



The Four Principles



Shaykh ul-Islaam
Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhaab رحمته الله



Additional benefits from
Dr. Murtaza bin Bakhsh حفظ الله



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All Praise belongs to Allâh, the Lord of the Universe and may the peace and blessings be upon the Last of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, upon his family and all his Companions. To proceed,

I ask Allâh, the Most-Generous, the Rabb of the Throne to protect you in this World and the Hereafter, and to bless you wherever you are and to make you from those who are grateful when they are given, patient when they are tested and those who seek forgiveness when they sin. For verily, these are the three signs of happiness.

Know, may Allâh guide you to obeying Him, that Haneefiyyah is the religion of Ibraaheem عليه السلام: It is that you worship Allâh alone making the religion purely for Him, as He said,

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

And I (Allâh) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone). (Surah adh-Dhaariyaat:56)

When you acknowledge that Allâh has created you for His worship, then know that worship is not regarded as such unless it is accompanied by Tawheed, just as prayer is not regarded as prayer unless it is accompanied by purification (taharah). So, when shirk enters into worship it corrupts it just like an impurity invalidates purification.

So, when you recognise that if shirk enters into worship, it corrupts it, negates all the actions and the one who does it is eternally in the Hell-Fire, then you will realise the most important matter obligatory upon you, the recognition of this fact, in order that Allâh may save you from the abyss of committing shirk with Him, about which He, the Most-High said,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾

Verily, Allâh forgives not (the sin of) setting up partners (in worship) with Him, but He forgives whom He wills, sins other than that (Surah an-Nisaa:116)

This knowledge comprises of four principles which Allâh, the Most-High, has mentioned in His Book.

(Four Fundamental Principles to Understand Tawheed and Shirk)

The First Principle

To know the kuffaar, whom the Messenger ﷺ fought, used to affirm that Allâh, the Most-High, was the Creator, Sustainer and the Disposer of all the affairs, but that did not enter them into Islâm and the proof is His, the Most-High's saying,

﴿قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ﴾

“Say: "Who provides for you from the sky and the earth? Or who owns hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who disposes the affairs?" They will say: "Allâh." Say: "Will you not then be afraid of Allâh's punishment (for setting up rivals in worship with Allâh)?" (Surah Yunus:31)

Its derived benefits:

1. (Laa Ilaaha ill-Allâh) Kalimah at-Tawheed does not mean that there is no creator, sustainer or disposer of affairs except Allâh; These meanings are incorrect, because even the polytheists of Makkah believed in these meanings.
2. To believe that Allâh is the creator, sustainer and disposer of all affairs is called Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah, and the affirmation of Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah alone does not bring a person into the fold of Islâm.
3. To believe that there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allâh is called Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah; This is the correct meaning of Laa Ilaaha ill-Allâh, that the polytheists denied and therefore were called polytheists.
4. It is obligatory upon the one who believes that Allâh is the Rabb of all that exists, to also affirm that Allâh alone is worthy of all forms of worship in truth; otherwise he will not benefit anything from Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah.
5. Whoever understands the meaning of Laa Ilaaha ill-Allâh to only be Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah is to be considered misguided, even if he utters Laa Ilaaha ill-Allâh a thousand times.

Note: To know more about Laa Ilaaha ill-Allâh, read our leaflet “Kalimah at-Tawheed Laa Ilaaha ill-Allâh”.

The Second Principle

That they (the polytheists) say: “We do not call upon and turn towards them except to seek nearness and intercession (with Allâh)”. So the proof against seeking nearness (through the awliyaa) is His saying,

﴿وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَنَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ﴾

“And those who take awliyaa besides Him (say): “We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allâh.”

Verily, Allâh will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Truly, Allâh guides not him who is a liar, and a disbeliever.” (Surah az-Zumar:3)

The proof against intercession (through the awliyaa) is His, the Most-High’s saying,

﴿وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَنْصُرُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ﴾

“And they worship besides Allâh things that hurt them not, nor profit them, and they say: “These are our intercessors with Allâh.” (Surah Yunus:18)

And Intercession is of two types: The prohibited intercession and the affirmed intercession.

The prohibited intercession is that which is sought from other than Allâh concerning that which only Allâh is able to do. The proof is His, the Most-High’s saying,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمْ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

“O you who believe! Spend of that with which We have provided for you, before a day comes when there will be no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession. And it is the disbelievers who are the Dhaalimun (wrong-doers, etc.).”

(Surah al-Baqarah:254)

And the affirmed intercession is that which is sought from Allâh while the intercessor is honoured with the intercession and the one interceded for is whose actions and speech are pleasing to Allâh, after He gives permission, as He, the Most-High said,

﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ﴾

“Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission?” (Surah al-Baqarah:255)

Its derived benefits:

1. The reason for the polytheism of the people of the past was due to the fact that they would take their deities as intercessors with Allâh.
2. They acknowledged the fact that these idols, trees etc. could neither benefit nor harm them.
3. They claimed that they only took them as intercessors with Allâh; but Allâh refuted their claim by saying that they had committed polytheism.
4. Not every kind of intercession is acceptable to Allâh.
5. There are conditions for a permissible intercession and Allâh will not accept any intercession without these conditions being fulfilled.
6. The only individuals deserving of intercession on the Day of Judgment will be those who did not die upon polytheism.

Note: In fact, the polytheism of the Quraysh occurred due to their misunderstanding of the issue of intercession. Today, if some of the Muslims are asked the reason for their invoking of prophets and saints, they always respond by saying, "They will intercede for us."

The Third Principle

The Prophet ﷺ encountered people differing in their worship. Amongst them were people who worshipped the angels, some who worshipped the prophets and the righteous men and others who worshipped stones, trees, the sun and the moon. The Messenger of Allâh ﷺ fought them and did not differentiate between them. The proof is the saying of Allâh the Most-High,

﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِئْتَةً وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ﴾

"And fight them until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allâh) and all the deen is for Allâh (Alone)." (Surah al-Baqarah:193)

And the proof that the sun and the moon (were worshipped) is the saying of the Most-High,

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنْتُمْ آيَاةً تَعْبُدُونَ﴾

“And from among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate yourselves not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate yourselves to Allâh Who created them, if you (really) worship Him. (Surah Fussilat:37)

And the proof that the angels (were worshipped) is the saying of the Most-High,

﴿وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا﴾

“Nor would He order you to take angels and prophets for lords (gods).” (Surah aal-e-Imraan:80)

And the proof that the prophets (were worshipped) is the saying of the Most-High,

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَتَّعَلَّمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ﴾

“And when Allâh will say (on the Day of Resurrection) “O Isa, son of Maryam! Did you say to men: ‘Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allâh? He will say: "Glorified are You! It was not for me to say what I had no right (to say).

Had I said such a thing, You would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner self though I do not know what is in Yours; truly, You, only You, are the All-Knower of all that is hidden (and unseen). (Surah al -Maa'idah:116)

And the proof that the righteous (were worshipped) is the saying of the Most-High,

﴿أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ﴾

“Those whom they call upon desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord (Allâh), as to which of them should be the nearest; and they hope for His Mercy and fear His Torment.” (Surah al-Israa':57)

And the proof that stones and trees (were worshipped) is the saying of the Most-High,

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّتَّ وَالْعُزَّىٰ ۙ وَمَنْوَةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْآخِرَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾﴾

“Have you considered al-Laat and al-Uzza. And Manaat, the other third?” (Surah an-Najm:19-20)

عَنْ أَبِي وَقِيدٍ اللَّيْثِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: خَرَجْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ إِلَىٰ حُنَيْنٍ وَمَنْحَنِ حَدَّثَنَا عَنْهُدٍ بَكْفَرٍ، وَلِلْمُشْرِكِينَ سِدْرَةٌ يَعْكِفُونَ عِنْدَهَا، وَيُنُوطُونَ بِهَا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهَا: ذَاتُ أَنْوَاطٍ، فَمَرَرْنَا بِالسِّدْرَةِ، فَقُلْنَا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ

اجْعَلْ لَنَا ذَاتَ أَنْوَاطٍ كَمَا لَهُمْ ذَاتُ أَنْوَاطٍ ...

Abu Waaqid al-Laythee رضي الله عنه said: "We departed with Allâh's Messenger ﷺ to Hunain and we had recently left kufr. The polytheists used to have a tree which they used to devote themselves to and hang their weapons upon, they used to call it 'Dhaat Anwaat'. We passed by a tree and said, "O Messenger of Allah, appoint for us a Dhaat Anwaat like they have a Dhaat Anwaat "...He said, Allahu Akbar! By the One in whose Hand is my soul, these are the ways. The like of what you have said is what Bani Israaeel said to Moosaa, Make for us an ilâh (a god) as they have âlihah (gods)." He said: "Verily, you are a people who know not. (Surah al-A'raaf)
Reported by at-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, Ibn Abi Aasim in As-Sunnah, classified as sahih by al-Albani)

Its derived benefits:

1. Polytheism means to worship others besides Allâh no matter how great that deity may be.
2. It is a clear response to those who say that polytheism is restricted only to worshipping idols.
3. Polytheism is a curse that brings division and disunity.
4. Polytheism is the greatest sin and trial.
5. It is a clear response to those who claim that they do not worship the saints, rather they only take them as intermediaries.
6. Ignorance is a great danger that can only be tackled with knowledge.
7. To consider a thing blessed (or to derive blessings from something) without evidence is polytheism.
8. Changing the names of things does not change their reality.

The Fourth Principle

The polytheists of our time are worse in their polytheism than the polytheists who came before. This is because those who came before committed polytheism during times of ease and made their worship purely for Allâh during times of difficulty.

However, the polytheism of the polytheists of our time is continuous, during times of ease and difficulty. The proof is His, the Most-High's saying,

﴿فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِّ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“And when they embark on a ship they invoke Allâh making their faith pure for Him only, but when He brings them safely to land, behold, they give a share of their worship to others.” (Surah al-Ankaboot:65)

Note: The polytheists of past committed polytheism only in Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah (Oneness of worship). However today, some Muslims commit polytheism in both Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah and Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah.

Its derived benefit:

If it is that Allâh’s Messenger ﷺ fought against the polytheists of past and declared them polytheists, then the present-day Muslims must fear Allâh because their polytheism is worse than that of the polytheists of the past.

Finally, a request:

Remember, you will not be given a second worldly life after this life that has been bestowed upon you. You will be held accountable for that which you did today. Tomorrow will be very difficult and terrifying. You will have to give your own answers without any helpers. The one who has oppressed his own self and the greatest oppression is polytheism, Allâh will never forgive such a person (if he were to die without repenting). Allâh The Most-High says,

﴿فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْلِفًا وَعَدِيدًا رُسُلَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقْرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾ سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطْرَانٍ وَتَغْشَى وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥١﴾ هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ الْوَاحِدِ وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾﴾

“So, think not that Allâh will fail to keep His Promise to His Messengers. Certainly, Allâh is All-Mighty, All-Able of Retribution. On the Day when the earth will be changed to another earth and so will be the heavens, and they (all creatures) will appear before Allâh, the One, the Irresistible. And you will see the Mujrimun that Day Muqarranûn (bound together) in fetters. Their garments will be of pitch, and fire will cover their faces. That Allâh may requite each person according to what he has earned. Truly, Allâh is Swift at reckoning. This (Qur’an) is a Message for mankind in order that they may be warned thereby, and that they may know that He is the only One Ilah, and that men of understanding may take heed.”

(Surah Ibraheem:47-52)