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FOUNDATIONS OF TAWHID

What Is Tawhid?



Its Meaning, Its Categories, and Their
Inseparable Relationship

Tawhid is to single out Allah in everything exclusive to Him: His Lordship, His Names and Attributes, and all worship. This article explains its meaning, its categories, and their inseparable relationship.

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Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim.

Tawhid means singling out Allah in everything exclusive to Him: His Lordship, His Names and Attributes, and all worship.

It is often translated approximately as “monotheism,” but that English word can be too limited if it is understood only as belief that one Creator exists. The Tawhid revealed in the Qur’an and authentic Sunnah includes truthful knowledge and affirmation concerning Allah, together with directing every act of worship to Him alone.

Scholars commonly explain Tawhid through three categories:

1. **Tawhid al-Rububiyyah:** singling out Allah in creation, absolute ownership, and sovereign governance.
2. **Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah**, also called **Tawhid al-‘Ibadah:** singling out Allah with all worship.
3. **Tawhid al-Asma’ wa-l-Sifat:** affirming the Names and Attributes established for Allah in revelation in a manner befitting Him, while negating what He negated from Himself.

These are not three separate beliefs about three separate objects. They are three connected aspects of one Tawhid. The Qur’an may gather their meanings in a single passage. Allah said:

ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ

“That is Allah, your Lord. None has the right to be worshipped except Him, the Creator of all things. So worship Him; and He is Guardian over all things.”

Source: Qur’an, al-An‘am 6:102.

The ayah identifies Allah as the Lord and Creator, affirms His exclusive right to worship, and describes Him with a perfect Attribute and action. The categories therefore clarify the revealed truth; they do not divide Allah, invent a new creed, or replace the language of revelation.

I. The Linguistic Meaning of Tawhid

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-‘Uthaymin رحمه الله said:

التوحيد لغة مصدر واحد يوحد، أي جعل الشيء واحدا

“Tawhid, linguistically, is the verbal noun of *wahhada-yuwahhidu*, meaning: to make a thing one.”

Source: Muhammad ibn Salih al-‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, Dar al-Thurayya, fourth edition, 1424 AH/2004, p. 39.

This linguistic explanation must be understood correctly. Allah is eternally and truly One. The servant does not cause Allah to become one, combine parts, or create an attribute of oneness in Him. Rather, the servant recognizes, affirms, and singles out Allah in belief, speech, intention, and worship.

For this reason, “singling out” is usually clearer than the English word “unification.” The latter may suggest joining previously separate things, which is not the intended meaning. Tawhid concerns acknowledging Allah as uniquely possessing what belongs to Him and refusing to assign any share of those exclusive rights to creation.

The verbal root also occurs in authentic Sunnah. Ibn ‘Abbas رضي الله عنهما reported that when the Prophet ﷺ sent Mu‘adh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه toward Yemen, he said:

إِنَّكَ تَقْدُمُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ، فَلْيَكُنْ أَوَّلُ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى أَنْ يُوحِدُوا
اللَّهُ تَعَالَى

“You are going to a people from the People of the Book, so let the first thing to which you call them be that they single out Allah Most High.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 7372. Authentic. Sahih Muslim, no. 19, reports the incident with a slight variation in wording.

This hadith establishes that the Prophetic call itself was expressed with the verb “to single out Allah.” It does not, by itself, list the later pedagogical category names. It does show that Tawhid is not a foreign concept imposed upon the religion after the period of revelation.

2. Tawhid Requires Negation and Affirmation

Ibn ‘Uthaymin رحمه الله said:

وهذا لا يتحقق إلا بنفي وإثبات، نفي الحكم عما سوى الموحّد وإثباته له

“This is not realized except through negation and affirmation: negating the ruling from everything besides the one singled out and affirming it for him.”

Source: Ibn ‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, p. 39, in the edition cited above.

Singling something out is not accomplished by an unrestricted affirmation. It requires denying the relevant right from everything else and affirming it exclusively for the one singled out.

In Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah, this appears clearly in *la ilaha illa Allah*. The testimony rejects true divinity and deserved worship from everything besides Allah and affirms them for Allah alone.

Allah said:

ذلك بأن الله هو الحق وأن ما يدعون من دونه هو الباطل وأن الله هو العلي
الكبير

“That is because Allah is the Truth, while what they invoke besides Him is falsehood, and because Allah is the Most High, the Great.”

Source: Qur’an, al-Hajj 22:62.

The ayah does not deny that false gods are actually invoked or worshipped by people. It declares that their claimed divinity and their worship are false. Allah alone is the true God and the only One who deserves worship.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

من قال لا إله إلا الله وكفر بما يعبد من دون الله حرم ماله ودمه وحسابه على
الله

“Whoever says, ‘None has the right to be worshipped except Allah,’ and rejects what is worshipped besides Allah, his wealth and blood become inviolable, and his reckoning is with Allah.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 23, from Tariq ibn Ashyam al-Ashja'i رضي الله عنه. Authentic.

The present article uses this hadith to establish the union of affirmation and rejection: affirming worship for Allah and rejecting false worship. Its legal applications and detailed conditions are outside this article's scope.

Accordingly, the preferred explanatory translation of *la ilaha illa Allah* is:

“None has the right to be worshipped in truth except Allah.”

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz رحمه الله summarized its meaning:

لا معبود حق إلا الله

“There is no object of worship worthy in truth except Allah.”

Source: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, official transcript, *al-Tawhid: Fadluhu wa-Anwa‘uhu wa-Hukmuhi*.

The expressions “has the right” and “in truth” explain the intended meaning; they are not presented as additional Arabic particles. A translation such as “there is no Creator except Allah” is not sufficient because it replaces the testimony’s direct concern with worship by a statement of Lordship. Allah’s exclusive Lordship is true, but the testimony directly establishes His exclusive divinity and right to worship.

Negation alone would leave a person with no object of worship. Affirmation that allows partners would leave association intact. Tawhid joins both: every false object of worship is rejected, and all worship is affirmed for Allah alone.

3. The Comprehensive Shar‘i Meaning

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin رحمه الله gave the broader definition:

وهناك تعريف أعم للتوحيد وهو: إفراد الله سبحانه وتعالى بما يختص به

“There is a more comprehensive definition of Tawhid: singling out Allah, glorified and exalted, in that which is exclusive to Him.”

Source: Ibn ‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, p. 39, in the edition cited above.

This is the controlling definition for the present article because it encompasses all three categories. It includes:

- what belongs exclusively to Allah in His Lordship and actions;

- what belongs exclusively to Him in His perfect Names and Attributes;
- what belongs exclusively to Him of the servant's worship.

The same verified source also gives the focused definition:

التوحيد هو إفراد الله بالعبادة

“Tawhid is singling out Allah with worship.”

Source: Ibn ‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, p. 39.

This focused definition is also correct in its context. It identifies the Tawhid over which the Messengers disputed with their peoples and the aspect most directly expressed by *la ilaha illa Allah*. The broad and focused definitions are therefore complementary, not contradictory. One encompasses everything exclusive to Allah; the other emphasizes the category most openly violated by the polytheists.

A sound definition must also move beyond abstract terminology. Tawhid includes knowledge, belief, intention, submission, and worship. A person has not fulfilled the call of the Messengers merely by accepting the philosophical proposition that one supreme being exists.

4. Why Scholars Distinguish Three Categories

The Qur’an and Sunnah repeatedly address three connected fields:

- Allah’s creation, ownership, provision, and governance;
- Allah’s Names and Attributes;
- Allah’s exclusive right to worship.

Scholars examined these texts and organized their recurring meanings into categories so that the subject could be taught precisely. Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz رحمه الله said:

هذا مأخوذ من الاستقراء، لأن العلماء لما استقروا ما جاءت به النصوص
من كتاب الله وسنة رسوله ظهر لهم هذا

“This is taken from induction, because when the scholars examined what the texts of Allah’s Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger brought, this became clear to them.”

Source: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, *Majmu‘ Fatawa wa-Maqalat Mutanawwi‘ah*, vol. 6, p. 277; also preserved on his official website under *Taqsim al-Tawhid ila Thalathati Aqsam*.

Induction means collecting and examining the relevant revealed texts, then identifying the principal meanings to which they return. The realities themselves are revealed. The concise arrangement into three named categories is a scholarly taxonomy drawn from those realities.

This distinction prevents two opposite errors. The first is to claim that one ayah or hadith contains a single verbatim sentence saying, “Tawhid has exactly three categories named Rububiyyah, Uluhiyyah, and al-Asma’ wa-l-Sifat.” That claim is not required and should not be made. The second error is to say that because the compact list is a scholarly classification, its contents are invented. A classification can accurately organize revealed material without adding a new belief to the religion.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin رحمه الله stated:

وأنواع التوحيد ثلاثة

“The types of Tawhid are three.”

Source: Ibn ‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, p. 39. The definitions continue across pp. 39–40.

The category names function as teaching tools. Their correctness is judged by whether they accurately gather what the Qur’an and authentic Sunnah establish.

5. Tawhid al-Rububiyyah

Ibn ‘Uthaymin رحمه الله defined Tawhid al-Rububiyyah as:

إفراد الله سبحانه وتعالى بالخلق، والملك والتدبير

“Singling out Allah, glorified and exalted, in creation, ownership, and governance.”

Source: Ibn ‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, pp. 39–40, in the edition cited above.

Allah said:

الله خالق كل شيء وهو على كل شيء وكيل

“Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is Guardian over all things.”

Source: Qur’an, al-Zumar 39:62.

Allah also said:

ألا له الخلق والأمر

“Unquestionably, creation and command belong to Him.”

Source: Qur'an, al-A'raf 7:54, relevant clause.

Rububiyyah includes believing that Allah alone is the Creator, the absolute Owner, the Provider, the Giver of life, the Cause of death, and the sovereign Governor of all affairs. Every created affair remains under His ownership, power, and governance.

This does not mean that created beings possess no limited ownership, perform no actions, or serve as no causes. Created ownership, action, and causation are restricted, dependent, granted, and governed by Allah. His ownership is absolute, His creative power has no partner, and every created cause exists and operates only by His creation and permission.

The Qur'an uses Allah's Lordship as proof of His right to worship. Allah said:

يا أيها الناس اعبدوا ربكم الذي خلقكم والذين من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون

“O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may attain taqwa.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:21.

The argument is direct: the One who created mankind is the One they must worship. Rububiyyah is therefore not an isolated theological fact. Properly understood, it points necessarily to Uluhiyyah.

6. Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah, Also Called Tawhid al-'Ibadah

Ibn 'Uthaymin رحمه الله said:

توحيد الألوهية وهو إفراد الله سبحانه وتعالى بالعبادة

“Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah is singling out Allah, glorified and exalted, with worship.”

Source: Ibn 'Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, p. 40, in the edition cited above.

It is also called **Tawhid al-'Ibadah**. The two labels describe the same category from related perspectives. *Uluhiyyah* emphasizes that Allah alone is the true God and deserves worship. *'Ibadah* emphasizes the servant's duty to direct worship to Him alone.

Allah said:

ولقد بعثنا في كل أمة رسولا أن اعبدوا الله واجتنبوا الطاغوت

“We certainly sent into every nation a Messenger: ‘Worship Allah and avoid the taghut.’”

Source: Qur’an, al-Nahl 16:36, relevant clause.

Allah also said:

وما أرسلنا من قبلك من رسول إلا نوحي إليه أنه لا إله إلا أنا فاعبدون

“We did not send any Messenger before you except that We revealed to him: ‘None has the right to be worshipped except Me, so worship Me.’”

Source: Qur’an, al-Anbiya’ 21:25.

At the level required here, avoiding the *taghut* means rejecting false worship and what is worshipped besides Allah. A fuller lexical and legal treatment of the term belongs elsewhere.

These ayat join two inseparable requirements:

1. worship Allah alone;
2. reject every false object of worship.

Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah therefore requires every act of worship—including supplication, sacrifice, vows, and reliance of worship—to be directed to Allah alone. These examples are representative, not exhaustive. The full definition and forms of worship belong to the next article in this series.

Uluhiyyah receives particular emphasis because Tawhid is often reduced to belief in one Creator. That reduction overlooks the actual call of the Messengers. They did not merely inform their peoples that a supreme Creator exists. They commanded them to worship Allah alone and to abandon false worship.

7. Tawhid al-Asma’ wa-l-Sifat

Ibn ‘Uthaymin رحمه الله defined Tawhid al-Asma’ wa-l-Sifat as:

إفراد الله تعالى بما سمي به نفسه ووصف به نفسه في كتابه، أو على لسان رسوله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وذلك بإثبات ما أثبتته، ونفي ما نفاه، من غير تحريف ولا تعطيل، ومن غير تكييف ولا تمثيل

“Singling out Allah Most High with what He named and described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ: affirming what He affirmed and negating what He negated, without distortion or denial, and without asking how or drawing resemblance.”

Source: Ibn ‘Uthaymin, *Sharh Thalathat al-Usul*, p. 40, in the edition cited above.

The foundational rule is gathered in Allah’s statement:

ليس كمثله شيء وهو السميع البصير

“There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.”

Source: Qur’an, al-Shura 42:11, relevant clause.

The ayah combines negation and affirmation. It negates every likeness between Allah and creation, while affirming that Allah truly hears and sees. Affirming His Attributes is therefore not resemblance, and negating resemblance is not denial of the Attributes He revealed.

The established method is to accept the revealed Names and Attributes:

- without **tahrif**: distorting their wording or meaning;
- without **ta’til**: denying or emptying them of their established meaning;
- without **takyif**: claiming knowledge of their modality without evidence;
- without **tamthil**: likening Allah’s Attributes to those of creation.

The meanings indicated by revelation are affirmed in a manner befitting Allah. Their modality is not known to creation unless Allah reveals it. Detailed discussions of particular Attributes and the historical controversies surrounding them require a separate study.

Allah said:

ولله الأسماء الحسنى فادعوه بها

“To Allah belong the most beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them.”

Source: Qur'an, al-A'raf 7:180, relevant clause.

This ayah shows that the Names and Attributes are not an isolated catalogue. Knowledge of Allah directs the servant to worship Him: he calls upon Allah by His beautiful Names and worships Him in light of what He revealed concerning Himself. The detailed relation of particular Names and Attributes to worship belongs to a separate study.

8. Why Recognition of Lordship Alone Is Not Enough

Tawhid al-Rububiyyah is true, necessary, and repeatedly established in the Qur'an. The error is to treat acknowledgement of Allah as Creator as though it were the complete Tawhid by which a person enters Islam, even while worship is directed elsewhere.

Allah said concerning the polytheists addressed by the Qur'an:

ولئن سألتهم من خلق السماوات والأرض ليقولن الله

“If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: Allah.”

Source: Qur'an, Luqman 31:25, relevant clause.

Yet Allah also said:

إنهم كانوا إذا قيل لهم لا إله إلا الله يستكبرون ويقولون أئنا لتاركوا آلهتنا
لشاعر مجنون

“When it was said to them, ‘None has the right to be worshipped except Allah,’ they became arrogant and said: ‘Are we to abandon our gods for a mad poet?’”

Source: Qur'an, al-Saffat 37:35–36.

The same people who acknowledged Allah's creation resisted the demand that they abandon their gods. Their dispute with the Messenger ﷺ was therefore not merely over the existence of a Creator. It concerned the exclusive worship demanded by *la ilaha illa Allah*.

Allah also said:

قل من يرزقكم من السماء والأرض أمن يملك السمع والأبصار ومن يخرج
الحي من الميت ويخرج الميت من الحي ومن يدبر الأمر فسيقولون الله فقل
أفلا تتقون

“Say: Who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Who controls hearing and sight? Who brings the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who governs every affair? They will say: Allah. Then say: Will you not have taqwa?”

Source: Qur'an, Yunus 10:31.

The ayah argues from what they acknowledged to what they were required to fulfil. Since Allah alone provides and governs, He alone must be worshipped.

A necessary qualification must be preserved. It should not be said that the Makkan polytheists perfectly fulfilled Tawhid al-Rububiyyah. They acknowledged major aspects of Allah's Lordship while retaining contradictions, corrupt beliefs, and worship of others. Nor should their acknowledgement be generalized to every non-Muslim in every age. The decisive Qur'anic point is narrower: acknowledging Allah as Creator did not make those polytheists Muslims while they directed worship to other than Him.

9. One Tawhid: How the Categories Relate

The three categories are not detachable creeds from which a person may select one as sufficient. They identify connected truths concerning the same One Lord.

Tawhid al-Rububiyyah establishes that Allah alone creates, owns absolutely, provides, and governs. Tawhid al-Asma' wa-l-Sifat establishes knowledge of Him through the Names and Attributes revealed in the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah. Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah is the servant's necessary response: all worship is directed to that Lord alone.

The relationship can be stated in three connected propositions:

1. **Allah's Lordship proves His right to worship.** The Creator and sovereign Governor alone deserves the worship of His creation.
2. **Allah's Names and Attributes identify the perfection of the One worshipped.** The servant worships Allah upon revealed knowledge, not an imagined or undefined deity.
3. **Exclusive worship fulfils the purpose to which the knowledge points.** Knowledge of Allah is not intended to remain a bare proposition without submission and worship.

Qur'an 6:102, quoted at the beginning, gathers these meanings: Allah is the Lord, the Creator of all things, the only true God, the One commanded to be worshipped, and the Guardian over all things.

The categories therefore do not divide Allah's Essence into parts, nor do they resemble a trinity. They distinguish subjects of knowledge and obligation. One person may acknowledge a true statement belonging to one category while violating another, as the Qur'an shows concerning the polytheists' acknowledgement of major aspects of Lordship alongside their false worship. Complete and correct Tawhid embraces the realities of all three.

10. The Twofold and Threefold Classifications

Some scholars classify Tawhid in two broad divisions rather than three. This is not a competing creed. It is a broader level of organization.

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said:

وأما التوحيد الذي دعت إليه رسل الله ونزلت به كتبه، فواء ذلك كله. وهو نوعان: توحيد في المعرفة والإثبات، وتوحيد في المطلب والقصد

“As for the Tawhid to which Allah's Messengers called and with which His Books were sent down, it is beyond all of that. It is of two kinds: Tawhid in knowledge and affirmation, and Tawhid in what is sought and intended.”

Source: Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin fi Manazil al-Sa'irin*, Dar 'Ata'at al-'Ilm, Riyadh / Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut, second edition, 1441 AH/2019, vol. 4, p. 449.

Ibn Abi al-'Izz al-Hanafi رحمه الله similarly said:

ثم التوحيد الذي دعت إليه رسل الله ونزلت به كتبه نوعان: توحيد في الإثبات والمعرفة، وتوحيد في المطلب والقصد

“The Tawhid to which Allah's Messengers called and with which His Books were sent down is of two kinds: Tawhid in affirmation and knowledge, and Tawhid in seeking and intention.”

Source: Ibn Abi al-'Izz, *Sharh al-'Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah*, al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, ninth edition, 1408 AH/1988, p. 89.

Shaykh Ibn Baz رحمه الله explained how the twofold and threefold schemes correspond:

والتوحيد نوعان: توحيد في المعرفة والإثبات، وهو توحيد الربوبية والأسماء والصفات. وتوحيد في الطلب والقصد، وهو توحيد الإلهية والعبادة

“Tawhid is of two kinds: Tawhid in knowledge and affirmation, which is Tawhid al-Rububiyyah and the Names and Attributes; and Tawhid in seeking and intention, which is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah and worship.”

Source: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, official lesson transcript, *Muqaddimat al-Sharih* in his explanation of *al-‘Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah*.

The mapping is straightforward:

1. **Tawhid of knowledge and affirmation** includes Tawhid al-Rububiyyah and Tawhid al-Asma’ wa-l-Sifat. Both concern what the servant knows and affirms about Allah.
2. **Tawhid of intent, seeking, and worship** is Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. It concerns whom the servant intends and worships.

The threefold scheme separates the first broad division into two subjects because Allah’s Names and Attributes form a vast revealed field deserving distinct treatment. The twofold scheme keeps both under the broader heading of knowledge and affirmation. Two and three therefore differ in granularity, not in the truth being described.

This also explains why the category number is not itself an article of faith. The obligation is to believe and fulfil the revealed realities. Scholarly categories are judged by their accuracy and usefulness in explaining those realities.

II. What *La Ilaha Illa Allah* Encompasses

The direct and central meaning of *la ilaha illa Allah* is that none has the right to be worshipped in truth except Allah. It must not be redefined as “there is no Creator except Allah.”

At the same time, the testimony necessarily encompasses the remaining categories. The One who alone deserves worship is the true Lord, Creator, and sovereign Governor. He is perfect in His Names, Attributes, and actions. Shaykh Ibn Baz رحمه الله said:

لأن في ضمن الشهادة الإيمان بأن الله ربه وخالقه، والإيمان بأنه مستحق
العبادة، والإيمان بأسمائه وصفاته

“Because contained within the testimony is faith that Allah is his Lord and Creator, faith that He deserves worship, and faith in His Names and Attributes.”

Source: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, official fatwa, *Aqşam al-Tawhid wa-Bayan Dukhuluha Dimna al-Shahadatayn*.

A distinction is necessary between direct meaning and necessary implication:

- The direct meaning of *ilah* in the testimony concerns true divinity and deserved worship.
- Allah’s Lordship and perfection are necessarily included by implication; they are not the direct lexical meaning of *ilah*.

The testimony that Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah is also indispensable. Worship must follow the guidance Allah revealed through His Messenger ﷺ. The detailed conditions of the testimony and the conditions of accepted worship require separate treatment.

12. The Reality Is Required; the Technical Labels Are Teaching Tools

A person does not enter Islam by memorizing the words *Rububiyyah*, *Uluhiyyah*, and *Asma’ wa-l-Sifat* while failing to believe or fulfil their meanings. Nor is knowledge of these exact Arabic labels, as labels, a separate condition imposed upon every new Muslim before his Islam can be valid.

Shaykh Ibn Baz رحمه الله said:

وَإِذَا عَرَفَهَا الْمُؤْمِنُ وَلَوْ مَا عَرَفَ الْأَقْسَامَ، إِذَا كَانَ قَدْ وَحَّدَ اللَّهَ، وَأَمَّنَ بِأَنَّ
 اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ، وَإِلَهَهُ، وَمَعْبُودَهُ الْحَقَّ، وَأَنَّهُ ذُو الْأَسْمَاءِ الْحُسْنَى وَالصِّفَاتِ الْعُلَى، لَا
 شَبِيهَ لَهُ وَلَا كُفْءَ لَهُ؛ كَفَى وَلَوْ لَمْ يَعْرِفِ الْأَقْسَامَ، لَكِنْ إِذَا عَرَفَهَا يَكُونُ مِنَ
 الْعِلْمِ الطَّيِّبِ

“If the believer knows their realities even though he does not know the category labels —if he singles out Allah and believes that Allah is his Lord, his God, and the One truly worshipped, and that He possesses the most beautiful Names and the highest Attributes, with no likeness or equal—then that suffices even if he does not know the categories. Knowing them, however, is beneficial knowledge.”

Source: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, official fatwa, *Ma Aqdam al-Tawhid, wa-Hal La Budda lil-Insan an Ya’rifaha?*

This does not minimize the obligation to learn what one needs in order to know Allah and worship Him correctly. The point is that the classification serves the revealed reality; the revealed reality does not depend upon the learner first mastering specialist terminology.

A learner may understand the required meanings in simple language:

- Allah alone is my Lord and Creator.
- Allah alone deserves all my worship.
- Allah possesses the perfect Names and Attributes established in His revelation, and nothing resembles Him.

If those meanings are believed and fulfilled, the person has understood what the category labels are intended to teach. If the labels are memorized while worship is directed elsewhere or Allah’s revealed perfection is denied, the terminology has not fulfilled its purpose.

Conclusion

Tawhid is not merely the assertion that one Creator exists. It is to single out Allah in everything exclusive to Him: His Lordship, His Names and Attributes, and all worship.

Its linguistic meaning involves singling out. In the revealed religion, that singling out is established through negation and affirmation: false divinity and worship are rejected from everything besides Allah, while true divinity and all worship are affirmed for Him alone.

The Qur'an and authentic Sunnah establish the realities that scholars organize into three categories:

- **Tawhid al-Rububiyyah:** Allah alone creates, owns absolutely, and governs all affairs.
- **Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah or al-'Ibadah:** Allah alone deserves every act of worship.
- **Tawhid al-Asma' wa-l-Sifat:** Allah is affirmed with the Names and Attributes established by revelation, without distortion, denial, asking how, or resemblance.

These are aspects of one Tawhid. Allah's Lordship proves His exclusive right to worship. His Names and Attributes identify the perfection of the Lord who is worshipped. Uluhiyyah directs the servant's intention and worship to Him alone.

The twofold classification states the same reality more broadly: Tawhid of knowledge and affirmation, and Tawhid of intent and worship. The threefold classification separates the first of those into Rububiyyah and the Names and Attributes.

Recognition of Allah as Creator is necessary, but it is not sufficient while worship is directed to others. The Qur'an records that the polytheists acknowledged major aspects of Allah's Lordship yet resisted *la ilaha illa Allah* because they understood that it required abandoning their gods.

The required matter is therefore not the bare memorization of category names. It is truthful knowledge of Allah, belief in what He revealed concerning Himself, rejection of every false object of worship, and the direction of all worship to Allah alone according to the guidance of His Messenger ﷺ.