

THE CREED TEACHINGS OF *ISLAM BERKEMAJUAN*: A GENEALOGICAL AND PRAXICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PURE TAWHID IN MUHAMMADIYAH

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DOI:

Received: Mei 2026

Accepted: June 2026

Published: Juli 2026

Abstract :

This article examines the creed of tawhid in Muhammadiyah teachings. This research is important because studies on this topic have been very limited to date. The purpose of this study is to trace the genealogy of Muhammadiyah's creed of tawhid and to examine how it is applied in response to complex and dynamic realities. This study employs qualitative literature review using a hermeneutic approach. It analyzes Muhammadiyah's formal sources and its key figures based on existing documents. The research findings indicate that, substantively, Muhammadiyah's teachings on the creed of tawhid share similarities with Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (particularly the Ash'ari school). This implies that, although known as a modern mass organization, substantively, Muhammadiyah's teachings on the creed of tawhid are deeply traditional. Nevertheless, technically, Muhammadiyah's eclectic nature remains evident when constructing narratives on monotheism, much like Salafi groups. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah has successfully transformed its traditional monotheistic views into a progressive theological movement that integrates doctrinal orthodoxy with social transformation. This is reflected in Muhammadiyah leaders such as Kiai Ahmad Dahlan, Amien Rais, Ahmad Syafii Maarif, and Hamim Ilyas. This study concludes that traditional monotheism has successfully bridged and guided constructive social activism to give birth to the civilization of the future.

Keywords : *Teaching, Muhammadiyah, Tawhid, Genealogy, Praxis***Abstrak :**

Artikel ini mengkaji tentang akidah tauhid dalam ajaran Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini penting karena studi mengenai topik ini masih sangat minim hingga saat ini. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menelusuri genealogi akidah tauhid Muhammadiyah serta mengkaji bagaimana akidah tersebut diterapkan dalam merespons realitas yang kompleks dan dinamis. Penelitian ini adalah studi pustaka model kualitatif dengan pendekatan hermeneutik. Penelitian ini menganalisis sumber-sumber resmi Muhammadiyah dan tokoh-tokoh utamanya berdasarkan dokumen-dokumen yang ada. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, secara substansial, ajaran Muhammadiyah mengenai akidah tauhid memiliki kesamaan dengan Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (khususnya Ash'ari). Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa, meskipun dikenal sebagai organisasi massa modern, secara substansial, ajaran Muhammadiyah mengenai akidah tauhid sangat tradisional. Namun demikian, secara teknis, sifat eklektik Muhammadiyah tetap terlihat jelas saat membangun narasi tentang tauhid, mirip dengan kelompok-kelompok Salafi. Selain itu, Muhammadiyah telah berhasil mentransformasi pandangan tauhid tradisionalnya menjadi gerakan teologis progresif yang mengintegrasikan ortodoksi doktrinal dengan transformasi sosial. Hal ini tercermin pada para pemimpin Muhammadiyah seperti Kiai Ahmad Dahlan, Amien Rais, Ahmad Syafii Maarif, dan Hamim Ilyas. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa tauhid tradisional telah berhasil menjembatani dan mengarahkan aktivisme sosial yang konstruktif untuk melahirkan peradaban masa depan.

Kata Kunci: *Ajaran, Tauhid, Muhammadiyah, Genealogi, Praksis*

INTRODUCTION

On February 20–22, 2026, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah held a Ramadan 1447 H discussion on the theme “*Akidah Islam Berkemajuan: Memperluas Paham Tauhid Murni Tinjauan Ideologis, Filosofis, dan Praksis*” (The Creed of Progressive Islami: Expanding the Concept of Pure Tawhid, An Ideological, Philosophical, and Praxical Review). This event has been a regular tradition of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah every Ramadan for the past 40 years.

This theme is very interesting, because the study on Islamic creed, including tawhid, as espoused by Muhammadiyah are particularly interesting, as discussions on this topic have been relatively scarce compared to other topics in fiqh and muamalah. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah’s formal rulings on creed, as outlined in the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Verdict Collection), commonly referred to as HPT, are highly concise and succinct; thus, a thorough explanation is necessary to fully grasp the concept of creed within Muhammadiyah. Therefore, this study session topic is certainly highly relevant, as there are many questions regarding what exactly the creed—particularly tawhid—adopted by Muhammadiyah entails, and how its genealogy and practices have enabled Muhammadiyah to establish thousands of AUM (Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah, Muhammadiyah Entrepreneurial Activities), such as founding 5,346 elementary and secondary educational institutions, 163 universities, 125 hospitals, 236 clinics, 444 Islamic boarding schools, 555 social welfare programs, 60 companies, and others (P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2024).

As part of Islamic creed, tawhid plays a central role in Islam. It is the cornerstone of Islamic theology (Al-Ash’ari & bin Ismail, 1990), affirming the oneness of God and serving as a theological creed concerning God’s attributes, the relationship between God and humanity, and the rejection of all forms of shirk (Watt, 2017). Tawhid also affirms the oneness of Allah in the aspects of His actions (*af’al*), divinity (*uluhiyah*), and names and attributes (*asma wa shifat*). In the development of modern Islamic thought, tawhid has undergone reinterpretation so that it is understood not only as a metaphysical creed but also as a principle of social ethics and a paradigm of civilization (Rahman, 2017).

As a modern Islamic movement, Muhammadiyah also regards tawhid as both the foundation (*al-mabādi’ al-tauhid*) and the ideological hallmark of the Progressive Islam Movement (C. B. of Muhammadiyah, 2023). Since its founding by KH Ahmad Dahlan in 1912, Muhammadiyah has championed a mission as a *tajdid* movement striving to return Islamic teachings to their primary sources, namely the Qur’an and Sunnah. This movement simultaneously seeks to eliminate religious practices deemed inconsistent with the principle of tawhid, such as TBC: *Takhayyul* (superstition), *Bid’ah* (heresy), and *Churafat* (superstition) (Abdullah, 2024), while also promoting social renewal through education, health, and social and philanthropic activities (Noer, 1973). In recent developments, Muhammadiyah has introduced the concept of Progressive Islam, which positions tawhid as the foundation of a theological paradigm oriented not only toward the purification of faith but also toward the development of civilization (Nashir, 2020). Within this framework emerged the idea of Progressive Islam Creed, an understanding of Islamic faith rooted in pure tawhid but developed to address the challenges of

modernity by drawing inspiration from the West. Within Muhammadiyah, Tawhid is understood not only as a theological creed but also as the foundation of a social movement aimed at liberating the community from poverty, ignorance, and backwardness, through initiatives such as building hospitals, modernizing education, and other efforts (Qodir et al., 2020). Within this framework, tawhid serves as both a normative principle and a driving force for social transformation (Burhani, 2016). Studies on Muhammadiyah in general have been widely conducted and are easily found in various journals and books, such as in the fields of religion (particularly *fiqh* or *tarjih*), education, social studies, culture, and even politics. However, studies on the creed of tawhid remain very limited. Therefore, the focus of this article is to examine pure tawhid within Muhammadiyah across two main domains: the genealogical dimension and the praxical dimension.

The genealogical dimension examines the relationship between Muhammadiyah's tawhid thought and the major classical theological schools in Islam. Meanwhile, the praxical dimension examines how the actualization of tawhid as believed by Muhammadiyah is mapped out in real life. This is where the gap lies between this study and previous research. There are indeed several studies on Muhammadiyah's creed, but their focus differs. Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim, for example, wrote three books on the commentary (*syarah*) of HPT regarding the book *al-Iman*, but did not link it to praxical implications in life (Abdurrahim, 2020). The results of Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim's study were re-examined by Dwi Jaka Anandika et al (2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative study employing a literature review approach. The primary data in this study consists of official documents related to Muhammadiyah creed. A hermeneutic approach was used to analyze these documents (L BERG, 2001). Hermeneutics involves an in-depth examination of real-life contexts (Miles et al., 2014). The task of hermeneutics is to understand texts through meaningful action (Ricoeur, 1981). Hermeneutics in this study is used to understand the main texts written in various official documents related to Muhammadiyah's creed of tawhid, produced by both Muhammadiyah and its intellectuals. Thus, the author's role is that of an interpreter of these texts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Creed Paradigm in Muhammadiyah

The creed paradigm of Muhammadiyah is outlined in the HPT book. The first chapter of the book is titled *Kitab al-Iman*, which outlines the fundamental tenets of faith in Muhammadiyah. This was an official decision made by Muhammadiyah in 1929 at the Special Congress in Solo. This creed is written in Arabic and Indonesian, and is very concise and succinct (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018).

In the context of evidence, Muhammadiyah is very strict and selective regarding matters of faith, requiring that the evidence used be *mutawatir*. Furthermore, when interpreting texts related to faith, the literal meaning must take precedence over *ta'wil*. As for the *ta'wil* of the Companions in this regard (Abdurrahman, 2002), it need not be accepted. This means that only the Qur'an and *mutawatir* hadith can be used as arguments in matters of belief. *Ahad* hadith

are only positioned as explanations for mutawatir texts that are still general in nature. As for ta'wil, Muhammadiyah accepts it only in a limited and contextual manner. This is stated in the HPT (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) as follows:

“يَجِبُ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ الْقُرْآنُ وَمَا تَوَاتَرَ الْخَبَرُ عَنْهُ تَوَاتُرًا صَحِيحًا مُسْتَوْفِيًا لِشُرُوطِهِ وَإِنَّمَا يَجِبُ الْإِعْتِقَادُ عَلَى مَا هُوَ صَرِيحٌ فِي ذَلِكَ فَقَطْ وَلَا تَجُوزُ الزِّيَادَةُ عَلَى مَا هُوَ قَطْعِيٌّ بِظَنِّي لِقَوْلِهِ تَعَالَى: إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا (يُونُس: 36). وَشَرَطُ صِحَّةِ الْإِعْتِقَادِ فِي ذَلِكَ أَنْ لَا يَكُونَ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ يَمَسُّ التَّنْزِيهَ وَعُلُوَّ الْمَقَامِ الْإِلَهِيِّ عَنْ مُشَابَهَةِ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ فَإِنْ وَرَدَ مَا يُؤْهِمُ ظَاهِرُهُ ذَلِكَ فِي الْمُتَوَاتِرِ وَجَبَ الْإِعْرَاضُ عَنْهُ بِالتَّسْلِيمِ لِلَّهِ فِي الْعِلْمِ بِمَعْنَاهُ مَعَ الْإِعْتِقَادِ بِأَنَّ الظَّاهِرَ غَيْرُ الْمُرَادِ أَوْ بِتَأْوِيلٍ تَقُومُ عَلَيْهِ الْقَرَائِنُ الْمُقْبُولَةُ.”

In the view of Muhammadiyah, the correct creed is that held by the “*firqah najiah*” (the saved sect) among the Salafist groups. They believe that the universe had a beginning, created by Allah from nothing, and will eventually come to an end. They also maintain that deepening one’s knowledge of the natural world to strengthen one’s faith in Allah is obligatory. The HPT (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) states:

“فَإِنَّ الْفِرْقَةَ النَّاجِيَةَ مِنَ السَّلَفِ أَجْمَعُوا عَلَى الْإِعْتِقَادِ بِأَنَّ الْعَالَمَ كُلَّهُ حَادِثٌ خَلَقَهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْعَدَمِ وَهُوَ أَيْ الْعَالَمُ قَابِلٌ لِلْفَنَاءِ وَعَلَى أَنَّ التَّنْظُرَ فِي الْكَوْنِ لِمَعْرِفَةِ اللَّهِ وَاجِبٌ شَرْعًا.”

In the context of tawhid, Muhammadiyah holds the view that it is obligatory to believe in the existence of Allah, the Creator of all things, the First without a beginning and the Last without an end. There is nothing like Him. He is the One and Only in His divinity. He is the Living One, the Self-Existing One, and the Creator of all that exists. He is the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing. He is the One who has power over all things. When He wills something, He says, “Be!” and it is. And He possesses all perfect attributes. He is free from all impossibilities and imperfections. He is the One who creates all things according to His will and decree. All things are in His hands, and to Him all things shall return (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018).

In the context of reason, Muhammadiyah holds the view that reason has limited capacity to comprehend the essence of God. Human reason cannot possibly grasp the essence of Allah and His relationship with His attributes. The Qur’an has closed the door of reason to this. Therefore, God does not command humans to discuss matters beyond the reach of reason. Humans are asked to believe wholeheartedly, without doubt. Reason is commanded only to contemplate His creation. In the HPT (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) it is stated:

“مَا أَلْفَنَّا اللَّهَ بِالْبَحْثِ فِي الْإِعْتِقَادِ بِمَا لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ عُقُولُنَا. لِأَنَّ عَقْلَ الْإِنْسَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَصِلَ إِلَى مَعْرِفَةِ ذَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَيْفِيَةِ إِتِّصَافِهِ بِصِفَاتٍ فَلَا تَبَحُّثُ عَنْهُ. وَلَيْسَ فِي وُجُودِهِ تَعَالَى شَكٌّ... وَقَدْ سَدَّ الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى الْعُقُولِ بَابَ الْخَوْصِ فِيمَا لَا تَبْلُغُهُ الْمَدَارِكُ بِقَوْلِهِ تَعَالَى: لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَنَصَّ عَلَى أَنَّ قُوَّةَ الْعَقْلِ مَحْدُودَةٌ وَأَنَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالنَّاسِ فِي قَوْلِهِ: يَخْلُقُ مَا يَبْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلَفَهُمْ وَلَا يَحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا. وَكَفَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُغْلًا أَنْ يَتَدَبَّرُوا فِي مَخْلُوقَاتِهِ لِيَسْتَدِلُّوا عَلَى وُجُودِهِ وَقُدْرَتِهِ وَحِكْمَتِهِ.”

One of the key tenets of Muhammadiyah's creed is the recognition of the existence of *al-firqah al-nājiyah* or *al-tā'ifah al-manṣūrah* (the saved or victorious group). This term refers to the group that remains on the path of truth amidst the emergence of various sects and differences of understanding within the Muslim community.

Classical scholars offer differing explanations regarding the identity of the group referred to as the *Firqah Nājiyah*. However, they generally agree that this group consists of those who adhere to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the understanding of Islam's early generations. Al-Shahrastani explains that the concept of the *Firqah Nājiyah* refers to the group that preserves the Prophet's teachings authentically (bin Abi & al-Syahrastani, 1976). Al-Ash'ari also explains that the saved group consists of those who follow the teachings of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah—that is, the group that adheres to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the Companions (Al-Asari, 2011).

According to Muhammadiyah, *al-firqah al-nājiyah* has a theological basis in the hadith of the Prophet narrated by at-Tirmidhi from Abdullah bin 'Amr, who said: This concept states that the Muslim community will split into several groups, but only one group will be saved. One of the hadiths cited by Muhammadiyah (M. T. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) is:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَيَأْتِيَنَّ عَلَى أُمَّتِي مَا أَتَى عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ حَذُو النَّعْلِ
بِالنَّعْلِ حَتَّى إِنْ أَنْ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَتَى أُمَّهُ عِلَاقِيَّةً لَكَانَ فِي أُمَّتِي مَنْ يَصْنَعُ ذَلِكَ. وَإِنَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ تَفَرَّقَتْ
عَلَى اثْنَتَيْنِ سَبْعِينَ مِائَةً تَفَرَّقَتْ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَسَبْعِينَ مِائَةً كُلُّهُمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا مِائَةً وَاحِدَةً قَالُوا: وَمَنْ
هِيَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي (رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ).

Here, Muhammadiyah believes there is one group that will be saved, namely the group that follows the Prophet and his companions. Muhammadiyah refers to this group as *Ahlul Haq Wassunnah*, as the antithesis of the *Ahl al-bid'ah wa al-dalāl* (M. T. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018). This term is another name for Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah, namely the followers of al-Ashari and Maturidi (Anandika et al., 2022). Muhammadiyah does not elaborate on the hadith to the contrary, which states that all groups will be saved and only one will enter Hell. This is likely because Muhammadiyah considers this hadith to be of weak (*dlaif*) quality, in line with the views of hadith critics. Within the context of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, Muhammadiyah does not get caught up in such terminological claims. For Muhammadiyah, these claims hold no special significance, as its creed aligns with that of the majority of Muslims, including those in Indonesia. The name also serves as an antithesis to the creeds of the Mu'tazilah, Qadariyah, Jabariyah, Shia, and others (Abdurrahman, 2002; Pasha & Darban, 2009). Therefore, Muhammadiyah does not place much importance on such claims. Moreover, in its development in Indonesia, the term *Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamaah* has evolved into a social construct that serves to reinforce the identity of certain organizations (Asy'ari, 2021; Cholid, 2021; Fadhilah et al., 2025; Kanafi et al., 2021).

It should also be noted that the uniqueness of Muhammadiyah's religious thought paradigm lies in the fact that, in understanding religion, including matters of faith, it involves direct *ijtihad* from the 2 primary sources of religious teachings,

namely the Qur'an and the *Sunnah al-Maqbūlah* (the accepted Sunnah), and not binding oneself to a specific madhhab/group/school of thought (*bilā madhhab or bidūni madhhab*). The Muhammadiyah creed states that anything not derived from these two fundamental sources cannot be upheld. The views of scholars or the founders of schools of thought are used only as references or inspiration in forming opinions that become organizational decisions (Anwar, 2018; Fanani et al., 2021). There is no obligation to follow their views. Furthermore, it should be noted that Muhammadiyah's official views are established through collective *ijtihad (ijtihād jamā'ī)*, which is binding on Muhammadiyah members in an organizational capacity (Abdurrahman, 2002; Pasha & Darban, 2009).

2. Genealogy of Creed in Muhammadiyah: Classical Islamic Theology Perspective

The genealogy of creed thought within Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from the tradition of classical Islamic theology. In the history of Islam, the discourse on tawhid has developed through various theological schools such as the Jabariyah, Mu'tazilah, Shi'ah, Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Ash'ariyah and Maturidiyah), Salafi, and Islamic reformist movements in the Middle East, particularly the thought of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida with their characteristic of purificatory tawhid, that is, the effort to purify religious practices of elements of shirk and traditions deemed inconsistent with Islamic teachings (Frank, 2020). Central themes of debate include the attributes of God, the Mutasyābihāt verses, predestination, and others. Nevertheless, the Muhammadiyah concepts of creed and tawhid possess distinct characteristics that share genealogical ties with mainstream theological schools within the classical Islamic tradition. Here are some examples of this:

a. Views on the Attributes of God (*ash-shifāt al-ilāhiyyah*)

In Islamic theology, the divine attributes of God are attributes of perfection inherent in God's essence and serve as the epistemological foundation for understanding His oneness and transcendence. From the Muhammadiyah perspective, the understanding of God's attributes is based on the principle of pure tawhid (purification of monotheism), relying on the Qur'an and the accepted Sunnah (*as-Sunnah al-Maqbūlah*), while avoiding excessive philosophical speculation and complex classical theological debates. In the HPT, Muhammadiyah states that Allah possesses the following attributes: 1. *Al-wujūd* (existence); 2. *Al-awwalu bilā bidāyah* (the First without a beginning); 3. *Al-Ākhiru bilā nihāyah* (the Last without an end); 4. *Lā yushbihuhu shay'un mina al-kā'ināt* (nothing in the universe resembles Him); 5. *Al-Aḥadu fī ulūhiyyatihi wa shifātihi wa af'ālihi* (The One in His divinity, attributes, and actions); 6. *Al-Ḥayy* (The Living); 7. *Al-Qayyūm* (The Self-Subsisting); 8. *As-Samī'* (The All-Hearing); 9. *Al-Baṣīr* (The All-Seeing); 10. *Al-Qadīr* (The All-Powerful); 11. *Izā arāda shay'an an yaqūla lahu kun fayakūn* (When He (Allah) wills a thing, He merely says to it, "Be!" and it is); 12. *Al-'Alīm* (The All-Knowing); and 13. *Al-Kalām* (The Speaker). In the HPT (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) it is stated:

"يَجِبُ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا وَهُوَ الْإِلَهُ الْحَقُّ الَّذِي خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاجِبُ الْوُجُودِ وَالْأَوَّلُ
بِلَا بَدَايَةٍ وَالْآخِرُ بِلَا نِهَايَةٍ وَلَا يُشَبِّهُهُ شَيْءٌ مِنَ الْكَائِنَاتِ الْأَحَدُ فِي أُلُوهِيَّتِهِ وَصِفَاتِهِ وَأَفْعَالِهِ. الْحَيُّ

الْقَبُومُ. السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ. وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ. وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ. اَلْمُتَّصِفُ بِالْكَلَامِ وَكُلِّ كَمَالٍ الْمُتَرْتَبُ عَنْ كُلِّ نَقْصٍ وَمُحَالٍ. يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ. بَيِّدِ الْأَمْرُ كُلَّهُ وَإِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ".

The description of God's attributes in the HPT above is similar to the concept of the 13 necessary attributes of Allah formulated by the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (Ash'ariyyah, Maturidiyyah, and al-Ghazali). When comparing the terminology in Muhammadiyah with the concepts of Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah, the correspondences are as follows: 1. *al-Wujūd* is equivalent to *wujud*; 2. *al-awwalu bilā bidāyah* is equivalent to *al-qidam*; 3. *al-ākhiru bilā nihāyah* is equivalent to *al-baqa'*; 4. *Lā yushbihuhu shay'un mina al-kā'ināt* is equivalent to *mukhalafah li al-hawādith*; 5. *al-aḥadu fī ulūhiyyatihi wa šifātihi wa af'ālihi* is equivalent to *waḥdāniyyah*; 6. *Al-Ḥayy* is equivalent to *al-Ḥayyat*; 7. *Al-Qayyūm* is equivalent to *qiyāmuḥu bi nafsih*; 8. *As-Samī'* is equivalent to *al-sam'*; 9. *Al-Baṣīr* is equivalent to *al-baṣar*; 10. *Al-Qadīr* is equivalent to *al-qudrah*; 11. *Izā arāda shay'an* is equivalent to *al-irādah*; 12. *Al-'Alīm* is equivalent to *al-'ilm*; and 13. *Al-Kalām* (Muhammadiyah is equivalent to Asyariyah). In the view of Muhammadiyah, the existence of Allah's attributes must not lead to anthropomorphism (*tasybih/tajsim*), which will be explained in the sub-theme on the *mutasyābihāt* verses.

Formulation 13 was devised to serve as a theological framework for simplifying the concept of the 20 attributes into a more concise form (Al-Ash'ari & bin Ismail, 1990; al-Gazālī, 1971). Ash'ari theology asserts that God possesses attributes that are truly existent (*tsābit*) and eternal (*qadīm*), yet they are neither separate from His essence nor entirely identical to it. This school of thought affirms the principle: "The attributes of Allah exist; they are neither Him nor anything other than Him." This means that attributes such as knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, sight, and speech are attributes that truly exist in Allah, yet their existence does not imply the existence of multiple gods (Al-Asari, 2011). It should also be noted that Muhammadiyah refers to the attributes of Allah in general terms and does not specify that there are 13 of them, even though there are 13. This indicates that the number of Allah's attributes is not limited, unlike the views of classical theologians who listed them as 20, 99, or other numbers.

Thus, the view of God's attributes in Muhammadiyah aligns with that of the Ash'ari school and differs from that of the Mu'tazilah, who deny that God possesses attributes identical to His essence (*naḥy al-ṣifāt*). According to them, the attributes of God do not have an existence separate from God's essence. They reject the idea that God's attributes are independent entities and are *qadīm* (eternal). If these attributes were considered *qadīm* and separate from the essence, this could lead to the existence of multiple *qadīm* entities (*ta'addud al-qudamā'*), which would result in an anthropomorphic conception of God (*al-tajassum* or *al-tasybih*) resembling humans. This concept clearly contradicts the principle of absolute *tawhid*.

The description of Allah's 13 attributes mentioned by Muhammadiyah reflects the recognition of essential attributes (*naḥsiah*), negative attributes (*salbiyah*), affirmative attributes (*maa'ni*), and qualitative states (*ma'nawiyah*) for Allah, as formulated by the Ash'ari school. Essential attributes are those that indicate the existence of Allah's essence itself (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), wherein Allah is the sole entity whose existence is absolute. Meanwhile, the *salbiyah* attributes signify the negation

(exclusion) of all deficiencies and the rejection of all attributes unworthy of Allah (*al-muttaṣifu bil-kalām wa kulli kamāl, al-munazzahu ‘an kulli naqṣin wa muḥāl*). As for the essential attributes, they are the affirmation of the essential attributes; these are the fundamental attributes inherent in Allah’s actions, serving as the basis for the emergence of the spiritual attributes. Meanwhile, the *ma’nawiyah* attributes are an affirmation of the *ma’ānī* attributes; they are an affirmation of the attributes; they are an affirmation of the *ma’ānī* attributes. For example, since Allah possesses the attribute of *qudrah* (will), then Allah is *qādir* (All-Willing) (Amin & Ichwan, 2020).

b. Ambiguous Verses (*al-Āyāt al-Mutasyābihāt*).

In the context of the ambiguous verses (*al-āyāt al-mutasyābihāt*), the approach adopted by Muhammadiyah reflects a methodological tendency closely aligned with the *tafwīd* approach (suspension of meaning), particularly in upholding the principle of *tanzīh* (God’s transcendence) and avoiding anthropomorphism (*tasybih/tajsim*) in understanding God’s attributes (Rofiq & Tamami, 2023). *Tasybih* has a broader meaning, namely likening God to His creation. Meanwhile, *tajsim* is the belief that Allah possesses a physical form or material attributes.

The *tafwīd* tendency in Muhammadiyah does not mean rejecting rationality, but rather constitutes a theological strategy to preserve the purity of *tawhīd* while avoiding excessive speculation in understanding God’s attributes (Hakim et al., 2023). Therefore, Muhammadiyah also maintains a limited space for metaphorical interpretation (*ta’wīl*). In the HPT (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) it is written:

“وَشَرَطُ صِحَّةِ الْإِعْتِقَادِ فِي ذَلِكَ أَنْ لَا يَكُونَ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ يَمَسُّ التَّنْزِيهَ وَعُلُوَّ الْمَقَامِ الْإِلَهِيِّ عَنْ مُشَابَهَةِ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ فَإِنْ وَرَدَ مَا يُؤْهِمُ ظَاهِرُهُ ذَلِكَ فِي الْمُتَوَاتِرِ وَجَبَ الْإِعْرَاضُ عَنْهُ بِالتَّسْلِيمِ لِلَّهِ فِي الْعِلْمِ بِمَعْنَاهُ مَعَ الْإِعْتِقَادِ بِأَنَّ الظَّاهِرَ غَيْرُ الْمُرَادِ أَوْ بِتَأْوِيلٍ تَقُومُ عَلَيْهِ الْقِرَائِنُ الْمُقْبُولَةُ.”

This view of Muhammadiyah aligns with its methodology of thought, which holds that human reason cannot possibly grasp the true nature of these *Mutasyābihāt* verses. Therefore, Allah does not burden humans with pondering them. (M. T. P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) What is required is to believe in their existence, without asking how or where. An example is Allah’s abode on the Arsh or throne. There is no need to ask how or where the Arsh is (Tarjih & Muhammadiyah, 2013).

Thus, Muhammadiyah’s view on these *Mutasyābihāt* verses aligns with the Ash’ari school regarding the limitations of reason and the principle of *iman bi al-ghaib*. The Ash’ari school adopts a more moderate approach in dealing with the *Mutasyābihāt* verses. Abu al-Hasan al-Ash’ari emphasized the *tafwīd* approach, meaning that the interpretation is left to Allah, and the text is accepted as it is without asking “how” it is meant (*bilā kayf*), but anthropomorphism must be avoided. In this approach, verses regarding Allah’s attributes are accepted as revelatory truth, but their essential meaning is left to Allah. This approach aims to avoid two extremes: likening God to His creation (*tasybih*) and rejecting the attributes mentioned in the Qur’an. To avoid anthropomorphic interpretations, Ash’ari theologians sought a solution by employing limited *ta’wīl* when necessary (Al-Asari, 2011).

Similarly, Muhammadiyah rejects free *ta’wīl*, as advocated by the Mu’tazilah, who interpret the *mutasyābih* verses using a rational *ta’wīl* approach. They argue that Qur’anic texts which, taken literally, contain anthropomorphic connotations

must be interpreted metaphorically to align with the principles of *tawhid* and *tanzih*. For example, the verse regarding “the hand of Allah” must be interpreted as Allah’s power or might, not as a hand in the physical sense. Similarly, the verse regarding “*istiwa* upon the arsh” is understood as Allah’s sovereignty or dominion over the universe.

c. Understanding of Destiny

Muhammadiyah holds that Allah has created all of His creatures. Likewise, Allah has predetermined everything before He created it, and governs all that exists through His knowledge, decree, wisdom, and will. As for everything humans do, it all occurs within the context of His *qadla’* and *qadar*. Meanwhile, humans themselves can only make an effort. In the context of Allah’s power, Muhammadiyah views Allah as possessing absolute, universal power that precedes all things based on His knowledge and will. Therefore, all human actions are Allah’s creation and have become part of His destiny. However, human actions performed through one’s own power are the result of one’s own efforts (*kasb*). Therefore, humans can only manage, to a limited extent, the portion that Allah has bestowed upon them, such as in seeking sustenance and other matters. In the HPT (M. T. P. Muhammadiyah, 2018) it is written:

“وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدَّرَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قَبْلَ خَلْقِ الْخَلْقِ يُصَرِّفُ الْكَائِنَاتِ عَلَى مُقْتَضَى عِلْمِهِ وَاخْتِيَارِهِ وَجُكْمَتِهِ وَإِرَادَتِهِ وَالْأَفْعَالِ الصَّادِرَةِ عَنِ الْعِبَادِ كُلُّهَا بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ وَقَدَرِهِ. أَمَّا اللَّهُ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا. وَلَيْسَ لِلْعِبَادِ إِلَّا الْإِخْتِيَارُ. فَالتَّقْدِيرُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَالْكَسْبُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ. فَحَرَكَةُ الْعَبْدِ بِاعْتِبَارِ نِسْبَتِهَا إِلَى قُدْرَتِهِ تُسَمَّى كَسْبًا لَهُ. وَبِاعْتِبَارِ نِسْبَتِهَا قُدْرَةَ اللَّهِ خَلْقًا. وَالْعِبَادُ لَيَنْصَرِفُ نَصِيبُهُ مِمَّا أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ بِهِ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ وَغَيْرِهِ.”

Thus, Muhammadiyah holds the view that God’s power is absolute and encompasses all of reality, while human power is limited and manifests itself in the form of human effort. Within this framework, humans act within the system of *sunnatullah* established by God, so that human freedom does not negate divine destiny but rather forms part of it. Thus, there is a complementary relationship between divine determination and human responsibility.

Muhammadiyah’s view on destiny and human effort emphasizes a middle path (*wasatiyyah*) between determinism and absolute freedom. From this perspective, humans remain within God’s decree (*qadar*), yet possess the capacity to strive (*ikhtiar*) and are accountable for their actions. Therefore, Muhammadiyah rejects fatalism that negates human agency, while also rejecting views that completely separate human will from God’s will. This approach aligns with trends in modern Islamic theology that view the relationship between divine decree and human agency as balanced and dynamic. Thus, Muhammadiyah’s perspective aligns with the adage: “Man wills, God determines” (Tarjih & Muhammadiyah, 2024). For Muhammadiyah, this perspective fosters an active ethos, in which human effort is part of God’s divine order, while the final outcome remains in God’s will. Thus, belief in predestination actually encourages a rational, progressive, and responsible attitude, rather than a passive or fatalistic one. For example, consider how Muhammadiyah views disasters. Based on its belief in positive theology, Muhammadiyah views disasters positively, recognizing that all disasters are God’s

will. The attitude toward disasters should be positive, not fatalistic. A positive attitude will help victims recover from the social and psychological impacts of disasters and then move toward reconstruction and psychological recovery (Baidhawiy, 2015). Thus, Muhammadiyah is genealogically close to the Ash'ariyah-Maturidiyah schools. When explaining human responsibility, the Ash'ariyah also developed the concept of *kasb* (acquisition). In this concept, Allah creates actions, but humans "acquire" or obtain those actions through their will. Thus, humans remain responsible for their actions, even though the creation of those actions originates from Allah (Al-Asari, 2011).

On this basis, Muhammadiyah rejects the Jabariyah view, which holds that humans do not possess the freedom to choose their actions, and that all their actions are entirely the creation of God. In other words, humans are merely tools or means for the fulfillment of God's will (bin Abi & al-Syahrastani, 1976). Muhammadiyah also rejects the Mu'tazilah view, which holds that human actions are created by humans themselves (free will), not by Allah. Allah merely grants the ability (*qudrah*) and guidance to humans, while choices and actions are entirely the responsibility of humans ('Abd al-Jabbar, 2006).

3. Muhammadiyah's Interactions with the Salafis and Wahhabis

The genealogy of religious thought, including the creed of Muhammadiyah, is often linked to global Islamic reformist movements, such as the Salafis, Wahhabis, and the Egyptian Salafis. In academic discourse, a debate has arisen over whether Muhammadiyah is part of the Salafi-Wahhabi movement or possesses its own distinct character. This question is natural, as Muhammadiyah's religious ideology resembles theirs, namely, the purification of religion and opposition to TBC (Abdullah, 2024). Salafi groups seek to understand and practice religious teachings based on the practices of the early generations of Islam (*al-salaf al-shalih*), namely, the Companions, the Successors, and the Successors of the Successors, in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The central figures of the Salafi movement are Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780–855), Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328), and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350) (Syukri, 2023). They emphasize the purification of Islamic teachings by striving to emulate the practices of the early generations of Islam and rejecting religious innovations (*bid'ah*) that lack a basis in the primary sources of Islam (Maharani, 2025; Zalta, 2025).

In understanding religious teachings, particularly the Qur'an and hadith, they employ a textual and literal approach, with the aim of preserving the purity of meaning as understood by the early generations of Islam (Setiawati et al., 2024), and they reject philosophical and contextual approaches (Saparudin, 2017). As for the Wahhabi movement, which was pioneered by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) (Pradipta, 2025), and maintained strong ties to the political establishment in Saudi Arabia through the alliance between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad bin Saud leading up to the formation of modern Saudi Arabia (Commins, 2005), shares common ground with the Salafi group, which is oriented toward purifying Islamic teachings by returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah and rejecting religious practices deemed innovations (*bid'ah*) or deviations from the pure creed of tawhid. Although many equate Salafis with Wahhabis (Ali, 2019), research indicates that Wahhabism is characterized by a more puritanical, literalist,

and exclusive stance toward other religious practices (Delong-Bas, 2008).

The Egyptian Salafism movement was founded by Al-Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), and Rashid Rida (1865–1935). Although its ideology aligns with that of earlier Salafis who sought to return Islam to its original sources (the Qur'an and Sunnah), Egyptian Salafism has begun to adopt a rational and contextual approach in interpreting these two authoritative sources (Imandar & Rezai Kermani, 2018; Kamali, 2016; Lauzière, 2015). Consequently, Salafism in Egypt is highly dynamic: it has transformed into a broader social movement (Lacroix, 2022), and even following the Arab Spring, it has further evolved into political parties participating in Egypt's elections (Høigilt & Nome, 2014). Other studies also indicate that the resurgence of Salafism following the Arab Spring was also influenced by the dynamics of the "religious market", that is, competition among Islamic groups vying for religious authority in the public sphere (Kirdiş, 2021).

The use of rational and contextual approaches in understanding religion by the Egyptian Salafis, particularly Muhammad Abduh, served as a significant inspiration and exerted a strong influence on Kiai Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah (Burhani, 2018; Nasir, 2023). Muhammadiyah employs religion alongside rational and contextual understandings in interpreting religious teachings and in its social and humanitarian actions (Arifin et al., 2022). Haedar Nashir, citing Mukti Ali, argues that although Muhammadiyah has links to the global Islamic reformist movement, there are two distinctions that lack a genealogy and format in previous Islamic reformist thought: the emergence of the Muhammadiyah women's movement known as Aisyiah, and the establishment of modern institutions such as health and social services in general (Nashir, 2026).

Thus, in general, there are indeed similarities between Muhammadiyah and Wahhabism regarding the purification of faith, the rejection of bid'ah practices, and the emphasis on tawhid (Nurfalina & Effendi, 2024). However, Muhammadiyah is not identical to Salafism or Wahhabism, because in understanding religious teachings, Muhammadiyah has developed a unique approach, namely *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* (Anwar, 2018; Ramadhan, 2025). For this reason, Muhammadiyah practices a more contextual form of reformism compared to Salafis and Wahhabis (Ciptadi et al., 2024). In more detail, Wisnu Arto Subari (2024) identifies nine distinctions between Wahhabism and Muhammadiyah, namely: [1] Muhammadiyah interprets the Qur'an and hadith using reason; [2]. Muhammadiyah accepts Western culture that aligns with Islamic teachings; [3]. Muhammadiyah accepts local culture that does not contradict Islam; [4]. Muhammadiyah practices amar makruf both individually and institutionally. Nahi Munkar is carried out systematically; [5]. Muhammadiyah accepts the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI); [6]. Reason is used to understand nature and religious texts; [7]. Women have both domestic and public roles; [8]. Clothing must cover the aurat; and [8]. Entertainment such as music, singing, drama, and theater can serve as media for da'wah.

In the context of Tawhid, Muhammadiyah differs from the Salafis and Wahhabis. Muhammadiyah divides Tawhid into: *uluhiyah*, *sifat*, and *af'al*, although *af'al* may be equated with *rububiyah*. The terminology of *tawhid af'al*, according to

researchers, may have been adopted from the views of Muhammad Abduh when he explained tawhid in a subsection titled "*Af'ālullāh Jalla Sya'nuh*". Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyyah, as the pioneer of the trilogy of Tawhid (Hoover, 2022), which was popularized by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, referred to the trilogy of Tawhid as: *rubūbiyyah*, *ulūhiyyah*, and *asmā' wa ṣifāt* (Delong-Bas, 2008; Wahhab, 1990). This indicates that Muhammadiyah exhibits an eclectic approach in formulating its views.

4. Praxical Tawhid: From Creed to Action

The concept of tawhid in Muhammadiyah is no longer understood merely as an abstract theological creed, but has undergone a transformation into an ethical principle and praxis that provides concrete guidance for social action. What can be termed praxical tawhid refers to the effort to actualize the oneness of God in real life, so that tawhid does not stop at the affirmation of faith (creed), but becomes the foundation for action in various aspects of life. This demonstrates that tawhid functions as an ideological force driving social transformation and community empowerment (Burhani, 2018). The following will present several examples of how this functional tawhid is actualized in real life, such as the mapping conducted by Ahmad Muttaqin (2026):

a. Reformative-Purificative-Rational-Empathetic Tawhid

The actualization of this model of tawhid is reflected in the founder of Muhammadiyah, Kiai Ahmad Dahlan. He emphasized that tawhid must serve as the foundation for reform aimed at social change and the renewal of Islamic thought (Nakamura, 2012). Kiai Dahlan actualized tawhid to bring about social change, particularly in the fields of education, health, and community welfare. The establishment of educational and social institutions by Muhammadiyah constitutes a concrete implementation of tawhid as a reform movement (Noer, 1973).

The purificatory dimension in Ahmad Dahlan's thought is evident in his efforts to purge religious practices of elements of TBC. He urged Muslims to return to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic teachings (Noer, 1973). This approach demonstrates a strong commitment to the purity of tawhid as the foundation of faith. Kiai Dahlan also emphasized the importance of rationality in understanding religion. He encouraged the use of reason to interpret Islamic teachings contextually, so that religion does not become trapped in formalism (Nakamura, 2012). This approach aligns with the spirit of Islamic renewal that emphasizes the integration of revelation and reason (Rahman, 2017).

The empathetic dimension of Ahmad Dahlan's tawhid is reflected in his emphasis on social concern and service to others. His interpretation of Surah al-Ma'un became the basis for a social movement emphasizing the importance of helping the weak and the poor. This demonstrates that tawhid must give rise to empathy and solidarity.

b. Rahamutiyah Tawhid

The actualization of Rahamutiyah Tawhid is reflected in the thought of Hamim Ilyas, chairman of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board (2022–2027). In Hamim Ilyas's view, as cited by M. Amin Abdullah (2016), tawhid is not merely understood as a servant's acknowledgment of Allah's oneness (*tawhīd af'al/al-rubūbiyyah* and *ulūhiyyah*), but must be interpreted as an ethical consciousness that fosters a compassionate attitude in life.

Rahamutiah Tawhid places Allah's attributes as *al-Rahmān* and *al-Rahīm* at the center of theology. Thus, faith in Allah must be reflected in behavior characterized by compassion, justice, and respect for humanity (Fatah, 2021).

Hamim Ilyas criticizes the tendency of classical theology to focus excessively on metaphysical debates, such as: the attributes of Allah, whether the Qur'an is eternal (*qadim*) or created (*hadith*), and debates on predestination. In his view, such debates often have no direct impact on the social lives of the faithful. Therefore, a transformation of tawhid into a theology that is grounded in reality and oriented toward the common good is necessary. Rahamutiah Tawhid emphasizes that: tawhid must give rise to mercy, worship must have a social impact, and religion must be a solution for humanity. This concept aligns with the idea of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which places human welfare as the primary goal of sharia. Thus, tawhid is not merely a creed but also a paradigm of social ethics.

c. Social Tawhid

Amin Rais is a Muhammadiyah figure who pioneered this concept. According to Amin Rais, tawhid must not be limited to normative aspects but must be manifested in concrete actions that promote social justice. The concept of social tawhid emphasizes that faith in Allah must be reflected in fair and humane social attitudes. Tawhid does not merely signify the acknowledgment of God's oneness but also the rejection of all forms of injustice, structural poverty, political injustice, and the domination of oppressive power (Rais, 1998). Social tawhid possesses a liberative character, that is, it frees humanity from various forms of oppression. From this perspective, tawhid serves as the foundation for the struggle against structural injustice. (Engineer, 1990) This concept is consistent with the concept proposed by Fazlur Rahman (2017).

d. Humanistic-Inclusive Tawhid

Humanistic-inclusive Tawhid was conceived by Syafii Maarif. He argues that Islam must serve as a moral force that brings mercy to all humanity without discrimination. He also strongly criticizes exclusivist attitudes that claim absolute, singular truth and reject the existence of other groups. According to him, such an attitude contradicts the spirit of Islam as a religion of mercy. He emphasizes that diversity is a reality that must be accepted and respected in national and religious life. He strongly criticizes the politicization of religion. Instead, we must prioritize interfaith dialogue and strengthen recognition of human equality (Maarif, 2009).

This humanism encompasses: respect for human rights, social justice, and human solidarity. This line of thought also aligns with the ideas of Fazlur Rahman, who views Islam as an ethical system that emphasizes universal moral values (Rahman, 2017). Ahmad Syafii Maarif believes that Islam must serve as a unifying force for the nation and not a source of conflict. (Maarif, 2009) Thus, tawhid becomes the foundation for building a peaceful and civilized society.

CONCLUSION

The genealogy of Muhammadiyah's monotheistic creed has an unbroken link to classical Islamic tradition. Although Muhammadiyah is described as a modern organization inspired by the global Islamic reformist movement that emphasizes a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah and opposes TBC, substantively and within the context of monotheistic creed, it turns out that Muhammadiyah is highly

traditional, as it shares similarities with the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (particularly the Ash'ari school). As a modern, non-sectarian organization, Muhammadiyah appears eclectic in its narrative regarding its monotheistic creed, which shares similarities with Salafism. This genealogy indicates a synthesis between doctrinal orthodoxy and the spirit of *tajdid* (renewal), which is a hallmark of this movement. At the praxical level, Muhammadiyah's monotheistic creed does not stop at normative and abstract theological aspects alone, but is realized in a progressive Islamic movement. Tawhid is understood functionally as an ethical and spiritual foundation that drives social transformation, such as in the fields of education, health, and community service. Thus, tauhid in Muhammadiyah serves as an ideological force that integrates the dimension of faith with concrete action.

Overall, the genealogy and practice of Muhammadiyah's tauhid, which exhibits traditional characteristics, can coexist with Islamic reformism. The combination of the two remains relevant and timely in addressing the complex challenges of the modern era. As a recommendation, further research should be conducted on the praxical tawhid among other prominent figures in Muhammadiyah who are active in various fields, particularly in areas that have not yet received attention from researchers, such as politics, culture, and economics.

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