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Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

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**SHIP OF
SALVATION**

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

The author – may Allah have mercy upon him – said:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

I ask Allah, the Most Generous, Lord of the Mighty Throne, to protect and take care of you in this world and the Hereafter, and to make you blessed wherever you may be, and to make you from those who, when given – they are grateful; and when tested – they are patient; and when they sin – they seek forgiveness. For indeed, these three are the signs of happiness. (1)

Explanation:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamīn (mankind, jinn, and all that exists), and I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, alone with no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the slave of Allah and His Messenger. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his family, and his companions, abundantly, until the Day of Judgement.

To proceed:

Indeed, this concise treatise – The Four Principles – is from among the important treatises from the writings of the Imam of this da'wah (Islamic call). Its importance comes from knowing the opposites of these four principles, and that the failure to uphold or properly understand these four principles results in great confusion regarding the condition of the polytheists and the condition of the monotheists.

And the trial occurred with the state of the people of Tawheed and the state of the people of Shirk, and Allah clarified in the Qur'an what is due of His right in Tawheed, and He clarified Shirk with Him with great clarification.

(1) See: Al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib by Imām Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him (p. 11).

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And these four principles are taken from the texts of the Book and the Sunnah, and from the knowledge of the condition of the Arabs – as will come – so they are great principles that protect whoever memorizes them and understands their meaning from having any hesitation in the matter of judging the people of Shirk, and regarding the obligation of making the religion purely for Allah and how that is to be.

The Imam of the Da‘wah, Imam Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb – may Allah have mercy on him – as is his habit in many of his treatises, begins them with a supplication for the one reading that message or for the one to whom it was directed. And this – as is well known – is a reminder that the foundation of knowledge and da‘wah is mercy and mutual compassion between the teacher and the student, and mercy and mutual compassion between the caller and the one being called; because mercy in that is the reason for connection. He said:

"And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently." [Āl ‘Imrān: 159] – that is: so it was by the mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them. So it was by the mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them. And the word "mā" in this verse is a particle of emphasis to strengthen the sentence, and it is what is called zā'idah (extra) (1) – to increase emphasis. So this supplication is a result of mercy.

And likewise it is befitting for the teacher, and for the dā‘ī (caller), and for the one enjoining good and forbidding evil to be merciful to the creation, just as Allah described His Prophet ﷺ with His statement:

"And We have sent you (O Muhammad ﷺ) not but as a mercy for the 'Alamīn (mankind, jinn and all that exists)." [Al-Anbiyā': 107]

And He said:

"He is full of pity, kind, and merciful towards the believers." [At-Tawbah: 128]

(1) Ash-Shawkānī – may Allah have mercy on him – said in Fath al-Qadīr (1/393) about this verse:

"And the word (mā) in His saying: 'By the Mercy of Allah you were lenient with them' [Āl ‘Imrān: 159] is an additional particle for emphasis," as said by Sībawayh and others. And Ibn Kaysān said: It is an indefinite noun (nakirah) in the genitive case due to the bā' (بـ), and "Mercy" is a substitute for it. The first opinion is more in line with the principles of Arabic. And similar to it is His statement:

"But because of their breach of their covenant..." [Al-Mā'idah: 13].

And the prepositional phrase is related to His saying: "you were lenient with them" [Āl ‘Imrān: 159], and it was placed before it to indicate restriction. And the tanwīn (nunation) on "Mercy" is for magnification. The meaning is: His gentleness with them was only due to the great mercy from Him! End quote.

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Ibn al-Qayyim – may Allah have mercy on him – said (1) in describing the state of the caller to Allah with the people of disobedience and those who turn away from the truth. He said regarding that:

"And make for Your Face two eyes – both of them weeping out of fear of the Most Merciful.

If your Lord had willed, you would have been like them; for the heart is between the Fingers of the Most Merciful."

Even when the ḥudūd (prescribed punishments) are applied and carried out, they are carried out with mercy, not with vengeance – mercy upon the one who deserved that punishment, because the Shayṭān overpowered him and made him deserving of that. Like a prisoner from among your beloved ones who fell into the hands of the enemy.

So this beginning with supplication from the Imām – may Allah have mercy on him – is a reminder of that. And among what he supplicated with is that he asked Allah for you and us to be among those who, when given – are grateful; and when tested – are patient; and when they sin – they seek forgiveness. For indeed, these three are the signs of happiness.

"When he is given – he is grateful"; because giving from Allah is a blessing, and Allah loves the grateful among His slaves. And gratitude is done with the tongue and through action. As He said:

"Give thanks to Me and to your parents." [Luqmān: 14] – this is with speech and with action.

And His saying:

"Work you, O family of Dāwūd, with thanks!" [Saba': 13] – this is from the side of action.

And His saying:

"Therefore remember Me (by praying, glorifying), I will remember you, and be grateful to Me and never be ungrateful to Me." [Al-Baqarah: 152] – this is from the side of speech and action.

For this reason, gratitude differs from praise. (2) Gratitude is for a blessing, while praise can be for a blessing or without a blessing – it can be initial praise.

(1) See: An-Nūniyyah of Ibn al-Qayyim along with its explanation by Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā (1/131).

(2) Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah – may Allah have mercy on him – said:

"Upon this, many people say: Praise (ḥamd) is broader than gratitude (shukr) in terms of its causes, for it can be for a blessing and for something other than a blessing. And gratitude is broader in terms of its types, for it can be by the heart, the tongue, and the hand. So if every created being has within it a blessing, then praise is only upon a blessing. And [we say]: 'All praise is due to Allah in all circumstances,' because there is no situation that He decrees except that it is a blessing upon His servants." End quote. See: Majmū' al-Fatāwā (14/308), and Al-Ḥasanah wa as-Sayyi'ah (1/75).

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And gratitude is with the tongue and with action, whereas praise is with the tongue only, without action – and there are well-known differences between the two among the people of knowledge.

This is something that should be reflected upon: that when the servant is given something, he should show gratitude for the gift of Allah. And gratitude for the gift, as has been mentioned, is through speech and action:

- As for speech: that he attributes that gift to the One Who gave it, and that he praises Him for it, and that he does not turn towards anyone else.

As He said:

"And whatever of blessings and good things you have, it is from Allah." [An-Naḥl: 53]

And He said:

"They recognise the Grace of Allah, yet they deny it..." [An-Naḥl: 83]

- And from the side of action: gratitude is by using the blessings in what is beloved to the One Who granted them and bestowed them.

And this is something that Allah loves from you – rather, from the greatest acts of worship that Allah loves is that the servant be grateful. That is why He said:

"And few of My slaves are grateful." [Saba': 13]

And He said:

"Offspring of those whom We carried (in the ship) with Nūḥ! Verily, he was a grateful slave." [Al-Isrā': 3] – meaning: O offspring of those whom We carried with Nūḥ, indeed he was a grateful slave – he used to thank Allah a great deal.

The people of tafsīr said (1): Whenever he ate a bite, he thanked Allah for it. Whenever he drank a drink, he thanked Allah for it. Whenever he wore clothing, he thanked Allah for that.

Meaning: that he would disown every power and strength regarding the blessings that came to him or anything made easy for him, and that he would acknowledge that it is from Allah.

(1) See: Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī (19/15), and Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī (10/213).

Ibn Kathīr – may Allah have mercy on him – said:

“And it has been reported in the ḥadīth and in the narration from the Salaf that Nūḥ – peace be upon him – used to praise Allah for his food, his drink, his clothing, and all of his affairs; and for that reason, he was called ‘a grateful slave.’”

See: Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (3/25).

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And the chapter of gratitude is connected to Tawhīd. And it is as if the Imām – may Allah have mercy on him – when he mentioned gratitude for blessings, patience in tribulation, and seeking forgiveness from sin, he was observing the condition of the monotheist and addressing him with what he must always maintain. For the one upon Tawhīd has been granted a blessing that no other blessing can equal – and that is: that he is upon the correct Islam, upon pure Tawhīd, the Tawhīd for which Allah has promised its people happiness in this world and the Hereafter.

And the one upon Tawhīd must face trials. So he asked Allah for him that if he is tested, he is patient; and trials may come through statements directed at him, or through the body, or through wealth, or through other means.

And he said: “And if he sins, he seeks forgiveness” – because the one upon Tawhīd must have with him some level of heedlessness, and he must fall into sin – whether from the minor sins or from the major ones. And from Allah’s Names is Al-Ghafūr (The Most Forgiving) (1), and the effect of this Name must appear in His creation and dominion. For this reason, Allah loves that His monotheistic, sincere slave be constantly seeking forgiveness, and the one upon Tawhīd must do so.

And if the servant abandons abundant seeking of forgiveness, arrogance will come to him – and arrogance invalidates much of one’s deeds. For that reason, he said here:

“And if he sins, he seeks forgiveness – for indeed these three are the signs of happiness.”

So then, these are inseparably linked to the condition of every person of Tawhīd:

- Gratitude for blessings
- Patience in trials
- Seeking forgiveness for sin and disobedience

(1) Ibn al-Qayyim – may Allah have mercy on him – said in his Nūniyyah:

And He is Al-Ghafūr (The Most Forgiving), so if one were to come with its fill

Of sins – without shirk but from disobedience

He would meet him with forgiveness equal to its fill – Exalted is He, the One Vast in Forgiveness.

See: An-Nūniyyah with the explanation of Ibn ‘Īsā (2/227–231).

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And the more the servant magnifies his knowledge of his Lord, the more he magnifies these three. And the more Tawḥīd is magnified in the heart, the more these three are magnified – until the servant sees no one besides Allah as deserving of any of his actions or behaviors. And if he becomes heedless of that, then his seeking forgiveness becomes the seeking of forgiveness of one who does not understand.

For that reason, he ﷺ used to seek forgiveness in the day and night more than one hundred times. (1) And in another narration in the Ṣaḥīḥ:

“By Allah, I seek Allah’s forgiveness and repent to Him more than seventy times a day.”
(2)

And the one upon Tawḥīd is at risk of the danger of self-deception – that he might say he is from the people of Tawḥīd, or from those who actualize the following of the Salaf, or from those affiliated with knowledge – yet in his heart there is no true humility and lowliness before Allah, the Exalted, which would be a reason for accepting this means – the means of Tawḥīd – to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.

And the affair of Allah is most great. He asked from His slaves something little. And for this reason, the matter of Tawḥīd is greatly magnified, and Shirk – and that which it leads to – is exceedingly vile.



(1) As in the ḥadīth reported by Muslim (2702) from the ḥadīth of al-Agharr al-Muzanī – may Allah be pleased with him.

(2) Reported by al-Bukhārī (6307) from the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah – may Allah be pleased with him.

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Know – may Allah guide you to His obedience – that the Ḥanīfiyyah, the religion of Ibrāhīm, is that you worship Allah making the religion purely for Him, as He, the Most High, said:

“And I (Allah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone).” [Adh-Dhāriyāt: 56]

So if you have come to know that Allah created you for His worship, then know that worship is not called worship unless it is with Tawḥīd – just as prayer is not called prayer except with purification. So if Shirk enters into worship, it corrupts it – just like impurity corrupts purification.

So if you have come to know that Shirk, when mixed with worship, ruins it, nullifies the deed, and its doer becomes from those who will abide forever in the Hellfire – then you have come to know that the most important matter upon you is: to know this, in the hope that Allah may save you from this trap, which is Shirk with Allah – the very thing that Allah said about it:

“Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him in worship, but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills.” [An-Nisā’: 116]

And that is through knowing four principles which Allah the Most High mentioned in His Book.

Explanation:

This introduction is an entry into these principles. And the first of that is: “The Ḥanīfiyyah, the religion of Ibrāhīm” – Allah made Ibrāhīm a ḥanīf, meaning: one who turned away (1) from the path of Shirk toward pure Tawḥīd. And Ḥanīfiyyah is the religion that turned away from every falsehood to the truth and distanced itself from every falsehood to the truth.

(1) See: Lisān al-‘Arab (9/56–57), under the root (ḥ-n-f):

“He inclined away (ḥanafa) from something and taḥannafa – meaning: he turned aside. And the ḥanīf is the Muslim who inclines away from the religions – that is, he inclines to the truth. It was also said: he is the sincere one.” End quote, with adaptation.

And Mukhtār aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ (1/67), under the root (ḥ-n-f), said:

“Al-Ḥanīf: the Muslim. And taḥannafa a man – that is, he acted upon the way of Ḥanīfiyyah. It is said: he was circumcised. And it is said: he abandoned the idols and worshipped [Allah].” End quote.

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It is the religion of our father Ibrāhīm – as He said:

“Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim Ḥanīf (Islamic Monotheism – to worship none but Allah Alone), and he was not of Al-Mushrikūn.” [Āl ‘Imrān: 67]

And He said to him:

“Verily, Ibrāhīm was an Ummah (a leader having all the good righteous qualities), or a nation, obedient to Allah, Ḥanīf (i.e., to worship none but Allah Alone) and he was not one of those who were Al-Mushrikūn (polytheists). (He was) thankful for His (Allah’s) Favours. He (Allah) chose him and guided him to a Straight Path.” [An-Naḥl: 120–121]

The true essence of the religion of Ibrāhīm is the realization of the meaning of “Lā ilāha illa Allah”, as He said in Sūrat az-Zukhruf:

“And (remember) when Ibrāhīm said to his father and his people: ‘Verily, I am free from what you worship. Except Him (i.e., Allah Alone) Who did create me; and verily, He will guide me.’ And he made it [i.e., Lā ilāha illa Allah] a Word lasting among his offspring, (true Monotheism), that they may turn back.” [Az-Zukhruf: 26–28]

And this Word is the statement “Lā ilāha illa Allah” – “Verily, I am free from what you worship” – this is the Word of Tawḥīd. This is the half that is negation in the Word of Tawḥīd – meaning: the statement “Lā ilāha” means “Verily, I am free from what you worship.”

“Except Allah” means: “Except Him Who did create me.”

And He made it a lasting Word in his offspring.

And the greatest explanation of the Word of Tawḥīd is this verse, in which He said:

“Verily, I am free from what you worship – except Him Who did create me.”

And for this reason, the people of knowledge (1) said: Verily, the statement of Tawḥīd “Lā ilāha illa Allah” contains negation and affirmation. The negation includes disavowal of every object of worship besides Allah, and from the worship of everything besides Allah – because worship of anything besides Allah is false. And the affirmation is the worship of Allah alone – meaning assigning the true, deserved servitude to only One: and that is Allah – exalted is He.

(1) See: Badā'i' al-Fawā'id by Ibn al-Qayyim – may Allah have mercy on him – (1/145).

He said – may Allah have mercy on him – under the fifth point when clarifying the negation mentioned in Sūrat al-Kāfirūn at His statement: “And nor will you worship what I worship” – that it affirms that He has a deity whom He worships, and that you are free of worshipping Him. So it includes negation and affirmation, and corresponds to the statement of the Imām of the monotheists: “Verily, I am free from what you worship, except Him Who created me”, and it corresponds to the statement of the group of monotheists: “And when you withdraw from them and what they worship other than Allah...” So it encompassed the true meaning of Lā ilāha illa Allah – the Most High. End quote, with adaptation.

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This is the religion of Ibrāhīm. And this is the Ḥanīfiyyah, and it is what Allah commanded His Prophet to adhere to:

“Then, We have inspired you (O Muhammad ﷺ saying): ‘Follow the religion of Ibrāhīm Ḥanīf (Islamic Monotheism – to worship none but Allah Alone)...’” [An-Nahl: 123]

So the religion of Ibrāhīm is Tawḥīd.

And if you have come to know this, then know that worship is not accepted except with Tawḥīd, and that is like purification for prayer. For Tawḥīd is a condition for the acceptance of worship, meaning sincerity; and purification is a condition for the validity of prayer. Just as prayer is not valid except with purification, likewise, the worship of anyone is not valid unless he is a muwaḥḥid (person of Tawḥīd). Even if there is a mark of prostration on his forehead, and he fasts during the day and stands in prayer during the night – the condition for the acceptance of that is that he be a muwaḥḥid, sincere.

Allah – Exalted is He – said:

“And indeed it has been revealed to you (O Muhammad ﷺ), as it was to those (Messengers) before you: ‘If you join others in worship with Allah, (then) surely your deeds will be in vain, and you will certainly be among the losers. Nay! But worship Allah (Alone and none else), and be among the grateful.’” [Az-Zumar: 65–66]

And He said – regarding the disbelievers:

“And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did, and We shall make such deeds as scattered floating particles of dust.” [Al-Furqān: 23]

So, great worship and abundant worship – if not done with sincerity – is not accepted. Just like a man who performs a great prayer – he lengthens the standing, and lengthens the bowing, and lengthens the prostration, and perfects it well – but he entered into it without purification, then this prayer is not accepted by consensus, because purification is a condition for the validity of prayer. As is established in the authentic narration that the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Allah does not accept the prayer of any of you if he breaks wind, until he performs ablution.” (1)

And he ﷺ said:

“Prayer is not accepted without purification, nor charity from unlawful wealth (ghulūl).” (2)

This is a universally agreed-upon condition, and this is a way to illustrate this great matter. Otherwise, the condition of sincerity and Tawḥīd for the acceptance of worship is even greater than the condition of purification for the acceptance of prayer.

(1) Reported by al-Bukhārī (135, 6954) and Muslim (225), from the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah – may Allah be pleased with him.

(2) Reported by Muslim (224), from the ḥadīth of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar – may Allah be pleased with them both.

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Because if one prays while in a state of minor impurity deliberately, there is a difference of opinion among the scholars regarding whether that leads to takfīr (declaring him a disbeliever). But as for the one who worships Allah while being a mushrik (one who commits Shirk), then by consensus his worship is not accepted, and by consensus, he is a disbeliever, for he has committed major Shirk, and no deed is accepted along with it.

Once this is established, then this foundation causes a person to both fear and rejoice:

- He fears Shirk and that he may fall into it or be among its people.
- And he rejoices that Allah has made him from the people of Tawḥīd.

His joy that Allah has made him from the people of Tawḥīd should cause him to show gratitude for it and safeguard it. And his fear and fleeing from being among the people of Shirk – or that some form of Shirk might come to him – makes him constantly cautious that something from Shirk might affect his worship, his creed, or his speech.

For if the acts of Shirk are from major Shirk, they nullify the deeds. And if they are from minor Shirk, then they are greater than innovations and various sins – in terms of their type. And this, without a doubt, makes a person someone who fears and hopes – that is, one who fears and rejoices:

- Rejoicing due to his Tawḥīd,
- Fearing Shirk,

And that causes him to seek out these principles which will grant him certainty regarding his affair.

Tawḥīd and Shirk in the call of the reforming Imām – may Allah have mercy on him – for the one who reflects, may bring with it

(1) See: Sharḥ an-Nawawī ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (3/103), Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (21/295), al-Mubdi‘ (1/499), ‘Awn al-Ma‘būd (1/61), ar-Rawḍ al-Murbi‘ (1/73).

An-Nawawī – may Allah have mercy on him – said in his explanation of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim:

“And the Ummah has unanimously agreed on the prohibition of performing prayer without purification – whether it be with water or with earth. And there is no difference between obligatory prayer and voluntary prayer, or the prostration of recitation, or the prostration of gratitude, or the funeral prayer – except what was reported from ash-Sha‘bī and Muḥammad ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī, from their saying that the funeral prayer is permissible without purification. And this is a false madhhab, and the scholars are unanimously opposed to it. And if one prays deliberately without an excuse, then he is sinful, but he is not declared a disbeliever according to us and the majority. It was reported from Abū Ḥanīfah – may Allah have mercy on him – that he considers him a disbeliever due to his mockery.” End quote.

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Some hesitation or doubt regarding the truth of what the reforming Imām – may Allah have mercy on him – came with, in terms of his establishing of matters, and in terms of his judgment upon the people of Shirk and those who commit polytheism. For this is a tremendous matter: that someone who says “Lā ilāha illa Allah, Muḥammad Rasūl Allah,” and prays, and gives zakāh, and fasts, and performs ḥajj, and engages in worship, and is from the people of great acts of worship and of righteousness – as people say – yet it is said that his deeds, those which he did from acts of Shirk, or because he did not disbelieve in the tāghūt, then all of his actions are rendered as scattered dust. This is a grave matter. So how does this settle in people’s hearts?

Perhaps it arises from reflecting on people who perform great acts of worship, yet they fall into Shirk. So some people may feel it is too serious to consider such people as polytheists. Thus, this judgment has a significant and awe-inspiring weight in the hearts of some people.

These principles are for laying the foundation of this great matter – that the matter must be viewed from the perspective of the right of Allah. The error came from people looking instead at the right of the creation, at the condition of the human being. But if they were to look at the right of Allah – exalted is He – the One who created man and fashioned him and perfected him, and the One who created the heavens in this wondrous form, and the earth, and established signs proving His Oneness through His Lordship, and placed those signs in the soul, and in the horizons, and in what surrounds him – then he would know that the polytheist has no argument before Allah. But Allah – exalted is He – sent the messengers as a mercy, to establish the proof and to proclaim the warning.



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The First Principle:

That you know: the disbelievers whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fought against used to affirm that Allah – the Most High – is the Creator, the Provider, the Controller of affairs, and that this did not enter them into Islam. And the evidence is His – the Most High's – statement:

“Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): ‘Who provides for you from the sky and from 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: ‘Allah.’ Say: ‘Will you not then be afraid of Allah’s punishment (for setting up rivals in worship with Allah)?’” [Yūnus: 31]

Explanation:

The first principle: That Tawḥīd of Lordship (Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah) does not enter anyone into Islam. Tawḥīd of Rubūbiyyah is not what is solely required. For the Arabs knew that Allah alone is the Creator, that He alone is the Provider, that He alone gives life, and causes death, and that He is the One who gives refuge and none can give refuge against Him, that the command belongs to Him, that He sends down the rain, that He created trellised and untrellised gardens — all of this they affirmed, that the One who subjected and created it is Allah.

Yet that did not benefit them, and Allah did not make them from the people of Islam because of that.

He said:

“And most of them believe not in Allah except that they attribute partners unto Him.” [Yūsuf: 106]

Meaning: “Most of them do not believe in Allah” — i.e., in His Lordship — “except while they are associating partners in His worship.”

So look at the state of the disbelievers among the Arabs: they affirmed many aspects of Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah — as He said:

“Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): ‘Who provides for you from the sky and from 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: ‘Allah.’ Say: ‘Will you not then be afraid (of Allah’s punishment)?’” [Yūnus: 31]

They will say: ‘Allah’ – meaning, the One who does these things is Allah alone.

Say: ‘Will you not then fear?’ – that is: Do you affirm that and acknowledge His Oneness in Lordship, yet you do not fear Him by worshipping Him alone and abandoning Shirk?

So Allah established the proof upon them by what they acknowledged, against what they rejected. And this is the method of the Qur’an in establishing the proof upon the polytheists: that among the evidences for Tawḥīd al-‘Ibādah (Tawḥīd of worship) is to establish the argument through Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah. For the One who alone does all these actions — that is, He alone is the Creator, the Provider, and so on from the aspects

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of Lordship — He alone is the One who deserves to be worshipped, to the exclusion of others.

And for this reason, He said — rebuking the polytheists:

“Do they attribute as partners to Allah those who created nothing but they themselves are created?” [Al-A'rāf: 191]

And He said:

“Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): ‘All the praises and thanks be to Allah, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! Is Allah better, or (all) that you ascribe as partners (to Him)?’” [An-Naml: 59]

And He described those whom the polytheists made as gods: that they are incapable, have no power, do not create, and do not possess attributes that would make them deserving of being turned to. As He said:

“If the flies snatch away a thing from them, they will have no power to release it from them. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought.” [Al-Ḥajj: 73]

This is the likeness of those to whom they directed their worship.

And the acknowledgment of the polytheists of Lordship (Rubūbiyyah) did not enter them into Islam. So we conclude from that: the acknowledgment of those who came after them regarding Rubūbiyyah does not mean they are believers.

So if someone were to come and say: “I believe that Allah is the Lord – He is the Creator, He is my Lord, He is the One who provides for me, He is the One who gave me life, He is the One who causes me to die” — this is not considered the Shar‘ī (legislated) īmān. Meaning: he is not considered a Muslim until he comes with Tawḥīd.

And for this reason, the theologians erred when they defined “Ilāh” (deity) as “the One capable of creating (inventing)”. (1)

(1) See: Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (3/101). Shaykh al-Islām – may Allah have mercy on him – said:

“And the intended meaning of ‘Ilāh’ is not merely ‘the one capable of creating (inventing),’ as some of the Imāms of the theologians mistakenly assumed, when they thought that divinity (ulūhiyyah) is simply the power to create to the exclusion of everything else – and that whoever affirms that Allah alone has the power to create, has borne witness that there is no Ilāh except Him. For the polytheists used to affirm this, yet they were still polytheists, as has already been clarified.”

“Rather, the true Ilāh is the one who alone deserves to be worshipped. So He is an Ilāh in the sense of being the Ma'lūh (the One who is worshipped).” End quote.

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

They said: “Al-Ilāh is the One capable of creating (inventing).” So according to them, the meaning of Lā ilāha illa Allah goes back to Rubūbiyyah (Lordship). And this is the greatest error concerning the religion of Islam — an error committed by the theologians against the religion and the Millah — as they made the test and trial centered around Rubūbiyyah. So, according to them, if one is certain that the One who brings about things and creates them is Allah, then he is a believer and a Muslim. But this is not the meaning of Ilāhiyyah (divinity); because the meaning of Lā ilāha illa Allah is:

“There is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah.” (1)

So its meaning goes back to ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude/worship) — not Rubūbiyyah.

Therefore, the intent of the Shaykh – may Allah have mercy on him – in this important and definitive principle — that this principle is certain based on the condition of the disbelievers and polytheists — is that they acknowledged Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah, and it did not benefit them, and it did not enter them into Islam, and it gave them no right; because they associated with Allah other deities and worshipped their false gods. They said:

“Has he made the āliha (gods) into One Ilāh (God)?” [Ṣād: 5]

So if we look at this time, and the time of the Shaykh, and those before it and after it, we find that there are those who are certain about Rubūbiyyah, yet commit shirk in worship — and that does not benefit them, just as it did not benefit the former ones. Because the principle is: the polytheists of the Arabs were certain about Rubūbiyyah.

And today, some souls may experience weakness — when they hear someone say “in shā’ Allāh,” or they hear someone mention Allah, or say about Allah that He is his Lord or his Master or the like — they assume him to be a Muslim, and are content with that. But this was not the point of the test in the first place. Rather, it is essential that he be a muwaḥḥid in his worship — meaning: that he worships Allah in the way that was brought by al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, and that he be free and completely dissociated from shirk and its people.



(1) At-Ṭabarī – may Allah have mercy on him – said (24/81) when interpreting “Lā ilāha illa Huwa”:

He says: There is no deity worthy of worship in truth, whose worship is permissible and to whom divinity rightfully belongs, except Allah — the One whose attributes are these. So call upon Him, O people, making the religion sincerely for Him. End quote.

Ash-Shawkānī – may Allah have mercy on him – said in Fath al-Qadīr (1/271), in the tafsīr of His – the Most High’s – saying: “Lā ilāha illa Huwa”:

That is: there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Him — and this sentence is the predicate of the subject. End quote.

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

The Second Principle:

That they say: "We did not call upon them and turn towards them except to seek nearness and intercession."

The evidence for seeking nearness is His – the Most High's – statement:

"And those who take Awliyā' (protectors and helpers) besides Him (say): 'We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah.' Verily, Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Truly, Allah guides not him who is a liar, and a disbeliever." [Az-Zumar: 3]

And the evidence for intercession is His – the Most High's – statement:

"And they worship besides Allah things that hurt them not, nor profit them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors with Allah.'" [Yūnus: 18]

And intercession is of two types:

Invalid (negated) intercession,

And affirmed intercession.

As for the invalid intercession: it is what is sought from other than Allah, in matters that none can accomplish except Allah.

And the evidence is His – the Most High's – statement:

"O you who believe! Spend of that with which We have provided you before a Day comes when there will be no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession. And it is the disbelievers who are the *ẓālimūn* (wrongdoers)." [Al-Baqarah: 254]

And as for the affirmed intercession: it is that which is sought from Allah, and the intercessor is one honoured with intercession, and the one for whom intercession is made is he whose speech and action Allah is pleased with – after His permission, as He – the Most High – said:

"Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His permission?" [Al-Baqarah: 255]

Explanation:

With this second principle in clarifying the state of the polytheists in their worship: they worshipped deities along with Allah and besides Him—what did they intend with this worship? Did they claim these were independent gods? Or were they intermediaries?

This principle has made clear: that they were only worshipping other than Allah on the basis of intermediation, or seeking nearness, or seeking intercession—meaning, they said that their false deities brought them closer to Allah, or conveyed their needs to Allah, or that these idols would intercede for them with Allah. That is, the polytheists of the Arabs were not asking from the idols independently, but rather, were asking them as intermediaries—either for closeness or nearness to Allah.

And the second type: is the type of intercession, as Allah said. So the proof regarding seeking nearness is His saying:

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

“And those who take Awliyā' (protectors and helpers) besides Him (say): ‘We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah.’ Verily, Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Truly, Allah guides not him who is a liar, and a disbeliever.”

[Az-Zumar 39:3]

He said: “And those who take Awliyā' besides Him,” meaning idols. “We do not worship them except,” meaning they say: “We worship them only,” and this is ḥaṣr (exclusive restriction), which the scholars of rhetoric call exclusive inverse restriction (ḥaṣr qalb idāfi). (1)

“We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah in position,” meaning: we do not worship them for any reason other than nearness. So they limited what they sought to nearness to Allah. They were seeking what is with Allah—so when they turned to those false gods, they wanted what is with Allah and did not ask from them independently, but only desired nearness and closeness to Allah.

As He (Allah) said:

“And those who take Awliyā' (protectors and helpers) besides Him (say): ‘We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah.’”

[Az-Zumar 39:3]

(1) He said in *Jawāhir al-Balāghah* (p. 157):

Additional restriction (al-qaṣr al-idāfi) is when the restricted matter is confined to something in relation to another specific thing — not in relation to all others besides it. For example, the statement: “There is no traveler except Khalīl,” — the intended meaning is to restrict the travel to him in relation to someone else, such as Maḥmūd, for instance. And the intent is not that no one else in existence is traveling besides him — for reality disproves that.

End of quote.

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

And the evidence for intercession is His saying: "And they worship besides Allah things that harm them not, nor benefit them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say: 'Do you inform Allah of that which He knows not in the heavens and on the earth?'" [Yunus: 18]

And intercession is that they ask Allah for their needs. The meaning of intercession is that the one being asked joins his request to that of the one requesting and then raises it to the one who possesses the authority. This is the meaning of intercession. So they say: "These are our intercessors with Allah," meaning: they will be the ones requesting for us what we desire, and Allah will not reject their intercession because they are near to Him.

And the origin of the polytheism found in the world — across all sects and groups — is built upon one of two directions:

As for the first direction: it is polytheism in belief in the spiritual beings of the planets, just as was the shirk of the people of Ibrāhīm. For Ibrāhīm came to a people who worshipped idols that were shaped in the images of the spiritual beings of the planets — specific planets that they believed had an effect on the universe. They worshipped those idols or statues because they believed that the spirits of those planets would dwell in them — that the devils would descend upon those idols and statues and speak to them. And sometimes their desires would be fulfilled, and thus shirk took place. They increased in that by believing that the planets themselves acted and that the spirit of the planet was the one speaking.

He (Allah) said: "Thus did We show Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he be one of those who have Faith with certainty. When the night covered him with darkness he saw a star. He said: 'This is my Lord.'" [Al-An'ām: 75–76]

And the scholars differed: was he merely observing or arguing? The correct opinion — which is stronger than the others — is that Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, in his statement "This is my Lord" was arguing, not observing. (1)

(1) See: Dar' Ta'āruḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql (8/515) by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him: "And if the opponent claims that the previous types of knowledge were necessitated, meaning: attained through reflection and deduction, then such a claim is obstinate and defiant.

And if he uses as proof the saying of Allah regarding al-Khalīl (Ibrahim): "When the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star. He said: 'This is my Lord.'" [Al-An'ām: 76] until His saying: "And indeed We bestowed aforetime on Ibrahim his (portion of) guidance." [Al-An'ām: 78]

Then this is in fact an evidence against him, not for him, because if Ibrahim had come to know [his Lord] through reflection and deduction, then it would not have been valid for him to say: "Verily, I am free from all that you join as partners (in worship)." [Al-An'ām: 78], for that would mean he had not yet completed his reflection and deduction.

Nor would he say: "Verily, I have turned my face towards Him Who has created the heavens and the earth..." [Al-An'ām: 79], except that he already knew his Lord. =

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As for the second type of shirk: it is the shirk of the people of Nūḥ, and it is shirk from the angle of belief in the spirituality and souls of the righteous. Allah the Most High said:

"And they have said: 'You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwāf, nor Yaghūth, nor Ya'ūq, nor Nasr'" [Nūḥ: 23].

It has been confirmed in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (1), from the ḥadīth of 'Aṭā' from Ibn 'Abbās that he said: "These were the names of righteous men who were among the people of Nūḥ." And shirk occurred through these men because they were righteous. The Arabs inherited shirk through the righteous—so they worshipped multiple idols and statues: they worshipped al-Lāt—and al-Lāt was a grave into which the spirituality of that person settled, as they claimed—and they shaped an idol over it, so they began worshipping it. These are devils who play with them. Likewise was al-'Uzzā, and al-'Uzzā was a tree, and Manāt was a stone. Beside that tree, there was a righteous man who used to worship; and beside Manāt was a righteous man who used to worship. They made those righteous people and their spirits—belief in them—and made them awliyā' (allies), and made that a means for those (righteous ones) to raise their needs to Allah for them.

If you contemplate the state of the Arabs—as the Shaykh (may Allah have mercy on him) intended to clarify in this second principle—you will find that shirk occurred among the Arabs through righteous people (as will be mentioned), or that shirk occurred through the gods for the sake of seeking nearness and intercession, not because those (gods) had anything of rubūbiyyah (Lordship), or that they had any kind of independent ulūhiyyah (divinity), no—rather, they had divinity in a secondary sense: they were worshipped because they were intermediaries, and not independent deities. That is why He said:

"Has he made the āliha (gods) (all) into One Ilāh (God – Allah). Verily, this is a curious thing!" [Ṣād: 5].

They believed that these gods were intermediaries for the sake of nearness and intercession.

And intercession in the texts of the Book and the Sunnah is of two types:

- Intercession that is negated
- And intercession that is affirmed

= And that was only due to the previous guidance that he had been granted, through which he came to know about lordship (rubūbiyyah), as in His saying:

"And indeed We bestowed aforetime on Ibrahim his (portion of) guidance, and We were Well-Acquainted with him." [Al-Anbiyā': 51]

Rather, what Ibrahim intended by that statement was to rebuke his people and refute them, because they used to worship the sun, the moon, and the stars."

See: Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (2/152).

(1) Reported by al-Bukhārī (4920) from the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him.

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

Negated intercession and affirmed intercession.

And the negated intercession — as the Imam, may Allah have mercy on him, mentioned — is the intercession in that which none can do except Allah; intercession in the forgiveness of sins from one who does not possess that, intercession meaning the seeking of supplication; shaf'a means to request, and shafā'ah is the request. And the one from whom it is being requested is either alive and present, or deceased; and the living, present one in this world or in the gathering places on the Day of Resurrection — the evidences have come allowing intercession to be sought from him, as numerous texts have mentioned that (1). As for the deceased, he is not in the realm of action, nor in the realm of request, and he is not with Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, in the place where he can ask and be given what he requested. Rather, intercession is sought from Allah.

So the negated intercession is that which Allah negated in the Book, as in His saying:

“For the Zālimûn (polytheists and wrong-doers) there will be no close friend, nor any intercessor (shafīʿ) who will be obeyed.”

[Ghāfir: 18]

And as He said:

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

[Al-Baqarah: 254]

(1) As in the ḥadīth of intercession, which has been narrated with various wordings, among them:

- That which was narrated by al-Bukhārī (ḥadīth no. 7510), and Muslim [ḥadīth no. 322 (193)], and [ḥadīth no. 326 (192)] with a more complete wording, from the ḥadīth of Anas ibn Mālik, may Allah be pleased with him.
- And it was narrated by al-Bukhārī (ḥadīth no. 4712) and Muslim [ḥadīth no. 327 (194)], from the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him.
- And it was narrated by al-Bukhārī (ḥadīth no. 7439) and Muslim [ḥadīth no. 302 (183)], from the ḥadīth of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, may Allah be pleased with him.

And in it is the following:

“...Then they will come to Nooh (Noah) and will say: ‘O Nooh! You are the first of the Messengers sent to the people of the earth, and Allah has named you a thankful slave. Do you not see what we are in?’ ...”

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And as He said:

“They have no Walī (protector) or intercessor besides Him.”

[Al-An‘ām: 51]

And other such verses in which intercession is negated. This negated intercession is the intercession that occurs without the permission of Allah and His approval, and it is requested from those who were not granted the ability for it — it is requested from a dead person, regardless of his rank — for he was not given the ability to intercede, and he was not given the permission to be asked for intercession.

Thus, intercession is to be sought from Allah, and this is the beneficial intercession, the affirmed intercession. And this is a side discussion by the Shaykh — may Allah have mercy on him — in clarifying the true intercession and refuting those who cling to false intercession. Its detailed discussion is known in its place in Kitāb at-Tawḥīd (1) and in the books of Ahl al-Sunnah concerning intercession.

The summary of that is: the affirmed intercession is the one in which the Sharī‘ah conditions are fulfilled. And the greatest of these conditions is permission and approval: permission for the intercessor to intercede, and approval of the intercessor and the one for whom intercession is made. He said:

“And how many angels are there in the heavens whose intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He wills and is pleased with.” [Surah An-Najm: 26]

And He said:

“Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His Permission?” [Surah Al-Baqarah: 255]

And He said:

“And they cannot intercede except for him with whom He is pleased.” [Surah Al-Anbiya: 28]

And He said:

“Except him who bears witness to the truth and they know (him).” [Surah Az-Zukhruf: 86]

(1) See Tayseer al-‘Azeez al-Hameed, the explanation of Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, chapter of Intercession (p. 235), where he said — may Allah have mercy on him — in commentary on the statement of Imām Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, may Allah have mercy on him, quoting from Shaykh al-Islām, may Allah have mercy on him: “So the intercession which the Qur’an has negated...”

Then he said: So He negated that intercession benefits anyone except the one for whom the Most Gracious has given permission, and is pleased with his statement and deed — and he is the sincere believer. As for the polytheist, the one who supplicates to other than Allah to intercede for him — then intercession will not benefit him, and no one will be given permission to intercede for him, as He, the Most High, said: “So no intercession of intercessors will be of any use to them.” [Sūrah al-Muddaththir, 74:48] — End quote.

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So then, the affirmed intercession is the beneficial one — but it benefits with the two conditions of permission and approval: approval of the intercessor — that he is among those who bear witness to the truth while they have knowledge — and approval of the one for whom intercession is made — that he is from the people of Tawhīd.

And for this reason, it is authentically established in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that Abū Hurayrah asked the Prophet ﷺ and said:

“O Messenger of Allah, who will be the happiest of people with your intercession on the Day of Resurrection?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“O Abū Hurayrah, I truly thought that no one would ask me about this ḥadīth before you, due to what I have seen of your eagerness for ḥadīth. The happiest of people with my intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who says *Lā ilāha illallāh*, sincerely from his heart or his soul.” (1)

The scholars (2) said: The meaning of his statement “The happiest of people” (*As‘adu an-Nās*) means “the fortunate of people.” The superlative form *As‘ad* here is not used literally for comparison, but rather it means the one who attains happiness, just as His statement:

“The dwellers of Paradise will, on that Day, have the best abode, and have the fairest of places for rest.” [Surah Al-Furqān: 24]

And the Hellfire has no fair resting place.

So then, intercession (*shafā‘ah*) is only for the people of sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*) — the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ, the intercession of the angels, the intercession of the righteous, and the intercession of the scholars — on the Day of Resurrection, it is only for the people of sincerity. And the people of sincerity request it from Allah; so the sincere one says: O Allah, allow Your Messenger to intercede for me on the Day of Resurrection. O Allah, allow Your angels to intercede for me. O Allah, allow the righteous scholars to intercede for me. O Allah, allow Your righteous slaves — those whom You love and who love You — to intercede for me, and other such phrases.

(1) Reported by al-Bukhārī (657099) from the narration of Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him.

(2) See: ‘Umdat al-Qārī by al-‘Aynī (2/127), and Fayḍ al-Qadīr by al-Manāwī (1/507). The author of ‘Umdat al-Qārī said regarding his statement (أَسْعَدُ النَّاسِ – the most fortunate of people):

“If it is said: The use of the superlative form (*af‘al al-tafḍīl*) indicates participation [in the attribute], and the polytheist and the hypocrite have no happiness – I say: *As‘ad* here means *Sa‘īd* (fortunate), i.e., the fortunate one among the people, just as they say: *al-Nāqīṣ* and *al-Ashajj* are the most just of Banū Marwān, meaning: the just ones of Banū Marwān.

And it is also permissible that it retains its actual, well-known superlative meaning, and the distinction [of being the most fortunate] is based on levels – i.e., he is more fortunate than the one who has not reached this degree of profound and confirmed sincerity.”

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So intercession is sought from Allah, and intercession is not sought from the created being. Why? Because intercession is a request. Intercession is the request for supplication (du‘ā’); when one says “I seek intercession,” it means: “I request from you du‘ā’, I request from you to raise my need.” And when the matter of intercession returns to being a request, then intercession becomes a type of du‘ā’. Thus, supplicating to other than Allah is major shirk. For this reason, we say: requesting intercession from other than Allah is major shirk — regarding what none has power over except Allah, such as the dead and the like — then this is major shirk, because it is du‘ā’, and du‘ā’ must be made sincerely to Allah alone.



Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

The Third Principle:

That the Prophet ﷺ appeared among a people who were diverse in their objects of worship: among them were those who worshipped the angels, among them were those who worshipped the prophets and the righteous, and among them were those who worshipped stones and trees, and among them were those who worshipped the sun and the moon. Yet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fought them all and did not differentiate between them. The evidence is His saying, the Most High:

"And fight them until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and polytheism: i.e. worshipping others besides Allah) and the religion (worship) will all be for Allah Alone [in the whole of the world]"

[Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:193]

And the evidence for the sun and the moon is His saying, the Most High:

"And from among His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon"

[Surah Fussilat, 41:37]

And the evidence for the angels is His saying, the Most High:

"Nor would he order you to take angels and Prophets for lords (gods)"

[Surah Aal 'Imran, 3:80]

And the evidence for the prophets is His saying, the Most High:

"And (remember) when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?' He will say: 'Glory be to 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-Ma'idah, 5:116]

And the evidence for the righteous is His saying, the Most High:

"Those whom they call upon desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord (Allah), as to which of them should be the nearest; and they (themselves) hope for His Mercy and fear His Torment"

[Surah Al-Isra', 17:57]

And the evidence for the stones and trees is His saying, the Most High:

"Have you then considered Al-Lat, and Al-'Uzza. And Manat, the other third?"

[Surah An-Najm, 53:19-20]

And the Hadith of Abu Waqid Al-Laythi, may Allah be pleased with him, who said:

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"We went out with the Prophet ﷺ to Hunayn, and we had just recently left disbelief (i.e. we were new Muslims). The polytheists had a lote tree by which they would stay and hang their weapons on it, and it was called Dhāt Anwāṭ. So we passed by a lote tree and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, make for us a Dhāt Anwāṭ as they have a Dhāt Anwāṭ...'"

(Hadith continues) (1)

Explanation:

This principle contains a premise and a conclusion.

As for the premise, it relates to knowing the condition of the Arabs regarding what Allah informed about them in their acts of worship, and the false deities of the Arabs which they used to worship were of various types. Among them were those who used to worship the sun and the moon, and the evidence for that is His saying, the Most High:

"Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them, if you (really) worship Him."

[Fuṣṣilat: 37]

This type of Arabs — a group of them used to worship the sun and the moon — and from other than the Arabs also.

And among them were those who used to worship trees and stones.

And among them were those who used to worship the angels, as He said regarding them:

"And (remember) the Day when He will gather them all together, and then will say to the angels: 'Was it you that these people used to worship?'"

They (angels) will say: 'Glorified be You! You are our Walī (Lord) instead of them.'"

[Saba': 40–41]

And there were from the people — from the Arabs and others — those who associated partners with the angels.

And among them were those who associated partners with the Prophets, like 'Īsā (Jesus), as He said regarding him:

"And (remember) when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): 'O 'Īsā (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?'"

He will say: 'Glory be to 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.'"

[Al-Mā'idah: 116]

(1) It was recorded by al-Tirmidhi (2180), al-Nasa'i in al-Kubrā (346), Ibn Ḥibbān (94/15), and Imām Aḥmad (5/218). Abū 'Īsā said: A ḥadīth that is ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ.

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So they associated 'Īsā (Jesus) with Allah in worship.

And they also associated the righteous ones, as He said:

“Verily! Those for whom the good has preceded from Us, they will be removed far therefrom (Hell).

They shall not hear the slightest sound of it (Hell), while they abide in that which their ownelves desire.”

[Al-Anbiyā': 101-102]

And it has come in the reason for the revelation of this verse (1), that when the saying of Allah was revealed:

“Certainly! You (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell! (Surely) you will enter it.

Had these (idols, etc.) been gods, they would not have entered there (Hell), and all of them will abide therein.”

[Al-Anbiyā': 98-99]

The Arabs rejoiced at that and said: “We will be with 'Īsā, and we will be with 'Uzayr, and we will be with so-and-so.”

Then the saying of Allah, the Most High, was revealed:

“Verily! Those for whom the good has preceded from Us, they will be removed far therefrom (Hell). They shall not hear the slightest sound of it (Hell).”

So they directed various acts of worship toward the Prophets, Messengers, and the righteous.

And they also directed it toward trees and stones, as He said:

“Have you then considered Al-Lāt, and Al-'Uzzā.

And Manāt, the other third?” [An-Najm: 19-20]

They turned to the devils and the jinn, as Allah said regarding them:

“Nay, but they used to worship the jinn; most of them were believers in them.”

[Surah Saba 34:41]

And He said:

“And verily, there were men among mankind who took shelter with the males among the jinn, but they (jinn) increased them (mankind) in sin and transgression.”

[Surah Al-Jinn 72:6]

(1) Reported by al-Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak (216), al-Ṭabarānī in al-Kabīr (12/153), and al-Ḍiyā' in al-Mukhtārah (10/304) from the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Ḥākim said: “This ḥadīth has a ṣaḥīḥ chain of narration, and they (i.e., al-Bukhārī and Muslim) did not narrate it.”

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

These are the categories of the worship of the Arabs, which have come in the Qur'an, and the condition of the Arabs is made clear through it.

Did Allah, the Exalted, command His Prophet ﷺ to differentiate between one group and another?

Did He say to him: "Those who worship trees, stones, idols, the sun, and the moon — fight them;

but those who made the righteous and the prophets intercessors and made them as a means of nearness and closeness to Allah — do not fight them"?

This differentiation did not come.

Rather, the command came as one, and all of them were ruled to be disbelievers and polytheists, and they were fought.

And Allah commanded His Messenger ﷺ to fight all of those categories and all of those polytheists.

The command to fight them came without any distinction, in His saying:

"And fight against the Mushrikûn (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah) collectively as they fight against you collectively."

[Surah At-Tawbah 9:36]

This is general for all of them.

And this is the conclusion, and what came before it is the introduction.

And if that is the case, then there is no difference between the one who worships a prophet, or worships a stone, or a tree, or worships a jinn, or an angel — the state is the same.

So whoever comes in this time and differentiates, saying, "The righteous are merely allies (awliyā'), and they have a station with Allah, and the prophets have a station and nearness — so if we seek their intercession, then they have a position before Allah"

So we say: What is the difference between the worship of these righteous people and turning towards them, and the worship of those who worshipped 'Īsā, or worshipped 'Uzayr, or worshipped other righteous ones who used to be worshipped? What difference is there between this and that? There is no doubt that the ruling upon all of them is the same. And this is a definitive principle: that there is no difference between this and that — because the matter revolves around the servitude of the heart. So if polytheism and setting up rivals with Allah establish themselves in the heart, then whether the one associated in worship is righteous or wicked, a prophet or not a prophet, a tree or an angel — the matter is the same. Because the heart must direct its servitude to Allah alone, and its religion must be solely for Allah. "Surely, the religion (i.e. the worship and the obedience) is for Allah only." [Az-Zumar: 3]

And: "Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): 'Allah (Alone) I worship with sincere devotion to Him (Alone) in my religion.'" [Az-Zumar: 14]

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

This servitude is from the side of the worshipper; one does not look to whom he is directing his worship to. So if he turns to Allah, the One, the Alone, then he is a sincere monotheist. And if he turns to other than Him, then he is a polytheist — no matter who that other one may be. Hence Allah said:

“And the mosques are for Allah (Alone), so invoke not anyone along with Allah.” [Al-Jinn: 18]

And His saying “anyone (أَحَدًا)” includes all without exception, as we have mentioned repeatedly.

And like His saying:

“And whoever invokes (or worships), besides Allah, any other ilāh (god), of whom he has no proof, then his reckoning is only with his Lord. Surely, the disbelievers will not be successful.” [Al-Mu'minūn: 117]

He said here: “And whoever invokes along with Allah any other ilāh (god), of whom he has no proof...” — he has no proof for that. This is a description of anyone who worships other than Allah — because he has no proof for what he worships. And it does not imply that there could exist proof for anything worshipped besides Allah. Rather, every person who worships other than Allah and calls upon other than Him — he has no proof for the legitimacy of that being being worshipped or turned to.

So if we look in this present time at those who worship the saints, worship the graves, the shrines, and turn towards them, and worship the Prophets and Messengers, and say: “(These are) maqāmāt (noble stations),” and similar statements regarding the Companions — in every land there is a shrine that people turn to and associate partners with Allah by means of it. They say: “This is not like the worship of the polytheists of old.” Why? They say: “Because this is the worship of the righteous ones, whereas those (polytheists) only worshipped idols and stones.”

How can this be?! While Allah said regarding those worshipped:

“(They are) dead, lifeless, and they know not when they will be raised up.” [An-Nahl: 21]

A group of the commentators — like Abū Ḥayyān in his tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ (1) and others — said: This verse is about those who will be resurrected, because Allah said: “Dead, lifeless...” — and the one described as dead is he who was previously alive. As for the idols made from stone, trees, and similar things — they are not described as “dead, lifeless,” because they never possessed life in the first place. Rather, the one who used to have life and then died is the one of whom it is said: “Dead, lifeless.”

And this is made even clearer by His saying:

“...and they know not when they will be raised up.”

— for it is about those who will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection to meet Allah.

(1) See: Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ (5/468).

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

So this very argument used by the polytheists of this time and the polytheists during the time of the Shaykh – may Allah have mercy on him – is found everywhere. They say: "We only turned towards the righteous," and those early ones also turned towards the righteous. They say: "We only sought intercession; we did not ask them independently." We say: the early ones also sought intercession, nearness, and mediation – they did not seek independence. So the reality is the same. Even if the names have changed, and the claims have changed, the reality is still the same. And how much the night resembles the previous one.



Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

The Fourth Principle:

That the polytheists of our time are greater in shirk than the former ones, because the former ones used to commit shirk in times of ease and make their worship purely for Allah in times of hardship. Whereas the polytheists of our time, their shirk is continuous—in times of ease and hardship. And the evidence is the saying of the Most High:

"Then, 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-'Ankabūt, 29:65]

Explanation:

This principle is a result of what has preceded, meaning it is built upon the previous points. Once it is established that the polytheists of this time are of the same category as the polytheists in every era—of the same category as the polytheists of Jāhiliyyah—even if they affiliate themselves with the religion and Islam, and they pray and perform acts of worship—once it is confirmed that they are of the same type, and the shirk they commit is the very same shirk the earlier ones committed—then perhaps the situation has worsened, and this is what the Shaykh clarifies in this principle: that the polytheists of this time are more severe in their shirk than the polytheists of Jāhiliyyah. Why? Because Allah described the people of Jāhiliyyah as committing shirk in times of ease, but when they were in hardship, they would single Him out (in worship).

He said:

"And whatever of blessings and good things you have, it is from Allâh. Then, when harm touches you, unto Him you cry aloud for help."

[Surah An-Naḥl, 16:53]

To Him—that is, without calling upon others besides Him.

"Then, when He has removed the harm from you, behold! some of you associate others in worship with their Lord (Allâh). (They do so) to show ingratitude for the (favours) We have bestowed on them."

[Surah An-Naḥl, 16:54]

And the Prophet ﷺ described their state at sea with the verse:

"He it is Who enables you to travel through land and sea, till when you are in the ships and they sail with them with a favorable wind, and they rejoice therein, then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think that they are encircled therein, then they invoke Allâh, making their Faith pure for Him alone, (saying): 'If You (Allâh) deliver us from this, we shall truly be of the grateful.' But when He delivered them, behold! they rebel (disobey Allâh) in the earth wrongfully."

[Surah Yūnus, 10:22–23]

And He said:

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

"Then, 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-'Ankabūt, 29:65]

And in another verse:

"And when a wave covers them like shades (i.e. like clouds or the mountains of sea-water), they invoke Allah, making their invocations for Him only. But when He brings them safe to land, there are among them those that stop in the middle, between (Belief and disbelief). But none denies Our Signs except every perfidious ungrateful."

[Surah Luqmān, 31:32]

So we say: If you reflect upon those and these, you will find that they used to commit shirk in times of ease, but when they were touched by hardship and affliction, they would devote sincerely and affirm the oneness of Allah — "they call upon Allah, making their worship pure for Him alone."

As for the polytheists of these times, when they are afflicted with hardship, they rush to "Aydarūs, or al-Ḥusayn, or al-Badawī, or to al-Mirghanī, or to... or to... and to the rest of the types of people, or to the dead whom they turn to — and when they are touched by harm, they rush to trees, stones, and the like.

And there is no doubt that this is greater than the shirk of the earlier polytheists — because they commit shirk in both conditions, whereas the former used to commit shirk in one condition and return (to tawḥīd) in the other.

But who understands this?! Who comprehends this?! And who is unaware of this matter such that it would not be certain for him, without any doubt or confusion?

Because some people may say: These people pray, and give zakah, and fast — so how can they be more severe in their shirk than the early polytheists?

We say: The foundation of the religion is the criterion; for these acts of worship without tawḥīd are of no benefit — as we mentioned at the beginning — just as prayer without purification does not benefit.

So if there are great acts of worship accompanied by shirk, they are of no benefit and are not accepted.

Then how is it if one commits shirk both in times of ease and in times of hardship?!

Some scholars have mentioned that one of them met a man from the people of Ṭā'if, before the spread of the da'wah there and before the people became acquainted with the da'wah and with tawḥīd. So he said to him: "These people of Ṭā'if, when hardship befalls them, they flee to Ibn 'Abbās, and they do not know Allah."

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

The other replied to him: "Knowing Ibn 'Abbās is sufficient." (1)

This is a type of shirk that has deeply penetrated the hearts, by which they have forgotten Allah — in times of ease and in times of hardship — except for those whom Allah wills. And this is widespread today, so reflect and observe, and you will see that the people are in bewilderment regarding this matter.

And Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has bestowed His grace upon us in this land, for we do not see nor hear what disturbs us from these polytheistic matters — the major disbelief, and major shirk with Allah. But whoever travels to the lands where acts of shirk are widespread, such as some regions of Egypt, some regions of Sudan, Africa, some parts of Pakistan, India, Iraq, Syria, and the like — he will indeed see astonishing things. The people turn towards these shrines and the graves of the awliyā' — rather, even to those who are not awliyā' — and they hold beliefs regarding them, giving them a share of divinity. But it is Allah alone — He is the One who has the greatest right to exclusive devotion of the religion.

And the greatest right He deserves is that the heart worships Him alone, and that there be no act of worship whatsoever except for Him, exalted is He, alone and with no partner, as He said:

"So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord."

[Surah al-Kahf 18:110]

And He said in the ḥadīth qudsī:

"I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having an associate. Thus, whoever does an action for someone else's sake as well as Mine, I will leave him to whom he has associated with Me." (2)

(1) See: Al-Durar al-Saniyyah fi al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah (1/213).

(2) Reported by Muslim (2985) from the narration of Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him.

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

So if this (i.e. riyaa', showing off) — wherein a person performs a deed for other than Allah, intending the sight of so-and-so — is already condemned, then how about directing acts of worship to other than Allah? Such as calling upon other than Allah, or seeking aid from other than Allah, or vowing to other than Allah, or slaughtering for other than Allah, or seeking refuge in other than Allah in matters that no one can do except Allah, or seeking help from other than Allah in what no one can do except Allah, or turning to the dead and holding beliefs concerning them — and they call this “the secret.” They say: The spirit of the master has a secret, and for this reason, they replace the word “soul” with the word “secret,” saying: He has a secret, and May Allah sanctify his secret, because they believe these souls carry secrets.

But in reality, his soul contains no secret except the secret of its being fashioned and created by Allah. As for it giving help to one who seeks help from it, or granting to one who asks of it — then all of this is only for Allah alone, exalted is He.

“(And) when those who were followed disown (those who followed), and they see the torment, then all their relations will be cut off from them.”

(Surah Al-Baqarah: 166)

And Allah informed us of the state of the polytheists in the Fire:

“By Allah, we were truly in a manifest error. When we held you (false gods) as equals (in worship) with the Lord of the ‘Alamīn (mankind, jinn and all that exists).”

(Surah Ash-Shu‘arā’: 97–98)

The scholars said (1): They did not make them equals to the Lord of the worlds in creating, providing, giving life, or causing death — rather, they equated them with the Lord of the worlds in worship, by directing some acts of worship to them. So they made these false deities equal to Allah in deserving worship, because they worshipped Allah and also worshipped others along with Him. Thus, they equated the created with the Creator — and this is the most heinous form of injustice, and the ugliest form of transgression against the right of Allah.

(1) See: Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (1/757). He, may Allah have mercy on him, said:

“And His, the Most High’s, statement: ‘your equating [them with Allah]’ — they did not mean by it that they made them equal to Allah from every aspect. For indeed, no one from the children of Adam ever said such a thing, and it has never been transmitted from any group among the disbelievers that they claimed this universe has two equal creators. Even the Magians, who say there are two origins — light and darkness — are agreed that light is good, deserving of worship and praise, and that darkness is evil, deserving of censure and condemnation.” End quote.

And see: Jalā’ al-Afhām by Ibn al-Qayyim (p. 449). He, may Allah have mercy on him, said:

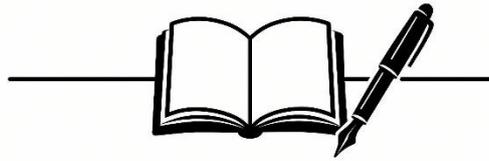
“And it is known that they only equated them with Him in love, deification, and worship. Otherwise, no one ever claimed that an idol or any of the rivals is equal to the Lord of the Worlds in His Attributes, or in His Actions, or in the creation of the heavens and the earth, or in the creation of His slaves as well. Rather, the equality was in love and worship.” End quote.

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

For His right, exalted is He, is to be venerated, glorified, singled out in Tawheed, worshipped sincerely, and acknowledged with every perfection, described with the attributes of beauty, majesty, and completeness, and recognized by the heart that there is no goodness except from Him, exalted is He, and no repelling of harm except by Him, exalted is He. Indeed, we live only by the grace of Allah and His bounty.

So this matter indeed goes back to the foundation of those three calls.

We ask Allah to make us among those who — when given, show gratitude; when tested, remain patient; and when they sin, seek forgiveness. And may the peace and blessings and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, and upon his family and companions.



شرح القواعد الأربع

لشيخ الإسلام

محمد بن عبد الوهاب رحمه الله

(١١١٥-١٢٠٦هـ)

Explanation of Al-Qawa'id Al-Arba' (The Four Principles)

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