

SHIRK AKBAR & ASGHAR

الشِّرْكُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَالشِّرْكُ الْأَصْغَرُ

Meaning

فَالشِّرْكُ الْأَكْبَرُ: مَا يُخْرِجُ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَ الْمِلَّةِ. وَالشِّرْكُ الْأَصْغَرُ: مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ

Greater *shirk* is that which takes a person out of the religion.

Lesser *shirk* is what is less than that.

Explanation

Shaykh al Uthaymeen

So *shirk akbar* (greater shirk) is: that which takes a person out of the religion.

And *shirk asghar* (the lesser shirk) is: what is less than that.

However the statement "what is less than that" is not a clear and unambiguous scale (to weigh up an action when deciding whether it is greater shirk or lesser shirk). For this reason the scholars have differed with regards to the guiding principle underpinning lesser shirk upon two (different) sayings:

The first saying: is that lesser shirk is everything which the Legislator has designated to be shirk and which the texts indicate is not from greater shirk.

For example: *Whoever swears by other than Allaah then he has committed shirk.* So the shirk here is lesser because the texts prove that the mere act of swearing by other than Allaah does not take [a person] out of the religion.

The second saying is that lesser shirk is whatever is a means leading to greater [shirk], even if the Legislation does not apply the title "*shirk*" to it.

For example, that a person depends upon something just like his depending upon Allaah, however he does not take (that thing) as an object of worship. So this is lesser shirk because this depending, which is like his depending upon Allaah, will cause him to be led ultimately to greater shirk.

And this (second) definition is more encompassing than the first because the first prevents you from designating something to be shirk unless you have a proof; and the second makes everything which is a means leading to shirk (to be) an act of shirk.

Taken from

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Translator Nasser ibn Najam - words in brackets and footnotes are translator's - checked by Dawood Burbank