

Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al- Wahhāb and Shirk – 01

This series of articles addresses the claim of the Qubūriyyūn and Yasir Qadhi that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb created a false conception of shirk from the Qur’ān and was not preceded by anyone in judging certain actions and forms of invocation to be shirk.

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IBN TAYMIYYAH ON TYPES OF SHIRK



Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said:¹

The totality of the affair is that shirk is of two types:

— **Shirk in rubūbiyyah** in that others are given some share of regulation (tadbīr) alongside Him, as He the Sublime said:

قُلْ أَدْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ شَرِكٍ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ ظَهِيرٍ

Say: “Call upon those whom you assert (to be associate gods) besides Allah, they possess not even the weight of an

¹ Iqtidā’ al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm (Dār Shibīlyā,, 1419H) 2/226.

atom either in the heavens or on the earth, nor have they any share in either, nor there is for Him any supporter from among them.” (34:22).

So He the Sublime explained that they do not have independent ownership of even an atom’s weight, and nor do they share in having ownership with Him in anything. Nor do they aid Him in His dominion.

And whoever is not an **owner, partner or aider**, then his association [with rubūbiyyah] is cut off.

—**And shirk in ulūhiyyah** in that others are invoked with the invocation of worship or invocation of request, as He the Exalted said:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

It is You alone that we worship and you alone that we ask for help. (1:4).

So just as affirming created entities as causes [of their effects] does not detract from Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah, and does not preclude Allāh being the Creator of everything, and does not necessitate that the creation is invoked with the invocation of worship or the invocation of seeking rescue, then likewise, affirmation of some of the unlawful deeds, of shirk and other than it, as causes, this does not detract from Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah. It does not preclude Allāh being the one who deserves sincere devotion (alone). It does not necessitate that we use words and actions in which there is shirk, when Allāh dislikes that and punishes the servant for it and the harm of which is greater upon the servant than the benefit.²

² The meaning here is that our affirmation of causes and their effects, being part of al-Qadar, that Allāh’s creation operates in this way, that effects are brought about by their causes in which Allāh placed properties, this in no way negates or detracts from Allāh being the Creator of all things. At the same time, just because causes produce their effects and there are properties and powers placed within things, it does not mean that this now justifies invoking created things—whether the sun, moon, stars, or whether angels, prophets, the

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

1. Recently, in a video published on 7 February 2021, Yasir Qadhi claimed that Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (رحمة الله) made a false construction of Paganism from the Qur’ān, one that “contradicts every Paganistic philosophy ever in human history”. That the Shaykh used this false construction to oppose all prior scholarship and to antagonise Muslims and make takfīr of them. That the Shaykh completely misunderstood the reality of Paganism, and on this false basis he made his argument that invoking the dead—which has a variety of forms—is the same or worse than what the Pagan Quraysh were doing.

Qadhi makes a distinction between Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah and Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, saying there are marked differences between them and that you cannot equate Ibn Taymiyyah’s position with that of Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

He went on to explain that the true nature of Paganism, of shirk, in ever Paganistic philosophy, is that the Pagans ascribe rubūbiyyah to other than Allāh. That there are mini-gods who possess some aspect(s) of rubūbiyyah which have been conferred upon them by a supreme creator-god, who is aloof from his creation and too worthy to be approached directly. So these

righteous. In the opposite situation, it is also the same, where just because someone affirms unlawful deeds such as stealing to acquire wealth or invoking others besides Allāh as a result of which one’s needs appear to be fulfilled in an apparent cause-effect relationship such as what happens with the people of shirk, then this does not detract from the truth and necessity of Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah, it does not preclude that Allāh alone deserves to be worshipped, and none of these apparent cause-effect relationships affirmed by those who have been misguided in this matter necessitate that we use words or do deeds in which there is shirk, when we know that Allāh is angered by it and punishes a servant for it and whose harm is greater upon him.

minor gods fulfil their needs, having independent control over benefit and harm, while the supreme creator-god can always intervene, having absolute power and disposal over all things.

Qadhi explains that this is what we find with the Romans, Greeks, Hindus and others and explains that this is the construction of shirk in the Qur’ān whereas Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb opposed this and made a false construction, not being preceded in this by anyone.

Upon this, shirk is only shirk when we have this same paradigm, this same construct present and in its absence, when people do certain deeds such as invoking the dead, we can only say it is **ḥarām** (unlawful), **munkar** (evil) and a **bid’ah** (innovation) but not **shirk**, because outside of that construct, it cannot be shirk.

He selectively cites from Ibn Taymiyyah to create confusion.

Also in his lecture Qadhi, uses subtle types of sarcasm, saying to those whom he anticipates are going to refute him, “to those who are going to refute me...”, “to those who are going to take a ten second clip from my lecture” and so on and he frequently uses the derogatory term “Najdi theology” and by which he certainly intends denigration and some form of contempt, though he hides it well with overt civility.

This is the broad idea and there were obviously many more things mentioned by Qadhi, so this should only be seen as a very broad summary for now. We are going to address his doubts inshā’Allāh in this series.

2. Yasir Qadhi falsifies the picture with regard to the presence of shirk in this ummah and makes it appear as if no aspects or semblances of this general construction of shirk exist in this ummah. Whoever travels the earth will find that there is a general notion that the awliyā’ in the graves, that attending to them and

making offerings to them and invoking them from near and afar, that in all of this is respect and veneration of them and in this lies sustenance and safety for the society or the nation, and that the awliyā’ will fulfil the needs of the people.

And attachment to the graves began and was spoken about well before Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and likewise Ibn Taymiyyah. Ḥanbalī scholars like Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 513H) spoke about it and declared the people who do certain actions around graves as “disbelievers”. Likewise, al-Rāzī (d. 606H) mentioned the same thing, that this practice spread in his time, and he considered veneration of the graves in anticipation of receiving intercession to be worship of other than Allāh. Ibn Taymiyyah likewise mentions how in his time the people would seek refuge in the graves of the awliyā’ when they learned about the approach of the Tartars, and he considered this to be kufr and shirk.

And this is precisely what Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb experienced in his time, and there is no doubt that this remains in the ummah today.

The point being that Qadhi is being extremely dishonest in concealing these facts about the reality of what takes place today and what has taken place in the past and he desires to remove the label of “shirk” from these actions.

3. In the quote from Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) above—and he came 450 years before Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)—he explains that shirk is of two types.

One that relates to **rubūbiyyah** where:

- ownership of dominion, or
 - a share of ownership in that dominion, or
 - aiding Allāh in that dominion
- is given to other than Allāh.

And there is no doubt that this was a major, overarching aspect of the shirk of nations in the past and likewise it was present among the Pagan Quraysh.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah separated between shirk in **rubūbiyyah** and shirk in **ulūhiyyah**, showing that in addition to the shirk of mini-gods granted something of rubūbiyyah, there is also shirk that takes place with respect to ulūhiyyah, and this is the shirk that relates to invocation (du‘ā) whether that of worship (‘ibādah), or that of request (mas’alah).

This is not an invention of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as is claimed by Qadhi. In fact Qadhi has slandered Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) in this respect with vicious slanders.

This matter will become more clear as we cite from other statements of Ibn Taymiyyah inshā’Allāh.

4. In the second category of shirk, that which relates to ulūhiyyah, Ibn Taymiyyah spoke of words and deeds **within which there is shirk**, and this is separate from shirk in rubūbiyyah, from the issue of demi-gods and mini-gods.

Yes, there is talāzum (a binding connection) between rubūbiyyah and ulūhiyyah. Qadhi tries to use this as an argument, however it will work against him, not for him, as we shall see in more detail in future articles inshā’Allāh.

This is because the talāzum works both ways, there is a conceptual, logical, rational flow from rubūbiyyah to ulūhiyyah, but also from ulūhiyyah to rubūbiyyah, and this applies independent of whatever construction you are working with, as is evident in the guidance of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) where “shirk” is a property of certain words and deeds, independent of any so-called construction of shirk, conceptually speaking.

5. There are beliefs that necessitate actions, such as the belief that a demi-god can grant children, and so it is invoked for that purpose, upon that belief, and there are also words and actions that imply and necessitate inward beliefs and/or assumptions, whether **conscious** or **subconscious**, *even if they are not verbally expressed or made explicit*.

In fact, even if they are denied verbally, it will not change the fact that those actions imply or necessitate those beliefs and assumptions by **rational, logical necessity**, otherwise there is a logical, rational contradiction between the statement or deed in question and the person’s denial.

Thus, the one who invokes Aḥmad al-Badawī for example, at a distance, and makes the du‘a to him for a need among his needs then it is implicit in this action that al-Badawī can hear at a distance and has the means of responding to the need, by fulfilling the need himself.

And if he invoked him—whether at a distance or in proximity to his grave—so that al-Badawī invokes the supreme Creator in turn, so that the supreme Creator fulfils the need of the invoker, from the angle of **wāsiṭah** and **shafā‘ah** (intermediation, intercession), this is another separate construction.

Intermediation in itself is a construction of shirk³ and is additional to the construction of demi-gods and mini-gods given aspects of rubūbiyyah and this is something explained by Ibn Taymiyyah also, very clearly in his writings and works.

This is because **the constructions, routes, avenues and manifestations of shirk are many** and the Qur’ān has explained all of that in great detail. It is not as Yasir Qadhi, the grave-worshippers, the extreme Ṣūfīs and other than them claim that

³ This requires further tafṣīl (detail).

there is only ever **a single monolithic construction** of shirk in the Qur’ān. That shirk can only be in the framework of a hierarchy of mini-gods all of whom have been given some aspects of rubūbiyyah. As if no shirk can exist and no words or deeds can be said to be shirk except with the existence of a monolithic construction of shirk that is already in place. Unless there first develops a system, a construction, a pantheon, similar to what is found with the Hindus and the ancient Greeks and Romans.

So only when that exists and is in place do certain words and actions take on the property of being “shirk” and prior to that, then no.

This is tremendous misguidance.

Essentially, the Qubūriyyūn and Yasir Qadhi are doing the same thing which they accuse Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb of doing. Whereas the Shaykh highlighted and focused on an aspects from the sum of its aspects, they are trying to restrict it, as if it only one thing, upon one construction.

We will address these matters further inshā’Allāh.

6. But coming back to the speech of Ibn Taymiyyah in what was cited from him earlier:

ولا يوجب أن نستعمل الكلمات وأفعال التي فيها شرك

“It does not necessitate that we use words and actions in which there is shirk.”

This shows that “shirk” is can be **a property of certain words and deeds**, independent of the belief in demi-gods and mini-gods. When certain words and actions are used, the conceptual flow from uluḥīyyah to rubūbiyyah is implicit in such words and deeds, and it can be at the level of **minor shirk** or **major shirk**.

The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

أجعلتني لله نداً؟

“Have you made me a nidd (rival) with Allāh?”

This was the response of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to the one who said: “What Allāh willed and what you willed.”

Is Yasir Qadhi going to say that the Messenger himself (صلى الله عليه وسلم) gave a false construction of shirk? Does there need to be a construction of a pantheon or hierarchy of demi-gods and mini-gods with independent powers before words or deeds can be said to have the property of “shirk”?

When a person says: “O Badawī, assistance!” when drowning or in a car crash, then it can be for reasons that are clearly implicit in this invocation:

—presuming he can remotely hear firstly, and secondly, that he has the independent power of response and fulfilment of need, so this is shirk of course, from angles, from the angle of knowledge of the unseen, and perfection of hearing, which only Allāh has.

—through the route of intermediation, intercession, this is a separate construction of shirk altogether that the Qur’ān has explained and it has its details.

Now of course, Qadhi will debate these issues and he has tried to pre-empt these matters, by saying:

“Hey refuters! I know all these arguments, I have already discussed them in my book on critical evaluation of shirk—a translation and commentary on Kashf al-Shubuhāt—so please, before you start refuting, go and read my book.”

But that is not the point here and this appears to be a diversionary tactic, it is not meaningful because a person can be upon the truth and then become misguided, and his leaving what he was upon and the arguments he used, does not become the truth, merely by his abandonment of that. So these are

meaningless words and they are just subtle forms of smugness and sarcasm that Qadhi is dropping here and there.

The main point here is that Qadhi has claimed that Shaykh Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb gave a false construction of Paganism, of shirk from the Qur’ān, that he has not been preceded in this, and implies that Ibn Taymiyyah is upon other than this.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah gives two “constructions” of shirk, one in **rubūbiyyah** and one that relates to **ulūhiyyah** and its rights, and from them is invocation, of worship and of need, such as requesting assistance, rescue, sustenance, offspring and the likes. Ibn Taymiyyah applies the label of “**shirk**” to these actions, not just “**ḥarām**”, “**bid’ah**” and “**munkar**”, as we shall see inshā’Allāh.

7. In short, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) did not make a false construction of Paganism, but he highlighted aspects among the sum of its aspects which the Qur’ān spoke about, and he was preceded in this by Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) as is evident and there are others before Ibn Taymiyyah as well. We shall address these issues in future articles inshā’Allāh.

As is clear from the speech of Ibn Taymiyyah, the ruling of “shirk” upon certain words and deeds in the guidance of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is independent of any so-called “construction” of a pantheon of gods that Qadhi speaks of and to which he wishes to confine the reality of shirk.

His argument that you cannot separate rubūbiyyah from ulūhiyyah—which is correct of course and which he thinks is an argument for him—works against him.

The fact that he himself may have elucidated these arguments in the past and no longer uses them or agrees with them, does not

mean that these arguments are not true and correct in and of themselves.

Thus, his taunts, as if to say:

“Hey refuters, I am just too clever, I already know all these arguments, and you are not going to bring anything I myself have not already brought...”

Is meaningless and has no value.⁴

For Allāh can certainly misguide a person from what he once knew as truth, due to a perversion in his heart, and that perversion does not have to be lusts and desires, such as wealth, authority, recognition, fame and so on, but it can be due to excessive confidence and reliance in oneself, in one’s alleged intellectual prowess and achievements, leading to a type of reliance which brings about abandonment from Allāh and removal of His tawfiq. Thus, a person stumbles and fumbles on the path, thinking himself to be moving towards enlightenment, justice when in reality, he is being utterly misguided.

Yasir Qadhi is upon the way of Ḥasan al-Bannā and that is what is driving his ideological and intellectual shifts.

Below is the text in Arabic from Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمة الله).

Abu ‘Iyaad

28 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 1442 / 10 February 2021—v.1.02

⁴ Qadhi says this numerous times because he knows that there is full internal coherence in these arguments that he cannot fault directly. Instead he has to fabricate, well not fabricate, but regurgitate the notion of a single monolithic construction of shirk in the Qur’ān so that words and deeds that the Sharīah clearly labelled as having the quality or description of “shirk” and as scholars before Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb labelled as shirk, can no longer be deemed as such.

APPENDIX: TEXT FROM IBN TAYMIYYAH

وجماع الأمر: أن الشرك نوعان:

* شرك في ربوبيته: بأن يجعل لغيره معه تدبيراً ما، كما قال سبحانه: ﴿قُلْ أَدْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا هُمْ فِيهِمَا مِنْ شَرِكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ ظَهِيرٍ﴾ (٢)، فبين سبحانه أنهم لا يملكون ذرة (٣) استقلالاً، ولا يشركونه في شيء من ذلك. ولا يعينونه على ملكه، ومن لم يكن مالكاً ولا شريكاً ولا عوناً، فقد انقطعت علاقته (٤).

* وشرك في الألوهية: بأن يُدعى غيره دعاء عبادة، أو دعاء مسألة كما قال تعالى: ﴿إِنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ النَّبِيَّاتُ وَإِنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْحِكْمَ وَإِنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْحِكْمَ وَإِنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْحِكْمَ وَإِنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْحِكْمَ﴾، فكما أن إثبات المخلوقات أسباباً لا يقدح في توحيد الربوبية، ولا يمنع أن يكون الله خالق كل شيء، ولا يوجب أن يُدعى المخلوق دعاء عبادة أو دعاء استغاثة. كذلك إثبات بعض الأفعال المحرمة، من شرك أو غيره أسباباً، لا يقدح في توحيد الألوهية، ولا يمنع أن يكون الله هو الذي يستحق الدين الخالص، ولا يوجب أن نستعمل الكلمات والأفعال التي فيها شرك، إذا كان الله يسخط ذلك، ويعاقب العبد عليه، وتكون مضرة ذلك على العبد أكثر من منفعته، إذ قد جعل الخير كله في أنا لا نعبد إلا إياه، ولا نستعين إلا إياه، وعامة آيات القرآن تثبت (٥) هذا الأصل (٦).