Between Monotheism and *Tawhid*: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

In the contemporary academic domains, there are incidents where 'monotheism' and '*tawhid*' are employed as synonymous terms, as if these concepts signify the same conceptual denotations about the belief and the unity of God; and as a result, religious faiths like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are categorized as monotheists. However, is it true that monotheism and *tawhid* are synonymous or identical concepts? Through analytical and comparative methods, this paper aims to compare and contrast between these two concepts, and identify the true conceptual and theological properties of each term.

Keywords: belief, unity of God, monotheism, tawhid

Abstrak

Dalam domain akademik kontemporari, terdapat insiden di mana 'monoteisme' dan 'tauhid' digunakan sebagai istilah sinonim; seolah-olah konsep-konsep ini menandakan penotasian konsep yang sama tentang kepercayaan dan kesatuan Tuhan dan menghasilkan agama seperti agama Yahudi, Kristian dan Islam, yang dikategorikan sebagai monoteis. Walau bagaimanapun, adakah benar bahawa monoteisme dan tauhid adalah konsep yang sinonim atau sama? Melalui kaedah analisis dan perbandingan, kajian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan dan membezakan antara kedua-dua konsep, dan mengenalpasti ciri-ciri sebenar konsep dan teologi bagi setiap istilah.

Kata kunci: kepercayaan, kesatuan Tuhan, monoteisme, tauhid

Introduction: between monotheism and other belief systems

Monotheism is a combination of two words, '*mono*' and '*theism*'. The former is from the Greek origins, and it means 'one' or 'single', while *theism* is also derived from the Greek word *theos* or God, thus monotheism denotes, literally, one God or one thought about God;[i] it stands for the belief in one personal God as the Creator and the Supreme ruler of the universe.[ii] Monotheism consists of number of interrelated senses, including the sense that there is something improper and illegitimate in worshiping more than one god, as well as not worshiping any god; in this sense both atheism and polytheism are improper. *Second*, because it holds that there is something improper to worship more than one god,

thus monotheism teaches the sense of worshiping only one god. *Third*, monotheism includes the doctrine that there exists one god who is the source of life.[iii] Thus, monotheism represents the belief in one personal God, who is the creator and the ruler of the universe. Monotheism does not allow the one God to be limited even by the causes of destruction and evil; the causes cannot be divine forces outside the will of the one God.[iv]

Generally speaking, monotheism teaches the belief in the existence of one personal God who is the creator and ruler of the universe, and thus it distinguishes itself from number of belief systems including atheism, monism, deism, pantheism, polytheism, and henotheism. Monotheism denounces atheistic doctrines which deny the existence of God;[v] in this sense, if atheistic doctrines are marked by the denial of God, monotheism is founded on the belief in the existence of God. Furthermore, monotheism teaches the belief in the existence of a single God who is transcendent and imminent, and in that sense it defines itself against polytheism which teaches

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plurality of gods.[vi] This is because, while polytheists hold the belief in the divinity of many personal gods who have different personal wills, in monotheism the whole realm of the divine power is unified, with no conflicting wills or limitations. Thus, monotheism differs from the polytheistic views of God: "not only quantitatively in the number of gods taught, but also qualitatively in its understanding of God as absolute being above nature and in complete mastery of it."[vii]

Moreover, monotheism also differs from monism;[viii] the later represents the tendency to explain all phenomena by one unifying principle (energy, sprit, mater, mind or body) and the rest are manifestations of this single substance, while monotheism teaches two types of existence, namely, Creator and creations, which are distinctively different; the former is transcendental and eternal, while the later is temporal. In monotheism there is definite separation between the Divine Realm and the universe, while monism denies such separation of the existence. Similarly, while deism is the belief in a God who created the universe;[ix] a belief which is solely based on reason, monotheism holds the belief in one God who created the universe; a belief which is based on revelation and justified by reason. The distinction is that, in monotheism, it is the revelation that describes God and His attributes, while reason justifies both the need and the reason of His existence. Moreover, in monotheism: "humans find value and integration of meaning by realizing their common creaturehood and serving this One universal God",[x] while in deism, religiosity is achieved only through interaction between human mind and the nature. Deism denies the value of revelation in the belief of God; however, monotheism holds that God exposes Himself through revelation and Prophethood, thus revelation and Prophethood are the bases of belief in God.

Finally, monotheism distinguishes itself from henotheism or monolatry;[xi] this is because henotheism reflects the tendency of worshipping many gods but rising one of the gods as a supreme god. This entails to accept the existence of many gods, but selecting one of them as a higher god above other gods. Monolatry also implies that certain community might worship one god as a supreme god over other gods, while other communities are allowed to have their gods. Apparently, the tendency of worshipping one supreme god over lesser gods, would eventually imply plurality of gods, thus monotheism dismisses henotheism, and teaches the belief in one God for all. Henotheism tends to localize (nationalize) God, while monotheism universalizes the power and authority of the one personal God, whereby the idea of lesser or supreme gods has no place in monotheism; thus in monotheism there is only one God for everyone and everybody. Likewise, monotheism refuses henotheistic doctrine which teaches that one god can be worshiped as a supreme god at one time and another god in another time.[xii] In this case, unlike henotheism, in monotheism, the one God has authority and power over all people at all times and places; hence monotheism presents a conception of one God, who is universal and transcends all kinds of tribalism or ethnocentrism.

Between Monotheism and *Tawhid-Allah*

Besides the fact that monotheism, generally, teaches the belief in the existence of one personal God, who is the Creator and the ruler of the universe, and thus distinguishes itself from other belief systems as mentioned earlier, however, there are divergent understandings of monotheism among monotheistic traditions.[xiii] For some, among monotheistic faiths, monotheism reflects the belief in the existence of many gods, but holds that all gods are essentially one and the same,[xiv] so that it makes little or no difference under which name or according to which rite a god or goddess is invoked.[xv] Moreover, there are those, among monotheistic traditions like Christians, who belief in one personal God, who is the Creator and the ruler of the universe, but tend to express such belief with Trinitarian or binitheism conceptions;[xvi] in this sense, God is one but three in one, or two in one. However, among the monotheistic faiths, there are some, like Muslims, and to some extent Judaism,[xvii] who do not agree with the existence of more than one God, "other gods either simply do not exist at all, or at most, they are false gods or demons; i.e., beings that are acknowledged to exist but that cannot be compared in power or any other way with the One and Only true God."[xviii]

For instant, the Qur'anic perspective of monotheism is exclusively uncompromising as compared to other monotheistic traditions like Christianity; in the Qur'an *Allah* (*s. w. t.*) is confessed as being one, eternal, unbegotten, unequalled and beyond partnership of any kind.[xix] In this understanding of monotheism, God is characterized with absolute singularity; neither could there be division in substance nor humanization in attributes, and worship is due to Him only, no other gods, lesser or greater, are conceivable beside Him. In contrast to ethnocentric and Trinitarian beliefs of God, this type of monotheism requires the belief in one God whose "nature is (highly) elevated, so far beyond our limited conceptions. He is the One and Only God, the Only One to Whom worship is due; all other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way should be compared or

associated to Him. He is Eternal without beginning or end, Absolute; not limited by time, space or circumstance. He is the Ultimate Reality."[xx] This kind of belief in the One God, Allah (*s. w. t.*), is known in Islam as *Tawhid-Allah* or the belief in the unity of Allah, which sounds, in the general outlook, similar to monotheism, but differs it in various aspects.

Tawhid-Allah is a combination of two words; *tawhid* (unity), and Allah (God); the former characterizes the latter as one which cannot be associated to any form of multiplicity.[xxi] The term *tawhid* stems from the Arabic origin of *'wahada'* (to unify), or *'wahid'* (one); *wahada* means 'singular', 'the sense of being unique' or 'without equal',[xxii] thus, the phrase, *wahada-Allah*, signifies to declare Allah to be one, or to profess the belief in the unity of God.[xxiii] Another aspect of *tawhid* is that God is *ahad* (the only), which basically teaches the same meaning of *wahid*,[xxiv] however, *ahad* reflects an advanced sense of God's unity; the indivisibility of His character.[xxv] The difference between *wahid* and *ahad* is that, by teaching that God is One and the Same Lord for everyone and everything, *wahid* implies the Oneness and the Universality of God, while *ahad* goes one step further than *wahid*, and declares the unity of His character, whereby God is One the Only One; nothing is beside Him, not before Him or after Him, and thus denies any form of divisibility or multiplicity of God's character. Furthermore, *tawhid* teaches that Allah is unique (*fard*), and resembles none.[xxvi] Thus, in the Islamic conception of monotheism, God is one (*wahid*), which reflects both the Universality and Oneness of God, and He is Unique (*fard)* and resembles none, whilst He is the only One (*ahad*), Whose character is indivisible. Thus, the Islamic understanding of monotheism (*tawhid*), goes one step further than what is generally known as 'monotheism', because;

First in the Islamic concept of *tawhid*, Allah (*s. w. t.*) is the Ultimate Reality; the Cherisher, the Provider and the Creator of everything and everyone, thus none is, or could be, associated to Him.[xxvii] On this ground, Muslims distanced themselves from the belief systems that teach the duality of the source of the universe, as in the case of Gnosticism,[xxviii] or Zoroastrian *Ahura-mazda* and *Angra Mainyu*,[xxix] or Christian Trinity. This is because, according to the Islamic monotheism, dualistic and Trinitarian beliefs do not reflect the absolute unity of the ultimate reality, and thus eventually lead plurality of the ultimate truth. Thus, Islam brought a refreshing iconoclasm at a time and place where dualism and trinitarianism were the higher, and polytheism the lower state of religious consciousness. And in order to

purge the consciousness free once and for all, (the terms) "Father", "Intercessor", "Saviour" and "Son" were utterly banished from the religious vocabulary; and the uniqueness and absolute transcendence of the divine Being were stressed. Thus, in the Islamic conception, all creations stand on same side of the line dividing the transcendent from the natural, and that is the necessary presupposition of God's axiological ultimacy.[xxx] Similarly, the Zoroastrian conception of monotheism is neither comparable nor compatible with the monotheism taught by Islam. This is because, while in Zoroaster's revelation, *Ahura Mazda* is presented as transcendental and universal God, the one who is uncreated Creator and to whom worship is ultimately directed, Zoroaster's dualistic interpretation of the dark and light in relation to the ultimate reality, raised the concern of monotheistic conceptions like Islam. The polytheistic tendencies which are manifested in the importance given to the *Yazatas*, the divine being to whom a hymn is addressed in the *Avesta* and to whom a cult may be rendered, make Muslim theologians question the absoluteness of Zoroastrian conception of monotheism.

Second, the concept of *tawhid* "does not assert only the unity of *Allah* but also the unity of His lordship;"[xxxi] hence monolatry or henotheistic concept of God is not acceptable in the Islamic *tawhid*. Universality of God forms an important component of the belief in one God in Islam; the Qur'an describes Allah, as *Rabb al-Alamin* (Lord and the Sustainer of everything and everyone).[xxxii] Thus, for Muslims, religions with the concepts of the exclusive or the favoured group, the elect, the chosen people, also run counter to the very nature of monotheism. For these religions, even if they believe in, and do indeed worship only one God, it is more appropriate to term them as *monolatrous* religions rather than as monotheistic religions. Monolatry is the worship of one God while acknowledging others the right to worship other gods, or more subtly and sophisticatedly, allowing this one God to be worshipped in different ways or by various other means, or even through various other forms. This allowance and recognition of others having a right to their own God or to worship God in their own ways means to keep other people out of their religion so that their religion will forever remain exclusively theirs.[xxxiii]

Third, the concept of *tawhid* teaches *tanzih* (the elevation of God above all kinds of resemblance to the creatures); Allah neither resembles His creature in essence nor in attributes or action.[xxxiv] In this case, *tawhid* emphasizes on the transcendental unity of

God; neither pantheon unity of gods,[xxxv] nor the division of the character of God is acceptable. In Islam, God is one in His essence without division, one in His attributes without resemblance and one in His actions without partner.[xxxvi] In this sense, beliefs which indicate plurality of power, or forms, or any other resemblance between God and others, do not stand for the true monotheism; thus both Hindu Trimurti,[xxxvii] and the Christian Trinity do not reflect the true monotheism from Islamic perspective. For instant, about the Trinitarian monotheism, questions have been raised with regard to the use of numbers (two or three) in relation to God. This is because, if numbers are used to designate eternal distinctions in God, this can also lead to other interpretations such as tritheism, which is a form of polytheism.[xxxviii] Moreover, if it is to mean merely the manifestations of God, this can lead also to non-Biblical interpretations of God's activity. Therefore, this will lead to speaking of God as a plurality of persons which further violates the absolute unity of God, as plurality indicates to multiple wills, personalities, individuality and essences.[xxxix] Thus, theological difficulties are raised here, among others; if these three Godhead essences are eternal and co-equal persons in authority, why did Jesus pray to the Father, in other words, could God pray to God? Why is it that only the father has the power while the other two Godheads do not? Therefore, as neither the Father, the Son nor the Spirit is completely God without the others,[xl] in the eye of many Muslims, Trinity teaches plurality of gods, hence reflects another form of polytheism.

Fourth, in the Islamic *tawhid*, worship is due only to Allah (*s. w. t.*); offering it to any other deity, is tantamount to polytheism. In the Islamic concept of monotheism, worship is appreciation of God's grace upon man, and acknowledgement of His nourishment of life; however, not all monotheistic conceptions imply this understanding, particularly those among monotheists who allow the worship of a supreme God together with lesser gods, such as henotheism.

Fifth, another divergent point between monotheism and *tawhid* is that, in Islam the belief in one God can only be derived from the divine revelation (*al-wahy*), not from cultural tradition, or from philosophical speculations, as in the case of some monotheistic beliefs.[xli] This is to say that, the Islamic concept of *tawhid* is "not a product of theological speculations but directly from the text of the divine revelation from God."[xlii] This is so, because "it is through revelation God has described Himself, His creative activity and His creation, and not through Greek or Hellenistic philosophical tradition, neither even through

philosophy nor through science."[xliii] The nature of the *tawhidic* monotheism in Islam has been revealed through and within the Divine Scriptural Texts. Thus, roots and form of this understanding of monotheism are therefore laid down firmly by, and from within, the Qur'an itself; this makes Islamic monotheism scriptural-based monotheism. The Qur'anic verse like: "And your Allah is One Allah. There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful", and "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him", are the foundations of Islamic conception of *tawhid*. In this case, Muslim scholars can understand the unity of God based on the revelations, and drive the meaning from the divine sources, but cannot theorize to form what monotheism should be outside the divine revelations. As a result of this, "the nature of God as understood in Islam is not the same as the conceptions of God as understood in Judaism and Christianity, nor is it the same as the conceptions of God in the Greek and Hellenistic philosophical tradition. It is also, neither the conceptions of God as understood in western philosophical or scientific tradition, nor as perceived by the occidental and oriental mystical traditions."[xliv]

For instant, in the case of Christian Trinity, contemporary Christian theologians, like John Hick, challenge the divine origins of Christian monotheism. These theologians are on the view that Christian monotheism signifies a constantly reconstructable theological theory. In the view of these scholars, Christian doctrines about God, such as the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are non-biblical and designed to solve specific theological problems like the Original Sin and the identity of Jesus, thus such beliefs are arguably not divinely revealed truths. As such, these notions are always in terms of the presuppositions of the conceptual and linguistic resources of a particular epoch, which could be, constantly, reversed and reconstructed. In the view of these theologians, the traditional doctrine of the Trinity was developed so as to safeguard Christian doctrine of incarnation; hence the deity of Christ is affirmed. Therefore, in the eyes of these Christian theologians, Christian monotheism does not stand as an unchangeable notion, but on the contrary, it is a notion that requires rethinking in each new cultural epoch.[xlv]

Conclusion

In the general sense, both monotheism and *tawhid* teach the belief in one personal God, who is the Creator and the Ruler of the universe, and thus both of these concepts go against atheism and polytheism.

However, the Islamic concept of *tawhid*, goes one step further and teaches not only the unity of Creatorship (*al-khaliqiyyah*) of God but the unity His Lordship (*uluhiyyah*). This is because, *first*, unlike monotheism, *tawhid* teaches a belief in one personal God, the Creator and the Ruler of the universe, whose character is indivisible and resembles none. *Second*, in the Islamic monotheism, God's attributes are unique and actions are incomparable to none; He has no equal in rank and absolutely has no equal (*la nidda*) in any manner. He has no contrary (*nid*), for what is understood by contrary is that which alternates with a thing in the same locus, but God has no locus for He is without contrary. By having no equal (*nid*) we mean all that which is other than He is created by Him, for if He has an equal, it would be either like Him from all aspects or higher than He is or lower than He is.[xlvi] *Third*, similarly Islamic *tawhid* requires to acknowledge and adore the One single universal Lord, with the belief and assertion of His Oneness; in terms of essence, attributes and actions. *Fourth*, *tawhid* is not a theory formed by philosophical debates, supported by mystical teachings and justified by clerical declarations; rather it is a belief derived from the divine revelations. Thus, *tawhid* and monotheism do not imply to the same conceptions of God, hence, monotheism cannot be employed as a synonymous term to *tawhid*.

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[i] William Little, H. W. Fowler and Jessie Coulson, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Claendon Press, Oxford, 3rd edn. 1973), p.1001.

[ii] *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1989), p.927.

[iii] *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Craig (London: Routledge), p.480.

[iv] Mircea Eliade, *Philosophy of Religion*, vol.9, p.72

[v] Theism is generally the belief in personal god (or gods) who actively involves in the affairs of the universe; the term theism, which is sometimes used as a synonymous term of monotheism, is the antonym of atheism (the belief that there is no god of any kind). Theists generally hold that God is transcendent, omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent, self-existing, self-conscious and immanent. Paul Edwards, *the Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1967), v.3. A. Pablo London, *Dictionary of World Philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.431.

vi Polytheism denotes the belief or worship in multiple gods. Some polytheists might explain the multiplicity of gods as merely signifying the distinctive aspects or facets of a greater divine unity; William L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, Op. Cit., p.593. Thomas Mautner, A *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishers, Op. Cit., p.327.

vii *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, Op. Cit., p. 476.

viii Monism reflects any tendency or theory that explains all phenomena by one unifying principle or as manifestations of a single substance. Monistic theorists differ considerably in their choice of a basis of unification. Barbara A. Chernow & George A. Vallasi, 1993. *Columbia Encyclopedia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 5th ed., p.1811.

ix Deism teaches that god exists and he is transcendent, but does not intercede in the world. In deism, the belief in god is solely based on reason and it rejects the truth value of revelation. Deism also believes that God created the universe and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, and giving no supernatural revelation; true religion is an expression of a universal human nature whose essence is reason. God cannot be personified and has no personal characteristics, and does not literally answer prayers. Robert Audi, *the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.188.

x Mircea Eliade, *Philosophy of Religion*, v.9, p.72.

xi Henotheism or monolatry is the belief in, and possibly worship of, multiple gods, one of which is supreme; in principle, henotheism reflects the belief in one God, but in practice it teaches plurality of gods.

xii Ibid, v.9, p.72

xiii There are some who believe in the existence of one god but within a pantheon (council of gods), while some monotheists believe and worship one god, who is one in character but many in number, whilst there are monotheists who believe in one personal God, but with monistic terms.

xiv God, in this understanding, is one but has different aspects and can be called by different names, therefore, all deities and gods of the various religious communities are, in fact, a manifestation of the single monotheistic God. *The River of God: A new Christian Origins,* p.35. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol., 8, 266.

xv Such a conception of God aims not to denounce the existence of multiple deities, but to inclusively appreciate them all. The basic theory in this conception is that there is one true higher god or deity in the world, nonetheless, in one way or another, this deity or god is present in many other lesser gods/deities. In addition, "each of (these) lesser deities (is) not a servant of the high God but is an actual manifestation of some aspects of the (high) God." However, while this polytheistic conception of monotheism holds that the lesser gods could bear and share the characteristics as well as the functions of the higher God, but still it does not rule out the belief in one omnipotent supreme God, see *The new encyclopedia britannica*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 15th

edn. 1989), vol.8, p.266. Gregory J. Riley, *The river of God: A new Christian origins,* p.34-35.

xvi The term "Binitarian" is used by scholars and theologians as a contrast to a trinitarian theology. This is because while Trinity is the theology of "three" Binitarian denote the theology of "two" in God. Binitarian understanding of God teach that there is one God in two persons; God the father and God the Son. In the Binitarian interpretation the Godhead comprise only these two persons. The Binitarians agree the existence of one God but they disagree with the Christian Trinitarians the Holy Ghost to be an independent God. see *The official statement of fundamental beliefs*, (Living Church of God, March 2004). Barnes M. *Early Christian Binitarianism: The Father and the Holy Spirit. Early Christian Binitarianism*, http://www.ccg.org/english/s/p076.html.

xvii There is ongoing debate on Judaism conception of God, particularly whether it is monotheistic and henotheistic. This is because the Judaism teachings which places Israelis a position closer to God than others and teaches chosen community by God, who gives the land of others to his favored group, presents an ethnocentric and localized version of monotheism.

xviii *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol.8, p.266. Gregory J. Riley, *The river of God: A new Christian Origins,* 36.

xix Al-Faruqi, *al-Tawhid: Its Implication for Thought and Life*, Op. Cit., p.4. 'Abd al-Jalil Mia, *The Concept of Unity*, (Dacca: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh,1980), Op. Cit. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol.8, p.266

xx Al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar b. Ahmad Al-Hamadani, *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsah*, p.80. AÍmad 'Abd al-×alim Ibn Taymiyyah, *SharÍ al-'Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah*, p.13. Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid, *al-IqtiÎad fi al-i'tiqad*, p.26-29.

xxi Jamal al-Dan MuÍammad Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, (Bayrut: DÉr Sadir, 1st edn.1990,), vol.13, p.448. Fayruz Abadi, *al-Qamus al-MuÍiÏ*, (Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr, 1978), vol.4, p.140. J Milton Cowan, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p.1056..

xxii Moreover, the noun *waÍdah or waÍdaniyyah* means soleness, oneness, singleness, solitariness, solitude, individuality, matchlessness, loneliness and aloneness.

xxiii *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, edited by J Milton Cowan, (Bayrut: Maktabah Labanon, 3rd ed. 1974), p.1055.

xxiv *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p.918. MuÍammad Ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, vol.13, pp.448-450. MuÍammad 'Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *al-Millal wa al-NiÍal*, (Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2nd edn. 1992), vol.1, p.31.

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xxvi *Al-Nafees English-Arabic*, (Al-Qahirah: Egyptian International Publication Co. 2000), p.626. J Milton

Cowan, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p.703. *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, p.725.

xxvii The Qur'an states: "*Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him*". *The Qur'an, al-Ikhlas*, (112: 1-4).

xxviii Gnosticism is the dualistic belief that the material world should be shunned and the spiritual world should be embraced. Gnostic belief system is loosely described as being dualistic in nature, meaning that Gnostics has the view that the world consists of or is explicable as two fundamental entities.

xxix Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism, taught that the worship of all kinds of gods should be abandoned except the worship of *Ahura Mazda* in the context of a universal struggle between the forces of light and of darkness. Though Zoroaster, extensively, acknowledged the worship of only one god *Ahura Mazda*, who has no partners and parallels, the dualistic understanding of the ultimate truth of the world played a very central role in his thought. To express the original source of life, he spoke of the *Spenta Mainyu* 'the Holy Spirit' and the *Angra Mainyu* 'the Evil Spirit'. However, these dualistic entities have a constant scuffle, at the end of which the Holy Spirit will prevail by the power of *Ahura Mazda*.

xxx Al-Faruqi, *al-Tawhid: Its Implication for Thought and Life*, p.4.

xxxi 'Abd al-Jalil Mia, *The Concept of Unity*, (Dacca: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh,1980),p. xi.

xxxii The Qur'an, 1:2.

xxxiii Kamar Oniah Kamaruzamman, *Understanding Islam: Comparative discourse*, (Kuala Lumpur: Saba Islamic Media, 2007), p.12.

xxxiv Nassir al-Din al-Asad, "The Concept of Monotheism in Islam and Christianity," in *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*, edited by Dan Cohn-Sherbok, pp.22-23.

xxxv Pantheon is a reflection of all of the gods worshipped by people who belong to a particular religion. The believers of this concept, believe that the gods are one, and should be worshipped all.

xxxvi Al-shahrastani, 'Abd al-Karim, *Kitab Niyayah al-Aqdam fi 'Ilm al-Kalam*, (Maktabah al-Thaqafah al-Diniyyah), p.90.

xxxvii The *Trimurti* (three forms) is a concept in Hinduism in which the cosmic functions of creation, maintenance, and destruction are personified by the forms of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the maintainer or preserver and Shiva the destroyer or transformer. These three deities have been called the Hindu triad.

xxxviii Contemporary Christian scholar of the Bible David K. Bernard comments on this saying that: "The use of the number three in relation to God is also dangerous. If used to designate eternal distinctions in God, it leads to tritheism, which is a form of polytheism. If used to designate the only manifestations or roles God has, it limits God's activity in a way not done in Scripture. God has manifested Himself in numerous ways, and we cannot even limit them to three". David K. Bernard, *The oneness of God*, (Hazelwood:

Pentecostal Publishing House, 1993), <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/pentecostal/One-Top.htm> (accessed 20 February 2007, chapter 12, p.1.

xxxix Trinitarian monotheism is actually a non-biblical concept as the Bible neither mention the word "Trinity" nor does it mention the word "persons" or "three" in relation to God. For further reading see, David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, Op. Cit.

xl David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God,* p.34.

xli For instance, because it is difficult to prove Trinity from the Bible, Christian theologians refer to the ecumenical declarations of the Christian councils in their understanding of Trinity, a position which is not acceptable by Muslim theologians who cannot understand monotheism without the guidance of the revelations.

xlii Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths*, pp. 44-45.

xliii Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, pp. 13.

xliv Muĺammad Naquib al-Attas, "The Worldview of Islam: An Outline" in *Islam and the Challenge of Modernity*, edited by Sharifah Shifa al-Attas, (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), p. 32.

xlv John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*: *Essays in Philosophy of Religion*, (London: Macmillan Press,1988), pp.115-116. John Hick, "Islam and Christian Monotheism*"*, in *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths,* edited &, pp.4-6. Gregory, J. Riley, *The River of God: A New Christian Origins*, pp.54-60.

xlvi Al-Ghazali, *Kitab al-Iqtisad fÊ al-I'tiqad*, (Al-Qahirah: Maktabah al-Husayn al-Tijariyyah, 1994), 35. Al-Ghazali, *Kitab al-'Arba'in fi Usul al-Din*, 7.