Differentiating The Pure Monotheism of Islam from the Implied Monotheism of Judeo-Christian Traditions

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Abstract

The article delves into the pure concept of Tawheed, the bedrock of Islamic monotheism, distinguishing it from the implied monotheistic perspectives of Judeo-Christian traditions. Tawheed (توحيد) is an Arabic term which means 'oneness' and 'unity.' In Islamic terminology it means the oneness of God. Tawheed in Islam transcends the acknowledgment of a single Creator of this Cosmos, representing a comprehensive oneness that influences every aspect of understanding, faith, and practice. The paper discusses the realistic, theological, and philosophical, dimensions of Tawheed, highlighting its uniqueness away from any typr of partnership with God. The article aims to articulate how Islamic monotheism, as embodied in Tawheed, is the truest form of monotheism, which is the basic faith of Islam distinguishing it from others in the religious sphere.

Keywords – Tawheed, Islamic Monotheism, Comparative Theology, Religious Philosophy, Islamic Theology

Introduction

In world religions, the concept of monotheism differs and consequently it shapes the spirituality of its followers. The monotheistic narrative of Judeo-Christian traditions has presented their own interpretations and understandings of a divine entity like Monolatry of Jews and trinity of Christians. But Islam's narrative is an unadulterated proclamation of monotheism, known as Tawheed (توحيد).

Tawheed is the foundational cornerstone of the Islamic faith, that goes beyond the mere acknowledgment of a single God. It is a belief that encapsulates the essence of pure monotheism, embodying a comprehensive oneness that permeates every facet of a Muslim's faith, practice, and governance. In its purest form, Tawheed dictates an absolute and indivisible unity of God, fundamentally rejecting any form of association, partnership, or division in the divine nature and sovereignty of Allah. This principle of

Islamic monotheism is a theological assertion influencing the moral, legal, and social dimensions of a Muslim's life.

This article elucidates the theological, philosophical, and practical layers of Tawheed, highlighting the profound depth and breadth of what it means to profess (لا إله إلا الله) *'La ilaha illallah'* - there is no God except Allah. In doing so, we will delineate the contours that set Islamic monotheism apart, affirming its position as the epitome of pure monotheism in the religious sphere.

The concept of Tawheed in Islam

The term *'Tawheed',* derived from the Arabic root *'Wahhada'* (وحدة) meaning something one, or to assert oneness. In the Islamic context, Tawheed is the assertion of the absolute oneness of Allah, the Almighty. This concept is not a theologicatracedation of Islam; rather, it is as ancient as humanity itself, with its roots tracing back to the very first prophet, Adam (عليه السلام). Islamic teachings affirm that all prophets sent by Allah, from Adam (عليه السلام) to Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), came with the same essential message – the message of Tawheed.

Quranic Elucidation of Tawheed

The Quran in innumerable verses is full of emphasizes on the oneness of Allah. Like, "Say, He is Allah, [who is] One," (Quran 112:1) and "Your God is the one God: there is no god except Him, the Most Compassionate and Most Merciful. (Quran 2:163), unequivocally assert the singularity of God in Islam. Unlike the monotheistic views in Judeo-Christian traditions, which have various interpretations of the nature

and person of God, the Islamic view is clear and categorical – there is no plurality in God's essence, attributes, or lordship.

Comparison with Monotheistic Views in Judeo-Christian Traditions

While Judeo-Christian traditions claim to profess monotheism, their understanding of it differs significantly from Islamic Tawheed. In Christianity, for instance, the concept of the Trinity posits a complex understanding of one God in three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

King Josiah or Yoshiyahu was the sixteenth king of Judah (640–609 BC) who, according to the Hebrew Bible, instituted major religious reforms by imposing monolatry on Jews. As described above, monolatry is the worship of one God, at the same time not denying that people can worship other gods/divine beings within the community with equal truth. Who were these divine beings that can be worshiped? They believed Angels were the daughters of God and certain prophets were the sons of god. Jews could worship angels and other powers in heaven, but they were to offer sacrifices to the god of Israel. There is a reference to this aspect in the Quran - The Jews call (Prophet) Uzair (عليه السلام) a son of God, and the Christians call Isa (عليه السلام) the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers (polytheists) of old used to say. (9:30)

These conceptualizations of God's nature is fundamentally at odds with Islamic Tawheed, which asserts a singular, indivisible entity without any division or multiple personifications. Islam's Tawheed, in its purest form, stands out for its uncompromising declaration of God's oneness, free from any human attributes or physical manifestations.

Theological Distinctiveness of Tawheed

Tawheed, in Islamic theology, is not merely a statement of God's oneness but a profound declaration of His uniqueness and sovereignty.

Analyzing the Exclusive Nature of God in Islam

At the heart of Tawheed is the concept of God's exclusivity. Allah is singular not only in number but also in attributes and essence. Unlike some interpretations in Judeo-Christian traditions where God's attributes can be shared with or manifested in other beings, in Islam, Allah's attributes are uniquely His. For instance, the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus as the son of God is in direct contradiction with Tawheed, which upholds the belief that none share in Allah's divine nature or attributes.

Tawheed's Rejection of Polytheism, Idolatry, and Anthropomorphism

Tawheed rigorously rejects any form of polytheism (shirk), idolatry, or anthropomorphism. The Islamic concept of God transcends physical form and human limitations, standing in contrast to some interpretations within Christianity and other faiths where God is depicted in human form or who possesses divine3 attributes. This aspect of Tawheed reinforces the idea that no part of creation can be equated with the Creator, the fact that is less explicitly defined in other so called monotheistic traditions.

The Indivisibility of Allah's Essence, Attributes, and Actions

In Islam, the unity of Allah's essence, attributes, and actions is paramount. This unity implies that God's essence cannot be divided or compartmentalized in any way, as seen in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Additionally, Islamic teachings assert that God's attributes are perfect and complete, ruling out any form of deficiency or need that might suggest a dependence on creation. The actions of Allah, such as creation, sustenance, and legislation, are also seen as exclusively His, devoid of any partners or intermediaries, which again, is a point of divergence from certain Christian and Jewish understandings.

Through its theological lens, Tawheed establishes a clear and uncompromising monotheism. It defines the Islamic understanding of God as completely unique, transcending human qualities and associations. This

theological distinctiveness of Tawheed not only shapes the Islamic perception of the divine but also sets the foundation for the practical and philosophical aspects of Muslim life, as will be explored in the following sections.

Tawheed and Islamic Philosophy

The concept of Tawheed in Islam extends far beyond theological declarations, permeating the very philosophy and worldview of a Muslim.

Metaphysical Implications of Tawheed on the Islamic Worldview

Tawheed provides a unique lens through which Muslims view the cosmos and their place within it. In the Islamic philosophical tradition, the universe is perceived as a coherent, purposeful creation of Allah, reflecting His wisdom and oneness. This worldview contrasts sharply with certain Judeo-Christian notions where the relationship between God, humanity, and the world can entail a plurality of interpretations. In Islam, the unity of God is mirrored in the unity of His creation, which functions within the laws He has ordained, pointing invariably back to the singularity of the Creator.

The Role of Tawheed in Understanding Existence and Purpose

Tawheed shapes the Muslim's understanding of existence and purpose. Life is not seen as a series of disconnected events but as a purposeful journey towards achieving submission to the will of Allah. This stands in contrast to some Christian narratives where the purpose of life is often intertwined with the salvation narrative of Jesus Christ. In Islam, the purpose of life, as well as the entirety of creation, is to worship and recognize Allah's oneness, a concept that governs all aspects of a Muslim's existence.

Distinctions from Judeo-Christian Philosophical Perspectives

While Judeo-Christian traditions offer a range of interpretations on the nature of God, the Islamic perspective, grounded in Tawheed, is unequivocal in maintaining God's absolute oneness and transcendence. This results in a philosophical approach where God is not just a creator or a moral authority, but the central axis of all existence and knowledge. The Islamic view of God as utterly transcendent and unique, influences various aspects of Muslim philosophy, including ethics, law, and governance, setting it apart from Judeo-Christian thought, which often humanizes God to various extents.

Practical Implications of Tawheed in Daily Life

Tawheed, as the bedrock of Islamic faith, significantly influences not only the beliefs but also the everyday practices of Muslims.

Tawheed in Islamic Jurisprudence and Law

In the realm of Islamic jurisprudence, Tawheed plays a crucial role. It reinforces the belief that all legislative authority belongs to Allah alone, with human laws seen as an attempt to understand and implement divine commands. This contrasts with some Judeo-Christian traditions, where human interpretation and the evolution of religious law over time play a more prominent role. In Islam, Sharia (Islamic law) derived from the Quran and Sunnah (the Prophet's traditions), is underpinned by the principle of Tawheed, emphasizing God's sole authority over all aspects of life.

The Influence of Tawheed on Social Justice, Ethics, and Morality

Tawheed informs the Islamic perspectives on social justice, ethics, and morality. The unity of God in Islam translates into a moral and ethical framework that underscores the unity and equality of all humans, advocating justice, fairness, and compassion. Unlike some interpretations in other faiths where ethical and moral directives may be linked to specific religious narratives or figures, in Islam, these principles are direct reflections of God's singular nature and will.

Tawheed in Personal Devotion and Worship

Personal devotion and worship in Islam are deeply rooted in the concept of Tawheed. The acts of worship, such as prayer (Salah), fasting (Sawm), charity (Zakah), and pilgrimage (Hajj), are not mere ritualistic practices but are expressions of acknowledging and reinforcing the oneness of Allah. This devotion is distinct from certain Christian practices where worship and devotion may be directed towards Jesus, saints, or other intermediaries, which would be considered a violation of Tawheed in Islam.

Tawheed in Governance and Society

The principle of Tawheed extends its influence beyond individual belief and practice to encompass the broader spheres of governance and societal structure in Islam.

The Impact of Tawheed on Islamic Political Theory

In Islamic political theory, Tawheed serves as a fundamental principle that asserts the sovereignty of Allah over all creation, including political authority. This perspective contrasts with certain Western political theories that may separate religious considerations from governance, often rooted in Judeo-Christian secular traditions. In Islam, political leadership and governance are viewed as a form of stewardship (Khilafah) entrusted by Allah, with rulers and governments expected to uphold and implement divine law (Sharia) in accordance with the principle of Tawheed.

Implementation of Tawheed in Historical and Contemporary Islamic Societies

Historically, Islamic societies have strived to implement the principle of Tawheed in their governance structures, legal systems, and social policies. From the early Islamic caliphates to contemporary Islamic states, the concept of Tawheed has been instrumental in shaping societal norms and governance models. This includes the application of Sharia law, the establishment of social welfare systems (like Zakat), and the promotion of communal harmony and justice. The degree to which Tawheed has been implemented varies across different historical and contemporary contexts, reflecting the dynamic nature of its application.

Tawheed as a Guiding Principle in Community and International Relations

Tawheed also plays a crucial role in shaping the Islamic approach to community relations and international affairs. The unity of Allah in Islam encourages a sense of brotherhood and solidarity among Muslims, transcending national, ethnic, and racial boundaries.

In international relations, this principle fosters a pursuit of justice, peace, and cooperation based on mutual respect and the recognition of Allah's sovereignty over all nations.

This approach stands in contrast to some international relations paradigms influenced by Judeo-Christian secularism, where national interest or geopolitical strategies might prevail over religious or ethical considerations.

Analyzing The Islamic Uniqueness

As we have explored the multifaceted dimensions of Tawheed, it becomes evident that this principle is not just a theological statement but the very core of Islamic uniqueness.

Reiterating the Singular Nature of Islamic Monotheism

Islamic monotheism, as articulated through Tawheed, is characterized by its uncompromising assertion of God's absolute oneness. This singular nature is manifest in the rejection of any form of association (shirk) with God, whether it be in worship, divine attributes, or sovereignty. This strict monotheism sets Islam apart from other faiths where monotheism might coexist with concepts such as the Trinity in Christianity or the anthropomorphic depictions of God in some Jewish texts.

Tawheed's Contrast with Judeo-Christian Monotheistic Traditions

While Judeo-Christian traditions have contributed significantly to the monotheistic discourse, their interpretations often include elements that are at

odds with the strict monotheism of Tawheed. For instance, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which presents God as three distinct persons in one, is a concept that is fundamentally incompatible with Tawheed. Similarly, in some interpretations within Judaism, the portrayal of God in human-like terms diverges from the Islamic view of God as transcendent and incomparable.

The Role of Tawheed in Defining Islamic Identity and Global Presence

Tawheed is more than a religious doctrine; it is a marker of Islamic identity, deeply influencing the cultural, social, and political aspects of Muslim societies.

This principle has not only shaped the historical development of Islamic civilizations but continues to play a crucial role in defining the ethos and values of Muslim communities worldwide. In the global religious and cultural discourse, Tawheed positions Islam as a distinct and unique voice, offering a perspective on monotheism that is clear, consistent, and unyielding in its emphasis on the oneness of God.

Conclusion

It is evident that Islam offers a perspective on the oneness of God that is profoundly unique and distinct from other pseudo-monotheistic traditions. This article has explored the theological, philosophical, and practical realms of Tawheed, each time uncovering layers that reveal the depth and exclusivity of Islamic monotheism.

Islamic monotheism, as encapsulated in Tawheed, stands apart in its absolute and unyielding affirmation of God's oneness. Unlike the monotheistic views in Judeo-Christian traditions, which often encompass a range of interpretations and nuances regarding the nature of the divine, Tawheed maintains a clear and consistent stance.

It asserts that Allah is singular not only in being but in attributes, actions, and authority. This singular focus on the oneness of God permeates every aspect of a Muslim's life, from individual beliefs and practices to societal structures and governance.

The uniqueness of Tawheed also lies in its comprehensive influence. It is not merely a theological concept confined to scholarly discourse; it is a living principle that shapes the everyday lives of Muslims. It informs their worldview, ethical framework, worship practices, and interactions with the broader society. The Islamic concept of monotheism, therefore, is not just a belief system but a way of life that is distinctively different from other religious traditions.

Tawheed positions Islam as a faith with a monotheistic purity that is unparalleled. It challenges and enriches the discourse on monotheism, offering a perspective that is rooted in the Quranic revelation and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم).

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Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian, and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000 books on various Islamic subjects. He has written many research articles on religion, history, and other subjects. He is also the Editor in Chief of CIFIA Global Journal.