

Published:
July 2, 2025

Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī: His Services in Refuting Atheism

Syed Shahrukh Kamal

PhD research scholar
The Faculty of Usūl-ud-Dīn,
International Islamic University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: shahrukh_syed@hotmail.com

Dr. Abdul Wahab Jan al-Azhari

Assistant Professor
The Faculty of Usūl-ud-Dīn,
International Islamic University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: abdulwahab.jan@iiu.edu.pk

Dr. Muhammad Kalimullah Khan

Head of Department
The Department of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ITC),
University of Management and Technology (UMT),
Sialkot, Campus.

Email: kalim.ullah@skt.umd.edu.pk

Abstract

This article explores the theological and philosophical contributions of Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī in defending Islamic belief by systematically refuting atheistic arguments. The study centers primarily on his treatise ‘al-Islām’, written in a period of intellectual upheaval shaped by rising of materialist philosophies. Through a rational and textual approach, Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī demonstrates the incompatibility of atheism with both sound reason and innate human disposition (fiṭrah). His methodical reasoning, rich use of analogies, philosophical rebuttals, and references to both Islamic and non-Islamic sources

Published:
July 2, 2025

makes his contribution a powerful intellectual response to modern disbelief.

Keywords: Atheism, Divine Existence, ‘Allāma Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Usmānī, Islamic Theology, Ilāhiyyāt, Rationality, Materialism, Fiṭrah.

Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, the One who alone possesses perfection, who is exalted above any likeness or equal. Intellects, instincts, verses, and testimonies all point to Him, and He bestows His blessings upon His creation without ceasing or debt. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muḥammad, the master of all men and upon his family and companions—the best of companions and kin—and upon those who follow them in excellence until the Day of Return?

Belief in the existence of Allah is the foundational pillar of Islamic creed. It is the basis upon which all other aspects – such as tawḥīd, prophethood, and worship – are built. Without affirming the Creator's existence, these concepts hold no meaning. In the modern era, this belief has come under severe attack from waves of atheism and materialism, ideologies that deny the existence of God and assert that nature and matter are eternal, with no creator or ultimate purpose.

A number of devout scholars rose to refute these claims, among the most notable of whom was Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, may Allah have mercy on him. He penned powerful, logical, and insightful responses affirming the existence of the Creator and dismantling the arguments of atheists. His approach skillfully combined rational proof with revealed text, addressing both innate human instinct and intellectual reasoning.

This research aims to highlight Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī’s efforts in rebutting atheism and affirming the existence of Allah, while also showcasing his method of presenting logical, cosmic, and scriptural evidence. It reveals the harmony

between sound human nature and Islamic faith and affirms that belief in God is not mere blind tradition but a rational conclusion based on reflection over the wonders of divine creation in both the universe and the human soul.

Biography and Scholarly Life of Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī

Early Life and Upbringing

Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī (may Allah have mercy on him) was born in Bijnor, India on the 10th of Muḥarram, 1305 AH / 1885 CE.¹ His father had originally named him Faḍlullāh, but he became known as Shabbīr Aḥmad from early childhood.² His lineage traces back to the Caliph ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (may Allah be pleased with him).³ He was raised in a religious and scholarly family that shaped his academic and spiritual orientation from a young age.⁴

Education and Academic Journey

At the age of seven, he enrolled in Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband,⁵ where he studied under some of its greatest scholars,⁶ including Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan⁷ and Shaykh Muḥammad Yāsīn — the father of the renowned scholar Muḥammad Shaftī.⁸ He graduated with distinction in 1325 AH / 1908 CE. Due to his intellectual brilliance, he began teaching while still a student and became known for his exceptional understanding of jurisprudence, logic, and ḥadīth sciences.⁹

Asceticism and Devotion in Worship

Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī was known for his piety and asceticism. He devoted a great deal of time to worship and reflection, which even affected his health —

though he found in worship a source of peace and serenity.¹⁰

Educational Contributions

Upon graduation, he was appointed as a teacher at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband. He later moved to the Fatehpuri School in Delhi as its head instructor, before relocating to Dābhēl in 1348 AH. He eventually returned to Deoband to serve as its principal in 1354 AH. He specialized in teaching jurisprudence and ḥadīth and taught foundational texts like Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī.¹¹

Academic and Pedagogical Influence

Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī played a significant role in producing many prominent scholars. Among his most distinguished students were: Muftī Muḥammad Shafī‘, Shaykh Muḥammad Idrīs al-Kāndhlawī,¹² Shaykh Badr al-‘Ālam al-Mīrathī,¹³ Sayyid Manāẓir Aḥsan al-Jīlānī,¹⁴ Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib al-Qāsimī, Aẓhar al-Silhatī, Sayyid Yūsuf al-Binnūrī – founder of Dār al-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah al-Binnūriyyah in Karachi¹⁵ – and Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Samī‘ al-Nadwī, among others. He was highly respected by his students for his deep knowledge and excellent teaching skills.

Political Role and Support for Pakistan’s Independence

He was among the first scholars to support the establishment of Pakistan and was active in the Muslim League.¹⁶ Quaid-e-Azam Muḥammad Ali Jinnah personally selected him to raise Pakistan’s flag for the first time, and also instructed that he lead his funeral prayer – a testament to his high regard and influence.

Participation in Drafting Pakistan's Islamic Constitution

He was a member of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan¹⁷ and a key advocate for adopting Islamic Sharī'ah as the foundation of the constitution. In February 1949, he organized an influential three-day conference in Dhaka that paved the way for the Objectives Resolution, which was later passed by the Constituent Assembly on March 12, 1949.¹⁸

Efforts in Reform and Da'wah

Shaykh al-'Uthmānī actively responded to modern ideological doubts and spread the correct Islamic creed across India using a persuasive and clear method. He also transmitted the teachings of Qāsim al-Nanotwī and made them accessible to students of knowledge.¹⁹

His Passing and Scholarly Legacy

He passed away in 1369 AH / 1949 CE, about a year and four months after the independence of Pakistan. Over 200,000 people attended his funeral, which was led by Mufti Muḥammad Shafi'. He left behind a lasting legacy through his students and his works, such as Fath al-Mulhim, al-Islām, al-Shihāb, and I'jāz al-Qur'ān.

His life was a shining example of a scholar who combined knowledge, action, da'wah, and political activism. His legacy continues to inspire those engaged in Islamic preaching and scholarship.²⁰

The Efforts of Shaykh Shabbār Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī in Refuting Atheism and Preserving the Creed of Tawḥīd

Tawḥīd and the Necessity of Affirming God's Existence

The doctrine of Tawḥīd (Islamic monotheism) and its opposite, Shirk (polytheism), both depend fundamentally on the affirmation of the existence of a deity. It is not possible to discuss Tawḥīd or Shirk without first establishing the existence of the One to be worshipped. Hence, the very first step must be to affirm that God exists — only after that can one determine whether He is one or many. In fact, denying God’s existence spares the atheist from having to engage with any of His words or commands — rational or revealed — making it a far easier path than confronting the overwhelming proofs that affirm His existence, oneness, and authority. This is precisely what makes it a more tempting path for many. Due to this deceptive ease, large numbers of people have fallen into this trap and invite others toward it as well.

This is by no means a new trial. Allah has already informed us of such evasions in the Qur'an, saying:

“They say, ‘There is nothing but our worldly life: we die and live, and nothing destroys us except time.’ Yet they have no knowledge of this; they only speculate. And when Our clear revelations are recited to them, their only argument is to say, ‘Bring back our ancestors if you are truthful.’”²¹

Then Allah rattled their shallow reasoning by asking:

“Were they created out of nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain.”²²

Published:
July 2, 2025

Definition of Atheism

Oxford English Dictionary defines the term '*atheism*' in simple words as:

“Disbelief or lack of belief in the existence of God or gods.”²³

While the Cambridge Dictionary provides a more descriptive definition as:

“The fact of not believing in any god or gods, or the belief that no god or gods exist. Atheism as we know it did not exist until modern times.”²⁴

The earliest known use of the noun *atheism* in English dates back to the late 1500s. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first recorded usage is from 1587, in a translation by Sir Philip Sidney, an Elizabethan courtier and author, and Arthur Golding, a well-known translator of Latin texts.²⁵

The equivalent for atheism in the Arabic language is *ilhād*. Ibn Fāris defines the Arabic root l-ḥ-d (ل-ح-د) as indicating a deviation from uprightness. He writes:

“The root signifies deviation from what is straight. One says, ‘The man committed ilhād’ when he veered from the path of truth and belief. The term laḥd (grave niche) derives from this because it is carved into the side of the grave. The word multaḥad (refuge) comes from the same root, as one turns toward a refuge for safety.”²⁶

Lisān al-‘Arab describes *ilhād* linguistically as:

“Deviation from what is intended or straight. In testimony, ‘he committed ilhād against me’ means he acted unjustly. To incline toward something with one’s tongue is also a form of ilhād. In the verse {The tongue of the one they incline to is foreign, while this is a clear Arabic tongue} [Qur’an 16:103], ilhād means doubt concerning Allah. Its root signifies turning away or deviating from something.”²⁷

Thus, atheism in its theological sense is the denial of the existence of God — a complete rejection of the belief in a Creator. While atheism has ancient roots in various civilizations, its modern emergence came with force following the Industrial Revolution and the rise of materialist philosophy. Materialism held that all phenomena could be explained purely through physical and chemical interactions, discarding any belief in the unseen, the Creator, or the soul.

Atheistic ideas made their way into the minds of some thinkers in the Muslim world during the colonial period, necessitating a scholarly and methodical defense from righteous scholars to refute these doubts. Among the most prominent of them was Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī (may Allah have mercy on him), who authored a concise treatise titled “al-Islām,” in which he addressed this topic. He clarified that the foundation of all Islamic principles lies in the two testimonies of faith, and that the first testimony — *Lā ilāha illa Allāh* — comprises three essential components: affirming the existence of God, affirming His exclusive right to be worshiped, and rejecting all partners ascribed to Him. Thus, it becomes clear that affirming God's existence is the first step in the path of faith and the primary pillar upon which all other aspects of belief are built.²⁸

His writing is precisely structured, composed with rhyme, rich in vocabulary, and skillfully woven in elegant arrangement; it flows with such rhythm that the reader is carried through without pause — though he intentionally kept it brief, reserving detailed elaboration for a separate work.²⁹

Presentation of the Atheistic Doubt

The Shaykh began by observing that all religious groups — except atheists

— affirm the existence of a deity. By noting this global consensus, he highlighted the weakness of atheism’s intellectual foundation.

He then laid out the core atheistic claim: the concept of God emerged historically as a convenient explanation for what humanity could not understand. Over time, this belief became so entrenched in the collective psyche that people came to accept it as an uncontested truth, attributing to God all intentions, actions, and even the governance of the cosmos.

Materialists argue instead that everything arises from two sources: matter and its force or motion. These two, they claim, are eternally coupled. All beings, they assert, emerged through this blind and unintentional motion — devoid of any awareness, design, or purpose. Thus, they regard both matter and motion as eternal and self-sufficient.³⁰

Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī’s Refutation of the Atheist Argument

The Shaykh responds by demonstrating that such a view, though it attempts to explain existence, fails as a substitute for an All-Knowing, All-Wise Creator. Lifeless, will-less, mindless particles cannot possibly generate a world so astoundingly precise and harmoniously balanced.

He writes:

“They have advised us to reject the notion of a knowing, wise, and perfectly complete Creator, and instead be content with “a god” who is blind, deaf, dumb, and entirely unaware, whose actions are never done with purpose, who cannot produce proportion or order in its creations, who has no comprehension of laws or systems, and is incapable of governing them. Meanwhile, the true Creator — whom we ought to seek — is One whose wisdom shines through every part of the universe, so much so that the human intellect is overwhelmed by its marvels. After exploring even a fraction of this creation, the wisest of scholars — even

materialists — have admitted that what they’ve discovered is far less than what remains hidden.”³¹

Three Intellectual Refutations Presented by the Shaykh

The Precision of the Cosmic System

The universe is intricately ordered, finely tuned, and interconnected. It cannot possibly be the outcome of randomness or chaotic chance.

Diversity and Complexity of Creation

The vast diversity of organisms, along with the mysteries of anatomy, astronomy, botany, zoology, and geology, all indicate that blind matter could never be the source of such complexity. Instead, they point toward an all-encompassing wisdom.

The Universal Neediness of Creation, Especially Humans

No created being is self-sufficient. Everything in the world is in need and under service. Human beings, despite their exalted status, are even more in need — requiring not only food and drink but also shelter, clothing, relationships, and psychological comfort.³²

“These noble elements of the world remain bound in utter submission. They are restrained in such a way that they cannot escape their constraints for even a moment.”³³ Surely, there must be a wise sovereign above them who extracts strenuous labor from them like prisoners, not allowing them ease lest they grow arrogant or be thought self-sufficient. In this display of humility, they — and those who witness them — recognize the greatness of God and His wise governance.”³⁴

Published:
July 2, 2025

Support from Western Thinkers

The Shaykh supported his rational argument with testimonials from Western philosophers and scientists who, despite not necessarily being Muslim, expressed wonder at the universe's design and rejected the notion of it being accidental.

Racine:

“O Heavens, speak! O seas, answer! O earth, declare! O countless stars, who has fixed you in your orbit? Who adorned the night with the moon’s light? You, O radiant sky, proclaim a Creator who fashioned you with ease.”

Millian Dourd (with amazement):

“One is left bewildered by those who say this organized universe is merely a product of chance or some property of matter! These illusory theories are rejected by sound reason, and genuine science has long surpassed such myths.”

Herbert Spencer:

“The deeper we delve into the mysteries of the universe, the more compelled we are to admit the existence of an eternal power as the source of all things.”

Professor Lina:

“The magnificent, eternal, all-knowing and all-powerful God reveals Himself to me through the amazing order of this universe to such an extent that I am left in awe at the beauty of His craftsmanship.”³⁵

These testimonies confirm that rational minds — even from outside Islam — cannot deny the existence of a wise Creator. This was precisely the Shaykh’s

goal: to demonstrate that both innate human nature and sound intellect lead not to atheism, but to belief in God.

A Challenge to the Materialists

Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī (may Allah have mercy on him) responded to the materialists’ claim that all cosmic order is the outcome of matter and motion without knowledge or will. He posed a rhetorical challenge similar to what Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allah have mercy on him) once used in his debate with atheists over thirteen centuries ago,³⁶ and likewise other scholars throughout Islamic history.³⁷

He asked:

“If someone were to claim that a newborn in a remote village of India, moments after birth, spoke with eloquence and brilliance, expounding upon sciences and philosophies that even Aristotle and Plato never reached, and articulating insights beyond what Bacon or Newton discovered, or what Rāzī and al-Ghazālī grasped in their dreams or contemplations — would anyone believe such a story? Wouldn’t they deem its narrator insane?”³⁸

Thus, the Shaykh exposes the contradiction in atheist reasoning: they reject as absurd the story of a newborn speaking with wisdom, yet accept that a mindless, lifeless matter created a complex and astonishingly precise universe. How can the first be denied while the second is believed?

The Shaykh also cited a powerful illustrative parable narrated by ‘Allāmah Ḥusayn Afandī: a perfectly constructed palace, complete with furnishings, gardens, and pools, was claimed by some to have formed on its own through random accumulations of dust, rain, and wind over millions of years. Others

Published:
July 2, 2025

attributed it to a wise architect. When asked which view was more rational, the obvious answer was that belief in a deliberate designer made far more sense. This analogy highlights the absurdity of claiming the universe came into existence without a Creator, despite its precision and harmony.³⁹

Critique of Partial Theism and the Theory of an Eternal Universe

Then the Shaykh offered a precise criticism of those who affirm the existence of God only partially — considering Him merely a factor contributing to the balance of the universe, without acknowledging Him as the Creator and Sustainer. In this context, he said:

“Undoubtedly, some intellectuals of our time have fallen into a grave error: they did not consider those high-level natural laws — in which the wisdom of God and the diversity of His craftsmanship manifest — as needing the assistance of the Supreme God. Rather, they deemed God's existence necessary only to establish harmony, proportion, interconnection, and unity among the movements arising from matter. However, maintaining such proportion and unity would not have been more difficult for the same matter and its motion that had already brought about such obscure and immutable laws in the universe.”

Then the Shaykh then mentioned that some Muslims had adopted the notion of the universe's eternality (qidam al-‘ālam) out of fear of the atheists. Hindus, too, embraced this idea and made it a part of their creed, building upon it the doctrine of reincarnation⁴⁰ — despite the fact that their oldest religious texts affirm the eternity of God alone and clearly state that everything else is contingent. The Shaykh referred to specific passages from those texts. According to this view, God needs matter just as a craftsman needs his materials; therefore, they claimed matter is eternal. However, this concept contradicts the teachings of

Published:
July 2, 2025

their ancient scriptures like the Vedas. At this point, the Shaykh directly addressed the Hindus, asking:

“Why not say, as Muslims do, that God is eternal in His essence and attributes, while everything else is created? He brought the universe into existence from nothingness and can return it to nothingness if He wills.”⁴¹

He concluded this segment with a brief allusion to his affirmation of belief in Qadar (Divine Decree) and Qaḍā’ (Divine Judgement), noting that further discussion on those subjects can be found in his other writings. From there, he transitioned naturally into the next topic: Divine Oneness (Tawḥīd).⁴²

Analysis of Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī’s Rational Methodology

A close examination of the Shaykh’s reasoning reveals his reliance on a powerful and disciplined rational methodology in affirming the existence of God. His approach is characterized by careful analysis, structured argument, and alignment with both reason and innate human nature (fiṭrah). Rather than merely relying on inherited doctrines or emotional appeal, Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī deconstructed the foundations of Islamic belief from a logical and objective perspective.

He frequently invoked the observable order and symmetry of the cosmos as a compelling argument for God’s existence. His philosophical reasoning demonstrated that this vast, intricate, and harmonious system cannot be the result of coincidence — it points instead to the will of a knowing, organizing, and intelligent Creator.

Overall, the Shaykh's method exhibits precision, structure, and logic. He crafted well-thought-out arguments based on intellectual reflection. This philosophical clarity made his work a forceful statement against atheism and a beacon for the harmony between faith and reason.

Beyond Refutation: Dissecting the Foundations of Atheism

Shaykh Shabbir Ahmad al-'Usmānī (may Allah have mercy on him) did not merely present and respond to the objections of the materialists, but delved deeper into dismantling their intellectual and psychological foundations. He pointed out that, despite denying God, they adopt notions that require a greater leap of faith than that of believers — how can a “blind matter” produce such order, precision, and harmony that astonish the human mind?

This notion involves a rational contradiction that undermines the very claim of rationalism. Comparing a blind, deaf, and senseless matter to God Almighty is nothing but a mockery of human reason.

Striking Parables: A Newborn's Speech and a Self-Made Palace

The Shaykh presents highly impactful parables, as mentioned earlier, that reveal the deep contradictions within materialist thought. At one point, he compares those who reject the idea of a newborn speaking profound wisdom yet readily accept that lifeless matter produced an intricately ordered universe. At another, he references the account by 'Allāmah Ḥusayn Afandī about a fully furnished palace allegedly formed by chance. Both examples reflect the Shaykh's skill in converting abstract arguments into tangible imagery, deconstructing false certainties through a method that awakens the intellect and appeals to sound human instinct.

Concise but Potent Language and Style

Although the Shaykh intentionally kept his treatise concise, his style remains dense with meaning, rich in argumentation, and vivid in metaphor. His use of relatable analogies and intuitive logic makes his writing effective for both lay audiences and scholars. These rhetorical features are essential for any discourse aiming to counter atheistic ideologies.

Critique of the Partial Recognition of God

A significant criticism the Shaykh presents is against those who acknowledge God's role only as a preserver of balance — not as a creator. He argues that this truncated view is self-contradictory. For if God is wise enough to maintain laws and balance, then surely He should be recognized as their initiator as well — not merely an operator within a pre-existing material framework.

Refuting the Notion of an Eternal Universe

One of the main avenues through which atheists seek to deny God's existence is the assertion of the eternity of matter. The Shaykh refuted this fallacy, clarifying that this claim entails the conclusion that God is unnecessary — a conclusion soundly rejected by both reason and revelation.

He also cited ancient Eastern scriptures, including the R̥g Veda, which affirm that only God is eternal and that everything else is created. This intelligent use of interfaith sources demonstrates the Shaykh's deep knowledge and his readiness to engage others on their own intellectual grounds.

True Creator vs. Material Craftsman

He explained that the claim of the eternity of matter and motion is nothing

but an evasion of theological commitment — an attempt to portray God as a mere “carpenter or blacksmith” who needs tools to create. In contrast, the true God needs nothing; He simply says to a thing, Be, and it is.

His Manner of Engagement

The Shaykh’s tone throughout the discussion is notably respectful and methodological. His aim is not to declare others disbelievers or to engage in rhetorical showmanship, but rather to address minds and awaken hearts. He even appeals to Western logic, citing non-Muslim thinkers like Racine, Herbert Spencer, and Professor Lina to illustrate that sound reason always leads to the recognition of a Creator.

Thus, it becomes clear that Shaykh Shabbir Ahmad Usmani offered a unique model that harmonized reason and revelation, combining logical argumentation with compassion in defending the doctrine of Tawheed and refuting the doubts of atheism — making his efforts a significant reference in this field.

Research Summary

This study explores the efforts of the eminent scholar, Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī (may Allah have mercy on him), in affirming the existence of God and refuting atheism. The analysis centers on his treatise al-Islām, which he wrote during a time when materialist philosophy and atheistic thought were gaining traction. The research highlights how he dismantled intellectual objections posed by atheists through a cohesive rational method, combining the strength of argument with eloquence in presentation.

Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī based his arguments on evident cosmic signs — the precision of the universe, the diversity of creation, and the physical and metaphysical dependence of human beings — to prove that such realities could not possibly be the product of lifeless matter or blind motion. Rather, they point unmistakably to a Wise, Knowledgeable, and Almighty Creator. He also employed vivid illustrative examples, such as the parable of the newborn child and the fully furnished palace, to simplify abstract philosophical concepts and connect them to human instinct and reason.

This study includes a detailed analysis of the Shaykh's position regarding the claim of matter's eternity. It shows how he addressed the issue with theological depth and logical clarity, even referencing Eastern religious texts to refute the idea. This reflects both the breadth of his knowledge and the strength of his reasoning. His tone was also marked by moderation and openness: he appealed to his opponents with reason, not hostility, and cited Western philosophers to reinforce his stance.

In conclusion, the research demonstrates that Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī's methodology represents a robust model of harmonizing reason with revelation — one that enables scholars to counter atheism with scholarly depth and purposeful clarity.

Research Findings

Through the analysis of Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī's efforts in defending theism and refuting atheism, the study reached the following conclusions:

1. **Strong Rational Foundation:** The Shaykh employed highly effective

intellectual and innate tools, enabling him to deconstruct atheistic frameworks and prove their fallacies.

2. **Root-Level Refutation of Doubts:** He did not suffice with superficial responses but tackled the philosophical and psychological foundations upon which atheistic doubts were built.
3. **Use of Persuasive Analogies:** The Shaykh presented strong sensory analogies — like the palace analogy — to simplify complex philosophical ideas, making his arguments accessible and impactful.
4. **Rebuttal of Eternal Matter with Scriptural and Rational Evidence:** He demonstrated that belief in eternal matter contradicts reason and cited from Hindu scriptures themselves to refute this notion.
5. **Harmonization of Faith, Reason, and Instinct:** The Shaykh emphasized that belief in God aligns with sound reason and pure human nature, while atheism diverges from both.
6. **Wise and Balanced Preaching Style:** His writing displayed eloquence and intellectual balance, avoiding harshness and offering a model of civil discourse with ideological opponents.

Recommendations

1. **Revive and Study the Works of Shaykh al-‘Uthmānī:** It is recommended to revive the scholarly legacy of Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī and publish his writings on theology, especially those addressing atheistic challenges.
2. **Include Modern Atheism in Theology Curricula:** Educational institutions should integrate topics on proving God's existence and responding to modern objections into ‘Aqīdah (Islamic creed) courses through analytical approaches that blend reason and revelation.
3. **Develop Youth-Oriented Digital Content:** Design accessible visual and written programs targeted at young audiences that address existential questions raised by contemporary atheism with convincing scholarly responses.
4. **Organize Interdisciplinary Dialogues:** Host regular scholarly forums

involving religious scholars, philosophers, and intellectuals to address issues of faith and atheism with academic rigor.

5. **Emphasize Fiṭrah (Innate Disposition) as a Basis for Faith:** Educational efforts should highlight the role of human instinct in nurturing belief in God, and connect it with rational and cosmological proofs in a comprehensive and relatable manner.
6. **Translate the Shaykh's Works into Global Languages:** To extend his influence internationally, it is recommended to translate his treatise *al-Islām* and analyze it through modern philosophical frameworks tailored to non-Urdu-speaking contexts.

References

- ¹ Nūr al-Bashar ibn Muḥammad Nūr al-Ḥaqq, *Tarjamat al-Shaykh* in *Faṭḥ al-Mulhim* (Karachi: Dār al-‘Ulūm, 2009), vol. 1, p. 7; Fayḍ Anbālīwī and Shafīq Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥayāt Shaykh al-Islām*, p. 10.
- ² Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *al-Tafsīr* (Karachi: Dār al-Ishā‘ah, 2007), vol. 3, p. 933.
- ³ Nūr al-Bashar, *Tarjamat al-Shaykh*, vol. 1, p. 7; see also: Anwār al-Ḥasan al-Shīrkūtī, *Ḥayāt ‘Uthmānī*.
- ⁴ Fayḍ Anbālīwī and Shafīq Ṣiddīqī, *Ḥayāt Shaykh al-Islām*, p. 11.
- ⁵ ‘Abd al-Rashīd Arshad, *al-‘Ishrūn Akābir al-Muslimūn*, pp. 545–546; Anwār al-Ḥasan al-Shīrkūtī, *Tajalliyāt ‘Uthmānī* (Multan: Idārat Ta’līfāt Ashrafiyyah, 2006), p. 35.
- ⁶ Shaīrkūtī, *Tajalliyāt ‘Uthmānī*, p. 35; Nūr al-Bashar, *Tarjamat al-Shaykh*, vol. 1, p. 7.
- ⁷ He was born in the town of Bareilly (currently in Uttar Pradesh). His father, Dhū al-Fiqr ‘Alī al-Diyūbandī, was a poet and literary figure who resisted British colonialism, was imprisoned by them, and exiled to Malta. Among his works was the Urdu translation of the meanings of the Qur’an.
- ⁸ He was Muḥammad Shafī‘ ibn Yāsīn al-Diyūbandī al-‘Uthmānī al-Ḥanafī. He graduated from Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband in 1335 AH, studying under scholars like Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, ‘Azīz al-Raḥmān, and Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī. He taught at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband for 26 years, then migrated to Pakistan and founded Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. He also served as a muftī.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Nūr al-Bashar, *Tarjamat al-Shaykh*, vol. 1, p. 7.
- ¹¹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 8.
- ¹² He was born on 12 Rabī‘ al-Thānī 1317 AH / 20 August 1899 in Bhopal, capital of the former Bhopal state. His father, Mawlānā Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Kāndhlawī (d. 1942), was a scholar and a student of Ḥājī Imdādullāh al-Muhājir al-Makkī, and worked in the forestry department. Muḥammad Idrīs Kāndhlawī focused on tafsīr and ḥadīth. He held the position of chief exegete at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, later migrating to Pakistan and teaching ḥadīth and tafsīr at Jāmi‘ah

Published:
July 2, 2025

Ashrafiyyah in Lahore. He authored several works on Qur'anic exegesis and the life of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. He studied at Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband and Mazāhir al-'Ulūm Sahāranpūr, under scholars including Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranpūrī, Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, and Shabbīr Aḥmad al-'Uthmānī. He passed away on 28 July 1974. See: Sājīd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣiddīqī, Introduction to *Minḥat al-Mughīth Sharḥ Alfiyyat al-'Irāqī fī al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 1st edn, 2009), p. 70; al-Bukhārī, *Akābir 'Ulamā' Diyūband*, pp. 215, 220; al-Baranī, *'Ulamā' Diyūband wa-Khidamātuhum fī 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 168, 171.

¹³ See: *Akābir 'Ulamā' Diyūband*, pp. 221, 226; *'Ulamā' Diyūband wa-Khidamātuhum fī 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth*, pp. 165, 168.

¹⁴ See: al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad Akbar Shāh, *Akābir 'Ulamā' Diyūband*, p. 196.

¹⁵ See: *al-Banāt* Magazine (Urdu), special issue on Shaykh al-Binnūrī (Karachi: Jāmi'ah al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, Muḥarram issue, 1398 AH / February 1978); Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf, *Tatimmah al-'Alām* by al-Ziriklī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2nd edn, 2002), vol. 2, p. 240.

¹⁶ Nūr al-Bashar, *Tarjamat al-Shaykh*, vol. 1, p. 8.

¹⁷ Shairkūtī, *Tajalliyāt 'Uthmānī*, p. 643.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 647.

¹⁹ Nūr al-Bashar, *Tarjamat al-Shaykh*, vol. 1, p. 8.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

²¹ Al-Qur'an, Sūrat al-Jāthiyah, 45:24–25.

²² Al-Qur'an, Sūrat al-Ṭūr, 52:35–36.

²³ Oxford University Press (2025) *Atheism*, in *Oxford English Dictionary*. [online] Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12597> [Accessed 29 June 2025].

²⁴ Cambridge University Press (2025) *Atheism*, in *Cambridge Dictionary*. [online] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/atheism> [Accessed 29 June 2025].

²⁵ Oxford University Press. 2025. *Atheism* in *Oxford English Dictionary*. Last modified 2025. Available at: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/atheism_n?tab=factsheet#35179934 [Accessed 29 June 2025].

²⁶ Ibn Fāris, Aḥmad ibn Fāris ibn Zakarīyā, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah (Cairo: Maktabat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduh, 2nd edn, 1969–1972), vol. 5, p. 236.

²⁷ Ibn Manzūr, Muḥammad ibn Mukarram, Lisān al-'Arab (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1994), vol. 3, p. 389.

²⁸ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-'Uthmānī, al-Islām (Lahore: Idārat al-Islāmiyyāt, March 1976), p. 11.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 10.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 12–14; see also: Shabbīr Aḥmad al-'Uthmānī, Mas'alah Taqdīr (Lahore: Idārat al-Islāmiyyāt, March 1978), pp. 30–31.

³¹ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-'Uthmānī, al-Islām, pp. 14–15.

³² See also: Shabbīr Aḥmad al-'Uthmānī, Faṭḥ al-Mulhim bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Imām Muslim (Karachi: Dār al-'Ulūm, 2009), vol. 1, p. 325.

³³ The Shaykh cited the same proof in his tafsīr of the verses showing Allah's unveiling of the dominion of the heavens and earth to Prophet Ibrāhīm; see: Shabbīr Aḥmad al-'Uthmānī, al-Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 631, fn. 1, 5.

Published:
July 2, 2025

³⁴ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *al-Islām*, pp. 15–17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

³⁶ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *Faṭḥ al-Mulhim*, vol. 1, p. 326; also: Ibn Abī al-‘Izz al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Taḥāwīyyah* (Riyadh: Ministry of Islamic Affairs, 1997), p. 35. The latter recounts: “It is narrated from Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allah have mercy on him) that a group of theologians sought to debate with him about affirming the oneness of divine Lordship. He said to them: ‘Before we discuss this matter, tell me about a ship in the Tigris river that sails by itself, loads itself with food and goods, returns by itself, docks, unloads, and repeats this process without anyone managing it — would you believe that?’ They replied: ‘This is impossible!’ He said: ‘If this is impossible for a ship, then how can it be true of the entire universe with all its upper and lower realms?’ This story is also attributed to others besides Abū Ḥanīfah.”

³⁷ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *Faṭḥ al-Mulhim*, vol. 1, pp. 325–327. He refers to the statements of Imām al-Ghazālī, Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, some Bedouins, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Imām Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Shāfi‘ī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, cited from *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*.

³⁸ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *al-Islām*, pp. 19–20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ “Its meaning is that when the soul leaves its body at death, it moves into another body, and continues in this cycle until it returns to its original source — Allah, Exalted is He. This idea of transmigration is tied to the doctrine of pantheism held by the Hindus, who believe that all beings contain a soul that emanated from the One God, and that all beings are in truth manifestations of that soul.” See: International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), *Comparative Religion Course: GUSU5103 (Master’s Level)*, p. 142. The idea of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (Oneness of Being) differs as held by some ignorant Sufis from the interpretation of upright Sufi scholars such as Shaykh Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, who affirmed Oneness of Being without affirming transmigration. We will address this in our next section on Tawḥīd.

⁴¹ Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 365, fn. 2; and p. 593, fn. 2.

⁴² Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *al-Islām*, pp. 25–29.