Monotheism: A Revisit of the Proofs of God's Existence in Islamic and African Traditional Religions

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Abstract

Islam and African Traditional Religions are among the monotheistic religions being practiced in Nigeria. The paper is a revisit of comparative enquiry on monotheistic proof of the existence of God in Islam and African Traditional Religions, which has been in existence since the inception of these religions. The paper intends to re-awaken all rational thinking beings especially adherents of Islam and African Traditional Religions to see monotheistic concept of God' existence as one in both religions despites profession of different faiths. The paper made use of prescriptive, comparative and analytic methods of research. It discovered monotheistic proofs of the existence of God and his attributes in the two religions are upheld tenaciously the same. Also, God is considered the most revered sacred object of worship, and to whom all due worship is directed to. Data for the paper were collected from the field and from renowned books. The paper discovered that, despite different profession of faiths in Islam and African Traditional Religions, both religions uphold the same monotheistic belief as evidence in proving the existence of God. Islam and African Traditional Religions should continue to see themselves as people of monotheistic faith. Also, they must

accord respect to each to each other as institutions that professed believe in the existence of a monotheistic God time without season.

Keywords: Monotheism, Islam, God, African Traditional Religions, Revisit

Introduction

God exists in one, and cannot be said not to exist in one, for He is acknowledged as the focal and sacred object of worship in both Islamic and African Traditional Religions. Hence, the nature of God and proofs for His existence are serious questions to the human person in African Tradtional Religion and Islam because of his perceived influence on human life (Nwachuckwu 23).Thus, this paper is an attempt to make a comparative revisit of the monotheistic proofs of God'existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions respectively with the view of drawing the adherents of the two religions to appreciate the existence of a monotheistic God, which is obtainable in their professing different faiths. God is believed to the originator and Supreme source of all life as conceived in Islam and African Traditional Religions (Oborji 59). Thus, the belief in Allah referred to as God in Islam is clearly stated in the *Shahada* that "Allah is very good, compassionate and loving kind". Hence, these attributes are same in African Traditional Religion as God is also addressed to be merciful, Holy and Just and existing sacred reality, which vividly proof his existence(Shishima 2). It is worth asserting also that, without the monotheistic idea of God's existence in the two religions, there would be no religions because, God is considered the centre of all religious life, beliefs and practices (Gbenda 25). God is also seen as one, who gives existence to things, and he is a self existing force who is otherwise referred to as Supreme monotheistic figure, master of the universe, whose existence is evidently enshrined in their belief systems despite different faiths been practiced.

Both Islam and African Traditional Religions consider God as their sacred object of worship, creator of the universe, one who is true, just, merciful, eternal and everlasting and cannot be said not to exist. His very own existence is revealed in the creatures he created because, he is the sole owner and maker of the universe. It is the purposeful intention of God to create man in his own image (*Imago Dei*) who will give him adoration and true worship as a monotheistic Supreme Being. Islam and African Traditional Religions also consider God as one who governs the universe and fortunes of mankind (Mbiti 37). Thus, the intuitive and experimental phenomenon of the mystery and existence of God in the 'two religions' is a clear manifestation that he is a monotheistic God that exist, and whose existence cannot be denied. Hence, among some African ethnic groups especially Mumuye addresses God as *Kpanti-Laa*, Tiv as *Aondo*, Yoruba as *Oludumare* and in Islam "*Illaha illa Allah*," there is no God but Allah (Anyacho 227).

Mendelshon went further to asserts interestingly that "in African Traditional Religion also, the more one talks about God to young or old, the deeper the impression grows of the concept of a monotheistic creator God" (37). Thus, in Islam also, God is seen as one who is omniscient, which is not different in African Traditional Religion. Al-*Khaliq* refers to the Creator; one who created the universe and all that it contains. Hence,monotheism is a generally widespread belief in the existence of God, who presides over the universe. Islam and African Traditional Religions professed belief in monotheistic God who is eternal, creator, omniscience, infinitely good and merciful (Ogwuche et al 29). In this discourse, we shall examine the origin of monotheism an overview of proving God' existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions, we shall also examined separately the monotheistic proofs of God's existence in Islam and that of African Traditional Religions respectfully. Monotheistic comparison of proofing God' existence between Islam and African Traditional Religions shall be examined, and some recommendations proffered.

Monotheism

It is simply abbreviated as theism which holds that only one God exists. God is seen as primal, supreme in power, Knowledge and moral worth, which created all other existing beings out of nothing the term came from the Greek '*mono* and Theism' meaning one God (Evans and Manis 37).

Islam

Etymologically, the root "*slm*" in Arabia means to be in peace; to be in an integral whole. From this comes Islam, meaning to surrender to God, as an integral whole (Eliade 303). Islam, a religion of clear dogma and simple worship with vigour of expression was founded by the prophet Mohammed the son of Abdullahi and Amina of the country of Arabia in the year 610 AD. (Omoregbe 53). The religion began in Arabia at the beginning of the 7th century of the Christian era in a pagan-Jahiliya Arab environment (Jomier 5).

African Traditional Religion

Is an Indigenous religion handed to Africans by their fore bearers. Gbenda also defines it as "the religious tradition of the African peoples that is based purely on their culture" (4). In other except, Anyacho puts that "African Traditional Religions is the term that is used to describe the religion that was founded by the fore-bearers of African" (242). Hence, African Traditional Religions is a religion which is being practiced by men and women today as the religion of their forefathers with no founder. In view of the above assertion, Adasu also asserts that, "African Traditional Religion is therefore not only a heritage from the past but also a living reality today" (4)". Shishima brilliantly also opines that "African Traditional Religion is part of African culture, which is based on oral traditions which are

handed by word of mouth from one generation to the other" (3). Awolalu also enthused thus "African Traditional Religion has no founder and does not need a reformer because the religion emanated from the answers to the needs of the African society which serves many uses today among them" (35).

Ekwunife defined African Traditional Religion also in the Nigerian context as:

> ... Living institutionalized religious beliefs and practices, which are rooted in the past….. religious culture, a religion that was transmitted to the present overt and covert votaries by successive…… forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs, pithy sayings and names slowly but constantly updated by each generation in the light of new religious experiences (1).

Origin of Monotheism: An Overview of Proving God 'Existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions

On the origin of monotheism as a general overview of proofing God'existence in both Islam and African Traditional Religions is as old as the concept since the creation of the world among existing monotheistic religions in the world. Right from man's beginning, there has been a general assumption that man was living in a world that is made and directed by a great force beyond his control. Thus, everything that beats the imagination of man was attributed to the Divine Power 'God' (Alue 65). Thus, every thing came into existence into the world or universe not just by themselves but through a force reckoned as the monotheistic reality. As man reflects about the wonders of creation, the origin of the existence of a monotheistic God is conceived.

Another authentic evidence of the monotheistic existence of Lordship of Allah is discovered on several experience of the heart through which the believers final comfort. Inner peace, moral education, and meaning in life – the spiritual fruits of true religion. In the below assertion on monotheistic proof that God exist, Allah said:

> God guides the ways of peace to those who follow what pleases Him, bringing them from darkness out into light, by His will, and guiding them to a straight path (Surat al-Ma'idah 5:15-16; Abdel Haleem, *Qur'an*, 111).

All rational thinking beings owed their existence to the monotheistic God whom they experienced in rational, moral and physical cosmos in Islam and African Traditional Religions. God is seen as an existing force whose origin lies in him, and his existence is innately endowed in the creatures he created. His very own existence is experienced by

men; inductively and experimentally. Hence, the origin of monotheism is inbuilt in the concept itself, which is vastly accepted by mankind that God has one origin for he is everywhere who is reasonably demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt (38).

Furthermore, concept of the Ultimate being vividly and really proofs he exists and his name is God. One can say that, God' origin is a mystery which no human can comprehend. He exists outside of time and space, and he is the stuff that made up himself, which no man can know. It is interesting to also note that, the experience of the Holy is something which is not touchable but awe inspiring; an ultimate meaning; who is the source of ultimate courage, and whose origin is a mystery (Adasu 12). Hence, monotheism is primal, supreme, knowledgeable, moral who exist in himself and not out of nothing (Evans and Manis 37). Also, God is immanent in himself whom no human can said to grasp or traced his origin.He is the origin and sustenance of all things. He is outside and beyond his creation. He is personally involved in the creation so that He is not outside of Him or His reach, He is simultaneously transcendent and immanent; and He is the origin of himself whom people conceived to exist (Mbiti 29).

It is worth saying also that, the knowledge of God's existence is universal and inbuilt in Islamic and African Traditional religion. Thus, genuine religious experience affirmed again and again in Muslim and African Religious daily life, whose faith recognize and feel the existence of God as inevitable. Also, cases of monotheistic existence are very solid in terms of their rational foundations as well as the purpose, meaning, comfort, and total guidance that give life.

Monotheistic Proof of God's Existence in Islamic Religion

The Holy Quran also inspires conviction by appealing to the aspects of the inner life of human beings, namely to the heart and mind. Allah said:

> [Prophet] when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, Am I not your Lord? And they replied, 'yes, we bear witness so you cannot say on the day of Resurrection, we were not aware of this (Surat al Araf 7:172, Abdel Haleem 174).

All people were born to be believers in God and reinforce the disposition that is already inside them about monotheistic concept of God. Even among the polytheists, who often believe that there is a higher God above all other gods, which cannot be doubted. Since all men can sense a higher power, they will instructively turn to God in times of danger. Allah also reiterates that:

> When man suffers some affection, he prays to his Lord and turns to Him, but once he has been granted favour from God, he forgets the One he had been praying to and sets up rivals to God, to make other stray from his path (Surat al Zumar 39:8) Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an* 460).

The Holy Quran further promises those who have faith in the monotheistic God that they will live a "good life" and move into infinitely greater existence in the afterlife. Allah said: [But] you, soul at peace: return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing; go in among My Servants; and into my garden (Surat al – Fajr 89:27-30); Abdel Haleem, *Qur'an* 595). *Shahada* Surah 112 contains the express belief and existence of God which reads:

In the name of Allah, the Merciful say;
He is Allah. Is Allah, the one, Allah,
The Eternal besought of all.
He begotten not was begotten.
And is none comparable unto Him (Anyacho 223).

Monotheistic proofs of the existence of God in Islam is derived from the Quran and Sunnah which involves both sources of beliefs: learnt based on appeal on intuition and rational reflection. Everything in the universe that has a beginning must have a cause.Therefore, the beginning of the existence of the universe must have been caused by something. The only such cause must be an uncaused cause, or God (Hanebioglu 188).

Belief in Allah is a universal and monotheistic concept that cannot be denied in proving God' existence in Islam. He is one and indivisible. He is alone and has not begotten anybody neither was he begotten. Thus belief in the oneness of Allah is definitely contained in the *Shahada* which captures Allah's attributes below:

Ar – Raham (The beneficent)
Ar – Rahim (Merciful)
Malik – (Master or owner (as in owner of the judgment day)
Al – quddus (The Holy One)
As – Salem (The Peace)
Al – Chafur (The Forgiving One)
Al – Hakam (The Judge)

All these attributes above give sole recognition that there is only one God whose proofs for his existence is stated in the Holy Quran, and cannot be denied. Thus, these attributes also

enhanced the true belief in the one God who exist and always will exist (Anyacho 228).In Islam, Allah said: "If you [Prophet Muhammed] ask them who created them. They are sure to say 'God' so why are they deluded? (Surat al-Zukhruf 43:87, Abdel Haleem)(Qur'an" 496).

Monotheistic Proofs of God' Existence in African Traditional Religion

Human beings sense the existence of monotheistic God or what they perceive as higher power with or without relationship to guide them. God took a primordial covenant with every person before the world was created that they would recognize their creator. Furthermore, all people were born to be believers in God, and their relations to divine simply awaken and reinforce the disposition that is already inside us.

African Traditional Religion is also a religion which holds belief in the monotheistic God, who is not strange to its adherents. Oborji further reiterates that "other spiritual beings have it as duties; ancestors are not of equal importance and power to the Supreme Being" (15). Thus, the Supreme Being is monotheistic in the sense that, He is the last Court of Appeal who can be approached when the lesser divinities fail to fulfill the desire of those who invoke them. Mbiti adumbrates the eternal and intrinsic attributes of a monotheistic God that exist to include:

i. Omniscient - that is, to know all things, to be simultaneously everywhere.
ii. Omnipresent - who is ever-present
iii. Omnipotent - Almighty, all powerful (38-39).
iv. God is just and merciful in all his dealings,and will judge the living and the dead, and he will forever remain a merciful to all his creatures.

Monotheism is a vivid proof of the existence of God in African Traditional Religion since the creation of man by God from the time immemorial, whose creative traits bear witness of his Supreme existence over the universe. Every professing African has the concept of God's existence intuitively and experimentally inbuilt in him or her. Hence,no doubt, God is revered and feared among his creatures as that "Supreme Being and monitheistic being that exist all the time, and who manifests in facets of African endeavors. Some called Him the God of my fathers, the God of our ancestors, the living and infinite, merciful, just and loving. From all these attributes mentioned here, God is no longer a stranger to the Africans, of the proof of his existence, who is and will always be. In another expose,God's existence is the basis of African profession of their faith in the monotheistic God. He is known in mind from eternity, he is power, Goodness, life and strength and the eternal mystery of life that exist). Thus, the holiness of God is a clear manifestation of his merciful, faithful and transcendental attributes (Shishima 2).

All these attributes proved vividly the monotheistic existence of God, whom people describe Him to possessed without any doubt. God is a Supreme Being in African Traditional Religion, who has power and authority and he is a lead figure to other smaller gods (Akaatenger 19). It is interesting to also say that,monotheistic proof of God's existence in African Traditional Religion is no longer a new thing, because the religion is one of the oldest on the earth surface that emanated from the divine source. Hence, monotheism in African Traditional Religion is been considered as one of the first revered Supreme concepts that cannot be denied to exist. Hence, the concept of God as the sacred object of worship in African Traditional Religion is conceived in the metaphysical as well as physical aspects of the African worlds, where he is seen as a superior source of life force (Gbenda 8).

It is on the above similar opinion, Mbiti went on to asserts "God is no longer stranger to the Africans and no one shows a child the Supreme Being" (38). Thus, the meaning and knowledge of the monotheistic concept of God in African Traditional Religion is intuitive. To the Africans, God implanted his spirit in them so that men have sparks of God in them. It is that part of men that came from God that ultimately goes to God, since we (men) have God's nature in us: The God nature of man compels him to worship him (Gbenda 12).

God's monotheistic existence is the primary and supreme object of worship in African Traditional Religion. Hence the very widespread belief in God who is believed to be Supreme Lord is been accorded in recognition by Africans in African Traditional Religion. Also,God is invisible and infinite and cannot be comprehended by finite men. It is in this manner that Africans believe in monotheism which is as old as the African continent. From this account of different local names of God in all tongues of Africa like: Chineke in Igbo, *kpanti- Laa* in Mumuye) Olodumare in Yoruba, Aondo in Tiv that monitheistic Great Spirit is respectively conceived and testify on the lips of believers.

Monotheistic Comparison of Proving God's Existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions

God' existence is not something that can be denied in both religions even as this paper attempts to make comparisons. His existence is indepth in the two faiths. Making a cursory study on the monotheistic existence of God'existence , both religions affirmed in the monotheistic existence of God as a divine revelation that has remained since the creation of man and his relationship with the supreme force(God). Thus, attributes of God, on their own, are most of the times, fruits of lived experience. They are realities discovered and developed in history (Nwachuckwu 23).

The Holy Qur'an 24:64 also opines on the monotheistic existence of God when it enthuses that Allah Almighty says:

> (What means) "Unquestionably, to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth. Already He knows that upon which you [stand] and [knows] the way when they will be returned to Him and He will inform them of what they have done. And Allah knows of all things…" God existence is a proof of monotheistic creator of heaven and earth. Islam sees man as a religious being created by God to worship Him. The Qur'an calls people to worship Allah and show gratitude to him by compressing their dependence upon Him (Anyacho 228).

Laa "Ilaaha 'illa Allah" which means; there is no god but God (Sura 96) revealed also that monotheistic proof of God's existence is a sacred revelation which reads:

> In the name of Allah the Beneficent, Merciful.
> Read: In the name of thy Lord who created man from a dust (Lot)
> Read: and thy Lord is the most bounteous,
> Who taught by the pen taught man that when he knew not.

God is ubiquitous in Islamic and African Traditional Religions; meaning he is found everywhere, and he is the ruler of the whole universe (Anyacho 245). Since the monotheistic existence of God is the basic Supreme force which both adherents of Islamic and Aftican Traditional Religions believed in. His existence is a proof that he exist,and he is called with names like: Abasi- Ibom in Ibibio, Doko in Nupe, Aondo in Tiv, Allah,Kpanti-Laa in Mumuye, Owoicho in Idoma (Gbenda 6-7). Thus, the idea of God is one of the most important concepts of proving his existence in African Traditional Religion and Islam. Hence, both religion believe in one God, who is conceived as the Creator of human beings and the universe.

Furthermore, the knowledge of monotheistic proofs of the existence of God should not be taken for granted, but be accorded reverence in the lives of his creatures, who acknowledge his surpassing greatness every day. The Holy Quran also has the revealed source of the proof of God's existence which cannot be denied too. Hence, Prophet Muhammad is the only messenger of Allah whom was mandated to stand up and recite the Holy Quran as the deposit of Islamic faith, which originated from a Supreme and powerful monotheistic God that ever exist before the world was.

It is indeed lucid to say also that, monotheism is a general concept that runs through the two religions in affirming the true existence of God. Hence, attributes like Mighty,

Supreme, Good, Omnipotent, and Omniscient, Just, Merciful, Infinite are sacredly reserved to God and proving that he really exists as one and not in many. Furthermore, the concept of God is developed in the two religions since their coming into existence has been affirmed without neglect. God is worshipped at designated places of worship; Mosque and shrine, or wherever is befitting by his creatures. He is believed to be the Supreme, the Creator, Protector and helper of all people (Adasu 16).Comparative monotheism in Islam and African Traditional Religions is aimed at unraveling detailed comparative studies of the monotheistic proofs of the existence of God as found in Islam and African Traditional Religions, which is the same.

Islam and African Traditional Religions are revealed religions who believe in the monotheistic God, being the sources of all things that came into existence and who all worshiped. Hence, God's very idea of existence is intuitively and empirically ascertained in rational beings whose existence is acknowledged. Hence, the universe owed its existence to the Supreme Being, who other divinities like angels, ancestors owed reverence to him. Hence, we cannot separate the monotheistic proofs of God' existence in both religions, because The Supreme Being' existence is really undeniable but affirmative. God's existence is the beginning and existence of the universe. Thus,the existence of universe shows that it must have caused by something, the only such cause, and cause must be an uncaused cause or God (Hacinebioglu 88). It is interesting to say that, transcendent and immanent qualities of God shows he really exist and he is the source and providence, which is why all humans depend upon him for provision of all things such as rain, children, health, long life, and prosperity of things (Akaatenger 17-18).

Recommendations

Islamic and African Traditional Religions should continue to affirmed the proofs of the existence of a monotheistic God whom they give desiring attributes as owner of the universe, one who is Just, loving, holy, pure and without blemish. Hence, adherents of the two religions here should continue to uphold the monotheistic proofs of the existence of God in their lives whom they owed their existence from him as the sacred object of worship that must be respected at all times.

There should be no disparity on the monotheistic concept of God among the adherents of Islam and African Traditional Religions because, both religions uphold the existence and worship of a supreme and holy God, whose attributes qualified him to exist in the universe . Also, the two religions here should continue to accord due worship to God as the maker of heaven and earth, through whom all things come. Hence, Islam and African Traditional Religions should continue to see themselves as sacred institutions where the monotheistic

proofs of the God existence of God must be honored and worshiped and professed at all times.

Conclusion

In the foregoing, the paper elucidated key terms like monotheism, Islam and African Traditional Religions. It went further to examined the origin of monotheism an overview of proving God'existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions. Also, monotheistic proofs of God's existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions were discussed separately.The paper also makes a monotheistic comparison of proving God's existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions, and outlined some recommendations.

Monotheism is a general concept found to exist in the two religions here, and these proofs of the existence of one God have come to stay because he is real and he exists as one from eternity. From all the attributes of God adumbrated and examined in the two religions, monotheism is really a universal proof of the existence of God, who is the Supreme and sacred object of worship in Islam and African Traditional Religions. Hence, without the existence of God or his idea, religion ceases to exist because, God is the centre of all religious beliefs and practices, whose own very existence is proven with facts to be real.God is also seen as the source of life, and the necessity that prompts people to seek him day in the day out. Hence, a revisit of the proof of God's existence in Islam and African Traditional Religions is without doubt that he is the Ultimate Reality who exists both in the mind and through experiences by the adherents of Islam and Aftican Traditional Religions respectively.

Thus, adherents of the two religions here need to not to panic despite professing different faiths, but they share in same belief of the existence of a monotheistic God. They are to fully reflect on the monotheistic existence of God as the solid, real, just, merciful, ultimate and limitless, and whose existence affirmed his greatness. God is the greatest being ever existing since the creation of world. Islamic and African Traditional Religions from the unset continue to uphold tenaciously on monotheistic existence of God not as Quasi but permanently inscribed in their faiths. Thus, God is a monotheistic, supreme and divine being, whose very idea is evidently a universal and sacred existing phenomenon found to exist in Islam and African Traditional Religions respectfully. Thus, monotheism is a universal concept which cannot be annihilated in proving the monotheistic proofs of God' existence in the two faiths. Hence, the monotheistic proofs of God' existence cannot be erased but remained same in the two religions.

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