ASMĀ'ULLAHI WAŞ-ŞIFĀTIHI: A DISCOURSE ON POLEMICS OF *SUFI* AND THEOLOGIANS

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Abstract

'Asmā'ullah waṣ-Ṣifātihi which denote Names and Attributes of God are important aspects of the science of *Tawhīd* which catches area of interest of researchers in the field of theology in Islam. Previous works have apparently established that the real Names and Attributes of God are known to the generality of Muslims because they are directly mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the prophet. However, these works were confronted with the challenges of discovery of other Names and Attributes of God that are not directly mentioned in the Qur'ān, which some schools of thought claim to exist in Islam especially the Sufi school of thought. This paper therefore, discusses the opinion of *Sūfi* and theologians on the connotation of Allah as unique Name of God and His Essence and examines other names of God and His attributes which are not directly mentioned in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. The paper adopts qualitative methodology. The paper concludes that the names of God-Allah has no etymology and derivatives, and the Names of Allah are more than the ones that are openly mentioned in the Qur'ān and the *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and Allah manifests His hidden names to those who are in close relationship with Him in terms of piety and worship. The paper recommends that the theologians should not stick to their own opinion alone but rather examine and agree to views of other schools of thought if they are appropriate and the Sufis should not present their arguments in abstruse expressions but in lucid manner that could be comprehended.

Keywords: *'Asmāullah, Sūfi*, Theologian, Muslims, Attributes, Names, *Tawhīd*

Introduction

The Names and Attributes of God (*'Asmā'ullah was-Ṣifātihi*) form the integral part of science of *Tawhīd* (unification) which deals with monotheistic nature of God in Islam. Islam as a religion lays much emphasis on these names because they are mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ān and *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as powerful names of God. Muslims generally believe in the names up to the extent of not only using them to reflect rigorously the existence of God but also requesting His favours and to boost efficacy of

prayer. This paper therefore, discusses the opinion of *Sufi* and theologians on the concept of the name of Allah. It also presents arguments and counter-arguments of the two opposing groups on whether the name "Allah" has an etymology and derivation. The paper further examines the views of scholars on the total number of names and attributes of God based on the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* and conclusion is made at the end of the paper.

Connotations of Allāh

The *Ṣūfi* and theologians have similar opinion that Allāh is the Creator of all creatures including human being. They believe in the maintenance of Allāh's unity in all man's actions whether related to Him directly or indirectly. Allāh is absolutely One and has neither partner nor associate in His Sovereignty. No creature has the same characteristics with His Essence and Attributes, and He has no rival in His Divinity and worship. His real Name and Essence is Allāh.[1] On this name (Allāh), scholars express divergent opinions as to whether the name can be etymologically traced to an origin or not. Some theologians, including Ibn Taymiyyah agree that the name Allāh can be traced etymologically to a word called *Al-ilah.*[2]

For instance, if the first *Hamzah* is removed and the next letter which is *lām* is compressed to the other letter *lam* in the word and the *lam* becomes emphatic (*Mushadad*), then the word will form Allāh.[3] These Theologians further claim that the word *Al-ilahiyah* is one of the names of God which denotes Him as the only Deity that is worth worshipping.[4]

On the contrary, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Inyās with some other Ṣufi masters opine that the word Allāh cannot be traced to any origin.[5] They argue that the word Allāh uniquely depicts the essence of God among the manifest names of Allāh.[6] As-Sarāj added the name *Ar-Rahmān* as another powerful name of God. They support their view with the Qur'ānic verse which reads thus:

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَٰنَ ۖ أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ سَبِيلًا

> Call upon Allāh, or call upon *Rahman*: by whatever name ye call upon him, (it is well): for to Him belongs the most beautiful Names. Neither speak Thy prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a Middle course between. (Qur'ān 17:110)

Another leading *Ṣūfi* called Abu-Bakr al-Wasti says all other names can be shared with God if the word '*Abd* is attached as prefix to them i.e '*Abdur-Rahmān*', however, no creature including human being can bear the name 'Allah' alone.[7] In addition, Shaykh

Ibrāhīm Inyās says that the word Allāh has no etymology because all letters that formed the word can succinctly stand on their own with meanings. He explains that the letter *Alif* in the word Allāh connotes the existence of God alone when He has not created other beings. The two letters of *Lam* in the word signify Allāh as the Creator of all creatures and their Provider while the last letter which is *Ha* indicates that everything is in His possession.[8]

The latter opinion was derived from Sufi esoteric perspective which is based on illumination (*Kashf*) and spiritual rigorous exercise (*Mujahada*). Though, Shaykh Ibrahim did not support his argument with any reference from either the Qur'an or *Hadith*. However, the researcher observed that the view is not in any way contradicting with the description of Allāh in the Qur'an. For instance, the letter *Alif* in the word Allāh which he claims to be the existence of God alone when He has not created other beings is in tandem with the Qur'anic verse which says:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate,
and He is, of all things, Knowing (Qur'an ٥٧:٣).

The above quotation denotes that Allah is the first and nothing preceded him. Also, the two letters *Lam* which connote 'Allāh' as Creator and Provider according to Shaykh Ibrahim can be traced to the description of Allah in Qur'an 6:102 which reads:

ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ

That is Allah, your Lord; there is no deity except Him,
the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He is
Disposer of all things.

The above verse indicates that Allāh is the Creator i.e *Khāliq* and *Rabb* i.e God who provides and takes care of His creatures. While the last letter *Ha* which he holds the view that "everything is in His possession" corroborates the verse which says:

قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ

"Indeed, the matter belongs completely to Allah."
(Qur'an ٣:١٥٤)

In the same vein, a Sufi master Abubakr al-Wasti refuted all what have been said by the theologians as regard the etymology and derivation of the word Allāh. He mentioned that

"Allāh" is the proper name otherwise known as *Ismudh-dhāt* and is unlike the word *Al-illah.*

The structural form of the word Allāh shows the unique characteristic which makes it to be distinctive from all other names of God.[9] For instance, if the first letter of the word which is *alif* is removed, it forms *Lilah* (لله) which means everything belongs to Allāh. In the same vein, if the first letter *Lam* of the word (لام) is also removed, it reads *lahu* (له) which means the possession of everything belongs to Him. By removing the second *Lam* then there remains letter *Hu* (ه) which is read phonetically as *Hu* denoting *Huwa* (هو) which also refers to the essence of Allāh in His Sovereignty. The letter *Wa* at the end of *Hu* is an appendix which does not appear in the letter but was originally there because it is a sign *'Alāmah* i.e sign of masculine gender for *dhamir Hu* (pronoune) indicating that possession of everything belong to Allah.[10]

From the foregoing, it is explicitly shown that both *Ṣūfi* and theologians agreed on the absolute Oneness of God and no other deity should be served or adored save Him. However, the two schools of thought have divergent views on the derivation and the etymology of the word Allāh. Moreover, the argument of Shaykh Ibrahim has been examined with the Qur'an references and discovered that they are in tandem with Allah's description, though his assertion may be based on esoteric interpretation. In addition, Abubakr al-Wasti's submission which indicates that each of the letters contained in the word Allāh connotes an independent meaning pointing to the essence of God. This opinion is stronger and accepted by the researcher in the sense that the distinguishing features inherent in the word cannot be found in any other names of the Divine Being save Allāh. Also, the word Allāh is exclusively borne alone by God and no other deity can bear this name because it is the greatest name of Allāh. More so, if any letter is removed from any of the names of God except "Allāh" thus, such name cannot be succinctly stood on its own with meaning.

Equally, the opinion of the theologians, which says that the word Allāh is derived from *Al-Ilahi*, is not strong as that of the view of the Sufis because the word *Al-Ilahi* cannot be used independently as the word Allāh, unless it is used in a genitive construction before it can properly suit the name of God. This can be seen in the expression like *Ilahin-Nās.* 'The Lord of Man', *Ilahil-'arsh.* 'The Lord of the Throne', among others. In addition, the word *al-ilah* can be used for the other deity. For example, *Ya Ilaha-l-ilahiyah* meaning 'O Lord of all lords'. By and large, since Allāh has no source or origin, then His proper name is not supposed to be traced to any etymology or derivation. Ibn 'Arabi says:

أحد ما مـــثـــلـــه أحد ## بـــجمال الـنـعت مـنفـــرد

He is One, nobody shares His singularity #
He is alone with beautiful names and attributes[11].

Views of Sufi and Theologians on Names and Attributes of God

Under this sub-heading, attention will be drawn to the Names and Attributes of God, since the word Allāh has been agreed upon by the *Ṣūfi* and theologians as a proper name and essence of God. Fakhr d-Din Ar-Razi, Ibn Arabi among others added a pronoun *Huwa (HE)* as part of the essence of Allāh. Now, the Names and Attributes of Allāh are denoted as *Asmā'ullah Wa Sifātihi. Asmā'ullah Wa-Sifātihi,* according to the theologians is an important aspect of knowledge of *Tawhīd* known as *Tawhīdu'l Maᶜrifah Wal-ithbāt* which contains knowledge of the Unity of God, His Lordship, Names and Attributes[12]. In Sufism, this aspect is the same as *'Ilmul-Ḥaqīqah* (knowledge of reality) or *Maᶜrifah (*gnosis*)* based on the submission of Ahmad 'Atā', which says that *Ḥaqīqah* is the unification of Allāh's names, His Attributes and Essence[13]. *Asmā'ullāh,* therefore, are names that are used to glorify Allāh and extol His Supremacy over His creatures. God referred to these names in the Qur'ān as His names and the Prophet explored them in his *Ḥadīth*. Allāh says in Qur'ān 20 v 8:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

Allāh, there is no god but He! To Him belongs the most beautiful Names.

These names could also be regarded as the attributes of God in the sense that they are the names whose attributes qualify the greatness and magnanimity of Allāh. The names describe the rationale behind the deeds, speech, and mercy of God. Allāh refers to Himself in Q. 59 vs 23-24 as:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ
الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ
مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allāh is He, whom there is no other god; the Sovereign, the Holy one, the Source of peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of safety, the Exalted in Might, the irresistible, the Supreme: glory is to Allāh. (High is He) above the partners they attribute to Him.

He is Allāh, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms (or colours). To Him belong the Most beautiful

names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth doth declare His praises and glory, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

All the names of Allāh mentioned in the above verses have their respective attributes. For example, the name *Al-Maliku* (the Sovereign) has the attribute of ***Mulk*** which means that Sovereignty belongs to Allah alone, *Al-Qudus* (the Holy one) with the attribute of *Quds* (Holiness), *As-Salām* (the Peace) which has the attribute of ***Salāmah*** (Peace), *Al-Mu'meen* (the Guardian of Faith) with the attribute of *Amnu* (Guidance or Protection), *Al-Muhaymin* (the preserver of safety) with the attribute of *Hayman* (safety), *Al-'Azīz* (the Exalted in Might) and its attribute is *'Izah* (Might), *Al-Jabar* (the Irresistible) with the attributes *Jabr* (irresistibleness), *Al-Mutakābbir* (the Supreme) with the attribute of *Kibr* (Supremacy), *Al-Khāliq* (the Creator) with the attribute of *Khalq* (Creating), and *Al-Muṣawwir* (the Bestower of Forms) with the attribute of *Ṣūrah* (Form). Other attributes such as *Sam'* (hearing), *Baṣar* (Seeing), *Dhul-Ḥikam* (Wise), *Raḥmah* (Mercy), *Kalām* (Speech), *'Ilm* (knowledge), *Ḥayāh* (life) among others form parts of the attributes of Allāh because Allāh used them in the Qur'ān as His names and attributes. For example, Allāh says: كتب ربكم على نفسه الرحمة (Your Lord has mandated mercy upon Himself Qur'an 6:54). These *Ṣifāt* (attributes) indicate that no human being is qualified to be described with them except the Almighty Allāh. However, application of any of these names and attributes to a man according to Al-Ghazāli means that he has attained a quality corresponding to that particular name of God not that he has become God or God becomes him[14]. The Prophet, in some of his sayings, equally alluded to the fact that Allah has the above mentioned Attributes. Some of such Prophetic sayings include the followings:

ثلاثة لا يكلّمهم الله و لا ينظر إليهم يوم القيامة ولا يزكّهم ولهم عذاب أليم ...

Meaning:

Three categories of people Allāh would not speak and look at on the day of resurrection and He would not purify them and they would be tormented with hell fire...[15]

أنا عند ظن عبدي بي وانا معه اذا ذكرني فان ذكرني فى نفسه ذكرته فى نفسي وان ذكرني في ملأ ذكرته في ملأ خير منه وان تقرب الي بشبر انتقرب إليه ذرعا وأن تقرب ذراعا تقربت إليه باعا وأن اتاني يمشي اتيته هرولة

Meaning:

I am just as My slave thinks I am, (i.e. I am able to do for him what he thinks I can do for him) and I am with him if He remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I too, remember him in Myself; and if he

> remembers Me in a group of people, I remember him in a group that is better than they; and if he comes one span nearer to Me, I go one cubit nearer to him; and if he comes one cubit nearer to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.[16]

The first *hadith* confirms Allah's Attribute *"Al Kalam"*, while the second confirms *"Al'Ilm"*.

Contrary to the above views, are the views of Muᶜtazilites which say God has no other names and attributes than Allāh, and that is the only name which shows the singularity of Him. The Muᶜtazilites further opine that all other names of God are nothing but pluralizing the singularity and indivisible nature of God which is one. They further express that God has no attributes because all the attributes used to qualify Him are similar to the attributes of mankind and He is different from mankind.[17]

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

And there is none like unto Him. Q 112 v 4

The Ashᶜarite scholars including Ibn Kilāb and Abul 'Abass al-Qalanizi believe in the attributes of God but not in *Sifatu'l Ikhtiyāriyyah* such as "He speaks by Himself". They maintain that all the *Sifāt* have already in them the essence of God[18]. However, Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 'Abdullah Al- Mubarak and others believe that the special attributes like *Mutakallim*, *Murīd*, *Muqaddir*, *Al-Qiyāmu-bi-Nafsihi* and others are part of the attributes of God because Allāh used all of these attributes for Himself in the Glorious Qur'ān and the Prophet also mentioned them in his *Ḥadīth* as illustrated above. This is also the position of *Ahlus-Sunnah wal- Jamaᶜah* and that is the more reason why they regard the Qur'ān as the speech of Allāh and not as a creature of Allāh[19].

The opinion of both the Muᶜtazilites and Ashᶜarites could not be accepted because Allāh used the attributes of hearing, speaking, watching, walking, meeting and so on for Himself in the Qur'ān and the Prophet also described Allāh with such attributes in his *Ḥadīth* as depicted above.

The Sufis also concur with the theologians that God is One, Alone, Eternal, Everlasting, Mighty, Compassionate, Creating, Speaking, among others. They believe in all the names and attributes of God. The Sufis maintain that God's essence and attributes do not resemble any characteristic of human beings. He is neither perceived by eyes, nor assailed by thoughts. God is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward. On the other hand, the speculative theosophy of Mysticism, that is, the school of thought which harmonizes Mysticism with Philosophy believes that when a *Ṣūfi* reaches a stage in a

spiritual journey he can reincarnate into God and becomes God i.e., *Hulūl fillah*, therefore, all the names of God and His attributes would become the name of that *Ṣūfi* [20]. This view could not be supported because it is not possible for a man to reincarnate into another man not to talk of God. The ideology of God inherent in man or man with God is irrational because how could it be possible for human beings to create heaven and earth? Therefore, no human being, irrespective of his or her spiritual status can become God, and then the idea of the *hulūl* is totally baseless and invalid.

Furthermore, another area of divergence between the *Ṣūfi* and theologians are on the exact or specific number of the names that God possesses. The theologians including Ibn Taymiyyah submit that the names of Allāh are those that are specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* otherwise, such names could not be counted as names of God[21]. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the messenger of Allāh said:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه ان رسول صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: إن لله تسعة وتسعين اسما مائة إلا واحدا، من احصاها دخل الجنة

Meaning:

Verily Allāh has ninety-nine names i.e one hundred minus one, and whoever knows them will enter the paradise.[22]

Based on this *Ḥadīth*, majority of theologians agreed only on the names and attributes of God mentioned by Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* and these attributes are classified into two viz: *Sifatu Ijābiyyah* and *Salbiyyah*. *Sifatu-Ijabiyyah* are the attributes which confirm the supremacy of Allāh over His creatures. All the names and attributes mentioned above are examples. While *Salbiyyah* attributes are those that distinguish Allāh from the characteristics of His creatures such as slumber, fatigue, sleeping and so on[23]. Examples of these are illustrated in the Qur'ān like:

لَا تَأْخُذُهُۥ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

"He neither slumbers nor sleeps". Q., 2 V 255

وَمَا مَسَّنَا مِن لُّغُوبٍ

And there touched Us not any fatigue" Q., 50 V 38

In furtherance, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Inyās submits in his exegesis *Fi-riyad t- Tafsīr* that:

وهذه الأسماء بينا لكم أنها حقيقة أربعة أسماء :الأول اللآخر الظاهر الباطن، إن شئت قلت الحي العالم المريد القادر الأول الآخر الظاهر الباطن

أربعة أسماء اذا أضفتها الى حضرة جمع الجمع الذي هو الحضرة التي ليس فيها اسم كانت خمسة، خمسة أسماء لكل ظاهر وباطن، عشرة هذا؟ وبالنسبة الى حضرة جمع الجمع أحد عشر واذا تجلت في الحقائق الثلاث خرجت ثلاثا وثلاثين، فلهذا ورد:(تسبحون الله دبر كل صلاة ثلاثا وثلاثين، وتحمدون الله دبر كل صلاة ثلاثا وثلاثين، وتكبرون الله دبر كل صلاة ثلاثا وثلاثين). ثلاث وثلاثون هذه تجلت في الحضرات الثلاث: حضرة السمع والبصر والكلام فخرجت تسعة وتسعون لله تسعة وتسعون اسما مائة الا واحد من أحصاها دخل الجنة. وبالنسبة الى حضرة جمع الجمع مائة، فاذا نظرنا بالنسبة الى ظاهرها وباطنها وتجلت في الحضرات الخمس تكون ألفا وبالنظر الى حضرة جمع الجمع تكون ألفا واحدا، فهي هكذا.

Meaning:

These Names explain to you that in reality there are four Names : The First (الأوّل), The Last (الآخر), The Apparent (الظّاهر), and The Hidden (الباطن) or if you wish you can say The Living (الحي), The knowledgeable (العالم), The Willing (المريد), and The Powerful (القادر). These four names are added to the ecstasy of union of union (حضرة جمع الجمع) where the fifth name is inherent. In this station, five manifested and five hidden names emerged which resulted to ten. If the apparent and hidden names are added to the ecstasy it becomes eleven then the eleven names of God are configured into three realities. This gives thirty-three which gives the reason behind chanting *SubhānAllāh* 33 times, *Alhamdulillah* 33 times and *Allāh Akbar* 33 times after each *Ṣalāh*. And if these thirty three names are configured into three ecstasies of Hearing (السّميع), Seeing (البصير), and Speech (المتكلّم) they become ninety nine which represents ninety nine names of God and whoever counts and preserves them would enter into paradise. The ninety nine is connected with the ecstasy, of union which gives a Hundred and this denotes that a hundred is manifested and another hundred is hidden among the names of God in this station. Then, when the two are configured to five realities it results to a thousand and when connected to ecstasy of *Jam'ul jam'* it becomes one thousand and one, and this is the number of the names of God.[24]

From the above, it is shown that Shaykh Ibrāhīm Inyās is in support of the view that God has ninety-nine names and that they are the names that are known to the generality of Muslims. He later concludes that God has one thousand and one names but he does not mention any of those names in this work except the ninety-nine names that had already been known in the narration of Abu-Hurayrah. The opinion of Shaykh Ibrāhīm corroborates with Al-Ghazāli's view and this is supported by some Ṣūfis . Shaykh Ibrāhīm Inyās in his attempt to explain *Tawhīd* (Unity of God) in another book titled *Kashfu'l Libass,* he categorizes *Tawhīd* into three. They are *Tawhīd Mubtadi'in* (the knowledge of God for the novices), *Tawhīd Mutawāsitin* (the knowledge of God for the intermediates), and *Tawhīd Kāmilin* (the knowledge of God for the competent). The first category which is *Tawhīd Mubtad'in* is *lā illaha illā Anta* (there is no god except You), the second one is *lā illaha illā Huwa* (there is no god except He) while the third category is *lā illaha illā Anaa* (there is no god except I). Based on this explanation, it could be suggested that apart from the name 'Allāh' which is well known, other names such as *Huwa, Anaa* and *Anta* among others can still be regarded as names of Allāh[25]. Ibn 'Arabi maintains that the ninety-names of Allah are the outward signs of the universe inner mysteries. He claims that Allāh's names are more than ninety-nine in the Qur'ān. For instance, he categorizes the names of God into four. They are:

(i) *Al-Asmā'u-l Maᶜrifah* (the known names).

(ii) *Al-Asmā'u- lil-afᶜal* (names attributed to deeds) with examples from Qur'ān 2 v15: Allāh says:

اَللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ

Allāh will throw back their mockery on them,
and give them rope in their trespasses.

and Qur'ān 9 v 79:

سَخِرَ اَللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Allāh will throw back their ridicule on them:
and they shall have a grievous penalty.

Name of other existence used on behalf of God. Ibn Arabi opines that there are other existences used on behalf of God. For instance in the below quoted verse of the Qur'ān, he argues that the word *Sarabīl* which appears twice in the verse is used on behalf of Allah who protect man from heat and Mutual violence.

وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَٰبِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ ٱلْحَرَّ وَسَرَٰبِيلَ تَقِيكُم بَأْسَكُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُۥ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ

He made you garments to protect you from heat, and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence. Thus, He completes His favours on you that ye may bow to His will (in Islām)". Qur'an 16 verse 81

(iii) Pronouns used by Allāh for Himself such as *Anaa* (أنا), *Huwa* (هو), *Anta* (أنت), *Nahnu* (نحن), among others. Allāh says in the Glorious Qur'ān.

إِنَّنِيٓ أَنَا ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا۠

"Surely I am Allāh there is no god but I" (Q.20v14). Furthermore, Allāh says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ

"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message" (Q. 15 v 9)

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْحَىُّ ٱلْقَيُّومُ

Allāh, There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. (Q. 3 v 2)

لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ إِنِّى كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ

There is no god but Thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!"[26]

Putting the views of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Inyās and his supporters under examination, it could be suggested that their views have conformity with the tradition of the Prophet encoded by Imām Ahmad as reported on the authority of 'Abdullah bn Mas'ud who said that the Messenger of Allāh S.A.W said that:

ما أصاب أحدا قط هم ولا حزن فقال اللهم اني عبدك ابن أمتك ناصيتي بيدك ماضي في حكمك عدل في قضاؤك أسألك بكل اسم هو لك سميت به نفسك أو أنزلته في كتابك أو علمته أحدا من خلقك أو استأثرت به في علم الغيب عندك أن تجعل القران العظيم ربيع قلبي ونور صدري وجلاء حزني وذهاب همي الا أذهب الله حزنه و همه وأبدل مكانه فرا.

Meaning:

> Any person who is overcome by sadness or grief and supplicates O Allāh, I am your servant my forelock is in Your Hand. Your decision concerning me shall certainly come to pass. Just is your judgment about me. I invoke you by every name that You have and You called Yourself which were sent down in Your book, taught to any of Your creatures or kept with you in the knowledge of the unseen that is with you. Make Glorious Qur'ān the spring of my heart, the light of my chest, the remover of my grief and the dissipater of my concern; Surely, Allāh will remove his grief and sadness and exchange them for delight[28].
>
> The Prophet (S.A.W) was asked, "O Messenger of Allāh should we learn these words? He said it is an obligation on all those who hear this supplication to learn it[29].

From the *Ḥadīth*, it is observed that the names of Allāh are more than ninety-nine and Allāh teaches whoever He loves among His servants His hidden names apart from the ones that are apparent. On this note, the Ṣūfi*s* believe that their ultimate goal is to search for Allāh and they try to reflect rigorously on the reality of God (*Ḥaqīqat-Ilahiyyah*) through His greatest name called Allāh and this makes them to discover other names that have the same numerical value of sixty-six (*Hisāb*) with the word Allāh. Such names are *Wakīl*, *Ahalal*, *Jaynij*, *Bakamad*.

Table 1: An example of other names of God

S/N	Names of God in Arabic	Transliteration for the Names of God	Letters of the Names in Arabic	Number of the Letters in each Name	Numerical Values (*Hisab*)	Total
1	الله	ALLĀH	ا	4	1	
			ل		30	
			ل		30	
			ه		5	66
2	وكيل	WAKĪL	و	4	6	
			ك		20	
			ي		10	

			ل		30	66
٣	أهلال	AHALAL	أ	4	1	
			ه		5	
			ل		30	
			ل		30	66
٤	جينج	JUNAYJ	ج	4	3	
			ي		10	
			ن		50	
			ج		3	66
٥	بكمد	BAKAMAD	ب	4	2	
			ك		20	
			م		40	
			د		4	66

Looking critically at the above table, it could be seen that the five names which appear on the table have the same number of letters in Arabic, which is four and the same numerical values of sixty-six which means that all the five names are representing the name of God (Allāh) irrespective of the language they form. Taking for instance the name (أهلال) *Ahlal* if *Ya' nida'* is attached to it, it forms *Ya Ahlal* (يا أهلال) which means I call on to You O Allāh and the *Ya' nida'* which appears at the beginning of the name could also be applicable to other names of God when making supplication with them like *Ya Razāq*, *Ya Laṭīf, Ya Hafīdh* among others. Moreover if the *Ya' nida'* is removed as prefix of *Ahlal* and made a suffix, it forms *Ahlaluya* which denotes glory be onto the Lord in Hebrew language. *AHA- LA-LUYA* is a way of giving thanks and appreciation to God in Christianity[30]. This shows the uniqueness of the name of God and His manifestation in the world of religions. This perhaps indicates the link and relationship in terms of God between Islām and Christianity which exist through Ṣūfism (*Ḥaqīqah*). In a nut shell, Ṣūfism is a system of belief which shows that God is associated to all heavenly religions and has possession of all things that are in existence -living and non-living.

Conclusion

We have critically discussed in this paper argument of both Sufi and theologians on the names and attributes of God. It is shown in the course of the discourse that the two opposing groups maintain the view that God is explicitly monotheistic in nature and according to the Sufis, His name "Allah" which is His essence has no origin, etymology and derivation since Allah Himself has neither origin nor source. While the theologians uphold the view that the word Allah is originated from *al-Ilah* this is counted as the most powerful name of God. They also maintain the view that the names of Allah are ninety nine in number. The paper further buttressed the transcendence of God and His immanence in all creatures as well as His originality of power, possession and provisions for all creatures. The paper further discussed that all the attributes of God can be possessed by His creatures nonetheless God is neither creature nor creature is God. The paper also established that God has numerous names which are apparent and hidden. The hidden ones are known to those who are closer in piety and nearness to Him.

Endnotes

1. Al-Ghazāli, M.M., *Al-Maqsad -l-asnā' fi-sharih Asmāillahi -l-Husnā'*, Lebanon, Darul-'Ilmiyyah, (n.d), 6
2. Sālih Fawzani Ridwān, *Translator's Note on Ibn Taymiah's al-ᶜAqāid-al-wastiyyah*, Saudi *'Arabi*a, Institute of World Research, 2010, 5
3. Umar Yusuf, *Asmāullāhi'l-Husnā'-f -fawāṣil-l-Qur'ān 'Adāduha wa' haduha* in Al-Sahwah Islāmic Journal series-1, April, 2013, 86.
4. Sālih Fawzani Ridwān, 2010, 6
5. This information is extracted from one of the litanies of *Shaykh* Ibrāhīm 'Abdullah Inyās called *Duᶜa'ul Mukhamisul-Askandari* collected from Shaykh Isa Yusuf Oladejobi on 20th June, 2016.
6. As-Sarāj Aṭ-Ṭusi, *Al-lummāᶜ -fi-Tārīkh-Taṣawwuf-l-Islāmi*, (n.d), 90
7. *ibid*, 89
8. This information is extracted from one of the litanies of *Shaykh* Ibrāhīm 'Abdullah Inyās called *Duᶜa'ul Mukhamisul-Askandari* collected from Shaykh Isa Yusuf Oladejobi on 20th June, 2016.
9. Umar Yusuf, *Asmāullāhi'l-Husnā'-f -fawāṣil-l-Qur'ān 'Adāduha wa' haduha* in Al-Sahwah Islāmic Journal series-1, April, 2013, 223
10. As-Sarāj Aṭ-Ṭusi, *Al-lummāᶜ -fi-Tārīkh-Taṣawwuf-l-Islāmi*, (n.d), 90. See akso Ar-Razī 's., *Tafsīrul Mafatihil Ghayb*, , Vol.1, 1994, 169.
11. Ibn 'Arabi, *Al-Futuhāt-l- Makiyyah*, Lebanon, Darul 'Ilmiyyah Vol.3. 2006, .434
12. Philips B.A., *The Fundamental of Tawheed*, Saudi Arabia Publication, 1990, 1-2
13. Ahmad ᶜAtā, *At-Taṣawwuf-l-Islāmi Bayna-'l-Asalah wal-Iqtbās*, Lebanon, Darul Jayl, 1987, 273
14. Al-Ghazāli M.M., *Al-asna f-Sharih Asmāu llahi-l-usnā*,. (n.d), 11
15. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Furqan Baynal Haq wa'l Batil*, 2nd *ed.*, Lebanon Darul Bayan, Vol.4 1993, 86

16. *Ṣaḥīḥul-Bukhari* 9:121 see: Ibn Taymiyyah, (1993), *Al-Furqan Baynal Haq wal Batil*, Vol.4, 273
17. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Furqan Baynal Haq wa'l Batil* 2nd *ed.*, 1993, 86
18. *ibid*, 86
19. *ibid*, 87
20. Ansāri M.A., *Ṣūfism and Sharīᶜah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad* Sicrhindi's *Effort to Reform* Ṣūfism, 1986, 78
21. Sālih Fawzāni Ridwan, *Translator's notes on Ibn Taymiyyah's al-ᶜAqaid-l-wastiyyah*, 2010, 33
22. Muhammad I.B, *Ṣaḥīḥ l-Bukhari*, Beirut: Dār Ihya' at-Turath al-'Araby, Lebanon, Vol. 3, 1991, 198. The Hadith is also quoted in *Hiṣnu'l Muslim Min Adhkar'l Kitāb was- Sunnah* by Saheed bn 'Ali Al-Qa'aṭān,Egypt, Maktabah'l Hadiy'l Muhammadyy. 2nd *ed.*, 2013, 31
23. Sālih Fawzani Ridwan, *Translator's Notes on Ibn Taymiyyah's al-ᶜAqaid-l-wastiyyah*, 2010, 63-66.
24. Abdullah I.I., *Fi-Riyad Tafsīr-l-Qur'ān-l-Karīm*, Senegal, Muktabatun-Nahudah, Vol.3. 2010, 251
25. *ibid*, 251
26. Ibn *'Arabi, Al- Futuhātul-Makkiyyah*, Lebanon, Darul-'Ilmiyyah Vol.8, 2006, 51-53.
27. *ibid*, 53 .
28. This Hadīth is quoted by Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathir, Lebanon Lahore, Darus-Salam Vol.4, .214. See also Fatihu'l Bāri 5:417 and Ṣaḥīḥu'l Muslim
29. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Vol.4, 2000, 214

30. Allaluyah is a way of giving thanks and appreciation to God in Christianity which corroborates with Yah Allalu found by Sufis in the course of their searching for the Ultimate reality names of God.

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A MORAL DISCOURSE ON THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS MIMICKING IN NIGERIAN FILMS: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF II CORINTHIANS 11: 13-15.

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation is notoriously religious. There is hardly anything done without religious coloration. The question begging for answer is whether such deep love for religion is fake or real. The most probable yardstick to answer the question here or there perhaps should be the agreement of the natural roles of religion with the citizens' moral upliftment. As far as the Nollywood actors are concerned, religion itself might not be fake. Most adherents, particularly the leaders are somewhat less than real. The paper is out to study religious mimicking in some home videos. Since the conclusion in such videos usually end up in expressing the hypocritical tendencies of religious leaders, the paper adopts historical and comparative study of II Corinthians 11:13-15. It concludes that until Paul's warnings are taken into consideration, religion particularly Christianity will continue to occupy space without much value on the society's moral standard.

Keywords: Nollywood, Mimicking, Christianity, Social vices.

Introduction

The prevailing moral decadence in our society has justified the call by Douglas Crow as quoted from Suleiman Jamiu for a discourse that would make a religious tradition relevant to the condition and challenges of modernity.[1] The justification is hinged on the continued increase in social vices in our society in spite of the acclaimed moral and reconciliatory roles of religion in both extended and nuclear families of the world. Perhaps, the assumed failure of religion to make positive moral imparts in Nigeria in spite of its deep religiosity, brought into existence various groups of "moral watchers" in our society. One of such groups is no doubt the Nollywood, a group of artists using their talents in film and home video productions.

The main interest of this paper is the way the Nollywood actors are using religious words, phrase and even costumes as make-belief in order to expose hypocritical

tendencies of religious leaders and adherents to the dismay of its teaming fans in Nigerian homes. The exposures in most cases seem to impugn on the characters of religious leaders, but the shocking neglect of known religious precepts in place of hedonistic gospels from Christian leaders as seen and heard from both church and electronic preachers is no doubt a temptation to agree with Nollywood make-belief actors that all is not well in our Churches. The question now arises: should the problems of immorality be blamed on religion or its adherents particularly as it affects Christianity in Nigeria? After all, the more churches we have now, the more crimes appear to increase.

This paper goes into exegetical exposition of II Corinthians 11: 13-15 for the purpose of reassessment of a biblical support for religious mimicking by Nollywood actors and its implication for the contemporary church leaders in Nigeria. While religion, if positively channeled, is capable of healing the wounds of social malaises in the Nigerian society, the role of these make-beliefs should not be seen as that of disrespect for religion but a warning to believers that faith only in God rather than in religious leaders is a necessary antidote to social maladies in our religious society.

Religion and Nollywood

William Grassie describes religion as one of the markers of cultural and national identity, which in turns become a natural aspect of our species.[2] According to him, even though the best and the worst things that humans do seem to be motivated by religion, it is not realistic to discard it off our life, instead, we must encourage it to try to make it more wholesome in human affairs.[3] Corroborating Grassie's views, Adeoye Oyewole in his argument for religion as an instrument for the mental well-being of humanity, expresses his supports for Carl Jung's psycho analytical theory as a major synergy for religious role in our societies.[4] According to him:

> While Sigmund Fiend believed that religious doctrines were all Illusions and universal obsessional neurosis of humanity, Carl Jung... viewed religion as collective mythologies with profound effect on personality. Thus, in Jung's view, religions are indispensable spiritual supports, whereas in Fiend's, they are illusory crutches.[5]

Since leadership is a necessary nexus in any progressive society however, positive effects of religion can only be felt in a situation where leaders allow truthfulness, moderation and objectivity to be their watchwords. To be a religious leader is not only to be a seeker after truth and knowledge, one should equally be able to live a life worthy of his or her callings. The call according to 1Timothy 3:1-7 requires a life that is proportionate with religious tenets in values and attitude. For example, a detachment from crass materialism is one of the biblical tenets (cf I John 2: 15- 17) for all Christians, but much more for church leaders who are being looked upon for directions. Failure to obey this precept could be translated to sacrificing truth and knowledge on the altar of self-aggrandizement