

IN THE NAME OF
HALLA
THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE ALL-MERCIFUL



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF *TAWHĒED*

(ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM)

شرح مباني التوحيد

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Publisher's Note

All praise and thanks are due to Allah alone, the One, the All-High and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His messengers and prophets, his family, Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps till the end of time.

Tawhid, the oneness of God, is the core of the Islamic faith. Mankind, created as the vicegerent of God, is assigned the duty of implementing this concept on earth in every walk of life since the days of the first man, Adam.

Satan is the eternal and arch enemy of mankind. He vowed that he will spare no effort to distract man from the guided path. He works hard to get man involved in innovations and heresies if paganism or atheism fails to attract attention. Dr. Philips has pointed out the inroads creeping into the creed very efficiently and clarified the concept of *Tawhid* in his book away from deviant views.

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, a devoted *da'iyah* who graduated from the Islamic University of Madinah, wrote a number of books on Islam in English. In this book he discusses the issue of *Tawhid* in an easy-to-understand language and style. It caters to the needs of all, especially the general readers, and goes a long way towards making the issue wholly understood.

The book, *al-Hamdulillah*, has been well received by readers everywhere. This edition is the revised and improved version by the author.

Chapter One

THE CATEGORIES OF TAWHĪD

Literally *Tawhīd* means “unification” (making something one) or “asserting oneness,” and it comes from the Arabic verb *wahḥada* which itself means to unite, unify, or consolidate.¹ However, when the term *Tawhīd* is used in reference to Allah (i.e. *Tawhīdullāh*²), it means realizing and maintaining of Allah’s unity in all of man’s actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allah is One, without partner in His dominion (*Rubūbiyah*), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (*Asmā’ wa-Ṣifāt*), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (*Ulūhiyah / ‘Ibādah*). These three aspects form the basis for the categories into which the science of *Tawhīd* has been traditionally divided. The three overlap and are inseparable to

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 *tawhīd* does not actually occur in either the Qur’an or in the statements (Hadiths) of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, when the Prophet sent Mu’ādh ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen in 9 AH, he told him, “You will be going to Christians and Jews (*Ahl al-Kitāb*), so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertion of the oneness of Allah (*Yuwahhido Allah*.” Narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās and collected by Bukhari, Muḥammad Muḥsin Khan, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-Eng.), Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Riyadh al-Ḥadeetha, 1981, vol. 9, Pp. 348-9, hadith no. 469 and Muslim, Abdul Hamid Siddeeqi, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Eng. Trans.), Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1987, vol. 1, Pp. 14-5, hadith no. 27. In this hadith the present tense of the verb from which the verbal noun *Tawhīd* is derived was used by the Prophet (ﷺ).

such a degree that whoever omits any one aspect has failed to complete the requirements of *Tawhīd*. The omission of any of the above mentioned aspects of *Tawhīd* is referred to as *Shirk* (lit. sharing); the association of partners with Allah. In Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry.

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

1. *Tawhīd ar-Rubūbiyah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Lordship") that is, affirming that Allah is one, without partners in his sovereignty.
2. *Tawhīd al-Asmā' wa-Ṣifāt* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Names and Attributes,") that is, affirming that they are incomparable and unique.
3. *Tawhīd al-'Ibādah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Worship") that is, affirming that Allah is alone in His right to be worshipped.³

The division of *Tawhīd* 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'an and in the explanatory statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), as will become evident to the reader when each category is dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

The necessity for this analytical approach to the principle of *Tawhīd* arose after Islam spread into Egypt, Byzantium, Persia and India⁴ and absorbed the cultures of these regions. It is only

natural to expect that when the peoples of these lands entered the fold of Islam, 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 discussions, their various philosophical concepts of God, confusion arose in which the pure and simple unitarian belief of Islam became threatened. There were also others who had outwardly accepted Islam 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 Allah among the masses in order to tear down the first pillar of *Eemān* (faith) and with it Islam itself.

According to Muslim historians, the first Muslim to express the position of man's free will and the absence of destiny (*qadar*) was in Iraqi convert from Christianity by the name of Sausan. Sausan later reverted to Christianity but not before infecting his student, Ma'bad ibn Khālid al-Juhani from Basrah. Ma'bad spread the teachings of his master until he was caught and executed by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwān (685-705), in the year 700 CE.⁵ The younger *Ṣahābah* who were alive during this period, like 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (d. 694 CE) and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfā (d. 705 CE), advised the people not to greet those who denied destiny nor perform funeral prayers for them when they died. That is, they considered them to be disbelievers.⁶ However, Christian philosophical arguments for free-will continued to find new supporters. Ghailān ibn Muslim from Damascus studied under Ma'bad and championed the cause of free will until he was brought before Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz (717-720 CE). He recanted his beliefs publicly; however, on

⁵ Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb at-Tahdhīb*, (Hyderabad, 1325-7), vol. 10, p. 225.

⁶ 'Abdul-Qāhir ibn Tāhir al-Baghdādi, *al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah), Pp. 19-20.

³ Ibn Abil-'Ezz al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah at-Ṭahāwīyah*, p. 78.

⁴ South Asia, i.e., presently Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, etc.

