



Assessment of the Division of Tawhīd into Uluhiyya and Rububiyya¹

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We have received many letters asking for the definition of *tawhīd al-uluhiyya* (Oneness of Allāh in Divinity) and *tawhīd al-rububiyya* (Oneness of Allāh in Lordship) and also in regards [the principle according] to which they were arranged, who it was that differentiated between them and the proof of its validity or invalidity.

Our reply, with the assistance of Allāh, is as follows:

The person who viewed such was Ibn Taymiyya, who invented this, saying:

“Indeed the Messengers were not sent save for the purpose of [teaching] *tawhīd al-uluhiyya* which means to single out Allāh (alone) for worship; as for [the other,] *tawhīd al-rububiyya*, which is to believe that Allāh is the Lord of all existence and disposer of their affairs, none has disagreed with this, Muslim or polytheist, the proof for which is the Almighty’s statement **“And if you were to ask them who fashioned the heavens and the earth they would reply Allāh”** (Qur’an 39:38)”

They also say:

“Those who seek means (*wasīla*) through the Prophets and pious, intercede through them and call upon them during hardships are worshipping them. (The Arabs of *jahāliyyah*) rejected the belief of the *rububiyya* of statues, Angels and the Messiah but they did not become disbelievers because of disbelieving in the *rububiyya* of these statues and whatever is alongside it, rather by abandoning *tawhīd al-uluhiyya* by worshipping them, and this is the same for those who perpetually visit graves, seek means through the pious, call upon them, and seek their assistance, seeking from them that which Allāh has not given them the ability to do.”

Muhammad bin ʿAbdul Wahhāb said:

“Indeed their disbelief is more distasteful than the disbelief of worshipping statues.”

If need be I could have presented his entire sorrowful and valiant discourse, but this is a summary of their views just for clarification and it contains a number of claims which we shall present again in brief and discuss them using both logic and text.

¹ This article was translated from (<http://www.al-razi.net/kwathare/nqd.htm>)

Their view that *tawhīd* divides into *ulubīyya* and *rububīyya* was unheard of before Ibn Taymiyya and is unimaginable as you shall soon learn. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did not say to anyone who accepted Islam ‘there are two *tawhīds*, and unless you single out Allāh in *ulubīyya* you are not a Muslim’ and neither did he demonstrate this in a single discourse and this was not heard from a single member of the *salaf* who they [the followers of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn `Abdul Wahhāb] boast of following in everything.

This division makes no sense for the true God is the true Lord and the false god is the false lord. None is deserving of worship or being assumed as divine except one who is the Lord. This division makes no sense also because we do not worship except those who we believe to be a lord that benefits and harms and thus worship is but a result of lordship, as the Almighty says:

“The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, so worship Him and be patient in His worship. Do you know of any equal to Him?” (*Qur’ān* 19:65).

Therefore *ulubīyya* is a consequence of *rububīyya*; for if we do not believe he is a lord who benefits and harms, then worship to him is illogical, as the Almighty says (about Sheba and her people):

“That they do not prostrate to Allāh, Who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth” (*Qur’ān* 27:25),

indicating that prostration is unbecoming for any, other than those who possess ability and power, and it would bear no implication prostrating to any other. This is what is understood and is proven from the Qur’an and Sunnah. As for the Qur’an it states:

“And (a prophet) will not instruct you to take the Angels and Prophets as lords.” (*Qur’ān* 3:80),

which clarifies the great number of lords they possessed; despite the clarity of the Qur’an that they made the Angels lords, Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad bin Abdil Wahhab said ‘they are monotheists in *rububīyya* since they have only one lord but they commit *shirk* in *tawhīd al-ulubīyya*! Yūsuf ﷺ said to his two companions in prison while inviting them to *tawhīd*:

“Are many lords better or Allāh, the One, the Irresistible?”
(*Qur’ān* 12:39)

And Allāh the Almighty says:

“They disbelieve in the Most Merciful; say (O Muhammad): ‘He is my Lord’” (*Qur’ān* 13:30),

for they did not make him lord. Another example is as Allāh says of the statement of a person,

“But he is Allāh, my Lord” (*Qur’ān* 18:38),

in response to one who denounced the Almighty's *rububiyya*. Also consider their discourse on the Day of Rising:

“By Allāh! Indeed we were in clear error when we made you equals to the Lord of all existence.” (*Qur’ān* 26:97-98),

and observe the Almighty's statement:

“When it is said to them ‘Prostrate before the Most Merciful!’ they reply ‘What is the Most Merciful, should we prostrate before whom you instruct us to?’” (*Qur’ān* 25:60).

Do you view the one to say this, a monotheist?! Now consider the Almighty's statement:

“And they argue about [the divinity of] Allāh” (*Qur’ān* 13:13),

as in many other verses which we shall not detail; but the point is that these *kuffar* did not possess *tawhīd al-rububiyya* as Ibn Taymiyya claimed; and Yūsuf ﷺ was calling to nothing other than *tawhīd al-rububiyya* because in reality there is no such thing as *tawhīd al-rububiyya* and *tawhīd al-ulubiyya* according to Yūsuf ﷺ so are they more acquainted with *tawhīd* than him and will they say he has erred in his interpretation of ‘lords’ which should have been ‘gods’?!

In addition, Allāh has said when he took the covenant from all people:

“Am I not your Lord?” and they replied ‘Yes’” (*Qur’ān* 7:172),

so if acceptance of *tawhīd al-rububiyya* was insufficient and accepted by the polytheists, as Ibn Taymiyya said, then taking this covenant would be unnecessary and they would not have to say on the Day of Rising:

“Indeed we were unaware of this” (*Qur’ān* 7:172);

it would be necessary for Allāh to change the conditions of the covenant to what they recognise and include *ulubiyya* since *rububiyya* is insufficient according to them, and all those other things which we would have to expand upon, which are not hidden from you. Anyway, *tawhīd al-rububiyya* was sufficient for them and they were not required to accept *tawhīd al-ulubiyya* also.

Also the Almighty's statement: ***“He is the God in the Sky and the God on earth,”*** shows He is the God on earth even if he is not worshipped as shall be the case at the end of time so. If it is said this means he is worshipped in the sense that he is alone in deserving worship, then we reply there is no difference in this case between god and lord for the one deserving of worship is the Lord and no other. However the discussion of Pharaoh with Musa ﷺ was regarding *rububiyya*.

“I am your lord, most high.” (*Qur’ān* 79:24),

and then he said:

“If you take a God besides me I shall imprison you.” (*Qur’ān* 26:29),

and nobody claims these are of the same meaning.

As for the Sunnah, there is the case of the two Angels asking the dead of the identity of one's lord and not of one's god because there is no distinction between lord and god – because they do not follow Ibn Taymiyya and nor do they speak in a chaotic way; in the view of these people it would be necessary to ask *'Who is your god?'* not *'Who is your lord?'*!! Regarding the statement,

“And if you were to ask them who fashioned the heavens and the earth they would reply Allāh” (Qur’ān 39:38),

this is what they say with their tongues but do not believe in their hearts; they were forced to say this for the decisive proofs that were presented before them. Perhaps they spoke of something that wouldn't even come near to settling in their hearts or reaching their souls, since they accompanied this statement with phrases showing they were lying because they believed the idols could benefit and harm. Also they became completely ignorant of Allāh and attributed even the smallest of matters to other than him for instance when the people of Hud said to him

“We say nought except that our Gods have afflicted you [with evil]” (Qur’ān 11:54),

so how can Ibn Taymiyya say that they believe their gods neither harm nor benefit? Observe the claim of these people about their cattle

“This is for Allāh’ they claim ‘And this is for our associates’; whatever is for Allāh reaches their associates and whatever is for their associates does not reach Allāh” (Qur’ān 6:136),

they present their associates with even the smallest and most insignificant of things. And Allāh says, explaining their belief in statues:

“[On the Day of Judgement it would be said to them] We do not see with you those intercessors you claimed to be associates” (Qur’ān 6:94),

showing they believed them to be their associates. Also Abū Sufyan said at Uhud *'Superior is Hubāl'* and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ replied *"Allāh is the most High and Prominent"*. So consider this and tell me what do you consider of the *tawhīd* that Ibn Taymiyya was ascribing to them, saying *"in this they are the same as the Muslims but they only differ in tawhīd al-ulubiyya"*?! This is also proven by the statement of Allāh ***“Do not curse those whom they call on besides Allāh lest they curse Allāh out of enmity with no knowledge”***, do you think they believed in *tawhīd* after seeing this?!

The followers of Ibn Taymiyya after all this say 'they are monotheists in regards *tawhīd al-rububiyya* and the Messengers did not fight them but for the purpose of *tawhīd al-ulubiyya*, and they disbelieved not except by abandoning this'!! I do not know the connotations of such restrictions, considering they denied the Messengers, refuted what was sent to them, made Halal the Haram, rejected life after death and the Afterlife, claimed that Allāh has a wife and a son and the Angles are the daughters of Allāh:

“Know that they from amongst their inventions claim ‘Allāh has bore a child’ and they are liars” (Qur’an 37:151-152),

and for all these reasons the Messengers did not fight them according to these people but fought them for the absence of *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* and they are like the Muslims in regards to *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya*! Or the Muslims are greater disbelievers in the view of Muhammad bin `Abdul Wahhāb!

We do not agree with any of this, yet we say:

Upon the supposition there is a distinction between *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya* and *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* as is claimed, *tawassul* (seeking means to Allāh) does not negate *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* because it is not worship, neither linguistically, nor legally, nor customarily and none have said that to call upon and seek means through the pious is worship. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ has not informed us of this and if it was worship or similar to it, it would not be permissible to do this for both the live and the dead.

If one insists that Allāh is closer to us than our jugular vein so we need no intermediation we reply ‘you have learnt a thing but are ignorant of a thing’ for if your view is such it would be necessary for you to leave all means and intermediates in everything since this world is built on the wisdom that there are means and accessories to everything. It would be necessary for him to deny intercession on the Day of Rising and that `Umar erred when he said:

“We seek means to you through the cousin of your Prophet, `Abbās.”
(*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*)

They would have to close all doors to means and intermediates which is in opposition to the divine Sunnah (way). It is also necessary they fall under the same rule they place the Muslims under since it is impossible they leave all means and intermediates. The difference between the live and dead in this context has no implication for the one seeking means does not ask of anything from the dead by principle but seeks from Allāh alone through the means of the dead or the repute of the dead person in Allāh’s eyes or His love for him or the like of this, is there any ascription of divinity to the dead in this, or is this worship? These people base their view on unverified conjecture, after all Muslims have permitted *tawassul*, rather have considered it to be good.

Look into the books of the four *madhhabs* and even the books of the Hanbalīs in the *adab* (manners) of the visitation of the Prophet ﷺ and you’d find that they consider *tawassul* through him recommended, this remained as consensus until Ibn Taymiyya came and opposed the consensus and others persisted in the instability of this dissension, opposing both intellect and text.

