

# Investigating Monotheism as Proof of God's Existence in African Religion

Rev. Fr. James Bako Danjuma Tella<sup>1</sup>, Hosea Nakina Martins<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> College of Humanities, Education and Law, Kaduna State University, Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the monotheistic existence of God in African Religion, specifically among the Mumuye people of Taraba State, Nigeria. Through descriptive and analytic research methods, data were collected from field observations, focus group discussions, and literary sources. The research reveals that the concept of monotheism is an inherent phenomenon in African Religion, with God possessing moral attributes such as supremacy, holiness, infiniteness, justice, and mercy. The study argues that adherents of African Religion owe their existence to the monotheistic God, who is the sacred object of worship. It recommends that adherents respect and uphold the monotheistic belief in one God as the source and object of their worship. Despite the presence of multiple sects within African Religion, the concept of God as a Supreme Being, Holy, Infinite, Just, and Merciful remains a fundamental aspect of the faith. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of African Religion, highlighting the importance of monotheism in the faith. The research suggests that adherents of African Religion should tenaciously uphold their monotheistic beliefs, without being swayed by external influences. By doing so, they can maintain the integrity and uniqueness of their faith, while also promoting a deeper understanding of African Religion globally. Ultimately, this study provides valuable insights into the significance of monotheism in African Religion.*

## KEYWORDS

*Monotheism, African Religion, Concept, Proof and God*

## I. 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 African Religion. He is also believed to be the originator and Supreme source of life as conceived in African Religion. Hence, these attributes in African Religion recognized God as merciful, Holy and Just and existing sacred reality. Thus, without the monotheistic idea that God exists in African Religion, there would be no religion because God is considered the centre of all religious life, beliefs, and practices. The concept of God in African Religion is complex and multifaceted, and it has been the subject of much debate and discussion among scholars. Despite the diversity of African cultures and languages, the idea of a Supreme Being is a common thread that runs through many African societies. God is often seen as the creator and sustainer of the universe, and is believed to be involved in the lives of individuals and communities.

In many African cultures for instance, God is also seen as a benevolent being who is concerned with the well-being of humanity. The concept of God in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of spirituality, where God is believed to be actively involved

in the lives of individuals and communities. This spirituality is often expressed through various rituals and ceremonies, which are used to communicate with God and the ancestors.

## **II. THE NATURE OF GOD IN AFRICAN RELIGION**

The intuitive and experiential phenomenon of the mystery and existence of God in African Religion is a clear manifestation that He is a monotheistic God that exists, and whose existence cannot be denied in African Religions. Hence, Mumuye addresses God as Kpanti-Laa, Tiv as Aondo, and Yoruba as Oludumare - there is no person but God, while the Jaba (Ham) people in Kaduna State also address God as Nom. It is interesting to note that, in African Religion, the more one talks about God, it means young or old, the deeper the impression grows of the concept of creator God. God is seen as one who is omniscient, which is not different in African Religion. The nature of God in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of benevolence, where God is believed to be concerned with the well-being of humanity. This benevolence is often expressed through various rituals and ceremonies, which are used to communicate with God and the ancestors. The concept of God's benevolence is also reflected in the various names and attributes given to God in different African cultures. For example, the Akan people of Ghana refer to God as Nyame, which means "the one who knows everything."

## **III. THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN AFRICAN RELIGION**

God is seen as one who gives existence to things, and He is a self-existing force who is otherwise referred to as the Supreme Being and monotheistic figure, the master of the universe, whose monotheistic existence is evidently enshrined in their belief systems. Hence, African Religions consider and have God as their 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 was the maker of the universe. The concept of God in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of monotheism, where God is believed to be the only true God. This monotheistic belief is reflected in the various names and attributes given to God in different African cultures. For example, the Yoruba people of Nigeria refer to God as Oludumare, while the Igbo people refer to Him as Chukwu.

However, despite the diversity of names and attributes, the underlying belief in one God is a common thread that runs through many African societies. The concept of God in African Religion is also influenced by the cultural and historical context of the people. African cultures are rich in tradition and history, and the concept of God is often shaped by the experiences and worldview of the people.

## **IV. MONOTHEISM IN AFRICAN RELIGION**

Monotheism is simply abbreviated as theism, which holds that only one God exists. God is seen as primal, supreme in power, knowledge, and moral worth, who created all other existing beings out of nothing; the term came from the Greek mono and Theism meaning one God. The concept of monotheism is central to African Religion, where God is believed

to be the creator and sustainer of the universe. This belief in one God is a fundamental aspect of African spirituality, and it has played a significant role in shaping the cultural and philosophical traditions of the continent.

The concept of monotheism in African Religion is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the diversity of African cultures and societies. Despite the complexity, monotheism remains a dominant theme in African spirituality, with many communities believing in a single, all-powerful God. This belief in one God is often accompanied by a strong sense of reverence and devotion, with many Africans believing that God is actively involved in their daily lives.

The exclusivity of monotheism in African Religion is reflected in the various rituals and ceremonies that are used to communicate with God and the ancestors. These rituals and ceremonies are often performed with great reverence and respect, and they are believed to be essential for maintaining the balance and harmony of the universe. The use of rituals and ceremonies to communicate with God and the ancestors is a key feature of African spirituality, and it reflects the deep-seated belief in the power and majesty of God.

In many African cultures, God is believed to be the source of all life and existence, and is often revered as the creator and sustainer of the universe. This belief in God's creative power is reflected in the many myths and legends that are found in African cultures, which often describe God's role in creating the world and all living things. The concept of God as creator and sustainer is also reflected in the many rituals and ceremonies that are performed to ensure the fertility and productivity of the land.

The concept of monotheism in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of moral worth, where God is believed to be a just and righteous God who demands moral obedience from His followers. This moral dimension of God's nature is reflected in the many moral teachings and codes that are found in African cultures, which often emphasize the importance of living a virtuous and morally upright life. The belief in God's moral worth is also reflected in the many rituals and ceremonies that are performed to atone for sins and to seek forgiveness from God.

Without exaggerating, the concept of monotheism is a central aspect of African Religion, where God is believed to be the creator and sustainer of the universe. The exclusivity of monotheism in African Religion is reflected in the various rituals and ceremonies that are used to communicate with God and the ancestors. The concept of God in African Religion is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the diversity of African cultures and societies. Despite the complexity, monotheism remains a dominant theme in African spirituality, with many communities believing in a single, all-powerful God.

## **V. AFRICAN RELIGION: AN OVERVIEW**

African Religion is an indigenous religion handed to the Africans by their forebears. Gbenda defines it as "The religious tradition of the African peoples that is based purely on their culture". In other words, Anyacho puts it that "African Religion is the term that is used to describe the religion that was founded by the forebears of Africans". African 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. African Religion

is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of spiritual and philosophical traditions. It is a religion that is deeply rooted in the culture and history of the African people, and it continues to play an important role in shaping their identity and worldview. The diversity of African cultures and languages has also contributed to the richness and diversity of African Religion, with different communities having their own unique spiritual practices and traditions.

## **VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN RELIGION**

African Religion is characterized by a strong sense of spirituality, where God is believed to be actively involved in the lives of individuals and communities. This spirituality is deeply ingrained in the culture and traditions of African societies, and it plays a significant role in shaping their worldview and daily lives. The concept of spirituality in African Religion is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the diversity of African cultures and societies.

Despite the complexity, spirituality remains a dominant theme in African Religion, with many communities believing in a strong connection between the living and the dead. The living and the dead are believed to be interconnected, and this interconnectedness is often expressed through various rituals and ceremonies. These rituals and ceremonies are used to communicate with God and the ancestors, and to seek their guidance and protection.

The importance of spirituality in African Religion cannot be overstated, as it provides a sense of meaning and purpose to the lives of individuals and communities. African Religion also places a strong emphasis on community and family ties, where the living and the dead are believed to be interconnected. This emphasis on community and family ties is reflected in the various rituals and ceremonies that are used to mark important life events, such as birth, marriage, and death. These rituals and ceremonies are often performed with great reverence and respect, and they are believed to be essential for maintaining the balance and harmony of the universe.

The concept of spirituality in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of reverence and respect for the divine. This reverence is often expressed through various rituals and ceremonies, which are used to honour God and the ancestors. The use of rituals and ceremonies to communicate with God and the ancestors is a key feature of African spirituality, and it reflects the deep-seated belief in the power and majesty of God.

Thus, the importance of reverence and respect for the divine is also reflected in the many moral teachings and codes that are found in African cultures, which often emphasize the importance of living a virtuous and morally upright life. The concept of spirituality in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of community, where individuals and communities come together to celebrate and honour God. This sense of community is reflected in the many rituals and ceremonies that are performed to mark important life events, such as birth, marriage, and death. These rituals and ceremonies are often performed with great joy and celebration, and they provide an opportunity for individuals and communities to come together and strengthen their bonds. The importance of community in African Religion cannot be overstated, as it provides a sense of belonging and identity to individuals and communities.

The concept of monotheism is a fundamental aspect of African Religion. The existence of God is acknowledged and worshipped by various African communities, each with their unique cultural and linguistic expressions. The nature of God in African Religion is that of a Supreme Being, creator, and sustainer of the universe, who is merciful, just, and eternal. The concept of monotheism in African Religion is also characterized by a strong sense of exclusivity, where God is believed to be the only true God. African Religion is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of spiritual and philosophical traditions.

The concept of spirituality in African Religion is characterized by a strong sense of reverence and respect for the divine, and a deep-seated belief in the power and majesty of God. The importance of community and family ties in African Religion is also reflected in the various rituals and ceremonies that are used to mark important life events, such as birth, marriage, and death. These rituals and ceremonies are often performed with great reverence and respect, and they are believed to be essential for maintaining the balance and harmony of the universe. The concept of monotheism in African Religion is a rich and complex phenomenon that deserves further study and exploration.

## **VII. THE ORIGIN OF MONOTHEISM**

The origin of monotheism is as old as the concept itself since the creation of the world. Right from man's beginning, there was the general assumption that man was living in a world that is made and directed by a great force beyond man's control. Everything that beats the imagination of man was attributed to the Divine Power 'God' (Alue, n.d., p. 65). Things came into existence into the world or universe not just by themselves but through a force reckoned as the monotheistic reality. As a man reflects about the wonders of creation, the origin of the existence of God is conceived.

All rational thinking beings owed their existence to the monotheistic God whom they experienced in rational, moral and physical cosmos. God is an existing force whose origin lies in him, and his existence is innately endowed in the creatures he created. His very existence is experienced by men; inductively and experimentally. The origin of monotheism is inbuilt in the concept of one, holy existing Supreme Being himself, which is vastly accepted by mankind that God has one origin for he is everywhere who is reasonably demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt (Alue, n.d., p. 38). Thus, Ultimate Being really exists and his name is God.

One can say without mincing words that, God's 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 human can know. It is interesting to also note that, the experience of the Holy is something which is not touchable and awe inspiring; an ultimate meaning; who is the source of ultimate courage, and whose origin is a mystery (Adasu, 1985, p. 12). Hence, monotheism is primal, supreme, knowledgeable, moral who exist in himself and not out of nothing (Evans & Manis, 2009, p. 37).

It is worth reiterating that, from the above claims also, God is immanent in himself whom no human can be said to grasp or traced his origin. God 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, 1970, p. 29). However, the knowledge of God's existence is a universal and inbuilt in Islamic religion just as in other major religions of the world.

The genuine religious experience affirmed again and again in a Muslim daily life, whose faith recognize and feel the existence of God. Also, cases of God's existence are very solid in terms of its rational foundations as well as the purpose, meaning, comfort, and total guidance that gives life. However, 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 or intuitively turn to God in times of danger. Another authentic evidence of the monotheistic proof for the existence of God is discovered on several experiences of the heart through which the believer's final comfort, inner peace, moral education, meaning in life and the spiritual fruits of true religion are realized.

African Religion is 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" (Oborji, 1998, p. 15). Thus the Supreme Being is monotheistic in the sense that, He is the last Court of Appeal and at the same time the Supreme Court who can be approached when the lesser divinities fail to fulfil the desire of those who invoke them.

Monotheism is a vivid proof of the existence of God in African 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. No doubt, God is revered and feared among his creatures as that "Supreme Being" who manifests in facets of African endeavours. 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 God's existence, who is and will always be.

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 source of power, goodness, life and strength and the eternal mystery of life that exist. The holiness of God is a clear manifestation of his merciful, faithful and transcendental attributes (Shishima, 2014, p. 2). Mbiti adumbrates the eternal and intrinsic attributes of a monotheistic God to include:

- [1] Omniscient - that is, to know all things, to be simultaneously everywhere.
- [2] Omnipresent - who is ever-present?
- [3] Omnipotent - Almighty, all powerful

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 Religion, who has power and authority and he is a lead figure to other smaller gods.

## VIII. MONOTHEISTIC PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE IN AFRICAN RELIGION: A UNIVERSAL REALITY

Monotheistic proof of God's existence in African 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 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 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, 2006, p. 8).

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

God's monotheistic existence is the primary and supreme object of worship in African Religion. The very widespread belief in God who is believed to be Supreme Lord is been accorded recognition by Africans in African Religion. God is invisible and infinite and cannot be comprehended by finite man. Africans belief in monotheism is as old as the African the continent itself. From this account for different local names of God in all tongues of Africa like: *Chineke* in Igbo, *Kpanti-Laa* in Mumuye, *Olodumare* in Yoruba, *Aondo* in Tiv and Nom among the Ham people.

God is ubiquitous; meaning: He is found everywhere and He is the ruler of the whole universe. Since the monotheistic existence of God is the basic Supreme African belief in the Supreme Being whom they called with names like: *Chineke* in Igbo, *Abasi-Ibom* in Ibibio, *Doko* in Nupe, *Aondo* in Tiv, *Kpanti-Laa/Daadapeng* in Mumuye, *Owoicho* in Idoma (Gbenda, 2006, pp. 6–7). Thus, the idea of God is one of the most important concepts of the proof of His existence in African Religion. African theologians also inform us that Africans believe in One God, who is conceived as the creator of human beings and the universe.

## IX. CONCLUSION

God is the source of life and the necessity that prompts people to seek him day in day out. Hence, a revisit of the proof of God's existence in African Religion is without doubt that monotheistic existence of God is real. Thus, adherents of African Religion should come to fully reflect on the monotheistic existence of God as the solid, real, just, merciful, ultimate and limitless phenomena, whose existence affirmed his greatness. Monotheistic proofs of the existence of God is the greatest being ever existing since the world was conceived. African Religion upheld tenaciously on monotheistic existence of God as permanently inscribed experiences of the holy.

In the foregoing, the paper elucidated basic terms like monotheism and African Religion. It went further to examine the origin of monotheisms as a general view, nature and origin of monotheistic proofs of God's existence, monotheistic proofs of God's existence in African Religion. Monotheism is a general concept found to exist in African Religion, and it proves the existence of one God as really as he exists. From all the attributes of God adumbrated and examined in African Religion, the monotheism is really a proof of the existence of God who is the sacred object of worship in African Religion. Without God, or the idea of the sacred God ceases to exist because, He is the centre of all religious beliefs and practices, whose existence is proven as facts and real.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Haven examined monotheistic proofs for the existence of God in African Religion, the research makes the following submissions:

- [1] African Religion affirmed the existence of a monotheistic God whom they give desiring attributes as owner of the universe, and who is just, loving, holy, pure and without blemish. Hence, the adherents of this religion should continue to uphold and proof in their lives that they owed their existence to the monotheistic God, who is their object of worship and must be respected at all times.
- [2] There should be no disparity on the monotheistic concepts of God's existence in African Religions by variant existing sects across different African cultures.
- [3] There should be due worship of God as the maker of heaven and earth, through whom all things come by adherents of African Religion.

African Religion and her adherents should see the need to foster the monotheistic concept of God in their worship as a challenge to a theism.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Adasu, M. O. (1985). *Understanding the African Traditional Religion: Part One*. England: Dorset Publishers.
- [2] Akaatenger, A. – M. (2015). *Witchcraft, Magic and Sorcery in African Religion Worldview: A Pastoral Reflection on Tiv Religious Traditions*. Makurdi: Phalanx.
- [3] Anaycho, E. O. (1994). *Essential Themes in the Study of Religion*. Obudu, Cross River State: Niger Link Printing and Publishing.
- [4] Elue, M. O. (2002). The fool says in his heart "There is no God." *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 5(Dec).
- [5] Ekwunife, A. N. O. (1994). *Consecration in Igbo Traditional Religion*. Enugu: Snaap Press.
- [6] Evans, S., & Manis, Z. (2009). *Philosophy of Religion* (2nd Ed.). USA: Inter Varsity Press.
- [7] Gbenda, J. S. (2006). *African Religion and Christianity in a Changing World: A Comparative Approach*. Enugu: Chuka Educational Publishers.
- [8] Mbiti, J. S. (1970). *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York: Anchor Books.
- [9] Mendelshon, J. (1962). *God, Allah and Juju*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- [10] Oborji, F. A. (1998). *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II: Missiological Orientation*. Rome: Leberit Press.
- [11] Ogwuche, P., et al. (2007). The importance of Christianity–Muslim relations in Africa. *NACATHS Journal of Africa Theology*, 17(March).
- [12] Shishima, D. S. (2014). *African Religion: A Bird's Eye View*. Makurdi: Obeta Continental Press Ltd.