

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allaah the most Kind the most Merciful

All praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the worlds. No aggression shall be except against oppressors. May peace and blessings be upon the slave of Allaah, His Messenger, the best of His creatures, and His Trustee over His Revelation, our Prophet, Imaam, and Messenger, Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abdul-Muttalib, the Hashemite, the Arab, al-Makky (from Makkah), and then al-Madane (from Al-Madinah). May Allaah's Peace and Blessings be upon his family, Companions, and those who adopt his way and follow his guidance until the Day of Resurrection.

Indeed, Allaah (سبحانه)¹ created the creatures to worship Him Alone, without ascribing partners to Him. Allaah (سبحانه) also sent His messengers to show this aim, call people for it, elaborate on it, and illustrate all that conflicts with it. This is why divine books were revealed and Allaah's Messengers (عليهم السلام)² were sent to the Jinn and mankind. Allaah (Praised be He) made the worldly life a way leading to the Hereafter. Those who adhere to the worship of Allaah and Tawheed (belief in the Oneness of Allaah) and follow His messengers (عليهم السلام) will move from the place of deeds, namely, the worldly life to the abode of reward, namely, the Hereafter, which is the abode of bliss, unalloyed pleasure, honour and genuine happiness. Those whom Allaah (سبحانه) blesses with Paradise will never die and their clothing and youthfulness will never fade. They will be in an eternal blessing, unending health, continuous youthfulness, and peace of mind. A caller from Allaah (عز وجل)³ will call them: **[O people of Paradise! You are to live (therein) and you will never die; you are to stay healthy (therein) and you will never fall ill; you are to stay young and you will never become old; you are to be in a constant bliss and you will never feel miserable.]** This is the way the people of Paradise will live. They will be given all that they desire or demand. **["An entertainment from (Allaah), the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."]** They will see Allaah's Honourable Face (عز وجل) as He (سبحانه) wills.

However, those who do not obey Allaah's Messengers (عليهم السلام) in this life and follow their vain desires and the temptations of Satan, will move to the abode of punishment, which will

¹ (سبحانه) (Subhanahu) Exalted be He

² (عليهم السلام) Peace be upon them

³ (عز وجل) (Azza wa Jaal) Glorified and Exalted be He

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

be for them a place of humiliation, loss, torture, pain and Hell. Those whom Allaah (سبحانه) has predestined to be among the people of the Hell will be in unceasing torment and misery. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[Neither will it have a complete killing effect on them so that they die, nor shall its torment be lightened for them.]** Allaah (سبحانه) also says: **[Verily whoever comes to his Lord as a Mujrim (criminal, polytheist, sinner, disbeliever in the Oneness of Allaah and His Messengers), then surely, for him is Hell, wherein he will neither die nor live. And: And if they ask for help (relief, water), they will be granted water like boiling oil, that will scald their faces. Terrible is the drink, and an evil Murtafaq (dwelling, resting place.)!] And: [...and be given to drink boiling water so that it cuts up their bowels]** The worldly life is the place of deeds that draw us near to Allaah (عزوجل) by the means that please Him. In this life, we should spare no effort to keep the self away from anything that displeases Allaah (سبحانه). It is, in fact, the time of learning and cooperating in righteousness and piety along with recommending one another to hold fast to and persist on the truth. Allaah (عزوجل) says: **[And I (Allaah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone). I seek not any provision from them (i.e. provision for themselves or for My creatures) nor do I ask that they should feed Me (i.e. feed themselves or My creatures). Verily, Allaah is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, the Most Strong.]**

Allaah (سبحانه) created the Jinn and mankind in order to worship Him (عزوجل). He did not create them because He needs them, for He (سبحانه) is Self-Sufficient and He is not in need of anything. He (سبحانه) says: **[O mankind! It is you who stand in need of Allaah. But Allaah is Rich (Free of all needs), Worthy of all praise. If He wills, He can destroy you and bring about a new creation. And that is not hard for Allaah.]** Allaah (سبحانه) never created the Jinn and mankind in order to obtain their support but He (سبحانه) created them for a great wisdom; to worship, glorify, and to fear and praise Him (Praised be He) with all that He is worthy of as well as to learn the Divine Names and Attributes and praise Him with them. They are intended to offer what Allaah (سبحانه) loves of words and actions, be grateful to Allaah (سبحانه) for the Grace He bestows on them and be patient with the afflictions they may face as they fight in the cause of Allaah (سبحانه) which is the best of deeds as indicated by Hadeeths. Moreover, people should contemplate on Allaah's Greatness and what is required of them regarding their Lord. Allaah (سبحانه) says,

[It is Allaah Who has created seven heavens and of the earth the like thereof (i.e. seven). His Command descends between them (heavens and earth), that you may know that Allaah has power over all things, and that Allaah surrounds all things in (His) Knowledge. And, And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allaah, so call on Him by them and, Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allaah (always, and in prayers) standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): "Our Lord! You have not

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

created (all) this without purpose, glory be to You! (Exalted are You above all that they associate with You as partners). Give us salvation from the torment of the Fire.] We should remember the purpose of our creation and be aware that we will not remain in this worldly life forever; but we will move to another life to be accounted for our endeavours. Death may even overwhelm a person while he is young and yet to be held accountable. This is for a certain wisdom.

The world contains both good and evil, righteous people and wicked ones, sadness and happiness, harm and usefulness, illness and health, richness and poverty, disbelievers and believers, sinners and virtuous people as well as things that are created for the benefit of the jinn and mankind. Allaah (سبحانه) says, **[He it is Who created for you all that is on earth.]**

Again, we emphasise that the purpose of the creation of jinn and mankind is to glorify and obey Allaah (سبحانه) in this life, revere His commands and prohibitions, worship Him (عزوجل) by observing His commands and avoiding what He forbade, seek Him when we are struck with afflictions and complaints, ask Him alone for Ghawth (source of succour), and call for His help in everything and every matter in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

In fact, understanding the concept of Tawheed is the most important matter and it is the aim of creation along with revering Allaah's orders and prohibitions, devoting all acts to Allaah, calling for His help in both religious and worldly affairs, and following what has been revealed to His messengers (عليهم السلام) with complete comfort and love of the divine commandments, dislike of the forbidden matters, hopefulness of Allaah's Mercy and fear of His punishment.

Allaah's messengers (عليهم السلام) were sent to inform people of this truth and to educate them in what is obligatory and what is forbidden, so that people will not say, "There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner." The messengers were sent to the people, bearing glad tidings and warning. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allaah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taaghoot (all false deities i.e. do not worship Taaghoot besides Allaah)."** And: Messengers as bearers of good news as well as of warning in order that mankind should have no plea against Allaah after the (coming of) Messengers. And: **And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)) but We revealed to him (saying): Laa ilaaha illa Ana [none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allaah)], so worship Me (Alone and none else)."**]

The mission of the messengers is to direct the jinn and mankind to what has been revealed to them, show them the ways that lead to salvation, warn them against the ways that lead to destruction and establish the evidence against them to leave them with no excuse. Allaah (سبحانه) prescribed the acts of worship because He loves to be praised and worshiped.

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

Therefore, He praised Himself with what He is worthy of and He dislikes evil-deeds, so He prohibits sins whether they are committed openly or secretly.

Therefore, a Muslim should exalt and praise Him as He deserves. All Praise is due to Allaah in the first (i.e. in this world) and in the last (i.e. in the Hereafter). A Muslim should make use of the means that Allaah (سبحانه) made permissible for him, keep away from His Prohibitions and abide by His Limits obeying Him (سبحانه) and all that was revealed to the messengers (عليهم السلام).

Moreover, learning religious knowledge and identifying the wisdom of creation as well as being patient with them are extremely beneficial. It helps the Muslim to offer the obligatory acts on the basis of knowledge and deep insight. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)⁴ said, **[If Allaah wants to do good to a person, He makes him understand the religion. And: He who follows a path in quest of knowledge, Allaah will make the path of Paradise easy to him.]**⁵

In fact, the greatest and most important matter is to believe in the Oneness of Allaah (سبحانه) and avoid ascribing partners with Him (عزوجل). This is the basis of Islaam, which is the religion of all the messengers from the first to the last.

Indeed, this is the basis of the religion of Islaam as well as the religion of all the messengers from the first, Noah, until the seal of the prophets, Muhammad, (peace and blessings be upon them). By the same token, Islaam is the religion of all the messengers. Allaah (سبحانه) does not accept from anyone a religion other than it.

The word 'Islaam' indicates submission to Allaah (سبحانه), humbling oneself to Him, worshiping Him, and obeying His commands. This is the essence of Tawheed, which is to be completely devoted and submitted to Allaah (سبحانه). The true Muslim, who understands Tawheed, is the one who submits himself to Allaah, devotes his deeds solely to Him, and directs his heart to Allaah (سبحانه) in secret and open, in fear and hope, in sayings, deeds, and in everything.

Allaah (سبحانه) is the true God Who is worthy of being worshiped, obeyed, and glorified. There is no God but Him and no Lord other than Him.

However, Sharee'ahs (revealed Messages) may differ. Allaah (سبحانه) says, **[To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way.]** The religion of Allaah (سبحانه) is one, which is Islaam and it is manifested in seeking Allaah alone with worship including supplication, fear, hope, reliance, longing for His mercy, and fear of His punishment. Allaah (سبحانه) says, **[And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him.]** It means that Allaah (سبحانه) commands not to worship anyone other than Him. Allaah (سبحانه) says, **[You (Alone) we**

⁴ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

⁵ Both Hadeeths are related by Muslim in his Saheeh.

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).] Allaah (سبحانه) ordered His servants to say and acknowledge this.

Moreover, Allaah (سبحانه) taught them how to praise Him. He, the Exalted, says, **[All the praises and thanks be to Allaah, the Lord of the 'Alameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists). The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)]** Allaah (سبحانه) teaches His servants how to praise Him, then He says, **[You (Alone) we worship]** Allaah (سبحانه) directs them to this, so that they may praise Him with His Deserved Attributes, confessing that He is the Lord of the worlds, the One Who does good to them, and confers His Blessings upon them and that He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful and the Only Owner of the Day of Resurrection. All this is true for our Lord (عزوجل).

The Allaah (سبحانه) says, **[You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).]** The Ayah (Qur'aanic verse) means that we worship You Alone and You, Alone, we ask for help. There is neither Lord nor Supporter other than You. Indeed, everything good that occurs by people is from Allaah, for He is the One Who guides them to it, prepares them for it, helps them to do it and gives them the ability to do it. Allaah (عزوجل) says, **[And whatever of blessings and good things you have, it is from Allaah.]** He (Praised be He) is the One Who blesses His creatures with favours and helps them. He is the One Who is rightfully worthy of worship (عزوجل).

Therefore, every grace that comes to a person at the hand of a young, old, slave or free person, is from Allaah's Blessings (عزوجل), for He is the One Who provides it and makes it possible to you. He is the One Who creates the person who brings it to you and promotes him to bring it and gives him the power, the heart, and the mind and makes that person resolve to bring it to you.

Every blessing is from Allaah (سبحانه) regardless of the means by which it comes to man. Indeed, Allaah (سبحانه) is the One who is rightfully worthy of worship. He is the Creator of humankind, the One Who blesses them with bounties and the One Who judges between them in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. He is the One Who is described with the Attributes of Perfection and is far above the attributes of imperfection. He is One in His Lordship, One in His Divinity, and One in His Names and Attributes (عزوجل). Allaah (Praised be He) entails all aspects of Tawheed. He, Alone, Who creates His servants, prepares their life for them, provides them with sustenance and arranges their affairs while no one shares this with Him (عزوجل). Allaah (عزوجل) says: **[Allaah is the Creator of all things, and He is the Wakeel (Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian) over all things. And: Verily, Allaah is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, the Most Strong. And: Surely, your Lord is Allaah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and then rose over (Istiwa) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty), disposing the affair of all things. No intercessor**

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

(can plead with Him) except after His Leave. That is Allaah, your Lord; so worship Him (Alone). Then, will you not remember? To Him is the return of all of you] and so on.

Allaah Alone is worthy of worship, owing to His perfect blessing and benevolence. He disposes of the affairs of all creatures and guides them. He Alone is the Creator, the All-Provider, and the Perfect in Self, Attributes, and Names. Thus, He deserves worship and submission of all His servants. `Ibaadah (worship) means submission and humility. Religion is called `Ibaadah, because the person who adopts a religion offers the rites of that religion with submission and humility before the one whom he worships. So, Islaam was called `Ibaadah.

In the etymology of `Ibaadah, the Arabs said "tareeq mu`abbad" means a paved way frequently treaded by people so that it became marked. In describing a camel, the Arabs said "ba'eer (camel) mu`abbad", i.e. a mount that has been frequently used in travel. So it becomes known and marked for this task. `Abd, i.e. a slave, refers to the one who submits to Allaah (سبحانه) and avoids Allaah's Prohibitions. Indeed, the more a slave knows about Allaah (سبحانه) and has perfect faith in Him, the more he offers acts of worship perfectly. On this basis, Allaah's messengers were the most perfect slaves of Allaah (سبحانه) and they worshiped Him the best due to their knowledge and glorification of Him more than anyone else. May Allaah's Peace and Blessings be upon them!

Therefore, the best characteristic by which Allaah (سبحانه) described His Messenger, Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was being a Allaah's slave. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[Glorified (and Exalted) be He (Allaah) [above all that (evil) they associate with Him] Who took His slave (Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) for a journey] And: [All the praises and thanks be to Allaah, Who has sent down to His slave (Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)) the Book (the Qur'aan)] And: [And when the slave of Allaah (Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)) stood up invoking Him (his Lord - Allaah) in prayer]** and so on.

To be a slave of Allaah is a great and honourable rank. Allaah (سبحانه) endowed His messengers with an extra honour, which is the Message that was revealed to them. Therefore, they acquired two kinds of honour; the prophetic message and being Allaah's Special Slaves. Indeed, Allaah's messengers (عليهم السلام) are the most perfect persons in terms of worship and piety followed by the 'sincere servants' (Siddiqoon) who were the foremost to believe in Allaah (سبحانه) and His messengers, adhered to His commandments and became the best people after the prophets, like Aboo Bakr al-Siddeeq (may Allaah be pleased with him). Aboo Bakr al-Siddeeq was the most sincere and perfect person after the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), because of his honour, piety, precedence in good deeds and observance of the teachings of Islaam as well as the fact that he was the companion of Allaah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in the cave who helped the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) as much as he could. May Allaah be pleased with him!

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

To summarise, the ranks of slaves and prophets are the noblest. If the honour of Prophethood came to end then there remained the rank of Siddiqiyah, i.e. being a Siddeeq (sincere servant to Allaah) by sincerely worshipping Allaah (سبحانه).

Allaah's messengers (عليهم السلام) were the most perfect persons with regard to faith, righteousness, piety and guidance owing to their perfect knowledge, worship, and submission to Allaah (عزوجل). They are followed by the sincere servants (Siddiqoon), the martyrs, and then those who are righteous. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[And whoso obey Allaah and the Messenger (Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)), then they will be in the company of those on whom Allaah has bestowed His Grace, of the Prophets, the Siddiqoon (those followers of the Prophets who were first and foremost to believe in them, like Aboo Bakr as-Siddeeq (رضي الله عنه)⁶, the martyrs, and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are!]** It is prerequisite to believe in the prophets in order to have pure faith in the Oneness of Allaah (سبحانه). That is why the prophets called people to believe in Allaah (سبحانه) at first and then to believe in them as Allaah's messengers.

Thus, there are two points required: (i) to believe in the Oneness of Allaah and to be sincere in worshipping Him; and (ii) to believe in Allaah's messengers (عليهم السلام).

Therefore, whoever believes in the Oneness of Allaah but denies the messengers is a disbeliever and whoever believes in the messengers but does not believe in the Oneness of Allaah is also a disbeliever.

Differences may occur in the Sharee'ahs (revealed teachings and laws) whereas there have never been any discrepancy between the messengers with regard to the Oneness of Allaah, being sincerely devoted to Him and ascribing no partners to Him. The messengers knew no difference in all the revealed religions. Indeed, there is no Islaam, religion, guidance, or salvation except by having firm belief in the Oneness of Allaah, ascribing no partners with Him in worship and believing in all that was conveyed by the messengers of Allaah (peace and blessings be upon them).

Moreover, whoever believes in the Oneness of Allaah but does not have belief in Nooh (Noah) at his time, Ibraaheem (Abraham) at his time, or other prophets such as Hood (the prophet Hud), Saalih (the Prophet Salih), Ismaa'eel (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya`qoob (Jacob), or who followed them until our Prophet Muhammad (عليهم السلام) at their times, becomes a disbeliever unless he believes in the prophets along with believing in the Oneness of Allaah (عزوجل).

Islaam at the time of Aadam was represented in having firm belief in the Oneness of Allaah as well as following the Sharee'ah of Aadam (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Islaam at the time of Nooh was to believe in the Oneness of Allaah along with following the Sharee'ah of Nooh

⁶ (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

(صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Likewise, other prophets, including Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is established in having belief in the Oneness of Allaah along with believing in what was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and following his Sharee'ah.

The Jews and Christians do not believe in Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), so they are disbelievers even if some of them have faith in the Oneness of Allaah. They are disbelievers according to the consensus of the Muslims, for they do not believe in Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Moreover, if a person does not believe in the Message revealed to Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in full, such as the belief in everything except in the prohibition of adultery or sodomy, thinking that adultery or sodomy is permissible, is a disbeliever and his blood is violable according to the prescribed penalty agreed upon by all Muslim scholars after setting the religious proof against them if the person is ignorant of that. Thus, the mere belief in the Oneness of Allaah avails him nothing, because he belies the messengers and consequently some of Allaah's Message.

Moreover, if someone has belief in the Oneness of Allaah and Allaah's Messengers (عليهم السلام) but mocks or belittles a prophet, they become disbelievers. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[Say: "Was it at Allaah (عز وجل), and His Aayaat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations) and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) that you were mocking?" Make no excuse; you disbelieved after you had believed.]** The opposite of having faith in the Oneness of Allaah is Shirk, which means ascribing partners to Allaah (سبحانه).

A poet said: "Opposite matters distinctly unveil each other..." and another said: "things get distinguished by contraries"

Shirk is the opposite of Tawheed revealed by Allaah (سبحانه) to His messengers (عليهم السلام). Shirk includes associating partners with Allaah in worship, in His Lordship, or in His management of the affairs of the people or belying Allaah's messengers in what they said or did.

Tawheed is the correct meaning of the Testimony of Monotheism, i.e. La ilaha illaallaah (none has the right to be worshipped but Allaah). This testimony denies offering worship to anyone but Allaah and proves it is for Allaah Alone. Allaah (سبحانه) says, **[That is because Allaah, He is the Truth, and that which they invoke besides Him is Al-Baatil (falsehood, Satan and all other false deities)]** and, **[So know (O Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)) that, Laa ilaaha illaallaah (none has the right to be worshipped but Allaah)]** and, **[Allaah bears witness that Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), and the angels, and those having knowledge (also give this witness); (He always) maintains His creation in Justice. Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.]** And, **[And Allaah said (O mankind!): "Take not ilaahain (two gods in worship). Verily, He (Allaah) is (the) only One Ilaah (God).]**

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

The true meaning of Tawheed is to worship Allaah alone on grounds of belief, truthfulness and action, to have deep belief that worshipping anyone other than Him is invalid, and that whoever does so is a Mushrik (one who associates others with Allaah in His Divinity or worship) and he must disavow Mushriks. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[Indeed there has been an excellent example for you in Ibraaheem (Abraham) and those with him, when they said to their people: "Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allaah: we have rejected you, and there has started between us and you hostility and hatred for ever until you believe in Allaah Alone"]** And: **[And (remember) when Ibraaheem (Abraham) said to his father and his people: "Verily, I am innocent of what you worship, "Except Him (i.e. I worship none but Allaah Alone) Who did create me; and verily He will guide me."]** Thus, Ibraaheem (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) disavowed those who worshiped any other than Allaah and the things they worshiped.

However, Tawheed is realised through seeking Allaah alone with worship, disavowing worship of and worshipers of other than Him, believing in the invalidity of Shirk. It is obligatory on all those who worship Allaah (سبحانه) from the jinn and humankind to seek Him alone with worship and to establish the duty of Tawheed which is enforcing Allaah's Sharee'ah. Indeed, Allaah (Praised and Exalted be He) is the Ruler in this worldly life by His Sharee'ah and in the Hereafter by Himself (Praised be He) and this is part of Tawheed to have firm belief in that. Allaah (عزوجل) says: **[The decision is only for Allaah]** And: **[So the judgement is only with Allaah, the Most High, the Most Great!]** And: **[And in whatsoever you differ, the decision thereof is with Allaah (He is the ruling Judge).]**

Therefore, offering some acts of worship to Aawliyaa' (pious people), prophets, the sun, the moon, the Jinn, angels, idols, trees, and so on, is inconsistent with Tawheed and nullifies it.

Allaah (Praised be He) sent His Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and the prophets before him to nations who worshiped things other than Allaah (سبحانه), such as prophets, righteous persons, trees, stones, idols, and stars. All the prophets called their people to believe in Allaah and His Oneness and to say La ilaha illa Allaah (the Testimony of Tawheed), disavowing all that contradicts this faith, those who worship other than Allaah as well as the objects they worshiped. Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allaah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taaghoot (all false deities i.e. do not worship Taaghoot besides Allaah)."]**

By this, you know that what is done around the graves that are worshiped beside Allaah (سبحانه), such as the grave of [al-Sayyid] al-Badawy and al-Husayn in Egypt and the like as well as what some ignorant pilgrims may do at the grave of the Prophet by seeking help over enemies and complaining to him, are forms of worshipping other than Allaah (عزوجل). It is like the Shirk of the first periods of ignorance. There are Soofees who believe that some Aawliyaa' are capable of administering the universe and managing the affairs of the world even though this is major Shirk with regard to Allaah's Divinity.

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

Some think that some people have a direct relation with Allaah (سبحانه). Consequently such servants believe that they do not have to follow Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) or that they know the unseen, and are able to control other things. Indeed, this is major disbelief in Allaah, rendering its doer out of the fold of Islaam if he is a Muslim.

Tawheed, Islaam, faith or salvation can only be achieved by seeking Allaah (سبحانه) alone with worship and believing that He is the Possessor of the kingdom and the One Who manages the affairs of His creatures; He is Perfect in His Self, Attributes, Names and Actions; He is the Lord of the universe and there is no partner with Him or anyone to prevent His Judgment.

This is Tawheed which is the religion of all the prophets and the meaning of Allaah's Saying: **[You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).]** The Ayah means that (Allaah) is the One Who we believe in His Oneness, obey, hope and fear. Commenting on the Ayah, Ibn `Abbas (رضي الله عنه) said, "We worship, hope and fear You Alone."

We seek Allaah's Help to help us obey Him in all our affairs. Worship is to believe in the Oneness of Allaah, be sincerely devoted to Him in fulfilling His Commands and abandoning His prohibitions; to have perfect belief that He is worthy of worship, the Lord of the Worlds, the Owner of everything, the Creator of everything and Perfect in His Self, Names, Attributes and Actions, and that He has no deficiency, default or partner in any of this (عزوجل). For Him is Absolute Perfection in everything (عزوجل).

Thus, it is evident that a Muslim must believe in all the Messengers and all that was revealed to them, including Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). However, if someone devotes their worship to Allaah (سبحانه), believes in His Messengers (عليهم السلام) and especially Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), follows His Sharee'ah (Islaamic Law), stands firm in the teachings of Islaam but in the meantime commits one or more things that nullify Islaam, their worship is nullified and their deeds will not benefit them.

For example, if someone believes in Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his whole mission and follows his Sharee'ah, but says: 'Musaylimah, who rebelled and massed people in the battle of Yamama against the Muslims and was fought by the Companions during the Caliphate of Aboo Bakr al-Siddeeq, is a messenger like Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ),' they will be disbelievers and their faith will become null and void. Likewise, their good deeds will be nullified, even if they used to offer Salaah (prayer) during the night and fast during the day.

This is because they commit one of the violations that nullify Islaam, namely believing in Musaylimah al-Kadhdhab i.e. The Liar. This falsehood includes belying Allaah (عزوجل) Who says: **[Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allaah and the last (end) of the Prophets.]** Moreover, this includes belying

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) who said in Mutawaatir Hadeeths⁷ that Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is the Last Prophet, so, there is no prophet after him.

Likewise, if someone offers Sawm (fasting) during the day and Salaah during the night, observes different acts of worship, seeks Allaah Alone with their worship and follows Allaah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then once they dedicate some of their worship to someone or something other than Allaah, such as offering certain worship for a prophet, a Walee (a pious person), an idol, the sun, the moon or a star e.g. Through supplication, seeking help and victory over enemies, all their works are in vain until they repent to Allaah (سبحانه).

Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[But if they had joined in worship others with Allaah, all that they used to do would have been of no benefit to them. And: And indeed it has been revealed to you (O Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)), as it was to those (Allaah's Messengers) before you: "If you join others in worship with Allaah, (then) surely (all) your deeds will be in vain, and you will certainly be among the losers."]**

Similarly, if someone believes in all Allaah's message but denies the prohibition of adultery, sodomy, or intoxicating beverages, they will be disbelievers even if they do every good deed, because allowing forbidden matters that are known to everyone renders the person outside the fold of Islaam. Thus, their good deeds and Tawheed will be useless in this case according to the agreement of all Muslim scholars.

Equally, if someone said that Nooh, Hood, Saalih, Ibraaheem, Ismaa'eel, or any other prophet is not a prophet, they become non-Muslims and all their good deeds become invalid, for they belie Allaah (Praised be He) concerning what He mentioned about these prophets (عليهم السلام).

Likewise, deeming as unlawful what Allaah (سبحانه) regards as lawful in spite of having Tawheed, sincerity and faith in the Messengers renders the person outside the fold of Islaam. For example, if someone claims that they prohibit eating the meat of camels, cows, and sheep that Allaah (سبحانه) makes lawful and is agreed upon by scholars to be lawful, they will be regarded as apostates after showing them the evidence of the case if they are ignorant of it.

Also, if someone says that wheat, barley, or anything that is allowed to be consumed, is prohibited or says that a daughter or sister is allowed to be married to their unmarriageable kin, they become non-Muslims even if they pray and fast and offer all acts of worship, because deeming unlawful what is lawful renders the person outside the fold of Islaam.

⁷ (Hadeeths reported by a significant number of narrators throughout the chain of narration, whose agreement upon a lie is impossible)

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[But if they had joined in worship others with Allaah, all that they used to do would have been of no benefit to them.]**

Unfortunately, we are living at a time when ignorance and lack of knowledge are running rampant. People have ever-growing interest in sciences other than religious sciences and become occupied with worldly matters so that their awareness of Allaah (سبحانه) and His religion become weak. These things took them away from religious knowledge. You may find most scientific talks are concentrated on financial subjects whereas comprehending matters of religion and learning Sharee'ah and Tawheed are neglected and abandoned.

Therefore, one should pay attention to this matter and be interested in the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). One should study and consider them in order to understand the meaning of Tawheed, 'Eemaan, and Shirk and to be well-acquainted with religious knowledge. Understanding the texts of the Qur'aan and Sunnah makes one realise the ways to Paradise and Salvation from Hellfire. This is especially true when a person is keen to attend religious sessions and study under pious scholars in order to gain knowledge and spread useful knowledge to others and be aware of the religion.

There are two major categories of Shirk: major Shirk and minor Shirk.

Major Shirk contradicts Tawheed and Islaam. It also invalidates good deeds, because those who commit it are consigned to Hellfire. This applies to every act or saying that is proved to be an act of disbelief, such as calling on the dead or idols for help, deeming forbidden things as lawful and vice versa, or belying the Prophets. These acts and the like nullify one's good deeds and render the person an apostate from Islaam, as elaborated previously.

Allaah (سبحانه) says in Soorah (Chapter) of al-Nisaa': **[Verily, Allaah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills; and whoever sets up partners with Allaah in worship, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.]** The Ayah indicates that Shirk is not forgiven while any other sin is left to Allaah's Will; He may forgive or punish in parallel to the bad deeds when one dies without showing repentance for them. Allaah (سبحانه) may take a person out of the Hell and admit him to Paradise. This is the doctrine of Ahl-ul-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah (adherents to the Sunnah and the Muslim mainstream). This is contrary to al-Khawaarij (separatist group that believes committing a major sin amounts to disbelief) al-Mu'tazilah (a deviant Islaamic sect claiming that those who commit major sins are in a state between belief and disbelief) and those who followed their way.

There is another Ayah in Soorah al-Zumar in which Allaah (سبحانه) uses general words; He (سبحانه) says: **[Say: "O 'Ibaadee (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allaah: verily, Allaah forgives all sins. Truly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.]** Scholars said that this Ayah talks about those who showed repentance whereas the Ayah of Soorah al-Nisaa' speaks of people other

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

than those who repent, i.e. Those who die while having committed Shirk and other wrong deeds. The Ayah of Soorah al-Nisaa' reads: **[Verily, Allaah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills.]**

As for the one who dies after committing sins other than Shirk, such as adultery, while he believes that these sins are prohibited and does not regard them as unlawful, but he dies before he shows repentance, this person is left to Allaah's Will; He (سبحانه) may forgive him and admit him to Paradise for he comprehended Tawheed and Islaam and may also punish him in accordance with the bad deeds he committed, such as adultery, consuming intoxicant beverages, disobedience of parents, severing kinship ties or other major sins as shown previously.

However, Al-Khawaarij maintain that a person who commits a major sin is to stay in Hell eternally and by this he is a non-Muslim. The opinion of the Khawaarij is approved by the al-Mu`tazilah concerning his eternal abode in Hell. However, the moderate position of Ahl al-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa'ah differs from that. They maintain that a person who commits adultery, theft, disobedience to parents and other major sins is neither a non-Muslim by this nor will he stay in Hell eternally as long as he does not believe it is lawful to commit these sins. The doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah states that such wrongdoers are to be left to Allaah's Mercy as we said. In fact, these are very important matters that should be known and recognised by Muslims, for they are among the principles of `Aqeedah (Islaamic Creed).

A Muslim should know the reality of his religion and all that contradicts it, such as ascribing partners to Allaah (glory be to Him). Allaah (سبحانه) makes it allowable to repent of bad deeds until the sun rises from the west but what is strikingly distressful is that many people are unaware of the religion of Islaam and are ignorant of its principles that may cast them into the abyss of Shirk and disbelief due to their ignorance of what was revealed to the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) of guidance and religion. Therefore, one should take care of himself and avoid the Prohibitions of Allaah (سبحانه) and seek Allaah Alone with his good deeds. Moreover, the best deeds that one should observe as a Muslim is hastening to do good deeds and to learn Islaamic teachings substantiated by evidence from the Qur'aan and Sunnah through reciting Allaah's Book, attending religious sessions, and making friends from among the righteous people so that one may be aware of his religion.

The Muslim should invoke Allaah (سبحانه) to keep him on the way of guidance and Truth. If you commit a wrong deed, you should hasten to offer repentance from that sin. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **[All children of Aadam are to err and the best amongst them are those who repent.]** This is an authentic Hadeeth. This is because an evil-deed results from lack of religion and weakness of faith.

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

Allaah (سبحانه) accepts the repentance of a person who repents. So, why do some people delay repentance for evil-deeds and abandon these deeds and feel regret for them? Allaah (سبحانه) says: **[And all of you beg Allaah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful]** And: **[O you who believe! Turn to Allaah with sincere repentance!]** Repentance is most required, for it is a characteristic of a true Muslim. Allaah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, **[Penitence wipes out all the previous misdeeds.]** So, you should adhere to repentance. Whenever you commit a sin, offer penitence and set yourself aright. A true believer is that who does not occupy himself with worldly matters but makes time for working and another time for learning and understanding religious matters and contemplating, reciting, and studying the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and attending learning circles and making friends with righteous people, for these matters are the most important of your affairs and the cause of happiness.

There is another kind of Shirk called Minor Shirk such as Riya' (showing-off); seeking reputation by words or actions; saying if Allaah and so-and-so will; and swearing by other than Allaah, like swearing by one's trust, the Ka'bah, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and the like. These things are classified as minor Shirk and one is commended to beware of them. When a man said to the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), **"What Allaah and you will," the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Do you make me equal to Allaah? (Say), 'What Allaah, Alone, wills.'"**

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said: **[Do not say, "What Allaah and so-and-so wills," but say, "What Allaah wills and afterwards so-and-so wills.]**

He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said: **["Whoever takes an oath should swear by Allaah or remain silent." (i.e. He should not swear by other than Allaah.)]** And: **[Do not swear by your fathers, or by your mothers, or by rivals to Allaah; and swear by Allaah only when you are speaking the truth.]** And: **[Whoever swears by other than Allaah he commits Shirk.]** There are other authentic Hadeeths in this regard, such as: **[The most dreadful thing I fear for my Ummah is the minor Shirk.** When he was asked about it, he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **Riya' (showing off).]**

Riya' may be a form of major disbelief if a person adopts Islaam as a kind of Riya' and hypocrisy so that he shows Islaam while he neither believes in it nor loves it. Therefore this person is regarded as a hypocrite and a non-Muslim.

Similarly, if someone swears by other than Allaah (سبحانه), glorifies the one who swears by Him, thinks that a certain person knows the unseen or can be worshiped along with Allaah, they will be committing major Shirk.

However, if someone swears by something other than Allaah (سبحانه) spontaneously, such as the Ka'bah, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and the like without having this belief, they are only committing minor Shirk.

Essence of Tawheed and Shirk

I ask Allaah (سبحانه) to bestow comprehension of His Religion on us and to help us adhere to it and protect us from the evils of ourselves and our misdeeds and from temptations. He (سبحانه) is the All-Generous and Open-handed.

May Allaah's Peace and Blessings be upon His servant and Messenger our Prophet Muhammad, his family, Companions and those who follow him rightfully until the Last Day.