

MONOTHEISM

Shaykh Rajab Ali says,

Monotheism is the basis of self-building. Anyone who wants to construct a building, they must first lay the foundation firm enough, otherwise that building will not be well grounded. The spiritual seeker must begin his journey from Monotheism, as the first utterance of all The Prophets has been *La Ilaha Illallah*. Man will fail attaining human perfection, unless he appreciates the truth of Monotheism and believe that there is nothing in existence except God's Pure Essence. Having grasped the reality of Monotheism, man will whole-heartedly attend The Creator.

It is further said,

Man is the tree of Monotheism, the fruit of which is the emergence of Divine Attributes; it (the tree) will not be perfect until it yields such fruit. Man's peak of perfection is reaching (nearness to) Allah, that is, to become a manifestation of God's Attributes. Try to bring to life Divine Attributes in you. He is Gracious; you be gracious too. He is Merciful; you be merciful too. He is Concealer (of defects); you be concealer too.

According to al-Khumeini (AR),

If you are engrossed in Monotheism, you will enjoy The Exalted God's special bounties at any moment that you had not enjoyed prior to that moment. God's bounties and blessings are novel at any moment.

In addition, one of the definitions of Polytheism is agreeing and obeying ones evil desires,

The mother of all idols is the idol of your own nafs (carnal desires); unless this grand idol and powerful Satan is not shattered, there will be no way to Him-The High and The Most Exalted. Lo and behold! This idol can hardly be shattered and this Satan can barely be tamed! If you want to find your way to the truth of Monotheism, do good to people. The burden of Monotheism is heavy and hazardous, and not everyone is able to tolerate that burden. However, benevolence to the people makes its tolerance easy.

The sentence '**Allah IS ONE**' may be interpreted in four ways. Two of them are not permissible for Allah (SWT) and two are allowed. The two meanings which are not permissible for Allah (SWT) are,

1) The saying of a person who says '*one*' when he uses it as a number is not permissible, because that which has no second (i.e. is unique) does not come under the domain of a number. Do you not see that Allah (SWT) has declared him an unbeliever who said that Allah (SWT) was the third of the three?

2) And the saying of a person who says that '*He is one of the people*' in the same sense as a specie is one of its genes. This, also, is not allowed because it likens Allah (SWT) to other things, and our Lord is too great for, and far above of, this likening.

And as for the two meanings which are applicable to Him, they are,

1) The saying of a person who says, '*He is One, there is nothing like unto Him.*' Such indeed is our Lord.

2) And the saying of a person who says that, He, The Mighty, The Great, is unique in significance. That is, He is not divisible, neither in existence nor in thought or imagination. Such indeed is our Lord.
(Imam Ali (AS))

Says the learned divine Abu Ja'fer, the son of Babawayh al-Qummi (AR),

Know that our belief concerning Tawhid is that Allah (SWT), exalted is He, is One and Absolutely Unique. There is no one like Him, He is prior, He never was, and never will be, but The Hearing and The Seeing One. The Omniscient; The Wise; The Living; The Everlasting; The Mighty; The Holy; The Knowing One; The Powerful; The Self-sufficient.

He cannot be described by His Essence, His Body, His Form, or by His Accidental Qualities. Nor in terms of length, breadth, surface, weight, lightness, quiescence, motion, place or time. He, Exalted is He, transcends all the attributes of His creatures. He is beyond both the limitations of transcendence and of immanence.

He is a Thing, but not like other things. He is Unique, Eternal Refuge; He begets not lest He may be inherited, nor is He begotten lest He may be associated with others. There is no one like Him. He has no equal or opponent, compeer or consort. Nothing can be compared with Him. He has no rival, no partner. Human eyes cannot behold Him, while He discerns the power of eyes. The thoughts of men cannot compass Him, while He is aware of them. Slumbers overtakes Him not nor sleep.

He is The Gracious and The Knowing One, The Creator of all things. There is no deity other than Him. To Him alone belongs The Power of Creation and Authority. Blessed is Allah, The Lord of The Worlds.

al-Mawdudi (AR) explains the following effects of Tawhid, which the belief in **'La Ilaha Illallah'** (There is no God but Allah) has on the life of a man, and exactly why when one denies it fails in this life and the next.

It is said that a believer in this Tawhid can never be narrow in outlook. He believes in Allah (SWT) Who is The Creator of The Heavens and The Earth, The Master of The East and The West, and Sustainer of the entire Universe. After this belief he does not regard anything in the world as a stranger to himself. He looks on everything in the universe as belonging to the same Lord he himself belongs to. His sympathy, love and service are not confined to any particular sphere or group. His vision is enlarged, his intellectual horizon widens, and his outlook becomes as liberal and as boundless as is The Kingdom of Allah (SWT). *How can this width of vision and breadth of mind be achieved by an atheist, a polytheist or one who believes in a deity supposed to possess limited and defective powers like a man?*

This belief produces in man the highest degree of self-respect and self esteem. The believer knows that Allah (SWT) alone is The Possessor of all power, and that none besides Him can benefit or harm a person, provide for his needs, give and take away life, or yield authority or influence. This conviction makes him indifferent to, and independent and fearless of all powers other than those of Allah (SWT). He never bows his head in homage to any of God's creatures, nor does he stretch out his hand before anyone else. He is not overawed by anybody's greatness. This attitude of mind cannot be produced by any other belief. For it is necessary that those who associate other beings with Allah (SWT), or who deny Allah (SWT), should bow in homage to some creatures, regard them able to benefit or harm them, fear them and place their hopes in them.

Along with self-respect this belief also generates in man a sense of modesty and humbleness. It makes him unostentatious and unpretending. A believer never becomes proud, haughty or arrogant. The boisterous pride of power, wealth and worth can have no room in his heart, because he knows that whatever he possesses has been given to him by Allah (SWT), and that Allah (SWT) can take away just as He can give.

In contrast to this, an unbeliever, when he achieves some worldly merit, becomes proud and conceited because he believes that his merit is due to his own worth. In the same way pride and self-conceit are a necessary outcome and concomitant of *'association of others with Allah (SWT) in His Divinity,'* because a non-believer believes that he has a particular relation with the deities which does not exist between them and other people.

This belief (in Tawhid) makes man virtuous and upright. He has the conviction that there is no other means of success and salvation for him except purity of soul and righteousness of behavior. He has perfect faith in Allah (SWT) Who is above all need, is related to none and is absolutely just. This belief creates in him the consciousness that, unless he lives rightly and acts justly, he cannot succeed. No influence or underhand activity can save him from ruin.

As against this, the non-believers always live on false hopes. Some of them believe that God's son has atoned for their sins; some think that they are God's favorites, and will not be punished, while others make offerings to their deities and believe that by so bribing the deities they acquire a license to do whatever they like. Such false beliefs keep them enmeshed in sin and evil deeds; depending on their deities, they do not bother about their souls and living pure and good lives. As to atheists, they do not believe that there is any being having power over them, to whom they should be responsible for their good or bad actions; therefore, they consider themselves independent to act in whatever way they like. Their own fancies become their gods and they live like slaves of their wishes and desires.

The believer, on the other hand, never becomes despondent. He has a firm faith in Allah (SWT) Who is Master of all The Treasures of The Earth and The Heavens, Whose Grace and Bounty have no limit, and Whose Powers are infinite. This faith imparts to his heart extraordinary consolation, fills it with satisfaction and keeps it filled with hope. Although he may meet with rejection from all sides in this world, faith in and dependence on Allah (SWT) never leave him, and on their strength he goes on struggling. Such profound confidence can result from no other belief than belief in One Allah (SWT). Non-believers and atheists have small hearts; they depend on limited powers; therefore, in times of trouble they are soon overwhelmed by despair and, frequently, they commit suicide.

This belief produces in man a very strong degree of determination, patience, perseverance, and trust in Allah (SWT). When he makes up his mind and devotes his resources to fulfilling The Divine Commands in order to secure God's Pleasure, he is sure that he has the support and backing of The Lord of The Universe. This certainty makes him firm and strong like a mountain and no amount of difficulties, impediments and opposition can make him give up his resolution. Disbelieving and atheism have no such effect.

This declaration inspires bravery in man. There are two things which make a man cowardly; Fear of death and love of safety, and the idea that there is someone else besides Allah (SWT) who can take away life and that man, by adopting certain devices, can ward off death. *Belief in 'La Ilaha Illallah' purges the mind of both these ideas.*

The first idea goes out of his mind because he knows that his life and his property and everything else really belong to Allah (SWT), and he becomes ready to sacrifice everything for His Pleasure. He gets rid of the second idea because he knows that no weapon, no man or animal has the power of taking away his life; Allah (SWT) alone has the power to do so. A time has been ordained for him, and all the forces of the world combined cannot take away anyone's life before that time. It is for this reason that no one is braver than the one who has faith in Allah (SWT). Nothing can daunt him, not even the strongest tempest of adversity and the mightiest of armies. Where can the non-believers and the atheists get such great determination, force and power from? They hold life the dearest thing in the world; they believe that death is brought about by the enemy and can be warded off by running away from him!

The belief in '**La Ilaha Illallah**' creates an attitude of peace and contentment, purges the mind of jealousy, envy and greed and keeps away the temptations of resorting to base and unfair means for achieving success. The believer understands that wealth is in God's Hands, and He apportions it out as He likes; that honor, power, reputation and authority - everything - is subjected to His Will, and He bestows them as He wills; and that man's duty is only to endeavor and to struggle fairly. He knows that success and failure depend on God's grace; if He wills to give, no power in the world can prevent Him from so doing; and if He does not will it, no power can force Him to.

On the other hand, the non-believers and the atheists consider success and failure as dependent on their own efforts and the help or opposition of earthly powers. Therefore, they always remain slaves to cupidity and envy. They never hesitate to turn to bribery, flattery, conspiracy and other kinds of base and unfair means to achieve their ends. Jealousy and envy of others success eat them away, and they will stop at nothing to bring about the downfall of a successful rival.

The most important effect of '**La Ilaha Illallah**' is that it makes man obey and observe God's Laws. One who has belief in it is sure that Allah (SWT) knows everything hidden or open and is nearer to him than his own jugular vein. If he commits a sin in a secluded corner and in the darkness of night, He knows it; He even knows our thoughts and intentions, bad or good. We can hide from everyone, but we cannot hide anything from Allah (SWT); we can evade everyone, but it is impossible to evade God's grip.

The firmer a man's belief in this respect, the more observant will he be of God's Commands; he will shun what Allah (SWT) has forbidden and he will carry out His behests even in solitude and in darkness, because he knows that God's presence never leaves him alone, and he dreads The Court whose warrant he can never avoid. It is for this reason that the first and the most important conditions for being a Muslim is to have faith in '**La Ilaha Illallah.**' Muslims, as you have already been told, means one 'obedient to God' and obedience to Allah (SWT) is impossible unless one firmly believes in '**La Ilaha Illallah.**'