

1.1 THE CATEGORIES OF TAWHEED

Literally *tawheed* means “unification” (making something one) or “asserting oneness,” and it comes from the Arabic verb وَحَّدَ (*wahhada*) which itself means to unite, unify, or consolidate.¹ However, when the term *tawheed* is used in reference to Allaah (i.e. *tawheedullaah*)², it means realizing and affirming Allaah’s unity in all of man’s actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allaah’s One, without partner in His dominion (*ruboobeeyah*), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (*asmaa was sifaat*), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (*uloheeyah ‘ibaadah*). These three aspects form the basis for the categories into which the science of *tawheed* has been traditionally divided. The three overlap and are inseparable to such a degree that whoever omits any one aspect has failed to complete the requirements of *tawheed*. The omission of any of the above mentioned aspects of *tawheed* is referred to as *shirk* (which literally means “sharing” but here signifies) the association of partners with Allaah. In Islamic terms this association is in fact idolatry.

Because of this principle of *tawheed*, the Islamic belief in God is uniquely unitarian and Islaam is counted among the world’s monotheistic religions along with Judaism and Christianity. However, according to the Islamic unitarian concept (*tawheed*), Christianity is classified as polytheism and Judaism is considered to be a subtle form of idolatry.

Thus, the principle of *tawheed* is very profound and needs further clarification even among Muslims. This point is vividly illustrated by the fact that some Muslims like Ibn ‘Arabee³ understood *tawheed* to mean monism; that

¹ J.M. Cowan, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Spoken Language Services Inc., New York, 3rd. ed., 1976), p.1055.

² The word *tawheed* does not actually occur in either the Qur’aan or in the statements (*Hadeeths*) of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent Mu’aadh ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen in 9AH, he told him, “You will be going to Christians and Jews (*ahl al-Kitaab*), so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertion of the oneness of Allaah (*Yuwahhidoo Allaah*).” (Narrated by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by al-Bukhaaree (Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), (Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Riyaad al-Hadeetha, 1981), vol.9, pp.348-9, no.469) and Muslim (Abdul Hamid Siddiq, *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1987), vol.1, pp.14-5, no.27). In this *Hadeeth* the present tense of the verb from which the verbal noun *Tawheed* is derived was used by the Prophet (ﷺ).

³ Muhammad ibn ‘Alee ibn ‘Arabee was born in Spain in the year 1165 CE and died in Damascus in the year 1240 CE. He claimed to possess inner light and knowledge of Allaah’s greatest name and referred to himself as the seal of the sainthood which he implied was a status higher than

everything which exists is Allaah and Allaah is everything. He asserted that there is only one real existence, which is Allaah everything else is unreal.⁴ Yet, such beliefs are classified by mainstream Islaam as pantheism and, as such, *kufr*. Other Muslims such as the *Mu‘tazilah*⁵ held that *tawheed* consisted of stripping Allaah of all His attributes and asserting that He is present everywhere and in everything; yet these ideas were also rejected by orthodox Islaam and considered heretical. In fact, almost all of the various heretical sects which broke off from the main body of Islaam, from the Prophet’s time till today, began their divergence from the point of *tawheed*. All of those who worked for the destruction of Islaam and the misguidance of its followers have attempted to neutralize the principle of *tawheed*, because it represents the very essence of the divine message of Islaam brought by all the prophets. They have introduced concepts about Allaah totally alien to Islaam; concepts designed to take man away from the worship of Allaah alone. Once people accept these pagan philosophies about God, they become easily susceptible to a multitude of other deviant ideas, all of which eventually lead those who accept them to the worship of created things under the guise of the true worship of God.

The Prophet (ﷺ) himself vividly warned Muslims to beware of such deviations as had befallen the nations before them. He encouraged them to stick closely to the path which he had tread. One day as he sat with his companions, he drew a straight line in the dirt. He then drew a series of lines branching off from either side of it. When the companions asked him what it meant, he pointed to the branches and told them that they represented the various paths of misguidance in this life. He went on to say that at the head of each path sat a devil inviting people to it. After that, he pointed to the straight line in the middle and told them that it represented the path of Allaah. When the companions asked for further clarification, he told them that it was his path and he recited the following verse:

prophethood. In the centuries following his death, his followers elevated him to the status of saint, and gave him the title of *ash-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master), but the majority of Muslim legal scholars considered him a heretic. His principle works are *al-Futoohaat al-Makkeeyah* and *Fuṣoos al-Hikim*, (H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1953), pp.146-7.

⁴ A modern proponent of this belief called *wahdatul-wujood* is Haroon Yahya. He has included a chapter in most of his works written in refutation of Darwinism promoting this belief.

⁵ A rationalist philosophical school founded in the Umayyad period (i.e. early 8th century CE) by Waasil ibn ‘Ataa and ‘Amr ibn ‘Ubayd. It gained sway over the ‘Abbaasid state for over a hundred years and continued to influence Islamic thought until the 12th century (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp.421-6).

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ

“This is my path leading straight, so follow it. And do not follow the other paths, or else you will be separated from His (Allaah’s) path.”⁶

It is therefore of the utmost importance that *tawheed* be clearly understood in the way it was taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) and understood by his companions, or else one could easily end up on one of the many deviant paths while claiming *tawheed*, praying, paying *zakaah*,⁷ fasting and making Hajj. Allaah, Most Wise, has pointed to this phenomenon when He said in the Qur’aan,

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

“Most of them claim to believe in Allaah, but they really commit *shirk*.”⁸

The three categories of *tawheed* are commonly referred to by the following titles:

1. Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah: lit. “Maintaining the oneness of Lordship,” that is, affirming that Allaah is one, without partners in his sovereignty.
2. Tawheed al-Asmaa’ was-Sifaat: lit. “Maintaining the unity of Allaah’s Names and Attributes,” that is, affirming that they are incomparable and unique.
3. Tawheed al-‘Ibaadah: Affirming that Allaah is alone in his right to be worshipped.⁹

The division of *tawheed* into its components was not done by the Prophet (ﷺ) nor by his companions, as there was no necessity to analyze such a basic principle of faith in this fashion. However, the foundations of the components are all implied in the verses of the Qur’aan and in the explanatory statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions, as will become evident when each category is dealt with in more detail later.

⁶ Soorah al-An‘aam, (6):153, Reported by Ibn Mas‘ood and collected by an-Nasaa’ee, Ahmad and ad-Daarimee. Authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Sharh as-Sunnah*, vol.1, p.13, no.17.

⁷ annual compulsory charity.

⁸ Soorah Yoosuf, (12):106.

⁹ Ibn Abil-‘Ezz al-Hanafee, *Sharh al-‘Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p.78.

The necessity for this analytical approach to the principle of *tawheed* arose after Islaam spread into Egypt, Byzantium, Persia and India and absorbed the cultures of these regions. It is only natural to expect that when the peoples of these lands entered the fold of Islaam, they would carry with them some of the remnants of their former beliefs. When some of these new converts began to express, in writings and discussion, their various philosophical concepts of God, confusion arose in which the pure and simple unitarian belief of Islaam became threatened. There were also others who had outwardly accepted Islaam but secretly worked to destroy the religion from within, due to their inability to oppose it militarily. This group began to actively propagate distorted ideas about Allaah among the masses in order to tear down the first pillar of *eemaan* (faith) and with it Islaam itself.

The early caliphs and their governors were closer to Islamic principles, and the consciousness of the masses was high due to the presence of the Prophet's companions and their students. Hence, the demand for the elimination of open heretics received immediate response from the rulers. In contrast, the later Umayyad caliphs were more corrupt and as such cared little about such religious issues. The masses were also less Islamically conscious and thus were more susceptible to deviant ideas. As greater numbers of people entered Islaam under the Umayyads, and the learning of an increasing number of conquered nations was absorbed, the execution of apostates was no longer used to stem the rising tide of heresy. The task of opposing it fell on the shoulders of the Muslim scholars of the period who rose to meet the challenge intellectually. They systematically opposed the various alien philosophies and creeds by categorizing them and countering them with principles deduced from the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. It was out of this defense that the science of *tawheed* emerged, with its precisely defined categories and components. Therefore, as the categories of *tawheed* are studied separately and in more depth, it must not be forgotten that they are each a part of an organic whole which is itself the foundation of a greater whole, Islaam itself.

Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (Maintaining the Unity of Lordship)

This category is based on the fundamental concept that Allaah alone caused all things to exist when there was nothing; He sustains and maintains creation without any need from it or for it; and He is the sole Lord of the universe and its inhabitants without any real challenge to His sovereignty. In Arabic the word used to describe this creator-sustainer quality is *ruboobeeyah* which is derived from the root *Rabb* (Lord). According to this category, since God is the only real power in existence, it is He who gave all things the power to move and to change. Nothing happens in creation except what He allows to happen. In

recognition of this reality, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) used to often repeat the exclamatory phrase “*La hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaah.*” (There is no movement nor power except by Allaah’s will).

The basis for the *ruboobeeyah* concept can be found in many Qur’anic verses. For example, Allaah says:

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ

“Allaah created all things and He is the agent on which all things depend.”¹⁰

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

“And no calamity strikes except by Allaah’s permission.”¹¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) further elaborated on this concept saying, “*Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together in order to do something to help, they would only be able to do something for you which Allaah had already written for you. Likewise, if the whole of mankind gathered together to harm you, they would only be able to do something to harm you which Allaah had already written would happen to you.*”¹²

Thus, what man conceives as good fortune and misfortune are merely events predestined by Allaah as part of the tests of this life. The incidents follow patterns set by Allaah alone. Allaah has said in the Qur’aan:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَرْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ

“O Believers! Surely there is in your wives and children an enemy for you, so beware of them.”¹³

That is, within the good things of this life there are severe tests of one’s faith in God. Likewise, in the terrible events of life there lies test as is mentioned in the verse,

¹⁰ Soorah az-Zumar, (39):62.

¹¹ Soorah at-Taghaabun, (64):11.

¹² Reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmitheeh. See Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson -Davies, *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), (Damascus, Syria: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1976), p.68, no.19.

¹³ Soorah at-Taghaabu, (64):14.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ
وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

“Surely We will test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and life and the fruits of your work, so give glad tidings to those who are patient.”¹⁴

Sometimes the patterns are recognizable, as in the case of cause and effect relationship, and sometimes they are not, as in the case when apparently good results come from evil means, or bad results from good means. God has explained that the wisdom behind these apparent irregularities is often beyond man’s immediate comprehension due to his limited scope of knowledge:

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“It is possible that you dislike something that is really good for you, or like something bad for you, but Allaah knows (what is best for you), and you do not.”¹⁵

Apparently evil events in human lives sometimes turn out to be for the best, and apparently good things which people desire turn out to be harmful. Consequently, man’s realm of influence in the course of events which make up his life is limited to mental choices between options presented to him. The ultimate results of these choices, however are not under his control. In other words, “Man proposes and God disposes.” Apparent “good fortune” and “misfortune” are both from Allaah and cannot be caused by good-luck charms such as rabbits’ feet, four-leaf clovers, wishbones, lucky numbers, zodiacal signs, etc., or by omens of bad luck like Friday the thirteenth, breaking mirrors, black cats, etc. In fact, the belief in charms and omens is a manifestation of the grave sin of *shirk* (association) in this form of *ta’weed*. ‘Uqbah, one of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), reported *that once a group of men approached Allaah’s Messenger to give their allegiance to him, and he accepted the oath from nine of them but refused to accept it from one. When they asked him why he refused their companion’s oath, he replied, “Verily, he is wearing an amulet.”*¹⁶ *The man who was wearing the amulet put his hand in his*

¹⁴ Soorah al-Baqarah, (2):155.

¹⁵ Soorah al-Baqarah, (2):216.

¹⁶ A charm worn to bring good fortune or avert evil.

cloak, pulled the amulet off, broke it, and then made the oath. The Prophet (ﷺ) then said, “Whoever wears an amulet has committed shirk.”¹⁷

As for using the Qur’aan like a charm or amulet by wearing or carrying Qur’anic verses on chains or in pouches to ward off evil or to bring good fortune, there is little difference between such practices and those of the pagans. Neither the Prophet (ﷺ) nor his companions used the Qur’aan in this fashion, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Whoever innovates in Islaam something which does not belong to it will have it rejected.”¹⁸ It is true that the Qur’anic chapters an-Naas and al-Falaq, were revealed specifically for exorcism (that is, for removing evil spells), but the Prophet (ﷺ) demonstrated the proper method by which they should be used. On an occasion when a spell had been cast on him, he told ‘Alee ibn Abee Taalib to recite the two chapters verse by verse, and when he became ill he used to recite them on himself.¹⁹ He did not write them down and hang them around his neck, tie them on his arm or around his waist, nor did he tell others to do so.

Tawheed al-Asmaa’ was-Sifaat (Maintaining the Unity of Allaah’s Names and Attributes)

This category of *tawheed* has five main aspects:

1. For the unity of Allaah’s names and attributes to be maintained in the first aspect, Allaah must be referred to according to how He and His Prophet (ﷺ) have described Him, without explaining away His names and attributes by giving them meanings other than their obvious meaning. For example, in the Qur’aan Allaah says that He gets angry with the disbelievers and the hypocrites. He says:

وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ
عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

¹⁷ Collected by Ahmad.

¹⁸ Reported by ‘Aaeshah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.3, p.535, no.861), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.3, p.931, no.4266 and no.4267) and Abu Daawood (Ahmad Hasan, *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1st. ed., 1984), vol.3, p.1294).

¹⁹ Reported by ‘Aa’eshah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.6, p.495, no.535) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.3, p.1195, no.5439-40).

“...that He may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the pagans, men and women, who have an evil opinion of Allaah. A circle of evil is around them; Allaah is angry with them, curses them and has prepared for them an evil end.”²⁰

Thus, anger is one of God’s attributes. It is incorrect to say as some have, that His “anger” must really mean His “punishment”, since anger is a sign of weakness in man that does not befit Allaah. What Allaah has stated should be accepted, with the qualification that His anger is not like human anger-based on Allaah’s statement.

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“There is nothing like him.”²¹

This verse clearly underscores the fact that Allaah’s attributes are different from those of men. When this fact is overlooked, however, a strictly literal interpretation of the verse will result in the denial of God’s very existence. For Allaah describes Himself as living and man lives; therefore, according to this “rationalist” argument, God neither lives nor exists.

In fact, the similarity between God’s attributes and those of mankind is in name only and not in degree. When attributes are used in reference to God, they are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies.

2. The second aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa’ was-Sifaat* involves referring to Allaah as He has referred to Himself without giving Him any new names or attributes. For example, Allaah may not be given the name *al-Ghaadib* (the angry one), in spite of the fact that He has said that He gets angry, because neither Allaah nor His messenger has used this name. This may seem to be a very fine point, but it must be maintained in order to prevent the false description of God. That is, finite man is in no position to define the infinite Lord of creation.

The names *an-Naasir* and *ar-Rasheed* are among the common names which cannot be authentically attributed to Allaah. Although their meanings are true and are mentioned as attributes of Allaah, they cannot be found in any Qur’aanic text or authentic *hadeeth*. They do, however, exist in a few *hadeeths* containing a list of the 99 names of Allaah, some of which can be found printed in copies of the Qur’aan. Unfortunately, all of these *hadeeths* are inauthentic.

3. In the third aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa’ was-Sifaat* Allaah is referred to without giving Him the attributes of His creation. For example, it is claimed in

²⁰ Soorah al-Fath, (48):6.

²¹ Soorah ash-Shooraa, (42):11.

the Bible and Torah that Allaah spent the first six days creating the universe then slept on the seventh.²² For this reason, Jews and Christians take either Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest during which work is looked at as a sin. Such a claim assigns to God the attributes of His creation. It is man who tires after heavy work and needs sleep to recuperate.²³ Elsewhere in the Bible and Torah, God is portrayed as repenting for His bad thoughts in the same way that humans do when they realize their errors.²⁴ Similarly the claim that God is a spirit or has a spirit completely corrupts this are of *tawheed*. Allaah does not refer to Himself as a spirit anywhere in the Qur'aan nor does His Prophet (ﷺ) express anything of the nature in *hadeeth*. In fact, Allaah refers to the spirit as part of His creation.²⁵

The key principle which should be followed when dealing with Allaah's attributes is the Qur'anic formula,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“There is nothing at all like Him, and He is hearer and seer of all.”²⁶

The attributes of hearing and seeing are among human attributes, but when they are attributed to The Divine Being they are without comparison in their perfection. However, when these attributes are associated with men they necessitate ear and eye apparatuses which cannot be attributed to God. What man knows about the Creator is only what little He has revealed to him through His prophets. Therefore, man is obliged to stay within these narrow limits. When man gives free reign to his intellect in describing God, he is liable to fall into errors by assigning to Allaah the attributes of His creation.

In their love of pictorial representations, Christians have painted, carved and molded innumerable human likenesses and called them images of God. These have served to pave the way for the acceptance of Jesus' divinity among the masses. Once they accepted the conception of the Creator as being like a human being, accepting Jesus as God presented no real problem.

²² Genesis 2:2, “And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.” (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version (Nelson, 1951), p.2.

²³ In contrast Allaah says explicitly in the Qur'aan, “No tiredness overcomes Him nor sleep...” (Soorah al-Baqarah, (2):255).

²⁴ Exodus 32:14, “And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.” (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

²⁵ Allaah clearly states that in the following verse: “They ask you (Muhammad) about the spirit. Tell (them) that the spirit (exists) by my Lord's command” (Soorah al-Israa, (17):85.

²⁶ Soorah ash-Shoora, (42):11.

4. The fourth aspect of *tawheed as-Asmaa' was-Sifaat* requires that man not be given the attributes of Allaah. For example, in the New Testament Paul takes the figure of Melchizedek, king of Salem, from the Torah (Genesis 14:18-20) and gives both him and Jesus the divine attribute of having no beginning or end:

1. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. **He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God he continues a priest forever.**²⁷

'5. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee"; as he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."²⁸

Most *Shi'ite* sects (with the exception of the *Zaidites* of Yemen) have given their "*imams*" divine attributes of absolute infallibility,²⁹ knowledge of the past, the future and the unseen, the ability to change destiny³⁰ and control over the atoms of creation.³¹ In so doing they set up rivals who share God's unique attributes and who, in fact, become gods besides Allaah.

5. Maintaining the unity of Allaah's names also means that Allaah's names in the definite form cannot be given to His creation unless preceded by the prefix '*Abd* meaning "slave of" or "servant of." Many of the Divine names in

²⁷ Hebrews 7:1-3, (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

²⁸ Hebrews, 5:5-6 (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

²⁹ Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar states in his book *Faith of Shi'a Islam*, (U.S.A.: Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2nd ed. 1983): "We believe that, like the prophet, an **Imam must be infallible, that is to say incapable of making errors or doing wrong, either inwardly or outwardly, from his birth to his death, either intentionally or unintentionally**, because the Imams are the preservers of Islam and it is under their protection." (p.32). See also *Islam*, (Teheran: A Group of Muslim Brothers, 1973), p.35, by Sayed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.

³⁰ Al-Muzaffar further states: "We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration has reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely-given power. By this means **the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time**, and he understands by means of this Divinely - given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher.

³¹ Al-Khomeini states: "Certainly the Imam has a dignified station, a lofty rank, a creational caliphate, and sovereignty and mastery over all atoms of creation." (Aayatullaah Musavi al-Khomeini, *al-Hukoomah al-Islameeyah*, (Beirut: at-Talee'ah Press, Arabic ed., 1979), p.52).

their indefinite form like *Ra'oof* and *Raheem* are allowable names for me because Allaah has used some of them in their indefinite forms to refer to the Prophet (ﷺ):

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ
رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“A messenger has come to you from among yourselves who is grieved by whatever afflicts you. He is full of concern for you, full of pity (*Ra'oof*) and full of mercy (*Raheem*) for the believers.”³²

But *ar-Ra'oof* (the One Most Full of Pity) and *ar-Raheem* (the Most Merciful) can only be used to refer to men if they are preceded by ‘*Abd*’ as in ‘*Abdur-Ra'oof*’ or ‘*Abdur-Raheem*’, since in the definite form they represent a level of perfection which only belongs to God. The ‘Abbaside Caliph, Haroon *ar-Rasheed*, used the title “*ar-Rasheed*” which would have been rejected by the scholars of his time, had it been actually one of Allaah’s names. On the other hand, names like ‘*Abdur-Rasool*’ (slave of the messenger), ‘*Abdun-Nabee*’ (slave of the Prophet), ‘*Abdul-Husayn*’ (slave of Husayn), etc., where people name themselves slave to other than Allaah are also forbidden. Based on this principle, the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade Muslims from referring to those put under their charge as ‘*abdee*’ (my slave) or *amatee* (my slave girl).³³

Tawheed al-‘Ebaadah (Maintaining The Unity of Worship)

In spite of the wide implications of the first two categories of *tawheed*, firm belief in them alone is not sufficient to fulfill the Islamic requirements of *tawheed*. *Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah* and *Tawheed al-Asmaa’ was-Sifaat* must be accompanied by their complement, *Tawheed al-‘Ibaadah*, in order for *tawheed* to be considered complete according to Islaam. This point is substantiated by the fact that Allaah Himself has related in clear terms that the *mushrikoon* (idolators) of the Prophet’s time confirmed many aspects of the first two forms of *tawheed*. In the Qur’aan Allaah tells the Prophet (ﷺ) to say to the pagans:

³² Soorah at-Tawbah, (9):128.

³³ (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.3, pp.1385-6, no.4957).

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ
مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ

“Say: ‘Who is it that gives you sustenance from the sky earth, governs sight and hearing, brings forth life form dead (matter) and death from the living; and plans the affairs of man?’ They will all say: ‘Allaah’.”³⁴

وَلَكِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

“If you asked them who created them, they would surely say, ‘Allaah’.”³⁵

The pagan Makkans all knew that Allaah was their creator, sustainer, their Lord and Master; yet that knowledge did not make them Muslims according to God. In fact, Allaah said:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

“Most of them do not believe in Allaah except while joining partners to Him.”³⁶

Mujaahid’s³⁷ commentary on this verse was as follows: “Their belief in Allaah, represented by their statement, ‘Allaah created us, provides for us and takes our lives, did not stop them from worshipping other gods along with Allaah.’”³⁸ From the previously mentioned verses, it is clear that the *kuffaar* (disbelievers) knew of Allaah’s sovereignty, dominion and power. In fact, they used to faithfully devote various types of worship to Him like Hajj, charity, animal sacrifices, vows and even prayers in times of dire necessity and calamity. They even used to claim that they were following the religion of Abraham. Because of that claim, Allaah revealed the verse:

³⁴ Soorah Yoonus, (10):31.

³⁵ Soorah az-Zukhruf, (43):87.

³⁶ Soorah Yoosuf, (12):106.

³⁷ Mujaahid ibn Jubayr al-makkee (642-722) was Ibn ‘Abbaas’ most outstanding student. The narrations of his *Tafseer* (commentary) of the Qur’aan has been compiled by ‘Abdur-Rahmaan at-Taahir and published in two volumes under the title, *Tafseer Mujaahid*, (Islamabad: Majma’ al-Buhooth).

³⁸ Collected by Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree.

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Abraham was not a Jew, nor was he a Christian, but (he) was a true Muslim and not among those who joined partners with Allaah.”³⁹

Some pagan Makkans even believed in the Resurrection and the Judgement and others in predestination (*qadar*). Ample evidence of their belief can be found in pre-Islamic poetry. For example, the poet Zuhayr was reported to have said: about punishment:

“It is either delayed, placed in a book and saved for the Day of Judgement, or hastened and (injustice) avenged.”

‘Antarah was quoted as saying:

“O ‘Ebil, to where will you run from death, if my Lord in the sky has destined it?”⁴⁰

In spite of the Makkan’s confession of *tawheed* and their knowledge of Allaah, Allaah classified them as disbelievers (*kuffaar*) and pagans (*mushrikoon*) simply because they worshipped other gods along with their worship of Allaah.

Consequently, the most important aspect of *tawheed* is that of *tawheed al-’Ibaadah*, maintaining the unity of Allaah’s worship. All forms of worship must be directed only to Allaah because He alone deserves worship, and it is He alone who can grant benefit to man as a result of His worship. Furthermore, there is no need for any form of intercessor or intermediary between man and God. Allaah emphasized the importance of directing worship to Him alone by pointing out that this was the main purpose of man’s creation and the essence of the message brought by all the prophet. He said:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِي

“I did not create the *jinn* and mankind except for My worship.”⁴¹

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

³⁹ Soorah Aal‘Imraan, (3):67.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Sulaymaan ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhaab’s *Tayseer al-‘Azeez al-Hameed*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 2nd., 1970), p.34.

⁴¹ Soorah adh-Dhaariyaat, (51):56.

**“Verily, We have sent to every nation a messenger (saying),
‘Worship Allaah and avoid false gods.’”⁴²**

Understanding the purpose of creation in a complete sense is beyond man’s innate abilities. Man is a finite created being and cannot reasonably hope to fully comprehend the actions of the infinite Creator. Hence, God made it a part of man’s nature to worship Him, and He sent prophets and books of divine revelation to clarify the aspect of the purpose of creation which was within man’s mental ability to grasp. That purpose is, as previously mentioned: the worship of God (*‘ebaadah*) and the main message of the prophets was to worship God alone, (*Tawheed al-’Ibaadah*). Consequently, the gravest sin is *shirk*, the worship of others instead of Allaah or along with Allaah.

In Soorah al-Faatihah, which every Muslim is required to recite in his or her daily prayers, verse four reads, **“You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help.”** This is a clear statement that all forms of worship should be directed exclusively to the One who can respond: Allaah. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) confirmed the concept of unity of worship saying, *“If you ask in prayer ask only Allaah, and if you seek help, seek it only from Allaah.”*⁴³ The absence of any need for intercession is further emphasized by the any verses indicating His closeness to man. For example:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِي إِذَا دَعَانِي فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي
وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

**“When My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me (tell them),
‘Verily I am close (to them); I listen to the prayer of every one who
calls on Me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me in order
that they may be guided aright.”**⁴⁴

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

**“It is We who created man and We know what his soul whispers to
him, for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”**⁴⁵

The confirmation of *Tawheed al-’Ibaadah* conversely necessitates the denial of all forms of intercession or association of partners with Allaah. If someone prays to

⁴² Soorah an-Nahl, (16):36.

⁴³ Reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmithi, See *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), p.68.

⁴⁴ Soorah al-Baqarah, (2):186.

⁴⁵ Soorah Qaaf, (50):16.

the dead seeking their influence on the lives of the living or the souls of those who have passed away, they have associated a partner with Allaah, because worship is being shared between Allaah and His creation. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, in no uncertain terms, “Prayer (*du‘aa*) is worship.”⁴⁶ And, Allaah, Most Great and Glorious, said:

أَفْتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ

“Do not worship besides Allaah that which cannot help or harm you.”⁴⁷

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ

“Those on whom you call besides Allaah are only slaves like yourselves.”⁴⁸

If someone prays to the Prophet (ﷺ), or to jinn, angels or so called saints asking for help or asking them to request help from Allaah on his behalf, he has also committed *shirk*. The concept of “Ghaus-i-Azam” (*al-Ghawth al-A‘dHam*), a title given by the ignorant to ‘Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee,⁴⁹ is also an expression of *shirk* in this form of *tawheed*. The title literally means “the greatest source of rescue; the one most able to save someone from danger,” and such a description only belongs to Allaah. When misfortune occurs, some people call on ‘Abdul-Qaadir by this title seeking his aid and protection, even though Allaah has already said:

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ

“If Allaah allows harm to befall you none can remove it except Him.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol.1, p.387, no.1474.

⁴⁷ Soorah al-Anbiyaa, (21):66.

⁴⁸ Soorah al-A‘raaf, (7):194.

⁴⁹ ‘Abdul Qaadir (1077-1166) was a principal of a school of Hanabalite Law and a Ribaat (monastery) in Baghdad. His Sermons (collected in *al-Fat-h ar-Rabbaane*, Cairo 1302) were strictly orthodox with some, mystic interpretations of the Qur’aan. Ibn ‘Arabee (born 1165) declared him the *Qutb* of his time and stated that he had a rank which placed him above all beings except God. ‘Alee ibn Yousuf ash-Shattanawfee (d. 1314 CE) wrote a book called *Bahjat al-Asraar* (Cairo, 1304) in which he attributed many miracles to ‘Abdul-Qaadir. The Qaadiireyah Sufi order is named after him and its spiritual exercises and regulations traced back to him. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp.5-7 and 202-205).

⁵⁰ Soorah al-An‘aam, (6):17.

According to the Qur'aan, when the Makkans were questioned about directing their prayers to their idols, they answered,

مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ

“We only worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allaah.”⁵¹

The idols were only used as intermediaries yet Allaah called them pagans for their practice. Those among Muslims who insist on praying to other than Allaah would do well to reflect on this fact.

Christians, influenced by the teachings of Saul from Tarsus (later called Paul), deified Prophet Jesus and directed their prayer to him and his mother. The Catholics among Christians have saints for every occasion to whom they direct their prayers in the belief that these saints can directly influence the affairs of this world. The Catholics also use their priests as intercessors between themselves and Allaah in the mistaken belief that the priests are closer to Allaah due to their celibacy and piety, and thus more likely to be listened to by Allaah. Most *Shi'ite* sects have devoted certain days of the week and hours of the day for prayer to 'Alee, Faatimah, Hasan and Husayn⁵² due to their distorted belief in intercession.

Worship ('*ebaadah*) in the Islamic view, includes more than just fasting, paying *zakaah*, Hajj and animal sacrifices. It includes emotions like love, trust, and fear, all of which have degrees which should only be directed to God. Allaah has addressed these emotions and warned against excesses in them as follows:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

“There are among men those who take (for worship) others besides Allaah as equals to Him. They love them as they should only love Allaah. But those who believe have a much greater love of Allaah...”⁵³

أَلَا تَقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ أَتَخْشَوْنَ اللَّهَ فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

⁵¹ Soorah az-Zumar, (39):3.

⁵² Faatimah was the Prophet Muhammad's youngest daughter who married the Prophet's cousin 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib, and Hasan and Husayn were their sons.

⁵³ Soorah al-Baqarah, (2):165.

“Will you not fight people who broke their oaths, plotted to expel the messenger and were the first to (attack) you? Do you *fear* them? Allaah has more right to be *feared* if you are truly believers.”⁵⁴

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Put your *trust* in Allaah if you are truly believers.”⁵⁵

Since the term *Ibaadah* means total obedience, and Allaah is considered the ultimate lawgiver, the implementation of secular legal systems not based on divine law (*Sharee‘ah*) is an act of disbelief in the divine law and belief in the correctness of such systems. Such a belief constitutes a form of worshipping other than Allaah (*shirk*). Allaah said in the Qur’aan:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“Those who do not rule by what Allaah has revealed are disbelievers (*kafiroon*).”⁵⁶

On one occasion, the Prophet’s companion, ‘Adee ibn Haatim, who was a convert from Christianity, heard the Prophet (ﷺ) recite the Qur’anic verse,

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allaah,”⁵⁷

so he said: ‘Surely we did not worship them.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) turned to him and said ‘Did they not make forbidden (*haraam*) what Allaah had made allowable (*halaal*)⁵⁸ and you made it *haraam*, and did they not make *halaal* what Allaah made *haraam*⁵⁹ and you made it *halaal*?’ He replied, ‘We certainly did.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) then said, ‘That was how you worshipped them.’⁶⁰

Hence, a significant part of *Tawheed al-Ibaadah* involves the implementation of *Sharee‘ah*, especially in lands where Muslims form the

⁵⁴ Soorah at-Tawbah, (9):13.

⁵⁵ Soorah al-Maa’idah, (5):23.

⁵⁶ Soorah am-Maa’idah, (5):44.

⁵⁷ Soorah at-Tawbah, (9):31.

⁵⁸ Christian clergy made *haraam* the marrying of more than one wife and the marrying of first cousins. Roman Catholicism forbade priests from marrying and forbade divorce in general.

⁵⁹ The Christian Church made *halaal* the consumption of pork, blood and alcohol. Some of them also made allowable painting and statues depicting God as a man.

⁶⁰ Collected by at-Tirmithee.

majority of the population. Divine law should be re-introduced in the many Muslims countries where governments now rule according to imported capitalist or communist constitutions, and Islamic law is either totally extinct or relegated to a few areas of minor importance. Likewise, Muslim countries where Islamic law is on the books but secular laws are in force, should implement the *Sharee'ah* as it pertains to all aspects of life. The implementation of non-Islamic rule in place of *Sharee'ah* in Muslim lands is an act of *shirk* and *kufir* as indicated by the previously quoted verse. However, as Ibn 'Abbaas explained, it is not the major act of disbelief which takes one out of the fold of Islaam but a lesser form. Consequently, ruling by non-Islamic law does not automatically make the doer a disbeliever unless he or she actually believes that non-Islamic laws are superior or equal to divine law. Therefore, the currently common practice of some extreme groups of declaring all Muslim rulers and those who work under them to be disbelievers (*takfeer*) simply because they uphold un-Islamic systems is incorrect. However, it is the duty of those in positions of authority to change such systems, while those in positions of influence should advise the rulers in a way which would not incite rebellion and bloodshed among the masses. As for those not in such positions, they should despise un-Islamic government for the pleasure of God and for the upholding of *ta'weed*.