as storytelling. And there are those who argue that the name Lowalangi which is used as the name of God is actually the name of another figure. It is a question that is still implicit in the minds of the Nias tribe, that there are several Nias traditional figures who actually represent the name of God. But why does the name of a god or traditional figure whose name is Lowalangi become God?

## **B. METHOD**

This research was carried out by means of a literature study or using the literature study method as well as interviews with several Nias ethnic figures who were sources, both servants of God and also intellectual people and traditional leaders (Sugiyono 2013) and reviewing it theologically. Researchers explored various literary works to answer the need for questions regarding the name of God, especially the sources of information were traditional figures and articles, as well as traditional

sayings that are still standard today. As well as how accurately it is based on theology. A literature search was conducted using references from missionary records and literature from mission institutions. To be more theoretical, the author uses references from current writings which must have a more scientific basis (Zaluchu, 2021).

### **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Lowalangi is actually a mythological concept of ethnic religion but it existed in the Nias civilization long before the arrival of Christianity. This concept was born from the belief of the ancient Nias people about two sisters, Lowalangi and Latura Danõ (the older one; several separate texts call it Nazuwadanõ) (Myers 1999). An anthropologist who has published a lot of research on the Nias tribe explains the differences between Lowalangi and Latura Danõ cosmologically. Latura Danõ, as the firstborn, represents the entity that resides in the underworld, is feminine and is a symbol of the lord of darkness. On the other hand, his younger brother, Lowalangi, has a superior position as ruler of heaven (the upper world), is masculine and brings light. The two are connected in a cosmological dialectic between the highest and lowest worlds above and below, heaven and earth which influence social life.

#### **1. Definition of Deity or God in General**

Gods are spiritual beings who are considered sacred, more important and worthy of worship than worldly realities. Belief in a god or gods is often described as theism. However, theism can also refer to certain religious propositions or often called tribal religions, where tribal religions hold that all worldly things depend on the existence of one supreme deity who is personally involved in the world. This may be contrasted with deism, the belief in a creator deity who is not involved in the created world, or pantheism, in which the deity is identified with the universe rather than supreme above it. Religions that include gods are sometimes called theistic religions (although this term also has more specialized uses) (Stephen). Some examples of tribal religions in North Sumatra are pormalin or what is often called a religion that believes in the spirits of ancestors or forefathers. Not only does one particular area have worship from each tribe, which was previously considered an ancestor, which was later adopted as God in a religious sense. Previously, the background of this god's name came from the beliefs of the Greeks, who then adopted this phrase for tribes who believed in ancestral spirits and mystical supernatural realms. Again, the meaning of the word God has appeared since Ancient Greece. One of the meanings of the word god is a "god or goddess", that is, a being worshiped or in the case of the Greek gods, worshiped by humans. There are some modern pagans who claim to worship Greek gods or other mythological gods, although the eclectic nature of modern pagans means that many of these worshipers do not necessarily believe that these gods actually existed (Robert Rothwell, 2022).

## **2. Background of the Nias People**

The people of Nias had a very strong traditional belief system before Christianity was introduced in the 19th century by missionaries, a Protestant Christian evangelization mission entered Nias Island in 1865, which was brought by zending (from the Dutch word 'zendeling' which means sending term for Protestant missionaries) who came from Germany, Ernst Ludwig Denninger from the Rheinische Missiongesellschaft (RMG) (Laia 2019b) . The history of the Gospel message in Nias began in 1822/1823 by two priests from the Roman Catholic Church. However, Protestant Christianity also came to Nias Island in 1865, brought by the German missionary and evangelist, E Ludwig Danninger. In 1873 (Zaluchu 2021) , a third missionary named Kramer came, who was stationed in Gunungsitoli. In 1874, the first baptism was successfully carried out for 25 residents of Hilina'a Village. At first, the spread of the Gospel in Nias experienced difficult times, but in 1915-1930, the spread of Christianity on Nias Island began to appear significant. This happened because of the hope of being recognized by the colonial government, which was the reason for many tribal chiefs to convert to Christianity. Currently, Protestant Christianity and Roman Catholicism are the majority religions on the Nias Islands, with approximately 73% being Protestant Christians and 18% Roman Catholics .

The people of Nias practice traditional religions that are rich in myths, rites and beliefs passed down from generation to generation. They believe that the universe is inhabited by various spirits, and Deity Lowalangi is one of the entities they regard as the creator of the universe and the sustainer of their life. The Lowalangi deity is often considered the highest entity in the Nias pantheon of beliefs.

### **The Concept of Lowalangi Deity in Nias Society**

The concept of Lowalangi Deity is an important part of the beliefs of the Nias people. The Lowalangi deity is believed to be a spiritual entity responsible for the welfare and protection of the Nias people. In the view of the Nias people, Lowalangi is the highest leader in the hierarchy of spirits and gods who protect their island. They believe that Lowalangi controls nature and important events in their daily lives. Worship of Lowalangi is reflected in various rituals, such as dances, wedding ceremonies and death ceremonies. Deity Lowalangi is one of the various gods worshiped by the people of Nias. This deity is believed to be the ruler of the wind, waves and everything related to the ocean. The people of Nias are very dependent on marine products, and therefore, the worship of the Lowalangi Deity is very important in their lives. Lowalangi is considered the protector and leader of the fishermen, as well as the guardian of their island's well-being. Traditional rituals and ceremonies are often carried out as a sign of respect for the Deity of Lowalangi. These ceremonies involve various offerings such as food, drinks and traditional dances. Traditional leaders or village shamans have an important role in coordinating these ceremonies and ensuring that communication with Lowalangi Deity is well established.

### **3. The Influence of Lowalangi Deities in the Daily Life of the Nias People**

The Lowalangi deity has a huge influence on the daily lives of the Nias people. The people of Nias believe that this deity has the power to protect them from danger, give them good luck, and maintain their well-being. The influence of the Lowalangi deity can be seen in various aspects of Nias people's lives, such as agriculture, hunting, fishing and other daily lives.

In agriculture, the people of Nias worship the deity Lowalangi to ask for abundant harvests and protection from pests and plant diseases. They believe that by worshiping this deity, they will gain blessings and good luck in their agricultural endeavors. When hunting, the people of Nias worship the deity Lowalangi to ask for good luck in finding game and protection from danger when hunting. They believe that this deity can give them strength and courage to fight enemies and obtain abundant prey.

In everyday life, the people of Nias also worship the deity Lowalangi to ask for protection from danger, disease and enemies. They believe that by worshiping this deity, they will gain good fortune, prosperity, and harmony in their lives. The influence of the Lowalangi deity can also be seen in various traditional ceremonies of the Nias people. These ceremonies are performed as a form of respect and devotion to this deity. The people of Nias believe that by carrying out these ceremonies, they can obtain blessings and good luck from the Lowalangi deity. Overall, Lowalangi deities have a very important role in the daily lives of the Nias people. The people of Nias believe that by respecting and worshiping this deity, they will gain protection, luck and prosperity in their lives.

### **4. Traditions and Beliefs in Nias Traditional Ceremonies**

The Nias tribe has many traditions and beliefs in their traditional ceremonies. Here are some of them:

- a. Stone Jumping Tradition: This tradition is only carried out by men and is usually done by young men by jumping over a 2 meter-high pile of stones to show that they are fit to be considered physically mature. Before jumping over the rock, a person must ask permission from the spirits of the ancestors or predecessors who jumped over the rock. The purpose of the ceremony is so that someone does not get hurt when jumping rocks. Apart from being presented as a traditional event, the Stone Jumping Tradition can also be an interesting performance, especially for tourists who come there (Ministry of Social Affairs, nd) .
- b. Birth Ceremony: The tradition that is usually carried out when the first child is born is the birth ceremony. In this ceremony, the baby will be given a name and a small party will be held to celebrate his birth
- c. Wedding Ceremony: In a wedding ceremony there are four important points that must be carried out, namely; Famatua (engagement), Fanema bola (determination of honesty), Famekola (honest handover of dowry), Falowa (wedding party) (Nusantarapedia.net, nd) .

- d. **Funeral Ceremony:** Funeral ceremony for a man's parents, usually when they are sick, a party is held by slaughtering a pig and bringing in an Ere or priest. This ceremony emphasizes the final feeding of the sick. In this ceremony the child asks for glory for his father who will die (Nusantarapedia.net, nd) .
- e. **Owasa or Faulu:** The Owasa or Faulu ceremony is a series of ceremonies related to social structure or the formation of the social structure of society. In North Nias, the ceremony to raise social status is called owasa, while in South Nias it is called faulu. The Owasa ceremony is made with a tiered party that exceeds the existing rules, namely by slaughtering more pigs so that it gets a higher social status than ("Museum-Nias.Org Istiadat-Nias," nd) .
- f. **Fondrakö:** The traditional law party (Fondrakö) is a ceremony that is formulated and validated in a ceremony called Fondrakö. The customary law (fondrakö) is ratified and established with a curse oath. People who break the law are cursed (larakö). The severity of the punishment depends on the offense committed. For each offense there is a specific punishment. Punishments can range from paying a fine to the death penalty. Fines could be paid in rice, pork or gold
- g. **Up Tiger event (Famatö Harimao):** In ancient times in the Maenamölö region, South Nias there was a ceremony where a statue of a tiger was carried and paraded around. Since there are no tigers on Nias, the statue (Adu Harimao) looks more like a dog with a cat's head. This sacred ceremony is held once every seven or fourteen years. The stretcher of the tiger statue was then broken and the tiger statue was thrown into the river. The ceremony is called 'Famatö Harimao'

In Nias tribal ceremonies too, there are various traditions and beliefs carried out by the community. Some examples of traditions and beliefs in Nias traditional ceremonies:

- a. **Fahombo**

Fahombo is one of the most important traditional ceremonies in Nias tribal culture. This ceremony is carried out to commemorate the death of a tribal chief or other important member. Fahombo involves various rituals, such as dancing, singing, and other artistic performances. This ceremony is considered very serious and has deep spiritual meaning for the people of Nias.
- b. **Animal Sacrifice**

In traditional Nias tribal ceremonies, there is often animal sacrifice as part of the ritual. The animal sacrificed is usually a pig, chicken or buffalo. This animal sacrifice is carried out as a sign of respect for the gods and goddesses and as a form of request for blessings and protection.
- c. **Traditional Dance and Music**

Traditional dance and music are also an important part of Nias traditional ceremonies. This dance and music is used as a means of cultural expression and as a form of celebration in traditional ceremonies. The traditional dance and

music of the Nias tribe has distinctive movements and rhythms that depict the life and beliefs of the community.

d. Use of Megalithic Stones

The Nias tribe has a tradition of using megalithic stones in traditional ceremonies. Megalithic stones are used as symbols of strength and courage. These stones are often carved with typical Nias motifs and are used in various traditional ceremonies, such as weddings, funerals and religious ceremonies.

e. Respect for Ancestors

The Nias tribal people have a strong belief in their ancestors. In traditional ceremonies, respect for ancestors is carried out through various rituals and prayers. Ancestors are considered to have an important role in protecting and providing blessings to society.

f. Role of Traditional Leaders

In Nias tribal ceremonies, traditional leaders have a very important role. Traditional leaders act as ceremonial leaders and have authority in carrying out community traditions and beliefs. Play a role in maintaining harmony and balance in society.

Overall, the traditions and beliefs in Nias traditional ceremonies reflect the close relationship between society and nature, gods and goddesses, ancestors and fellow community members. Traditional ceremonies are a means of strengthening cultural identity, maintaining beliefs and traditions, and strengthening social relations in the Nias tribal community.

## **5. An Overview of Theology in the Bible**

The use of the names Allah and GOD in the Bible (LAI), was used in 1612, when Albert Cornelius Ruyl translated the Bible into Malay (Gospel of Mark) which was published in 1929 by Jan Jacobiz Palestein. Translation of the book of Genesis in 1662 and the New Testament in 1668 by Daniel Browerios into Malay. And the complete Bible translation by Mechior Leideker was carried out in 1691-1701 and continued by Francois Valentyn, perfected by Pieter van der Vorm, George Henric Wernly, Engelbertus Cornelius Ninabers, and Arnoldus Brants, which has been compared with the original languages of the Bible, Arabic, Aramaic, Latin, English, German, French and Spanish were then printed in 1733 (Latin letters) and 1758 (Arabic letters edition) (Yakob Tomatala 2013) .

The meaning of the name God when viewed from a biblical perspective provides different explanations and theologians cannot provide adequate explanations, they are even convoluted, floating and contradictory in explaining the terms "LORD", "God"; "GOD" (Ezekiel. 37:12), "God" (Genesis 1:1) and "god" (1 Chronicles.16:26). According to them, the root of the confusion is the mistake made by the Indonesian Bible Society which translated "Elohim" as "Allah" (Genesis 1:1), "elohim" as "allah" and "YAHWEH" as "GOD" (Isaiah 42:8) and "GOD" (Ezekiel 37:12). This mistake comes from not understanding the difference between a personal name and a generic name. Yahweh is the name of the creator of the universe (Psalm 121:1-2;

Isaiah 40:28). That is the name that He revealed to Moses and the children of Israel, and that is His name forever, and by that name He will be called throughout all generations (Exodus 3:15). The Israelites lived among nations who knew their gods (Elohim) by various names, such as Baal, Asherah, God Bel, God Dagon and so on. Only the Israelites' worship was not idols, but was in the form of Spirit. To differentiate him from the worship of other nations, the Elohim of Israel declared His name to be YAHWEH (Isaiah 42:8, Zechariah 14:9) (Rumbekwan 2020) .

Just like human personal names, God's personal name cannot be translated even though the word is carried across cultures and languages. Yahweh's name must be glorified and must not be taken in vain (Exodus 20:7). "It's not permissible to just use words in vain, let alone replace them with the name of another nation's deity. However, in reality, the name Yahweh, which should be sanctified, glorified, glorified, and should not be used in vain, has been replaced with the name of a god or idol. What is forbidden in the Torah is taking Yahweh's name in vain, while telling Yahweh's name is commanded. Replacing Yahweh's name with other terminology or names is considered a very serious blasphemy for YAHWEH. If currently many nations in the world do not know that the Creator's name is Yahweh, it is because that name has been removed from their holy books. Yisrael Hawkins said something similar, "The fact is; YAHWEH's name has been forgotten by the majority of this world. Few people even know the sound of the Name of YAHWEH."5 (The reality is: the name Yahweh has been forgotten by almost the entire world. Only a handful of people know the sound of the name YAHWEH).

Deity is a term that refers to the existence of God or His divinity. The concept of deity is often discussed in theology and philosophy of religion. In Christianity, the concept of deity is related to the doctrine of the Trinity, namely the belief that God is one, but consists of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This concept is fundamental to many Christian denominations. Apart from that, the concept of deity is also related to God's attributes, such as His eternal existence, unlimited power, and perfect love. The concept of deity is also often discussed in the context of the debate between religion and science, especially in the New Atheism movement which rejects the existence of God and believes that science has replaced religion as a source of knowledge and truth. However, the concept of deity remains an important topic in theology and philosophy of religion, and continues to be the subject of study and discussion among theologians and philosophers. This deity is also adopted by the Nias tribe regarding the name of God.

Deity and Allah are concepts related to the existence of God or His divinity. Following are the differences between Deity and Allah: Difference between Deity and Allah:

- a. Deity is a term that refers to the existence of God or His divinity, while Allah is the name used to refer to God in the Islamic religion.
- b. The concept of Deity is often discussed in theology and religious philosophy in general, while Allah is a specific concept in the Islamic religion.

- c. The concept of Deity is related to the doctrine of the Trinity in Christianity, namely the belief that God is one, but consists of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, in Islam, Allah is the Almighty God and does not have children or partners.

The use of the word Allah in Christianity has been carried out since the 16th century in Indonesia, while the concept of Deity has been discussed since ancient times in theology and religious philosophy. The entry of the Gospel to Nias Island certainly had a lot of influence from the missionaries who conveyed the news about God. And they have difficulty realizing the name of God in the language of the Nias tribe. As well as looking for significant meanings and values that are very relevant to explaining the God referred to in the Bible. One of the names of a figure or god that was highly respected by the Nias tribe in general emerged. The one who ultimately became the highest lord of the Nias tribe was Lowalangi. This god has such accurate relevance that his name has been crowned as God in the Nias tribe. Where this god has a younger brother who rules the earth and Lowalangi is the first child who rules the heavens of the universe. And virtuous, and very wise. He doesn't have jealousy that controls everything, but is different from his younger brother who wants to have complete power. In fact, according to history, it was not only Lowalangi who had greatness or strength. However, there are several other figures who also have power. Just different levels.

With the arrival of Christianity to Nias, there were significant changes in the people's spiritual beliefs and practices. Although some elements of Christianity may conflict with traditional Nias beliefs, a number of Nias people have combined Christian elements with the concept of Lowalangi Deity in religious practice. Some may see Lowalangi as a form of spirit or entity in line with Christian teachings. However, this does not mean that all Nias people who adhere to Christianity practice Lowalangi Deity within the framework of Christian beliefs. Those who combine these two beliefs may do so in more personal forms or in particular contexts that they deem relevant.

As Christianity entered Nias Island in the 19th century, Denninger became the first person from Germany to bring the Gospel to the Nias Islands, on September 29, 1865. In terms of when the Gospel arrived in Nias, it had been 154 years since many Nias people had embraced this new religion. (Laia 2019a) . As a result, their Christian faith influences their view of the Deity of Lowalangi. From a Christian perspective, the worship of gods and goddesses is considered an idolatrous practice and is forbidden. The Nias Christian community may face a dilemma in maintaining a balance between their ancestral traditions and the new Christian faith. Most of the Nias Christian community now avoids directly worshiping Deity Lowalangi and other gods and goddesses, on the grounds that they only believe in the God that exists in Christian teachings. However, traditional celebrations and ceremonies are often still respected, even if elements of deity worship have been removed.

In some cases, Nias Christians may see the Lowalangi Deity as simply a cultural symbol or myth in the history of their ancestors, without believing in a true spiritual

existence. They tend to focus more on Christian teachings and beliefs as the basis of their faith. When looking at the Deity of Lowalangi in the traditions of the Nias people from the perspective of the Christian faith, there are several important facts that can be considered:

- a. **Monotheistic Belief:** It is worth emphasizing here that the Christian faith is built on the basis of a strict monotheistic belief and at the same time makes it the core of the teachings of the Christian faith. From the perspective of the Christian faith, combining elements of traditional beliefs such as the Lowalangi Deity can be complex. For many Christians, Christian teachings emphasize belief in a single God and Jesus Christ as Savior. The concept of the Lowalangi Deity showing more than one spiritual entity may conflict with monotheistic Christian beliefs. In practice, many Nias Christians who face this dilemma may try to maintain a balance between their traditional beliefs and their Christian faith. They may view the Lowalangi Deity as part of their history and culture, while remaining true to their Christian teachings.
- b. **Similarity of Values:** If we try to study the two existing beliefs carefully, namely the Christian faith and the beliefs of the Nias people, then of course we can find similarities in the values of both beliefs, such as the emphasized values of love, kindness and justice. Although different expressions and rituals may be used in Lowalangi Deity worship, these aspects in the Nias tradition can also be seen as reflecting the moral principles supported by Christian teachings. This opened the way for dialogue between the Christian faith and Nias traditions.
- c. **Role of Christian Missions:** The people of Nias have experienced the influence of Christianity since the 19th century, when Christian missionaries entered the island. While some Nias people converted to Christianity, others retained their traditional beliefs. Over time, ethical challenges emerged in respecting traditional beliefs while introducing Christianity.

From the perspective of the Christian faith, the Deity of Lowalangi is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible. However, the missionaries have made efforts to contextualize Christian teachings with the traditions of the Nias people, namely by "borrowing" the name Lowalangi as the name of God. The Christian faith is based on belief in the Triune God, which is fundamental and significant in the life of Christians. The Christian faith also acknowledges and worships one supreme and infinite God, and His Son, one Christ; The Holy Spirit or divine Comforter; and man in the image and likeness of God. The truth of God's Word in the Bible is used as a guide to Christian faith

This article attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of the adoption of the name Lowalangi as the name of God by missionaries Denninger, Sundermann and Steinhart, so that Nias Christians, including servants and members of the BNKP congregation, have a correct understanding of Lowalangi. The discussion about Lowalangi is described through an analysis of the history of Israel in the Bible, especially the use of the terms Elohim and Theos as names for God. The results of the analysis show that the names given to God (Elohim and Theos) in Israel's history were

also taken from the names of gods and then given new meanings to them to differentiate them from the gods and goddesses of surrounding nations. This is an effort to contextualize theology in order to build people's faith. Thus, what Denninger, Sundermann and Steinhart did has parallels with what happened in the history of the faith of the Israelites. The missionaries have made efforts to contextualize Christian teachings with the traditions of the Nias people, namely by "borrowing" the name Lowalangi to address the God believed in and worshiped by the Nias people. Lowalangi is believed to traverse the history of the Nias people. Lowalangi as a God involved in the history of the Nias people. God who blesses, protects the Nias people during their lifetime. BNKP as the largest church organization in Nias, accepts Lowalangi as a substitute for the name of God as reflected in the BNKP Confession of Faith (Souisa 2019). What BNKP is doing is solely to clarify and root the people's faith that Lowalangi is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. The God he addresses every day in prayer and struggle is that Lowalangi is not a god but He is the God who created heaven and earth, who has power over human life.

Finally, Jesus said to him: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6). The Truth that is believed is all the Truth of God's Word in the Bible as a Guide to Christian Faith and the Lord Jesus Which is the Living Truth itself. "All writing which is inspired by God is useful for teaching, for revealing errors, for correcting behavior and for training people in the truth." (2 Timothy 3:16). Knowing the truth is the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of His Grace, a person can know the true. Only when a person's heart turns to God and has faith in Him, will he know the true and abide in the True (Ministry of Religion, nd). Lowalangi as understood by the Nias ethnic group is truly applied In real religious life, there is only one truth, namely Allah the Trinity which has been described in the Bible, which is the benchmark for the faith of Christians on the island of Nias. So that through Christian religious education we can provide an understanding that the real God and the God worshiped by Christians on the island of Nias is the God of the Bible, the God of the Israelites, the God who created the heavens and the Earth and who was incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Lowalangi deity is an important concept in the traditions of the Nias people which has a significant influence on their spiritual and cultural life. Although the introduction of Christianity has brought changes in the beliefs of the people of Nias, there are individuals who try to combine traditional elements with their Christian beliefs. The perspective of the Christian faith towards the Deity of Lowalangi in the traditions of the Nias community may vary, and each individual may have a different approach depending on their level of belief and personal interpretation. This reflects the complex dynamics between cultural and religious traditions in the development of Nias society.

In exploring beliefs about the Deity of Lowalangi in the traditions of the Nias people, it is important for Christians to respect and understand the traditional beliefs

of the Nias people while maintaining Christian values. Dialogue and mutual understanding between the people of Nias and Christian religious leaders can help create peace and tolerance in this pluralistic society. Despite differences in religious beliefs, joint efforts to promote love, kindness and justice can be the basis for building harmonious relations between Christian and traditional communities on the island of Nias. Through understanding the name of God from the Nias ethnic perspective, that the true name of God is implemented correctly and on a Biblical basis. The connection between the name of God in the Nias ethnic group is only limited to the name adopted by missionaries to straighten out the faith of Christians on Nias Island. Because no other Lowalangi name is misused by Christians in any worship. Because what must be worshiped is the real Lowalangi in the Bible, not Lowalangi because it is based on the name of a traditional figure, god or ancestor.

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