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# WAHHABISM AT A CROSSROADS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



**WAHHABISM  
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## **Today Wahhabis have been divided into two distinct branches:**

1) The first group consists of the extremist Salafis who view all other Muslims as disbelievers and polytheists. They consider themselves to be true Muslims and everyone else as being outside of the faith. Thus, they believe that they have the right to kill the members of these other groups and seize their wealth for themselves. Their clearest defining characteristics include a lack of rational thinking, as well as extreme violence which is characteristic of both their speech and action. In addition, they flee from rational discussion, and they have perpetrated so much violence in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and even in Saudi Arabia (the birthplace of this ideology) that the entire world has become utterly disgusted with them. Unfortunately, they have succeeded to a degree in painting Islam as a whole in a very bad light and it will take many long years to repair the damage which they have done. This group is reaching the end of its rope and they don't have much time left.

2) The second group consists of the open minded and moderate Wahhabis who are people of rational thought and discourse. They respect the opinions of other scholars and have a friendly relationship with various other Muslim groups. The people from this group don't write out death sentences for others, nor do they consider other Muslims to be disbelievers, nor do they believe that the wealth of others should be seized because of their beliefs. It is this latter group which is gaining more proponents by the day among Wahhabis, and this is a glad tiding for the world of Islam that Wahhabism is finally turning into a moderate creed. The signs of this change of attitude in Wahhabism are evident in the more recently published newspapers and books, as well as in debates broadcast on TV in Hijaz.



What follows is a documented elaboration of the issues outlined above.

## **Has Wahhabism Reached An End?**

Ten years before the collapse of the Soviet Union,<sup>1</sup> I wrote a book called 'The End of Marxism'<sup>2</sup>. It was emphasized in that book, that various pieces of evidence and indications pointed to the end of Marxism as a viable ideology and that this ideology was drawing to a close. The introduction of the book read: 'In my opinion, we are facing a reality today which may be bitter to some and surprising to others. This reality, which must be accepted, is that Marxism and its offshoot of Communism, are reaching their end and even now, they are in a state of decline. In even more explicit terms, Marxism, from the perspective of an impartial researcher, is an obsolete school of thought that belongs in the past and so it will soon be filed away in historical pages!

Marxism has utilized every possibility in creating a successful system but has continuously ended in failure due to its impractical aspects. Today, Marxism is considered as a philosophically and rationally dead system, and the utopian dreams of Marx, Engels, and Lenin are for the most part left unfulfilled. In essence, Marxism is much like a fashion that is now outmoded and obsolescent. Today, more than ever, it is clear that it is a system based on unrealistic idealism rather than realism. When we look at the whole of Marxism and its various offshoots today, we see that it is divided into many various factions with various interpretations of Marxism all across the world. For instance, the Marxism of Mao is completely different than that of Brezhnev and the communism of Tito is com-

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<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union collapsed in the year 1991 and each of its associated satellite countries broke off and created their own independent states.

<sup>2</sup> This book was published and distributed through the Generation of Youth publishing house.

pletely different to that of Castro, and the list goes on. Each of these interpretations of Marxism and communism is completely different from the others.<sup>1</sup>

Just as predicted, the Soviet Union ended up collapsing and ceased to exist as a communist entity. This was in spite of all the sloganeering and propaganda which they engineered, telling the world that Marxism was on the rise and Capitalism was soon about to collapse. Today Communism is a concept relegated to history texts and nothing more of substance can be seen of it! Such a prediction was neither magical nor based on psychic knowledge; it rather came about from an understanding of the very nature of Marxism itself.

Today, when we look at the ideology of the radical strain of Wahhabism, it is clear that their end is also near. They are losing their friends and supporters day by day and they shall soon be relegated to the books of history just like Marxism and its various offshoots. Utilizing the same procedure used in relation to Marxism, we can come to understand this reality by looking at the essential elements of radical Wahhabism. These elements show us that radical Wahhabism cannot continue to exist, particularly in today's world. The elements that will bring about the collapse of radical Wahhabism include the following:

- 1) Extreme violence in words and actions
- 2) An inclination to impose Wahhabi ideology on others
- 3) Extreme prejudice and religious fanaticism
- 4) A lack of familiarity with cultural values
- 5) Dogmatism and a knee jerk opposition to every new phenomenon
- 6) A weakness in the utilization of logic and an incorrect understanding of six Quranic words

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<sup>1</sup> The End of Marxism, pgs. 10 and 11. This book was published about ten years before the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was published through the Generation of Youth publishing house.

We will discuss these six elements in the coming pages, God Willing.

## **Extreme violence in words and actions**

The extreme violence of the radical Wahhabis is not hidden from anybody. A quick glance at the history of Wahhabism reveals that the Wahhabis have engaged in a great deal of killing and the irony in this is that the majority of their victims were Muslims and not foreign based enemies. One well known example of such wanton killing is their attack on the city of Karbala in Iraq where they killed a great number of Shia Muslims and laid waste to the city, taking away whatever plunder they could carry. Another example is their attack on the city of Ṭā'if in the Arabian Peninsula, where they killed a great many Sunni Muslims who inhabited that region.

When we witness this long history of violence, it is clear that violence is a part and parcel of Wahhabism itself, the roots of which can be found in its misconceptions regarding the concepts of faith, disbelief, monotheism (Tawḥīd) and polytheism. Due to their deviant conception, the Wahhabis very easily accuse others of polytheism and then extend this to mean that they can plunder their wealth and kill them. What is even worse is that they justify these evil actions as being in line with God's will! The leader of the Wahhabis has gone as far as considering the Muslims of our era to be worse than the pagans of the pre-Islamic era. With such a statement, it is clear what drives these people in the horrendous evils which they commit against the Muslims.

There is also no real need to look at the evils which they have committed throughout history as proof of who they are; it is simply sufficient to look at what they are doing in our world today in order to fully understand them. Amongst the fruits of this inauspicious tree are the evil groups of the Taliban, Sipah Sahabah, as well as Al Qaeda. These groups have committed so many evil and inhumane acts that they have

stained the image of Islam in the minds of the international community and this damage has been so severe that it is questionable whether it can ever be fully and truly repaired. Before going any further, let us first examine the Taliban as a group in order to better recognize and understand them:

## **The Taliban**

The Taliban, led by Mullah Muḥammad ‘Umar, first established itself in the city of Qandahar. Following their rise to power, from 1996 all the way to 2001, they ended up taking over and ruling a large swath of the country of Afghanistan. However, the formation of the movement of the Taliban can be traced back to the era of 1979 to 1985. During that period, there was a war between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan which caused a general state of chaos and anarchy to rule over the country; this presented an opportunity for the Taliban to gain further power for themselves. During the 1980’s, Afghanistan had become a satellite country for the Soviet Union; a group of Afghan fighters resisted this foreign domination and the United States supported them in turn as a bulwark against the rising communist power. The Soviet domination of Afghanistan did not last long.

Following the withdrawal of Soviet forces from various cities of Afghanistan in 1989, a number of other small groups of fighters rose to power. It was at this time that the Taliban also grew in power, introducing themselves as the ‘seekers of a pure Islam’. The Taliban were mostly composed of ethnic Pashuns (one of the many ethnicities found in Afghanistan) and so they decided to establish their main base of power in the city of Kabul. During this time period, they were constantly being armed and trained by the United States! At the beginning of the Taliban movement, many youth who lived in refugee camps, as well as others who were orphans, ended up being attracted to the Taliban and joining them.

The Taliban introduced themselves as a force for peace and stability during a time which had seen many years of anarchy and war. Due to the prevailing circumstances, many of the ethnic Pashtuns ended up supporting them. This was while many of the Taliban leaders and fighters had been trained and educated in the schools of the radical Wahhabis in Pakistan. In the end, the Taliban began their war for control in 1994. They were successful in taking over the cities of Qandahar and Herat, as well as the surrounding cities.

In 1995, they reached the outskirts of Kabul but they were routed by the government forces and forced to retreat. The Taliban reorganized their forces and continued to attack until they were able to take Kabul in 1996; more than 50,000 people were killed as a result. Burhān al-Dīn Rabbānī and Gulbudīn Ḥikmatiyār ended up fleeing towards the north of the country, while the Taliban executed Muḥammad Najībullah the de-facto president of Afghanistan who was supported by the Soviets.

After establishing a firm hold over the country, the Taliban enacted a very severe and harsh code of law based on Radical Wahhabism. Since Mullah Muḥammad ‘Umar was the highest ranking member of the Taliban, he ended up becoming the overall leader and he had the power to finalize or reject any of the laws which were being passed. The Taliban announced their laws to the people by driving cars with large loudspeakers on them around in the streets.

All cinemas were shut down and men were forced to attend congregational prayers by threat of the whip. Schools for girls were closed and women were banned from working outside of their homes. As a result of this, many hospitals (which were staffed by women) ended up becoming nonfunctional shells of what they had used to be. This was while many women had lost their husbands and fathers in the previous wars and so they had no one who could provide for them. Nonetheless,

they were not allowed to work due to the rules enacted by the Taliban.

Completely ignoring the right of offenders and criminals to a fair trial, the Taliban would punish them in very haphazard ways. They were known for their ease in executing people and such things were done without a second thought; they didn't care how many people they killed and both Sunnis and Shias were amongst their many victims. It was known that whoever stood against them would be killed very quickly.

The Taliban regime created a safe haven for foreign militants, such as Usama bin Laden, who had come to fight for Afghanistan against Soviet occupation. It was towards the end of the struggle against the Soviets, that bin Laden founded the Al Qaeda which worked hand in hand with the Taliban. This group fought alongside the Taliban both against the Soviets, as well as against the Northern Alliance (when the Taliban had established themselves as a movement).

By the late 90's, Usama bin Laden was already known to the Americans due to his attack on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania where hundreds of people were killed and more than one thousand and four hundred were wounded. After Usama bin Laden's supposed attack on America on September 11, it was clear that the Americans would demand that he be turned over but Mullah 'Umar, the leader of the Taliban, refused to do this since he considered Bin Laden to be important to his own interests.

In the month of October in 2001, America began its 'War on Terror' by attacking the Taliban which it held partially responsible for giving shelter to Al Qaeda; England also joined in on the attack alongside America. At the same time, the Northern Alliance also began their own attack, assisted by the Americans. Kabul and other important cities were soon taken. The Taliban began a process of retreat and during that same year, the city of Herat was also taken.

During their peak power, the Taliban were supported by countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and even America but this support did not last long. It is estimated that between 1995 and 1996 the Taliban required around seventy million dollars a year in order to continue their movement. According to the Indian journal of 'Strategic Analysis', the majority of this budget came from Saudi Arabia. Newsweek has similarly reported that Saudi Arabia was the main financial supporter of the Taliban.

In one of his trips to Saudi Arabia, Mullah 'Umar ended up meeting with many of the high ranking officials of the country and he was given ten million dollars in aid. In time though, everyone turned their backs on them and the Taliban rule ended up as something which is only read about in the history books. When the Americans attacked the Taliban, no one lifted a hand to help them and in fact, there were many people who helped in the fight against them. In spite of all the difficulties and destruction which the American attack entailed for the Afghan people, they still preferred the Americans over the Taliban. The reason behind this preference was that the Afghans believed that the severity and harshness of the Americans would be less than what they had experienced from the Taliban.

Just as we mentioned previously, the Taliban totally banned women from attending schools and they were utterly opposed to anything related to modern life, even if it was actually beneficial. They labeled anything new as an innovation in religion and threatened people with punishment if they even went near such things. Ironically, the Taliban would punish people for not having long enough beards, while they would encourage the planting and cultivation of opium, and they would facilitate drug trafficking.

They considered such things to be lawful while simultaneously forbidding the smoking of cigarettes! The reason behind this was that they made a great deal of money from the opium

trade and much of their weaponry was bought with such money. They then used this weaponry to kill other Muslim people and stabilize their rule. It is not, however, known how they justified this great and obvious contradiction: cigarettes were unlawful and long beards were obligatory but cultivating and smuggling opium was permissible!

Let us now look at the group known as the Sipah Saḥābah and see who they are:

### **Sipah Saḥābah (Sahabah Army)**

For centuries in the Indian subcontinent, Shias and Sunnis lived alongside one another in peace and harmony. This all changed when a radical group of Wahhabis by the name of Sipah Saḥābah was formed. They began to kill Shias using various merciless methods and they didn't care whether they killed men, women, or even children. Sometimes certain Shias would rise up to take revenge in turn and this led to a state of chaos and insecurity.

Journalists have mentioned the following about the genesis and activities of this group: 'This group claims to be a follower of the Prophet of Islam (s) and so they have named themselves as the Sipah Saḥābah (which means the army of the companions). They are a radical group, making up a type of ideology under the umbrella of Sunni Islam. This group was first founded in the early 1980s by a Sunni scholar called Mawlānā Ḥaqq Nawāz Jahangawī.'

It is interesting to note that this group was founded around the same time as the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It appears that it was created as a sort of counterweight in Pakistan in order to prevent any similar movements from taking place there. One of the important aims of this group was to prevent people from mourning for Imam Ḥusayn (a) so as to discredit Imam Hussein's (a) uprising and gradually pass it into oblivion, as they saw the revolt of Imam Ḥusayn (a) to be a



source of inspiration for the people to fight injustice and tyranny.

This idea is found repeatedly in their magazine 'The Rightly Guided Caliphate' for many long years. They have requested that the Pakistani government proscribe mourning ceremonies on the day of Ashuraa by razing all the Shia mosques and religious centers in the country, as well as put a complete stop to any similar gatherings held in schools or universities. This way, they sought to prevent people from participating in this ceremony in honor of Imam Ḥusayn (a). Naturally, such requests have always been rejected by the Pakistani government.

Among the other goals of this group was to combat a Shia group by the name of Taḥrīk Ja'farī which was established in Pakistan in the year 1979. When we look back in history, we see that the main reason for the establishment of the Sipah Saḥābah was as a counterweight to the potential of Shia revolution in the country. Through killings and intimidation, this group aimed to prevent the rise of Shia power. Parvīz Musharraf (a previous president of Pakistan) has stated that around four hundred people from both groups were killed in one year alone.

In addition to killing Pakistani Shias, Sipah Saḥābah targeted Iranians who resided in the country as well. They did so claiming that the Iranians were being supported by the Shia government of Iran and thus had to be killed! In reality, Sipah Saḥābah wished to create a Pakistan which is purely Sunni.

The main military bases and strongholds of this extremist group are concentrated in the south of Pakistan in the Punjab region, as well as the areas near Karachi. The group boasts more than 100,000 members and it contains over 500 organizational bases in the country. They are also present in countries outside of Pakistan, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Canada, etc...

Many of the schools and religious seminaries in the Punjab region are in fact run by the Sipah Saḥābah. It has also been reported that many of the Sunni schools outside of Pakistan are also taught by teachers affiliated with the Sipah Saḥābah where the ideology of terror and killing are taught. Mawlānā Jahangawī was killed in the year 1990. During that same year, he had happened to participate in the national elections in Pakistan but he did not receive sufficient votes to be elected. Nonetheless, he remained quite popular among his followers.

After his death, he was succeeded by a man named Mawlānā A'zam Ṭāriq. It is interesting to note that the Sipah Saḥābah was being actively supported by the Taliban militants and Mawlānā A'zam Ṭāriq would in turn announce his support for the Taliban and their policies, including their ban on television and cinema. In 1996, an even more violent group split off from the Sipah Saḥābah in order to form the Lashkar Jangwī due to their belief that the Sipah Saḥābah was too 'moderate'. Mawlānā A'zam Ṭāriq was charged with more than one hundred and three acts of terror against Shia figures.

The Sipah Saḥābah received financial support from various sources including wealthy radical Sunnis in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States, as well as radical Pakistani groups such as the Jamā'at Islāmī, Jamā'at 'Ulamāye Islāmī, and other extremist groups.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August in 2001, the Pakistani government decided to put a stop to the atrocities of these extremist groups. After five months, nothing had changed and groups such as the Sipah Saḥābah were still active. Therefore, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2002, President Parviz Musharraf again pushed to stop these groups and as a result, the group was banned. The military was also used in order to attack them and many of their followers were arrested.

After the group had been banned and somewhat dispersed, Mawlānā A'zam Ṭāriq created a new group by the name of Mil-

lat Islāmīyah. He went on to receive substantial donations from his foreign supporters. Once again, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2003, the Pakistani government proscribed this group as well. It arrested all of the main members, seized their bank accounts, and raided affiliated homes and religious centers.

In order to prevent any new groups from being formed, the Pakistani government had each of the six hundred arrested militants put up a 100,000 rupee guarantee that they would not go back to what they used to do. This was quite a considerable sum for each of them to pay. In the beginning of October 2001, Mawlānā A'zam Ṭāriq was arrested by the police. Even though he was under arrest and in jail, he participated in the October 10 elections of 2001, winning the necessary votes to become a member of the Federal Parliament of the Punjab province. In the end, he was released from jail on October 30<sup>th</sup> of that same month.

Several months after his release, he began to publicly support Ṣafrullah Khān Jamālī who had been elected as prime minister and as a result, he was left free to continue his extremist activities against the Shias. In the end, he was killed on October 6, 2003. After his death, the local security forces moved in while his supporters and students participated in his funeral ceremony, praying over the body in front of the parliament building in Islamabad.

After the funeral was concluded, the supporters began to attack various stores, restaurants, and movie theaters, setting them on fire and causing great damage and destruction in their wake.<sup>1</sup> In the end, the name of Sipāh Ṣaḥābah brings to mind horrible images of death and destruction, and their unspeakable acts of terror which were carried out even against praying congregants in mosques, which are the most sacred of places, can never be forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup> Summarized from various well known magazines and encyclopedias including Encarta.

## **Death and Destruction in Iraq**

In recent years, the Radical Wahhabis have established themselves in Iraq and they have committed their usual litany of crimes there as well. They have engaged in mass killings of men, women, children, and the elderly targeting people of the Sunni and Shia sects, as well as Arabs and non-Arabs altogether. Every now and then the streets in Iraq were covered in the blood of the innocent and they showed no inhibitions whatsoever when committing these crimes.

Muslims, as well as people in the non-Muslim world are left shocked at the atrocities of this extremist group. They wonder if this group intends to simply keep killing until there is no one left. It is a mystery as to what their goals are and which religion they are actually following.

Some people attribute these groups to the remnants of the Iraqi Ba'ath party which existed during the time of Saddam but we believe that this is an incorrect attribution. The reason behind this is that these groups use suicide attacks while the Ba'ath members were not known for using such methods. These methods are a hallmark of the Radical Wahhabis who consider themselves to be the only true believers, while condemning everyone else as disbelievers and sentencing them to death.

## **Death and Destruction in the Birthplace of Wahhabism**

What is even stranger and more frightening is that the Radical Wahhabis have not even spared their own Wahhabi countrymen, spreading death and destruction in Saudi Arabia. In their attacks on Jeddah, Riyadh, and other cities, the Wahhabis have killed a great number of their own people without any human-based considerations. Things reached the point where

Saudi scholars were actually speaking against these groups in their Ḥajj based Friday sermons this year (1425 AH).

They went into great detail in regards to the crimes committed by these people and raised the slogan of 'Lā Takfīr wa Lā Irhāb', which means 'No to Takfīr (calling others disbelievers) and no to terrorism'. The Saudi government found themselves with no choice but to make a public stand against terrorism and to coordinate efforts with other countries towards combatting these groups.

Yet we must ask ourselves as to who these terrorists really are? These terrorists are none other than the Radical Wahhabis who see everyone else as being disbelievers; they then take this a step further and believe that all disbelievers can and should be killed and their wealth taken in plunder. The Saudi government has made use of this public stance as a way to disassociate themselves from this group, as well as to find a way out of this terrorism crisis which they themselves have created.

In any case, this unfavorable fruit of Wahhabism unfortunately caused damage to the image of Islam amongst the people of this world. The religion of Islam has become wrongly linked with the evil actions of this group and this has further given a pretext to the enemies of Islam to further their propaganda against the faith. This propaganda has always existed but the actions of the Radical Wahhabis have provided these Islamophobes with the pretext they needed to depict all Muslims as a bunch of murderers!

This is while the religion of Islam has nothing to do with these extremists and their actions are theirs alone to carry. We all know that the Quran has 114 chapters and each of these chapters except one begin with the introduction of Allah as the most beneficent and the most merciful Lord and the one exception is a chapter which blames those who broke their peace treaty with Muslims and that is why it does not begin with this message of mercy!

In addition to all this, Allah tells the Prophet (s) in the Quran that he was not appointed as a severe and hard-hearted ruler over the people, for if he had been such all the people would have scattered from around him: 'It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you...'<sup>1</sup> In a tradition, it is also mentioned that: 'Is religion anything but love?'<sup>2</sup> This includes love for Allah, his Prophet (s), the pious, and indeed the entire creation of Allah. In spite of this, the actions of these extremists have played into the hands of the enemies of the Muslims who have then used this opportunity to paint the entire faith in a bad light all throughout the world.

## **The Roots of Cruelty and violence in the Teachings of the Founder of Wahhabism**

Before anything else, let us first present a brief history of the life of the founder of Wahhabism as reflected in the research findings of Eastern and Western historians. According to historical references, the founder of the Wahhabi sect, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, was born in the year 1115 AH in the small city of 'Uyaynah (one of the cities of the Ḥijāz region). He passed away in the year 1207 AH. His father was one of the judges of the Ḥanbalī sect and so he began to teach his son from a young age.

The writer of the book *Azālah' al-Shubbhāt* has mentioned that from a very young age, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb had a great interest in reading the books of Ibn Tayyīmīyah and Ibn Qayyim Jawzī. These two individuals had been active in the eighth century and their books were very influential in the formation of many of 'Abd al-Wahhāb's ideas. Many have written that 'Abd al-Wahhāb's father realized, while his son was still young, that he had many incorrect ideas and he was great-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Āl 'Imrān, Verse 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Mizān al-Ḥikmah*, Hadith 3097.

ly worried about him. He would continuously warn and censure him, hoping to reform him of his deviant views.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb used to travel a lot in the Islamic world. He settled in Mecca and then in Medina for a period of time, later going to the city of Basra in Iraq. He then traveled to Iran, living in the city of Iṣfahān and studying with a scholar by the name of Mīrzājān Iṣfahānī. After a period of time, he moved to the city of Qom and remained there for a short while. Afterwards, he moved into the Ottoman Empire, living in Syria and Egypt for a while. He finally returned to the Arabian Peninsula (to Najd), where he began to propagate his specific ideology.

Right at the very beginning, a group of people rose up in opposition against him and he was exiled out of the city of Ḥuraymalah; as a result, he moved to the city of ‘Uyaynah. When news of his deviant beliefs reached the governor of Aḥsā and Qaṭīf (Sulaymān ibn Muḥammad), he ordered the ruler of ‘Uyaynah (who was named ‘Uthmān) to have Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb executed. Since the ruler of ‘Uyaynah didn’t wish to go as far as executing him, he had him exiled from his city.

As a result of this, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was forced to go to the city of Dar‘īyah. The ruler of this city was a man from the tribe of Ghanīzah by the name of Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd. When Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was exiled to his city, he held a meeting with him where he presented him with his ideological viewpoints, promising that with his help, he could take over the entire region of the Najd province.

Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd (the forefather of the current Saudi kings) felt that he could use Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in order to expand his rule since he held sway over a group of hot blooded young men who would be quite useful in pursuing his goals. Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd promised to aid Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb on two conditions. The first condition was that

the latter would not establish any political relationships with other tribes, and the second condition was that he would turn over the taxes which he was receiving throughout the year from the people of Dar'iyah.

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb accepted the first condition but he implicitly rejected the second, saying that with their future conquests, there was much better war booty awaiting Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd. What is interesting here is that the war booty which Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb was speaking about was the wealth of the Muslims in Hijaz, including Mecca and Medina, and the surrounding regions of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as the other Muslim nations who had not embraced his ideas. The reason behind this was that he considered everyone outside of his tiny group to be disbelievers and polytheists who could be killed and their wealth taken at will!

Soon enough, the followers of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb began to attack the surrounding cities of the Hijāz region. They killed great numbers of people and plundered their wealth with the express purpose of gaining territory and spreading their specific ideology. After Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb had passed away, the Saudi kings, who had gained power in their alliance with him, continued his policies. They expanded their new kingdom to even greater limits until they had taken control of the entire region of Najd and the Hijāz.

One of the horrendous crimes committed by the Wahhabis, which has even been acknowledged by Wahhabi historians, is the massacre of the people of Ṭā'if, as well as the massacres which took place in Iraq in general, and in the city of Karbala specifically. From 1216 AH onwards (around ten years after the passing of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb), the Wahhabis attacked the cities of Karbala and Najaf on numerous occasions. They claimed their attacks were to spread monotheism (their own distorted version of belief in the Unity of Allah)



among the people, while they were, in effect, carried out to expand territory and to seize more booty.

During one instance of such attacks, they used a holy day, when people would leave Karbala to visit Najaf, in order to attack the city of Karbala. In this attack, they first gained access to the city by destroying a section of the city walls. Once they had entered the city, they attacked, killing thousands of innocent men, women, and children and plundering whatever they could find. They even attacked the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (a), stripping it of any gifts or valuables which the people had donated, after which they demolished the shrine completely.

Some historians have stated that as many as one thousand and five hundred people were killed whereby blood could be seen flowing on the streets. Strangely enough, these individuals called their wholesale slaughter of innocents a 'war for the sake of Allah' and the spreading of monotheism! The massacre which took place in Karbala has been recorded by many historians, including western, eastern, and even Saudi historians. One can refer to texts such as *Al-Mamlīkah' al-'Arabīyah' al-Sa'ūdīyah'* in the section titled *Al-Majd Fī Tārīkh Najd*, or the book *Tārīkh al-'Arabīyah' al-Sa'ūdīyah'* written by the Orientalist scholar Nancy Leaf, or *Miftāḥ al-Karāmah'* by Sayyid Jawād 'Āmulī for more information on what took place in Karbala.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now go back to the roots of cruelty and violence in the very ideology of Wahhabism itself. The best way to examine the ideology of Wahhabism is to look at the writings of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb who compiled a number of small books in which he clearly and explicitly defined his beliefs and ideology. What is apparent in regards to this man is that he was never considered very learned in the Islamic sciences

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the history and ideology of Wahhabism, you can refer to the following books: *Al-Islām Fī al-Qarn al-'Ashrīn*, *Jazīrat al-'Arab Fī al-Qarn al-'Ashrīn*, *Tārīkh al-Mamlīkah' al-Sa'ūdīyah'*, *Tārīkh Najd Ālūsī*, *Kashf al-Irtiyāb*, and *Tārīkh Wahhābiyān* by the Late Faqīhī.

and he didn't study for very long under any of the great teachers of his time. It is for this reason that he made a lot of mistakes. Unfortunately, he never corrected these ideological mistakes but rather, he stubbornly continued with his deviant beliefs.

One of the books of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb is *Kashf al-Shubbhāt*. It is a rather small book through which he attempts to respond to the criticisms of the scholars of the Muslim world (who were primarily Sunni in persuasion). The study of this book alone is sufficient for us to gain a window of insight into the roots of violence in the Wahhabi ideology:

1) The first point which proves significant is that Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb had an incorrect understanding of the concepts of monotheism and polytheism. He considered anyone who asks for intercession from the Prophet of Islam (a) to be a disbeliever and polytheist and this in spite of the numerous and clear cut verses of the Quran and traditions by the Prophet allowing it. As a result of their disbelief, he then considered their lives to be forfeit and their wealth open for plunder.<sup>1</sup> When we look at the Muslims worldwide, we see that the vast majority of both Sunnis and Shias seek intercession from the Prophet (s) and so the vast majority of Muslims are considered to be disbelievers by the Wahhabis and their lives and wealth are forfeit!

2) Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb also believed that the 'polytheists' of our time are worse than the polytheists who lived during the time of the Prophet (s) for two reasons. The first reason is that the polytheists during the time of the Prophet (s) would only resort to other gods during times of peace and security and when they were faced with various forms of distress, they would revert back to their worship of the one God, Allah, (When they board the ship, they invoke

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<sup>1</sup> Sharḥ *Kashf al-Shubbhāt* 'Uthaymayn, p. 81.

Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him],<sup>1</sup> . However, the polytheists of the current era seek intercession and thus worship other gods during times of distress and difficulty as well as during times of peace!

The second reason is that the polytheists of the Prophet's (s) era would worship pieces of wood and stones which were creations of Allah while the polytheists of the current era worship corrupt transgressors (apparently a reference to the Sufi leaders).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, their blood, wealth, and wives are more forfeit than the polytheists of the previous eras. Of course, such misconceptions are the result of a series of fallacies and misbeliefs (which we will deal with in detail in the last chapter of this text). The purpose of this section, however, is to uncover the roots of violence in the ideology of the Wahhabi school which permits the killing of non-Wahhabi Muslims and the plundering of their wealth!

3) Another instance of his irrational behavior is that whenever Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb mentions other scholars (and these are very well known Sunni scholars), he uses very demeaning language in regards to them. For example, he mentions: 'Oh you polytheists!'<sup>3</sup> or 'Oh enemies of Allah'<sup>4</sup> or when he says: 'the polytheists have another criticism'.<sup>5</sup> He then continues and says: 'These are the ignorant polytheists'<sup>6</sup> and 'These are the enemies of monotheism'.<sup>7</sup> He does not stop there, but in yet another place he says that one unlearned person is

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<sup>1</sup> Surah 'Ankabūt, Verse 65.

<sup>2</sup> Sharḥ Kashf al-Shubhhāt, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Sharḥ Kashf al-Shubhhāt, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Sharḥ Kashf al-Shubhhāt, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

better than a thousand of the scholars of the polytheists (a reference to the Muslims who believe in intercession).<sup>1</sup>

Just as we mentioned previously, the leader of the Wahhabis was not very learned in relation to the Islamic sciences and it appears from his words that he was angry at the critique of the scholars of his age. It was for this reason that he addressed them with such terms and declared them to be ignorant polytheists, and disbelievers. This is while the Quran has explicitly stated: 'O' you who have faith! When you issue forth in the way of Allah, try to ascertain: do not say to someone who offers you peace, 'You are not a believer,' seeking the transitory wares of the life of this world...'<sup>2</sup>

## **A Green Light for Harshness and Severity**

From the excerpts above, it is easy to understand how groups such as the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and other Wahhabi groups are able to kill other Muslims so easily all around the world. When we look at the vast majority of the Taliban's victims in Afghanistan, we see that they were primarily Muslims (both Shia and Sunni). This same thing also applies to the victims of Al Qaeda and other radical Wahhabi groups in Pakistan and Iraq. A quick glance at the ideological foundations of this mercilessness reveals that it originates with the founder of Wahhabism who considered those outside of his ideological fold to be polytheists and disbelievers, and whose blood and wealth were forfeit. It comes as no surprise that the majority of the victims of these Wahhabis have been other Muslims and all of the wealth that they have ever plundered belongs to other Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Nisā', Verse 94.

## **Mercilessness and a Great Blow to the Foundations of Islam**

A thorough examination of Islamic history shows that Wahhabis have dealt one of the greatest blows to Islam. The irony is that the religion of Islam is one which is based upon peace and mercy, and this is apparent from the beginning lines of the Quran itself.<sup>1</sup> Islam is the same religion which tells the Muslims to give sanctuary to the polytheists if they come with the intent of hearing the message of Islam, and to take them back to their homeland safe and sound whether they accept the message of Islam or not.<sup>2</sup>

This is the same religion which teaches us to be kind and forgiving in the face of those who hurt us so that the diehard enemies of the faith will feel ashamed and their hatred will be transformed into friendship.<sup>3</sup> This is the same religion which says: 'Is religion anything other than love and kindness?'<sup>4</sup> Truly the Wahhabis have shown this religion of love and mercy in such a bad light that both friend and foe have become averse to it! When we look at the world of today, it is clear that the grounds exist for the people of the world to accept the religion of Islam<sup>5</sup> but unfortunately, the actions and ideology of the Wahhabis have created a real barrier to this acceptance. We ask Allah that he may guide these misguided individuals to the right path.

### **A Strange Contradiction**

It is interesting to note that the government whose power is founded upon Wahhabism has open political, economic, and

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<sup>1</sup> Tafsīr al-Bayān, vol. 1, p. 461.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Tawbah, Verse 6.

<sup>3</sup> Surah Fuṣṣilat, Verse 34.

<sup>4</sup> Kḥiṣāl by Shaykh Ṣadūq, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Surah Naṣr, Verse 2.

cultural relations with both various Muslim nations, as well as non-Muslim nations. In essence, they have open relationships with people whom they consider to be polytheists and whom they condemn on a religious and ideological level. What is even more interesting is that the Saudis have built many spacious hotels in Mecca and Medina in order to play host to these 'Muslim Polytheists'! All throughout the year, these so called polytheists visit these holy cities in order to perform the Hajj pilgrimage.

As a result of these pilgrimages, the Saudis take in a vast amount of wealth and this is while according to a verse in the Quran the polytheists are impure (Najis) and they should not be allowed into the Masjid Al-Haram. The verse also states that if the people fear poverty (as a result of not allowing the polytheists into the House of Allah in Mecca), then Allah will provide for them out of his grace: 'O you who have faith! The polytheists are indeed unclean: so let them not approach the Holy Mosque after this year. Should you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you out of His grace, if He wishes. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.'<sup>1</sup> It is just strange to see all of these 'polytheists' being treated like monotheists, where the Wahhabis allow them into the holiest sites of Islam and build great hotels and other conveniences to serve them!

### **We Will Openly Announce...**

As a humble servant of Islam, I must openly state that the actions of the Wahhabis are completely out of line with Islam and the image which they have promoted of the faith is something which is completely contradictory to the reality of the faith. The ideology and actions of this group are very different from what the majority of Muslims believe in and it can be said that the greater bulk of Muslim scholars similarly oppose them. In reality, the ideology of this group stems from a lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Tawbah, Verse 28.

knowledge pertaining to Islam. In the last section of this book, we will prove the baselessness of the Wahhabi beliefs based on explicit Quranic verses as well as Islamic traditions, so that the moderate and rational people who are in their midst can realize their error and find their way back to the truth once again.

I humbly ask all Muslim scholars to work together and raise their voices in unison, saying that this small and extremist group, which considers everyone outside its folds to be disbelievers, is not representative of Islam whatsoever. It goes without saying that such an ideology has no place in the world of today and it is only a matter of time before it finalizes its descent into complete and utter oblivion. It is necessary that we present Islam, as it really is, to the world so that the people can recognize its true essence. This true reality will show the people that it is a religion of peace and love, and they will be able to realize its true value and potential for themselves and the world as a whole.

Stranger yet is that this same group which has been fostered by the Saudi government now poses a direct threat to their rule and things have reached the point where the Wahhabis are attacking targets inside of Saudi Arabia itself. The government has had no choice but to publicly announce their opposition towards them (at least the more extreme elements amongst them). This has led to changes in the curriculum which is taught in the religious seminaries, as well as the removal of more radical religious leaders at various mosques in the nation. These actions by the very founding elements of Wahhabism show that the extreme ideology is on its last legs and it cannot last much longer.

## **The Imposition of an Ideology**

One of the basic elements of Islamic thought is the concept that, when one approaches someone with a different faith or set of beliefs, they must be debated in a logical and compas-

sionate manner. Our faith teaches us that one cannot force someone with a different belief set to abandon their beliefs and this must come about due to the dictates of logic and reason. Similarly, our faith teaches that one cannot insult or berate another human being and expect them to change their point of view. The Quran has taught us the following in this regard: 'Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are guided.'<sup>1</sup>

In yet another verse, the Quran instructs the following: 'Do not argue with the People of the Book except in a manner which is best, except such of them as are wrongdoers, and say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us and in what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is one [and the same], and to Him do we submit.'<sup>2</sup> Islam has never allowed anyone to insult people by calling them 'ignorant polytheists', or 'enemies of Allah', or 'enemies of monotheism'. Such ugly insults are contradictory to the essence of the Islamic faith. Unfortunately, this is something which this group has done on various occasions.

When we look at the beliefs and ideology of Muslims around the world, we see that they hold the same basic beliefs and only differ in certain lesser issues. In other words, the roots of their beliefs are the same but they differ in the branches or at least in their understanding of the branches. These lesser differences should not be allowed to become a cause for conflict, dissension, and bloodshed. Rather, the Muslims should engage in rational dialogue and use the means of logic in order to draw closer to one another.

Radical Wahhabis are completely opposed to this logical methodology and they believe that when it comes to issues

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nahî, Verse 125.

<sup>2</sup> Surah 'Ankabût, Verse 46.



such as monotheism and polytheism, they must force their beliefs on others, even if it requires threats, bloodshed, plunder, and terror. The rationale for their actions can easily be found in the books of their founding leader and we mentioned some of what he has written previously.

When it comes to the Wahhabis, we tell them that if you consider yourselves to be scholars, then we are also scholars and the students of Al-Azhar are also scholars. Similarly, those studying at the religious seminaries in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and other Islamic regions are also scholars. There are many different religious seminaries which are home to well-versed individuals with varying juristic opinions. Why should people be forced to follow your exact opinions (in regards to monotheism and polytheism) when clearly these other scholars do not agree with you? The Wahhabis respond that this is the only truth and everyone must accept it!

What is the distinction and merit of the Wahhabi scholars which allows them to impose their ideology on the rest of the Muslims? Why is this ideology being promoted through fear and threats? There is no logical response which they can give to these questions. It is as if they imagine themselves to be at the pinnacle of faith and knowledge, while everyone else is steeped in ignorance! This is a type of attitude which no one in the modern world can accept any longer and it particularly has no place in the Muslim world. It is for this reason that we believe that they are reaching their end...

## **A Very Bitter Memory!**

I will never forget a strange scene which I encountered in Medina during one of my earliest Hajj pilgrimages. The scene in question caused me to go deep into thought for some time. When I had gone to visit the shrine of the Prophet (s), I saw a group of radical Wahhabis who were part of a group which was encharged with 'enjoining the good'. They were all armed with whips and whenever someone would attempt to kiss the

shrine of the Prophet (s), they would strike him with the whips and say: This shrine is simply pieces of iron and wood and what you are doing is 'Shirk' (polytheism).

These individuals were completely negligent of the fact that the pilgrims were not kissing the iron and wood simply to kiss a piece of iron or wood. They were rather kissing the shrine of the Prophet of Islam (s) as a sign of their deep love and respect towards him. This is the same action which all Muslims perform (even Wahhabis) in regards to the Quran where they kiss the cover of the Quran out of respect for its contents. How can showing respect and love for the Prophet (s) and the Quran be considered polytheism? No logic can ever accept such a thing.

Similarly, all the people of the world kiss their national flag out of respect for what it stands for.<sup>1</sup> Are these individuals kissing the flag in order to kiss the fabric which it is made of? Clearly no one kisses their flag in order to respect the fabric which it is made of; they rather kiss it out of respect for their country and independence, and kissing the flag is a sign of one's love for one's home country. In light of this reality, does anyone consider respecting one's nation to be polytheism? It is clear that this issue has nothing to do with polytheism whatsoever.

What is interesting is that all of the Wahhabis honor and respect the Black Stone which is on the Kaaba and they kiss it when they pass next to it. Imagine if we were to tell them that this is simply a stone and there is no benefit in kissing it? They would be quick to respond and say that the Prophet (s) would kiss it<sup>2</sup> and so we follow him in what he used to perform! We could then ask them at this point: Are you saying that the Prophet (s) gave you permission to perform polytheistic actions and he has made an exception to this one act? Are you saying that polytheism is forbidden except for this one ex-

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<sup>1</sup> Safinat al-Bihār, section on Waṭan (one's homeland).

<sup>2</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, vol. 2, p. 159.

empted act? Or is it that kissing something is not a reason for establishing polytheism? It is here that they would not be able to give us a proper answer and they would remain silent!

Moreover, we would also ask them that they are known to kiss the cover of the Quran and consider it to be a permissible action. However, it is nothing but a piece of leather or paper, so what is the benefit in kissing such a thing? They will say that our intention in this is to honor and respect the Quran! When we ask them whether this act is polytheism or not, they will tell us that the companions of the Prophet (s) were known to kiss the Quran and it is for this reason that it is allowed.<sup>1</sup>

We would ask them at this point: Did the Prophet (s) give you permission to perform polytheistic actions despite the fact that the Quran has clearly mentioned to us that: 'Indeed Allah does not forgive that partners should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything besides that to whomever He wishes. Whoever ascribes partners to Allah has indeed fabricated [a lie] in great sinfulness.'<sup>2</sup> This is an undeniable proof that polytheism cannot be accepted under any conditions. It is here that the Wahhabis will once again be left without an answer! It is a reality that the Wahhabis are stuck in a world of contradictions and this is while they themselves realize it but are not willing to acknowledge it.

## **What is the Primary Duty of the Custodians of the House of God?**

Indeed, the Kaaba and the other sacred sites in Mecca and Medina belong to all the Muslims of the world. The Quran has

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<sup>1</sup> In the Kuwaiti Encyclopedia it is mentioned (in the section on Taqbil) that: It is the strong opinion of the Hanbali and Hanafi scholars that kissing the Quran is permissible and it has been narrated that 'Umar would kiss the Quran every morning and 'Uthmān would kiss the Quran and rub the book upon his face.

<sup>2</sup> Nisā', Verse 48.

mentioned the following in this regard: 'Allah made the Ka'ba, the Sacred House, an asylum of security for men, as also the Sacred Months, the animals for offerings, and the garlands that mark them: That ye may know that Allah hath knowledge of what is in the heavens and on earth...'<sup>1</sup> In addition, all people are considered equal when it comes to benefitting from the Kaaba: '...and from the Sacred Mosque, which We have made (open) to (all) men - equal is the dweller there and the visitor from the country...'<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, those who are in charge of maintaining the Kaaba are duty bound only to ensure security, order, and the basic needs of the pilgrims. They are not supposed to make the Kaaba a place to promote their specific ideology. They do not have the right to impose their specific ideology (particularly when it is not in line with the beliefs of the vast majority of Muslims) on others. This is true today and it was also true during the pre-Islamic era just as the Quran has mentioned: 'Do ye make the giving of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque, equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and strive with might and main in the cause of Allah...'<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, if the Saudi scholars have a specific understanding of monotheism, they do not have the right to impose this understanding upon others. This is particularly true when other groups amongst the Muslims have their own scholars who have reached a different conclusion based on their own studies and knowledge. One example of this difference can be found in regard to the issue of seeking intercession from the Prophet (s). What this means is that an individual asks the Prophet (s) to intercede and request something from Allah on their behalf. The Wahhabis consider such an action to be disbelief and poly-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Mā'idah, Verse 97.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Hajj, Verse 25.

<sup>3</sup> Surah Tawbah, Verse 19.

theism while others consider it to be the very essence of monotheism itself.

Moreover, the Wahhabis also consider such an action to be an innovation in religion while others consider it to be a religious practice emanating from the genuine Islamic tradition. This goes to show that the Wahhabis, or any other group amongst the Muslims, do not have the right to force their interpretations upon others who do not share their views. We must emphasize the point that the Saudi government is merely responsible for creating an environment of security and order in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and for meeting the basic needs of the pilgrims in that holy land.

They should not create a center of propaganda for their specific ideology out of the Kaaba. It is also interesting to note that the king of Saudi Arabia has named himself as the 'Servant of the Two Holy Shrines' and not the 'Ruler of the Two Holy Shrines'. When this is the case, why do the Salafi and Wahhabi scholars consider themselves as the rulers of the Holy Shrines and attempt to impose their beliefs on others? This is while they believe that following their king and not attempting to supersede his authority is obligatory for them. Naturally, if something goes against the laws of Islam as recognized by the majority of Muslim scholars, then it should be prohibited but this is different from imposing one's ideology upon others.

## **The Worst Possible Way of Imposing One's Ideology upon Others**

Recently, the Wahhabis have begun to pass out books to the pilgrims through which they wish to refute the beliefs of other groups amongst the Muslims. Unfortunately, not only are these books incorrect in their basic arguments (using logical fallacies and other such means) but they also utilize very base language as well. Some of the books consist of nothing other than insults and slander against other Muslim groups.

This is all while, in case a logical rebuttal of their works is prepared and published, no permission would ever be granted for it to be disseminated amongst Muslims in Saudi Arabia. So why are the Wahhabis not edified by the following Quranic verse: ‘...so announce the Good News to My Servants,- Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it...’<sup>1</sup> It is clear that such an ideology has no place in the world of today and it will soon become something discussed only in the history books.

This is particularly true in our age where respecting the beliefs of others is seen in a very different light than during past times. Although people in the past may have been swayed by force in taking on an ideology, the people of our age are certainly not ready to do so any longer and this is one of the key factors in the upcoming decline of Wahhabism. When we consider the Baqī Graveyard and the shrine of the Prophet (s), it is clear that they belong to all of the Muslims. The ones in charge of these holy sites are only responsible for maintaining security and order and meeting the basic needs of the pilgrims. In addition, they are also duty bound to prevent any unlawful actions, which all the Muslims agree upon and nothing more!

The Wahhabis must respect the beliefs of all Muslims worldwide and never engage in insults and slander against what they hold holy, even if they disagree with it. Neither is Allah happy with such behavior, nor is his creation, and such behavior will entail nothing but a bad outcome for those who engage in it. The Holy Sanctuary of Allah must be kept secure in all respects. This entails that all those who go there should feel safe and calling people polytheists for the reasons we mentioned above goes against this.

I still cannot forget one of my earlier visits to the House of Allah where the Wahhabi police were preventing the pilgrims

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zumar, Verses 17 and 18.

from kissing the pulpit of the Prophet (s). The pilgrims naturally wouldn't give up and the police had become utterly frustrated. Finally, one of the police came up and said the following to them: I swear by Allah that it is allowed to attack these people with the sword and kill them! What difference is there between kissing the cover of the Quran and kissing the shrine or pulpit of the Prophet (s)? With what ease do these people issue decrees for the killing of the Muslims!

It is at this point that we can better understand how such groups as the Taliban or Al Qaeda, the inauspicious offspring of Wahhabism, so readily engage in the killing of the Muslims worldwide. It is the same ideological roots which they share with the radical Wahhabis that enables them to carry out horrendous terrorist attacks such as the one carried out in the holy city of Najaf around two years ago, where individuals from these groups engaged in a bombing which killed 150 people and wounded over 300; they did this without the least bit of trepidation and they ended up killing many innocent men, women, and children who simply happened to be there at that time. These are the bitter fruits of this type of ideology and unfortunately, such groups have darkened the image of Islam all throughout the world in recent years. This evil has even affected countries such as Saudi Arabia, the very birthplace of this ideology.

## **Open Minded and Moderate Wahhabis**

In recent years, we have seen a movement by a group of moderate Wahhabis towards a greater level of historical scrutiny and moderation in regards to their ideology and beliefs. This is definitely a positive step! This movement has reached the point where there is hope that discussion and rational thinking can take the place of insults, slander, and conflict. Although this movement has not yet formed into a mainstream method, there is evidence that it may blossom if given some time.

It has been reported that some Shia scholars and some moderate Wahhabi scholars have held a meeting with one another and their joint discussions have been broadcast in both of their respective media outlets. On the flipside, the extremist Wahhabis consider such behavior to signify disbelief and religious deviation and they are exceedingly angry at what has taken place. When they look at such things, they imagine that Islam is in decline because various groups are sitting down and speaking with one another rather than fighting.

In reality, the Quran has taught us the concept of polite discussions and it can be considered as one of the good customs in the religion. When various issues are discussed in a logical and rational manner, this will naturally give rise to a new era in the Muslim world and leave no room for calling others disbelievers and shedding their blood for various petty and illogical reasons. It is interesting to note that a group of moderate writers in Saudi Arabia have also engaged in this path through utilizing their skills with the pen.

For example, a scholar by the name of Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī<sup>1</sup> has lately written a book by the name of ‘Concepts Which Require Correction and Revision’ (in Arabic it is called Mafāhīm Yajib An Taṣīḥḥah). In its own way (due to the circumstances prevalent in Saudi Arabia), this text can be considered as one of the wonders of our time. A brief review of the basic contents of this text can be found in the end of this book.

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<sup>1</sup> Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī was one of the respected scholars of Mecca, holding great influence in his society, and teaching classes which were widely attended. It was only recently that he passed away. He wrote a great number of books which are widely regarded by researchers. One of these books is the aforementioned text ‘Concepts Which Require Correction and Revision’.



## Fanaticism

Fanaticism in our era can best be defined as an extreme belief or attachment towards something. This can either be an extreme belief ideologically in relation to issues pertaining to Allah or the Day of Resurrection, or it can be in relation to a code of conduct. It can even be in relation to defending a specific individual or defending one's nation. According to Imam 'Alī's (a) remarks in the Sermon of Qāsi'ah<sup>1</sup> in the Nahj al-Balāghah, the meaning of fanaticism in the past seems to have been similar to its meaning today. In the sermon, the Imam (a) has divided fanaticism into two potential types: the first is positive and praiseworthy 'fanaticism', while the second is negative and blameworthy fanaticism.

In relation to negative fanaticism, the example of Satan has been mentioned where his fanaticism<sup>5</sup> prevented him from prostrating before Adam (a) as commanded by Allah. It is interesting to note that Imam 'Alī (a) has named him as the 'leader of the fanatics': "Satan, the enemy of Allah and the leader of the fanatics and the foremost of the arrogant ones."<sup>2</sup> With regard to praiseworthy 'fanaticism', the Imam (a) has stated: 'Whenever you have no choice but to be fanatical, then let yourselves be fanatical in obtaining positive character qualities and performing good deeds'.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, this isn't fanaticism in its regular meaning but rather, it is the Imam (a)

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<sup>1</sup> Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 192 (The Sermon of Qāsi'ah).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Sermon 192.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

[this is a totally incorrect opinion about the equivalent of the Arabic term 'تعصب'; even in the mentioned part of the text where Satan is referred to, probably [and not necessarily] a better equivalent for the term 'fanaticism' could be 'intolerance' as Satan could not tolerate a being, created by Allah, who was superior to him. However, no matter which of these terms are used, the term 'ignorance' is certainly an incorrect choice of word.

teaching us about the hard work and determination required for gaining positive characteristics and performing good deeds.

Negative fanaticism is always mixed with intellectual stagnation, one sidedness, and illogical thinking, resulting in the escalation of hatred and, ultimately retrogression of a society. The signs of fanaticism can be found in harsh behavior, bloodshed, plundering wealth, debasing others, and the utilization of slander and insults. Fanatics tend to not have any respect for the opinions and ideas of others, and they refuse to listen to the arguments of their opponents. They feel that they are superior and better than others. All of the above-mentioned can be seen in the words, actions, and writings of the extreme Wahhabis, and they are particularly evident in the books of their ideological leader, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. With the least amount of evidence, they label other Muslims as polytheists and disbelievers, and plunder their wealth and kill them.

Would a group whose scholars call other scholars ‘Oh Ignorant One’ or ‘Oh Polytheist’ really be ready to sit down and discuss various issues with their opponents in a logical fashion? Naturally, if someone believes that other groups are disbelievers and it is permissible to take their wealth and kill them,<sup>1</sup> then what room will there be for any exchange or discussion? The Quran considers fanatical people who are not ready to listen to the words of others to be outside the circle of the righteous servants of Allah; the verses on this issue state: ‘As for those who stay clear of the worship of the Rebel and turn penitently to Allah, there is good news for them. So *give* good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [sense] of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect.’<sup>2</sup> These verses show that,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Zumar, Verses 17 and 18.

those who are opposed to this methodology are not amongst the righteous servants of Allah.

The Quran has also severely rebuked those who would place their fingers in their ears when the prophets (a) would speak in order that they wouldn't hear their words. One specific verse, among others, recounts the complaint of Prophet Noah (a) to Allah in regards to his people: 'Indeed whenever I have summoned them, so that You might forgive them, they would put their fingers into their ears and draw their cloaks over their heads, and they were persistent [in their unfaith], and disdainful in [their] arrogance.'<sup>1</sup>

During the recent past, it has not been allowed for anyone to criticize the ideology of Wahhabism in the cities of Mecca and Medina or any other part of the Hijāz region for that matter. The extreme Wahhabis would not tolerate even respectful criticism of their ideology and they have imposed strict censorship on all sorts of criticism. Even books from Islamic countries such as Egypt were (and indeed still are) subject to this stringent censorship. Anything which falls between the cracks of this censorship is simply an exception rather than the rule.

It is clearly evident that with such a state of extreme censorship, there is no possibility of intellectual growth and progress for them. They will simply remain in their state of intellectual stagnation, even as the rest of the Muslim world moves forward, since they will be unable to resolve the mistakes which exist in their ideology. The irony in all this is that we Shias have our libraries filled with books by Sunnis and even Wahhabi authors.

We have no fear in regards to possessing and reading such texts, and we don't feel it will negatively affect our faith in the least. This is while one would be hard pressed to find a library in Saudi Arabia which contains Shia books (and sometimes one

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nūḥ, Verse 7.

cannot even find one such book in them), much less a book which critiques the Wahhabi ideology. Why are these people so afraid of these books, while we are so fearless in regards to them? It is clear where this fear emanates from!

Such fanaticism has never been acceptable during any time period, much less during our own era. It is for this reason that the supporters of such an ideology should pack their bags and leave their beliefs to be discussed in the pages of history! The youth amongst the Wahhabis have the right to ask their elders why the books of the other Muslims sects or the books which logically critique the Wahhabi ideology are banned and they have no access to them? In spite of this, we mentioned previously that this type of fanaticism is seen to a lesser degree amongst the moderate Wahhabis and they have announced their readiness to sit down and discuss various ideological issues with the rest of the Muslim community.

### **A Lack of Regard for Cultural Values- The Demolition of the Most Valuable Historical Sites in the Islamic World**

The Arabian Peninsula is one of the most historically rich regions in relation to the early Islamic era. This is due to the fact that this region is the birthplace of Islam and there are many historical sites which can be seen here. The graves of the Prophet of Islam (s) and many of his companions as well as those of several infallible Imams (a) from the Prophet's Ahl-al-Beit are located in the Arabian Peninsula. In addition, there are many mosques, homes, and other pieces of history as well. Many of the scholars of Islam lived and died in this land and even kings and their palaces can be found here. Unfortunately, the Wahhabis have engaged in the demolition of most of these historical sites under the pretext that they are a 'means to polytheism'. Due to their inhumane actions, very little has been

left from all of these historical sites and this is truly a very heavy and momentous loss.

Today, it is clear that every nation relates back to its own history and defines its identity through who their predecessors were. They use this history, along with various historical artifacts as evidence in building and defining this identity. They consider such things as being extremely valuable, going so far as to preserve them in museums under very heavy security so that they are not lost, stolen, or destroyed. In contrast to this, the Wahhabis have gone on a rampage, destroying anything within their reach. Things have reached the point where there is really nothing left. The things which have been destroyed have been of such great value that no dollar amount can ever come close to replacing them.

One of the clearest examples of this destruction can be found in the Baqi Graveyard, which is considered to be one of the most important historical sites of Islam. The tombs of many of the early companions and other notable figures of Islam can be found in this graveyard, including those of the infallible Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (a), the children of the Prophet (s), his wives, great scholars, the various martyrs of the early wars, and other such figures. It is estimated that more than ten thousand companions of the Prophet (s) are buried there. When one realizes what this graveyard truly signifies, it is clear that it is a critical piece of our Islamic heritage.

Yet today when we enter the Baqi Graveyard, we find only a desolate stretch of uneven land devoid of any markers or architecture. Everything which used to exist here in the form of buildings and other forms of architecture has been razed by the Wahhabis and nothing remains. When people visit, there is nothing which can attract them to this place and give them an idea of what it really contains. When we look at the reasons which the Wahhabis used in razing everything to the ground,

we find that they consider their actions as a form of 'combat against polytheism'.

Unfortunately, they have dealt the historical heritage of Islam a great blow and there is nothing which can compensate the damage which has been done. It goes without saying that a fanatical individual is a very dangerous individual who can destroy the national heritage of an entire religion, removing all traces of it for those who live during current times, as well as those who will come in the future.

### **Another Contradiction- Why is the Shrine of the Prophet (s) Still Standing?**

People who have visited the cities of Mecca and Medina know that in spite of the destruction of the shrines sitting over the graveyard of Baqi and the graves of the martyrs of 'Uhud, as well as other wars, the shrine of the Prophet (s) still remains and the Muslims come to visit it from all around the world. An important question arises here as to why the Wahhabis have destroyed all of these other historical sites under the pretext of polytheism but they have not destroyed the shrine of the Prophet (s) with the same excuse?

The reality is that the Wahhabis are afraid to take such an action for it would raise the ire of Muslims all around the world. When the Wahhabis are asked how they destroyed all the shrines of the notables in Islam for the reason of polytheism but left the shrine of the Prophet (s) intact, they are left with no answer. If the shrines of other Muslims bring about polytheism, then the shrine of the Prophet (s) should possess the same quality.

Based on their reasoning, it can be said that the smaller shrines of the regular Muslims would have brought about a lesser brand of polytheism, while the larger shrine of the Prophet (s) would have brought about a greater brand of polytheism. If this is so, then why haven't the Wahhabis destroyed

this shrine? If we reverse this thinking and say that the shrine of the Prophet (s) isn't a sign of polytheism, then the same would apply to the other shrines as well! When the Wahhabis are asked such a question, they will once again be left with no real answer to give.

In one of my past trips, I visited the 'Imam of Medina' and since I found him to be a fair and learned man, I asked him this same question. Instead of answering my question, however, he began narrating an irrelevant story from history in order to bypass the main issue. The story was about the era of King Nāṣir al-Dawlah and it was about two Jewish men who had hatched a plot to dig a tunnel into the grave of the Prophet (s). During this same time, Nāṣir al-Dawlah began to have dreams every night where the Prophet (s) would come to him and ask him to save him from those two individuals. Since the dreams kept coming every night, Nāṣir al-Dawlah realized that something was going to take place in Medina.

He prepared himself for the journey and went to the city of Medina. There he assembled all the residents of Medina into rows in order to look at all of them. He finally came upon the two men he had seen in his dreams and he instantly recognized them. They were taken and severely punished for their plot and their entire plan fell apart. The king then ordered that the adjoining areas of the Prophet's (s) shrine be dug up and a wall of steel be placed around it in order that no one else should think of ever repeating such an action.

Clearly, such an answer was given to evade the issue completely and would not have satisfied anyone. This answer was related to the underground section of the Prophet's (s) shrine and it had nothing to do with the dome or the shrine itself. In spite of this, I felt that the person perhaps didn't know how to respond and it was more courteous not to press the issue, for it would only lead to his embarrassment. During recent times, I have also heard that one of the extreme Wahhabis has pro-

claimed that they plan on destroying the shrine of the Prophet (s). Although such words are in line with the philosophy of those radical individuals among them, they would not dare to do such a thing because of the worldwide repercussions they would face from the Muslims. This is particularly difficult for them to do during recent times due to the rise of the more moderate Wahhabis.

It is interesting to note that the idea of destroying the shrine of the Prophet (s) is something which is attributed to the founder of Wahhabism, namely Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Although Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb himself has rejected such an attribution in his writings, individuals such as Ḥasan ibn Farḥān Mālikī (in his book *Dā‘iyah’ wa Laysa Nabīyā*) are of the opinion that Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb actually did hold such a belief and had he been able to destroy the shrine of the Prophet (s), he would have done so.

## **Intellectual Stagnation and Opposition towards New Phenomenons**

When we look at the founder of Wahhabism, we see that he fought against various things which he considered to be innovations in the religion. This issue was something that all Muslims basically agreed about, since all Muslims consider innovations in the religion to be prohibited.<sup>1</sup> However, the problem here was that Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was making a serious error regarding the concept of “innovation in religion” as he failed to make a distinction between innovations in religion and things which were simply new and had not existed

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<sup>1</sup> In a tradition narrated from the Prophet (s), it has been stated: ‘The people of religious deviation are the worst of creation.’ (Kanz al-‘Ummāl, hadith 10951). Similarly, in a tradition from Imam ‘Alī (a) it has been narrated that: ‘There was no religious deviation created unless a religious custom (Sunnah) was left aside.’ (Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 9, p. 93). There are many such traditions present in the books of both Muslim sects.



previously, hence, he indiscriminately fought against every new phenomenon.

In order to delve deeper into this issue, let us first see what the definition of an innovation in religion is from the perspective of Islam. Is anything new an innovation in religion? If everything new is an innovation in religion, then one must stand up in opposition to all of the manifestations of modern human civilization which did not exist during the time of the Prophet (s). This was, in fact, exactly the way that the early followers of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had interpreted his remarks, hence, they had gone to the point where they even considered a bicycle to be a ‘mount of Satan’ since it had not existed during past times! They held similar views about telephones and went as far as cutting the telephone lines connecting the Saudi King with his army commanders!

The Wahhabis also considered cameras to be religiously unlawful up until a few years ago and it was not possible to buy such things. Similarly, Mullah ‘Umar, the Wahhabi leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan, never allowed anyone to take his picture (it appears that only one picture from a long time ago exists of him). In addition, he considered the education of women to be unlawful and did not allow them to study in schools, even in schools which were run by his own group.

Up until today, the Wahhabis consider women driving to be unlawful, even if they are fully covered. They also consider celebrating the Prophet’s (s) birth to be unlawful and an innovation in religion! They not only consider such an action to be unlawful but they also censure Sunni and Shia Muslims who hold or participate in such celebrations. Indeed, the vast majority of the jurists and scholars amongst the Muslims adhere to a very different definition of innovation in religion.

Innovation in religion (the precise word in Arabic is Bid’ah), based on its genuine definition, refers to making something a

part of the religion which is not a part of the religion.<sup>1</sup> Surely, no one ever uses things such as bicycles, televisions, telephones, cameras, and other such things as obligatory or recommended practices of the Islamic faith. Nobody considers owning a camera or television to be one of the pillars of Islam. These are simply tools which differ from one age to another. Just as people wear different styles of clothing during different erastechnology also changes as time goes on and all such new things are considered to be a part of common practices of the people, which are usually unrelated to the Islamic Law.

Therefore, innovation in its positive sense, encompassing various technological inventions, is in reality a positive thing and a sign of progress and advancement of human civilization. Therefore, bicycles are not a 'mount of Satan', nor are cameras the 'eye of Satan'. Telephones are similarly tools and they don't bring about corruption in the religion. Similarly, celebrations held in honor of the Prophet's (s) birth, which are simply a cultural expression honoring the Prophet (s) and based on the common law, are not considered to be a part of the religion itself. Nobody considers these celebrations to be one of the obligatory foundations of Islam. The Wahhabis have simply misunderstood the concept of innovation in religion, confusing it with everything new which has not existed in the past.

This concept of innovation in religion has also affected the state of the graveyards in Saudi Arabia. Many of these sites hold great historical and religious value for Muslims but unfortunately, nowadays when someone visits these sites, they are confronted by empty and desolate places which resemble barren deserts. There are no grave markers, the earth is completely uneven, and there is no sign of water or vegetation. This is while erecting simple grave markers is something which is customary all around the world, amongst all of the various nations and religious groups. People desire to respect their dead and

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<sup>1</sup> Ghanā'im al-A'yām, vol. 1, p. 277.

this causes them to plant some trees and flowers, organize the graves, and erect a grave marker indicating who has been buried in that particular grave site. This is done in order to honor the dead and give some peace to their family members.

Moreover, people also build suitable buildings over the graves of their well-known poets or scholars in their honor. The size and architecture differs based on the individual who has been buried and the cultural values of the people. This is, in effect, a human custom which is seen in many nations all around the world. It is neither an innovation in religion, nor does it entail polytheism or idol worship. It is simply a way to honor those who have passed. As we mentioned previously, innovations in religion are only those things which we make to be a part of the religion when they are not so.

Nowadays, it is customary that on the 100<sup>th</sup> year death anniversary of various poets or inventors, a celebration is held in their honor. This is done in order to honor the services of that individual, as well as to encourage the youth in furthering themselves intellectually and artistically. Does any sane individual consider these actions to be something which is added to the religion? It is clear that such things are simply an expression of honor and respect, and they are not something imposed upon religious practices.

Now if we were to hold such a ceremony for a religious figure, in order to draw attention to their sublime teachings and ethics, then what is wrong with such an action? Would anyone consider this a religious deviation or would they consider it an expression of honor and respect for the teachings of that great religious figure? Such a ceremony would only act to further the bonds of the people with the teachings of that figure.

It is noteworthy that sometimes new cultural and artistic creations are adopted in a society, which are neither considered a part of the religion nor do they violate any religious laws, and so they are not to be considered as innovations in

the religion. For instance, when we look at the Holy Shrine in Mecca, we see many such cultural and artistic creations which did not exist during the time of the Prophet (s). For example, there are high minarets which certainly did not exist during the early Islamic era. The prayer niche of the Prophet (s) is covered with various decorations which did not exist previously. The mosque of the Prophet (s) in Medina is covered with many verses of the Quran in beautiful calligraphy (some say that all the verses of the Quran can be found there). Even the names of the Prophet (s), the infallible Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (a), and some of the notables amongst the Muslims can be found on the wall of one of the courtyards of the Prophet's Mosque.

In light of all of these new things which did not exist during the time of the Prophet (s), is there anyone who will say that these are innovations in the religion? If they are innovations in the religion then why do the Wahhabis not remove them and change back these holy sites to what they used to look like in the time of the Prophet (s)?, If, on the other hand, they are not, then why do the Wahhabis forbid other things which are exactly the same? It is without any doubt that no one can consider such things as a part of the religion; rather, they are simply issues related to the common practices of the people and creations which are part of their culture.

The people who oppose such cultural customs of the Muslim people due to their intellectual stagnation, really have no place in the world of today and they should bid their ideology farewell. It will not be long before such stagnant ways of thinking are relegated to the pages of history. The only way for such people to save themselves is to realize their mistakes and reform themselves before it is too late; the moderates who live amongst the Wahhabis can play a vital role in such a reformation.

It is worth reiterating that an innovation which is unlawful is when something is made a part of Islam which is not a part of

it. An example of this is if something is added to the prayers, which is not a part of the prayers originally, or if something is added to the Ḥajj pilgrimage, fasting, or other such religious practices. Another example is if someone says that Allah has decreed that we must celebrate the birth of the Prophet (s) on such a night and this is a part of the religion! Unfortunately, the ignorance and intellectual stagnation of this group of people has caused them to confuse these two issues with one another. They have mistaken things which are new and did not exist in the past with the issue of new things which are made a part of the religious code and take the form of innovations made in the religion.

### **Another Contradiction**

Another strange contradiction which is found amongst the Wahhabis is that in the past, they considered such things as bicycles to be innovations in the religion and resisted them strenuously. Yet when we look at these same people today, we see that they drive the most advanced cars made in America, Europe, and Japan without the least bit of consideration for what they said in the past. Similarly, these people used to consider simple telephone lines as unlawful innovations in the religion and went as far as cutting the lines connecting the Saudi King with his military commanders.

Yet today, we see that even the homeless individuals amongst them carry cellphones everywhere they go! Is not such a 180 degree reversal a sign of the coming fall of the Wahhabi ideology? What is even more interesting is that the ruling government of Arabia is moving towards a complete modernization of the nation without any thought of these previously held ideas.

### **The Half-Baked Ideas of Ibn Taymīyah**

People who are aware of the history of Wahhabism know that the real ideologue of the Wahhabi ideology is Ibn Tay-

mīyah. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb has the exact same views in regard to monotheism, polytheism, intercession, and other such things as Ibn Taymīyah, who came before him. Some people may wonder why Ibn Taymīyah failed to spread his teachings in Syria (where he was active), while Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was successful in doing so? Before delving into this issue, it would be beneficial for us to first briefly re-view the life of Ibn Taymīyah.

The full name of Ibn Taymīyah is Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymīyah Ḥanbalī and he was born in the year 661 AH and passed away in the year 728 AH. He was born in the city of Ḥarrān, which was a city in Syria but due to the oppression of the Tatars, he ended up immigrating to Damascus alongside his family while he was still a child. Since Ibn Taymīyah was from the Ḥanbalī persuasion, he began to propagate this school of thought. Since the Ḥanbalīs reject scholastic theology (‘Ilm al-Kalām), he similarly rejected it and called its practitioners ‘innovators in the religion’.

He similarly accepted the literal meaning of the ‘Attributes of Allah’ which are mentioned in the Islamic texts without any explanation (in line with the Ḥanbalī ideology), while condemning any inclination towards rationalism. In spite of all this orthodoxy, he developed and began to propagate a very specific and completely unprecedented ideology, along with supporting the Traditionalist school of thought. For example, he considered it polytheism if someone traveled to the grave of the Prophet (s) or to the graves of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) in order to seek blessings from them.

He also rejected the virtues which had been narrated in regards to the Ahl al-Bayt (a) in the books of the Sunnis and Shias. It is interesting to note that these same virtues were mentioned in the book of his ideological leader, Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. In spite of this, he rejected all of them and worked hard (in the same way as the Umayyads did) toward lowering

the status of Imam ‘Alī (a) and his children. Not surprisingly, the specific teachings of Ibn Taymīyah did not catch with the other Sunni scholars. With the exception of one of his students (Ibn al-Qayyim), the rest of the Sunni scholars opposed him and wrote many books refuting his erroneous ideas and the innovations he had made in the religion. Amongst such scholars was Dhahabi, one of his contemporaries, who censured him and asked him to submit in the face of the authentic traditions.

Dhahabī wrote to him, saying: “Now that you are in the seventh decade of your life and it is close to the time that you will leave this world, is it not time to repent and return from your ways?” Similarly, the Chief Justice of all four Sunni sects in Egypt rejected the views of Ibn Taymīyah and considered them to be innovations in the religion. Later on, in the twelfth century AH, a man appeared by the name of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb who took hold of Ibn Taymīyah’s views and began to propagate them, supporting his new and unprecedented views above all.

In addition to the aforementioned new ideology, Ibn Taymīyah also had certain other beliefs peculiar to himself. In the year 698 Hijri, he began to engage in a series of very heated ideological debates against his opponents in which he practiced and promoted the following:

- 1) He would set the limits of Islamic law himself
- 2) He would shave the heads of children
- 3) He was willing to fight against those who opposed his ideology
- 4) He forbade people from making vows (Nadhr)
- 5) He believed that Allah could physically be seen!!
- 6) He believed that: Although the Khawārij (Kharijites) had left the religion, they were one of the most truthful of people:

الْخَوَارِجُ مَعَ مَرُوفِهِمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ فَهُمْ أَصْدَقُ النَّاسِ

One of the good actions of Ibn Taymīyah was that in the year 702, he initiated certain movements against the Mongol

invaders. ‘Allāmah Amīnī, one of the great Shia scholars of our time, has first mentioned how Ibn Taymīyah rejected the tradition in regards to the initial invitation of the Prophet (s):

(وَ أَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ...). Ibn Taymīyah rejected the chain of narrators belonging to this tradition and ‘Allāmah Amīnī has stated the following in this regard: “It is not surprising (that he has rejected this chain of narrators) for he is known as an extremely biased individual who has rejected many of the essential foundations of the faith, accused many Muslims of disbelief, and rejected many of the virtues narrated for the Ahl al-Bayt (a)”<sup>1</sup>.

‘Allāmah Amīnī has also mentioned in another place that: “It was for this reason that the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah would always criticize him. For example, Shawkānī has narrated from Muḥammad Bukhārī Ḥanafī that he considered him a disbeliever and he said: “Anyone who calls Ibn Taymīyah ‘Shaykh al-Islām’ is a disbeliever!””<sup>2</sup> One of the diehard defenders of Ibn Taymīyah was Ibn Kathīr, the author of the text *Al-Bidāyah’ wa al-Nihāyah’* (deceased, 744 AH). All throughout his book, Ibn Kathīr has used every opportunity to defend Ibn Taymīyah or to praise him. Another line of defense was provided for bin Taymīyah by one of his contemporary scholars, a renowned traditionalist by the name of Abū al-Ḥajjāj Mazī, who became hated throughout his society for supporting him. He was the author of the book *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* and he ended up passing away in the year 742 AH.

Amongst the students of Ibn Taymīyah is Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Marī Lablī Ḥanbalī. According to Ibn Ḥajar, Aḥmad was opposed to Ibn Taymīyah at first but after meeting with him, became one of his friends and students. He was quite adamant in supporting him, particularly in regard to his ruling on

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ghadīr, vol. 2, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vol. 1, p. 247 (footnotes)



‘traveling for the purpose of visiting the shrines of the Prophet (s) and other religious figures’. In the end, he was summoned by the Mālikī Judge Akhnāī who proceeded to beat him until his body flowed with his blood. He then ordered his men to place him backwards on a donkey and ride him around town in order to humiliate him in front of the people for his deviant beliefs.

Yet, the greatest students and staunchest defender of Ibn Taymīyah was, no doubt, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah’. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah’ passionately defended the ideology of Ibn Taymīyah and took it upon himself to disseminate his ideas while Ibn Taymīyah was alive, as well as after he had passed away. He was jailed alongside Ibn Taymīyah several times, and he was also whipped and paraded throughout the city on a camel to be humiliated. He was also with Ibn Taymīyah when he was imprisoned in the Castle of Damascus.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now return to the main discussion at hand which concerns the question of why Ibn Taymīyah was not successful in spreading his creed in Syria, while Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was successful in spreading the same ideology in Najd, as well as the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. There are two primary reasons behind this phenomenon:

The first is that Syria (and the city of Damascus in particular) was one of the centers of Islamic knowledge during that time period. There were many seminaries there and a great number of prominent scholars. These individuals stood up in opposition to the ideas of Ibn Taymīyah and even though he had many supporters of his own, they were still successful in checking his influence. Yet when we look at the Najd region, we see that it

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from the following texts: ‘Ilām al-Nubalā’, vol. 1, p. 37; Al-Ṣaḥīḥ Min al-Sīrah’, vol. 1, p. 245; Al-Ghadīr, vol. 2, p. 280; Al-Dharī’ah, vol. 2, p. 283; Āshnāī Bā Firaq va Madhāhib Islāmī, sec. 14; Āyin Wahhābiyat va Faṣṣnāmeḥ Maktab Islām, num. 10.

wasn't a center of Islamic learning, nor did it have an appreciable number of scholars.

So when Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb began to propagate these same teachings, there was no one who had the intellectual standing to oppose it; due to this reason, his ideology began to spread rapidly amongst the unlearned masses. When we look at history, it is clear that any area which has learned scholars is kept safe from the deviant ideas which come about, while those who do not have these learned scholars are rapidly influenced and transformed for the worse.

Another important factor is that in those times, there were severe conflicts between the various tribes of the Najd region over power and supremacy and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb took advantage of these issues in order to spread his ideology. He allied himself with the Saud Family with the condition that if they supported his ideology, he would supply them with fighters in order to expand their territory. However, a quick glance at the situation of Syria at the time of Ibn Taymīyah indicates that such political conditions did not exist and in addition, Ibn Taymīyah did not have such things in mind either.

## **A Weakness in Logic and a Misunderstanding of Six Quranic Words**

As it was discussed above, a certain misinterpretation of the issues of monotheism and polytheism constitutes the core of Wahhabism, the roots of which can be found in the teachings of Ibn Taymīyah. In his treatise *Kashf al-Shubhāt*, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb has elaborated on his specific interpretation of these two issues, which we have summarized for ease of flow:

- 1) The monotheism to which Islam has invited the people is monotheism in worship, because the Arab polytheists in the time of the Prophet (s) accepted that Allah was the creator of

all things: 'If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely say, 'The All-mighty, the All-knowing created them.'"<sup>1</sup> In another place, the Quran has mentioned: 'Say, 'Who provides for you out of the sky and the earth? Who controls [your] hearing and sight, and who brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and who directs the command?' They will say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Will you not then be wary [of Him]?'"<sup>2</sup>

In light of these Quranic verses, it is clear that the Arab polytheists considered Allah to be the creator of all things, as well as the one who manages and controls all of creation. With this being the case, what was their polytheism specifically related to? The main issue of these people was that they were polytheistic when it came to worship, meaning that they would worship idols and other such things. In other words, the Arab polytheists never rejected the oneness of Allah as the creator and Lord of all of creation; they rather would place others alongside him in their worship. Islam in turn called them to worship only the one God, Allah the Almighty.

2) Polytheism is to call upon anything or anyone other than Allah for the resolution of one's problems (for example, by imploring the Messenger of Allah (s) or Imam Ali (a)). The Quran has stated the following in this regard: '...so do not invoke anyone along with Allah.'<sup>3</sup>

3) If anyone seeks intercession with the Prophet (s) or any of the righteous servants of Allah, then this is considered to be polytheism. His life and wealth can be taken by the monotheists for he has become a polytheist and any polytheist can be killed and his wealth and family taken. The evidence for this ruling comes from the Quran where it states: 'Say, 'All inter-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zukhruf, Verse 9.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Yūnus, Verse 31.

<sup>3</sup> Surah Jinn, Verse 18.

cession rests with Allah. To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; then you will be brought back to Him.”<sup>1</sup>

4) In addition, when the Arab polytheists were criticized for idol worship, they said: “we only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah,”<sup>2</sup> but the Prophet (s) never accepted this from them. This shows us that the Arab polytheists didn’t worship their idols as their main lord but rather, they worshiped them for the purpose of intercession. Therefore, considering anyone other than Allah as an intercessor causes one to become like the Arab polytheists; this in turn causes one’s life and wealth to become forfeit.

This was the summary of the views of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in regards to monotheism and polytheism.

## **A Critique of the Wahhabi Ideology**

In reality, the main bulk of the Wahhabis’ textual discussions on monotheism and polytheism centers around the few verses which we mentioned above. Referring to these verses as evidence, they try to simply ignore the other verses without attempting to understand the Quran holistically. They furthermore bolster their position by claiming that any of the verses which other scholars mention in refuting their position are among the ‘ambiguous verses’ of the Quran, while the verses they themselves have used are among the ‘definitive verses’.<sup>3</sup>

By examining this issue in depth, one realizes that the primary error of this group lies in their misunderstanding of six Quranic concepts, which has caused them to end up calling all the other Muslims polytheists and disbelievers. Unfortunately, the Muslim world has paid a very heavy price for the mistakes of this group. How much Muslim and non Muslim blood has been spilled over this issue? How much wealth has been plun-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zumar, Verse 44.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Zumar, Verse 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sharḥ Kashf al-Shubbhāt, p. 74.

dered from its rightful owners? Even up until today, this state has continued to exist in certain places such as in Afghanistan under the Taliban, as well as in Pakistan under the Sipāh Ṣaḥābah. In recent years, we have seen the same situation crop up in the Shia and Sunni mosque bombings of Iraq as well.

Why is it that the people who hold this ideology are not willing to sit down and discuss their differences with the scholars of Al Azhar, Damascus, Qom, and Najaf? The first step to resolving an issue is discussion yet these people have side-stepped this and gone immediately towards violence, death, and destruction. Why is it when these individuals wish to address others in their texts, they use terms like ‘Oh Ignorant Polytheists’? Without having even spoken to this other group, they have already labeled them as disbelievers deserving of death. If someone considers another person an ignorant polytheist and calls him such, then where is the room for further discussion?

Why is it, that these people are not willing to discuss these issues in a friendly manner as the Quran has instructed us: ‘...So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [interpretation] of it.’<sup>1</sup> If the Wahhabis had adopted this type of behavior, there would not have been so much blood shed all around the Muslim world. The wealth of the Muslims would similarly have not been wasted and the enemies would not have gained dominance over them.

If we look at the Zionists who have gained power today in Palestine, it is clear that all of these things played a very strong role in their power and influence. It is not clear what kind of an answer the Wahhabis will give to Allah on the Day of Judgment when they are questioned about all this. In any case, the following six key concepts in the Quran are what the Wahhabis have misunderstood:

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zumar, Verses 17 and 18.

- 1) Polytheism and polytheist (From the Quran's perspective)
- 2) The term *Ilāh*, which means deity (in relation to the phrase: There is no deity but Allah)
- 3) Worship (From the Quran's perspective)
- 4) Intercession (From the Quran's perspective)
- 5) Supplication (*Du'ā*) (From the Quran's perspective)
- 6) Innovation in religion

### **A) The Concept of Polytheism**

The first concept which the Wahhabis have misunderstood is that of polytheism and who exactly is defined as a polytheist. The term 'Shirk' (polytheism) in Arabic lexicon refers to participation in something and the term 'Sharīk' refers to an equal or partner. The lexical dictionary *Lisān al-'Arab* has mentioned the following for the meaning of 'Shirk': "It refers to associating a partner with Allah in his Lordship. So in essence, the term Shirk refers to the creation of equals or partners for Allah in his rule and dominion. Rāghib, the well known lexicologist, has stated the following in his book *Mufradāt*: "There are two types of 'Shirk' in religion. The first is the 'Great Shirk' where an individual associates an equal with Allah and this will cause one to be deprived of paradise."

"The second is the 'Lesser Shirk' where one focuses on other than Allah in certain affairs and this is a type of showing off (*Riyā*) and hypocrisy (*Nifāq*)." Therefore, the 'Greater Shirk' is when someone associates an equal with God in his powers of creation, lordship, and worship.<sup>1</sup> Now, if we were to say that Prophet Jesus (a) would heal those who were incurably ill with the permission of Allah, and that he would raise the dead with the permission of Allah, and that he had knowledge of the unseen through the power and permission of Allah, then this is not considered to be 'Shirk' (polytheism).

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<sup>1</sup> *Mufradāt Rāghib*, section on 'Shirk'.

The Quran has mentioned that Prophet Jesus (a) said: 'and [he will be] an apostle to the Children of Israel, [and he will declare,] "I have certainly brought you a sign from your Lord: I will create for you the form of a bird out of clay, then I will breathe into it, and it will become a bird by Allah's leave. I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by Allah's leave. I will tell you what you have eaten and what you have stored in your houses. There is indeed a sign in that for you, should you be faithful.'<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if we request something from the Prophet of Islam (s), the infallible Imams (a) from the Ahl al-Bayt, or the righteous servants of Allah, then such an issue will not be polytheism because it is through the permission of Allah. It is, in fact, the very essence of monotheism for such individuals are never considered as the partners of Allah but rather, they are His servants and they can perform such actions only through His permission and power. It would only be polytheism if one considered them to be partners with Allah with their own independent power.

It is surprising how the leaders of the Wahhabis have come up with such a conclusion from the concept of polytheism. They have in essence concluded that if one asks the righteous servants of Allah for something by the permission of Allah, then this is a type of polytheism. This is in spite of the fact that it goes against the explicit verses of the Quran! Let us imagine that there is an obedient servant who listens to their master and doesn't do anything without their master's permission and consent. If someone asks that servant to request something from their master, has that act of requesting something from the servant made the servant an equal with their master?

Obviously, requesting something from the servant does not make them equal with their master; it is the master who ulti-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Āl 'Imrān, Verse 49.

mately grants that request, even if it is outwardly fulfilled by the servant. It is clear that no one would consider such a thing as creating an equal to the master! All of the mistakes of the Wahhabis arise from this misunderstanding which is due to the fact that they haven't positioned the verses of the Quran next to one another in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Quran as a whole. They have instead cherry picked a few select verses, ignoring the rest, and this is why they have reached such erroneous conclusions.

## **B) The Concept of Ilāh (Deity)**

The ideological leader of the Wahhabis is of the opinion that the term Ilāh only refers to an object of worship. For example, he believes that the phrase 'There is no deity but Allah' only refers to monotheism in relation to worship. In essence, they believe that this means that there is no deity who is one other than Allah and that this isn't a rejection of polytheism in creation, sustenance, and lordship. Their reasoning is that the Arab polytheists accepted the monotheism of creation, sustenance, and lordship, and their only issue was that they worshipped other beings alongside the Almighty Allah.

### *A More Detailed Explanation*

Contrary to the assumptions of the Wahhabis, the Arab polytheists were not only entangled in polytheism of worship; in other words, the term Ilāh does not only mean an object of worship. Rather, it can contain the meaning of creator as well. For instance, consider the following verses in the Quran: 'Have they taken gods from the earth who (create creatures and) spread (them throughout the earth)? Had there been any gods in them other than Allah, they would surely have fallen apart. Clear is Allah, the Lord of the Throne, of what they allege [concerning Him].'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Anbiyā', Verses 21 and 22.



In these two verses, the term *Ālihah* (which is the plural form of *Ilāh*) is used with the meaning of creator and the verses speak of monotheism in creation and not monotheism in worship. In yet another verse, this same issue has been discussed with even greater clarity: 'Allah has not taken any offspring, neither is there any god besides Him, for then each god would take away what he created, and some of them would surely rise up against others. Clear is Allah of what they allege! The Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, He is above having any partners that they ascribe [to Him].'<sup>1</sup>

In these verses, the existence of any creator other than Allah has been negated (with the use of the word *Ilāh*) for if there were any other gods the order of the universe would have been found in disarray. This verse clarifies the belief of the polytheistic Arabs in a number of creators, rather than just one. In this way, it is clear that it is a mistake to conflate monotheism with only monotheism in worship, all the while ignoring the other aspects which Islam has mentioned. The Quranic verses are very clear in this regard.

What is very apparent in this issue is the methodology which the Wahhabis have used in coming to this understanding. Due to their bias in favor of their specific understanding of monotheism, they have selected a series of verses while completely ignoring the other verses of the Quran. If they had instead placed all of the verses next to one another, they would have gained a more holistic and accurate understanding of these issues.

Furthermore, a number of other verses of the Quran indicate that some of the Arab polytheists had taken the issue of idol worship a step beyond the belief that their idols were objects of worship and that they had lordship over the creation. In other words, they believed that their idols could also influ-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Mu'minūn, Verses 91 and 92.

ence the destiny of the people. They believed that if someone opposed or disrespected these idols, the idols would become angry at their enemies and ruin their lives. In the same vein, they believed that the idols would favor those who respected and loved them and help them attain a successful life. For example, the polytheists of the time of Prophet Hūd would say: ‘All we say is that some of our gods have visited you with some evil.’ He said, ‘I call Allah to witness—and you too be [my] witnesses—that I repudiate what you take as [His] partners’<sup>1</sup>

These people believed that their idols would become angry at times and visit harm on those who were opposed to them, while they would become happy at other times and send blessings on their supporters. So this meant that they believed the idols had direct power over the destiny of the people and this is a type of belief in the divine lordship of these idols. There were many polytheists who held these types of beliefs. There is a famous poem composed by an Arab poet in regards to the Banī Ḥanīfah tribe who had built an idol out of dates and who later ended up eating their ‘date god’ during a time of famine. The poem censures this tribe for their actions, warning them that the eaten idol will become angry at them and they will be harmed by its wrath. This shows the beliefs which the Arabs held concerning the divine lordship of their idols.<sup>2</sup>

Another poet has mentioned: “Is an idol which the foxes urinate upon truly a lord?”<sup>3</sup> All throughout the history of idol worship, the term lord (Rabb) has been used in relation to these idols due to the belief that they had control over their own segment of creation. When Prophet Joseph (a) wished to invite his polytheistic jail mates to monotheism, he said: ‘O my prison mates! Are different masters better, or Allah, the One, the All-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Hūd, Verse 54.

<sup>2</sup> Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 7, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 3, p. 253.

paramount?’<sup>1</sup> Another piece of evidence in this regard is that the Prophet (s) said to the polytheists of the Ahl al-Kitāb (Jews and Christians) that: ‘Say, ‘O People of the Book! Come to a common word between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that some of us will not take some others as lords besides Allah.’ But if they turn away, say, ‘Be witnesses that we have submitted [to Allah].’<sup>2</sup>

The term Arbāb (lords) here clearly shows that these people were entangled in the polytheism of lordship as well. Another verse of this same chapter mentions: ‘And he would not command you to take the angels and the prophets for lords. Would he call you to unfaith after you have submitted [to Allah]?’<sup>3</sup> Similarly, another verse in the Quran clearly states: ‘They have taken gods besides Allah, [hoping] that they might be helped [by the fake deities].’<sup>4</sup> This verse states that the polytheists believe that the idols have the power of lordship and that they can help shape their destiny due to their great power.

In the story of Prophet Abraham (a), we see that at first, he pretended to share their beliefs in order to teach them a lesson about what they actually believed in. He initially pretended to select the stars as an object of worship, then the moon, and then the sun. Through the entire process, he was showing the people how invalid their ideology really was. When we examine the story in depth, it is clear that the polytheist people of Babylonia believed in the lordship of these celestial objects. They saw the stars, the moon, and the sun as objects which had power over their lives. This is also seen in Prophet Abraham’s (a) response to Nimrod.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Yūsuf, Verse 39.

<sup>2</sup> Āl ‘Imrān, Verse 64.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Verse 80.

<sup>4</sup> Surah Yāsīn, Verse 74.

<sup>5</sup> Surah Baqarah, Verse 258.

In conclusion, we can say definitively that the term *Ilāh* does not refer only to an object of worship but rather, it can hold the meaning of a creator or lord as well. The polytheists were not only afflicted with polytheism in worship but they were also afflicted with polytheism in creation and lordship as well. How can the Wahhabis use such weak lines of reasoning to justify their killing of so many Muslims all around the world? How can they use such reasoning to justify the theft of the wealth of so many Muslims all around the world? It is truly shocking to think that such weak arguments are used to justify so much evil that this group has committed in the name of Islam.

### **C) The Concept of Worship**

Worship is the third Quranic concept which the Wahhabis have misunderstood. The proponents of the Wahhabi ideology openly state that if someone goes towards the righteous individuals in order that they may intercede on their behalf with Allah, then this is an example of what is described in the following Quranic verse: ‘Indeed, only exclusive faith is worthy of Allah, and those who take others as *awliya* besides Him [claiming,] ‘We only worship them so that they may bring us near to Allah,’ Allah will judge between them concerning that about which they differ. Indeed Allah does not guide someone who is a liar and an ingrate.’<sup>1</sup>

The Wahhabis have misunderstood this verse in that the error of the polytheists was not that they would seek intercession with the righteous but rather, their error was that they would worship false deities for their intercession and they would fall down in prostration before them. The Quranic verse is very clear in this regard. For example, when we visit the Prophet (s) in Medina and we say to him: “We seek your intercession in this world and the next”, are we worshipping the

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Zumar, Verse 3.

Prophet (s)?! Are we actively praying towards him with the assumption that he is an independent power? Clearly, our seeking of intercession is nothing of this sort.

What connection does seeking intercession have with worship? When we look in the Quran, we see that Prophet Jesus (a) had the God given power of curing those who had been born blind. If someone took their child to him and asked him to cure them through the power of Allah, would anyone consider this a type of worship? This is something which is clearly not worship and the Quran has considered it to be a permissible action. When we look at the meaning of worship in lexicon and common usage, it refers to the utmost limits of humility in front of another and actions such as Rukū' and Sujūd are considered to be such acts of worship. Meanwhile, asking something from a person is not considered to be worship and is a completely different matter.

Rāghib, in his lexicon has stated: 'Subseivence is the expression of humility and Worship is superior to that for it is the height of humility.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in Lisān al-'Arab, it has been mentioned that: "The essence of worship is humility and the lowering of oneself (before another)." It is interesting to note that the leader of the Wahhabis has focused on a part of the aforementioned verse, while completely ignoring another part of it. The verse clearly indicates that the main issue is the worship of other than Allah and not the seeking of something (such as intercession through the permission of Allah) in order to gain further proximity towards him. This is the key point in this matter.

There is no doubt that whenever people wish to understand an issue, they must do so with an open mind and without any prejudice. If they attempt to understand an issue while at the same time holding blind prejudgments and prejudices about it

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<sup>1</sup> Mufradāt Rāghib, section on 'Abd (servant).

then there is no doubt that their prejudice will prevent them from reaching a correct conclusion. Even though all of the material which is necessary for reaching a proper conclusion is right in front of them, still, they will be unable to see anything except for what they wish to see. In this way, the Wahhabis have declared millions of Muslims as polytheists and worthy of death! They have furthermore declared that these 'polytheists' have no rights to their property or even their own families due to their disbelief.

### **D) The Concept of Intercession**

Intercession is the fourth Quranic concept which the Wahhabis have understood in an incorrect manner. Just as we mentioned previously, they consider anyone who calls upon the Prophet (s) or the infallible Imams (a) (or any other righteous servant of Allah) for intercession as a polytheist and disbeliever worthy of death. They have taken this issue so far that their leader, in his book *Kashf al-Shubbhāt*, has considered the ones who seek intercession in our era as being worse than the polytheists who lived in the pre Islamic era.

This is while the pre Islamic polytheists did not believe in the Day of Judgment, nor did they pray, or act upon any of the Islamic tenets of faith. They also considered the Prophet (s) to be a magician who must be killed and they considered the Quran a book of magic. In spite of all of these things, the Wahhabis still consider them to be better than the Muslims of today who act upon all of the tenets of Islam but who also seek intercession from certain holy figures.

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb claimed that the polytheism of the pre Islamic Arabs was lighter than the polytheism of these modern day 'polytheists'. His logic in all this was that the pre Islamic Arabs would commit polytheism during times of safety but they would revert back to their monotheism during times of hardship. This is while the modern day practitioners of

intercession commit these acts of 'polytheism' both during times of ease, as well as during times of hardship.

It is blatantly unfair to call a group of religious people who believe in all the principles of the Islamic faith, act upon its teachings, abstain from all of the sins, pay the Islamic taxes, engage in charity, travel long distances in order to visit the Kaaba in Mecca, memorize the Quran, and are learned in the Islamic sciences worse than the idol worshippers who did not believe in Islam whatsoever, and who would slaughter people left and right with no just cause. These idol worshippers were the same people who would bury their daughters alive for no other sin than being female. Does a simple belief in intercession cause these pious Muslims to suddenly become worse than the pre Islamic polytheists? Are these people now deserving of death and the loss of their wealth?

Indeed, such a line of reasoning is completely illogical both in the world of today, as well as in the past, and there is no one who can accept such a thing. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the end for such an ideology is near and it will soon be relegated to the pages of history. Let us now attend to the very essence of the issue of intercession in order to see if there are any contradictions between such a concept and that of monotheism. What is the problem with this concept and why have the Wahhabis been so quick to call for the killing of those who believe in it? Is it that Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Ibn Taymīyah have had some sort of a revelation which all the other scholars throughout Islamic history have missed?!

The reality is that the issue of intercession has been proven throughout numerous verses of the Quran. Due to this same reason, there is a consensus among the Muslim scholars that it is one of the certain beliefs found in Islam. It is something which is so evident that the Wahhabi scholars are not so bold as to reject it in principle. Another point pertaining to this issue is that there can be no intercession by anyone without the

permission of Allah. This point has been made in over five verses of the Quran, one of them being the Āyat al-Kursī (the Throne verse) which states: ‘...Who is it that may intercede with Him except with His permission?...’<sup>1</sup>

The concept of the ‘Unity of divine actions’ conveys the idea that everything which takes place in this world must take place through the permission of Allah and that there is no one who is a partner with Allah in such matters. If intercession takes place, then it will take place through Allah’s permission. Since Allah is all-wise His permission is given based on a good reason and He will only give permission to those who are worthy of this intercession. If a person has burned all of their bridges when it comes to their sins, then perhaps they are no longer worthy of utilizing intercession. This is a vital point. Up until now, all the Muslims agree on this matter and so the question arises as to where the differences of opinion are.

When it comes to intercession, all of the Muslim scholars (with the exception of the Wahhabis) state that seeking something from the Prophet (s) within the framework set by Allah (meaning the rank of being an intercessor which Allah has granted him) is not opposed to monotheism. They have then gone further and stated that it is actually a part of the concept of monotheism itself. The Wahhabi scholars disagree with this majority opinion and they claim that if someone seeks intercession, they are a disbeliever and polytheist, and they are worthy of death and the loss of their wealth and possessions!

When we ask whether the Prophet of Islam (s) has the rank of an intercessor, all of the Muslims agree with this and they acknowledge that he does have this rank. So what is the issue here? In response, the Wahhabis state that while the Prophet (s) enjoys the rank of intercession, one should not seek intercession from him since it will cause one to become a disbeliev-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah, Verse 255.



er. Their reasoning is that the Quran has stated that the Arab polytheists used the pretext of worshipping the idols in order to receive their intercession before Allah, and our act of intercession is the same as the act of the Arab polytheists.

In response, we say that the Arab polytheists were worshipping the idols but we never worship the Prophet (s) or his Holy Family (a). The issue of seeking intercession does not have anything to do with worship and these are two completely different things. In response to this logical argument, the Wahhabis say that their ideology is correct and there is no room for argument! When we examine the Quran, we see that Allah himself has ordered the sinners to go before the Prophet (s) and seek his intercession on behalf of their sins so that Allah will forgive them: 'We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed by Allah's leave. Had they, when they wronged themselves, come to you and pleaded to Allah for forgiveness, and the Apostle had pleaded for them [to Allah]for forgiveness, they would have surely found Allah all-clement, all-merciful.'<sup>1</sup>

Another clear example of the validity of intercession can be found in the story of Prophet Jacob (a) which has been narrated in the Quran. The verses have mentioned that when the children of Jacob (a) had acknowledged their sins against Joseph (a), they went to their father and asked him to seek forgiveness on their behalf from Allah which is to say, intercede for them). The Quran has related: 'They said, 'Father! Plead [with Allah] for forgiveness of our sins! We have indeed been erring.' He said, 'I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you; indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.'<sup>2</sup> Here we see that not only did Jacob (a) not reject their request, but he also accepted it and implored Allah's forgiveness for them. This is a very clear piece of evidence found in the Quran which shows

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisā', Verse 64.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Yūsuf, Verses 97 and 98.

the validity of intercession, because a great Prophet like Jacob (a) would never call his own sons to polytheism and unbelief!

### *An Unacceptable Response*

It is interesting to note that when the extreme Wahhabis are left speechless in response, they retort that the two aforementioned verses are related to the time when these two prophets (a) were alive. After they had passed away, their bodies became spiritless vessels and thus they are not able to do anything with regard to intercession. Due to this reason, seeking intercession from the Prophet (s) after his death is without any use.

It should be noted that at this point, the issue of polytheism and disbelief has been put aside by the Wahhabis and they instead focus on the issue of the uselessness of intercession. Therefore, if we were to seek intercession while these individuals were alive, it would neither be polytheism nor disbelief but if it is performed after their death, it is a futile action. In essence, these words signify that they have taken back all of their aforementioned claims of polytheism with respect to this issue.

Contrary to this, we state that seeking intercession is neither considered as disbelief, nor a futile action. The reason behind it is that there is no Muslim who will accept that the rank of the Prophet (s) is any less than the rank of an ordinary martyr who was killed in the battles of 'Uḥud or Badr. The Quran has mentioned relating to these martyrs: 'Do not suppose those who were slain in the way of Allah to be dead; no, they are living and provided for near their Lord,'<sup>1</sup> The Wahhabis claim in opposition that since the Prophet (s) has died a natural death, he is like nothing more than a dead stone! The Quran explains that even an ordinary martyr is not dead and they are alive and being provided for by their Lord. This shows us that

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Āl 'Imrān, Verse 169.

the Prophet (s), whose rank is much greater than an ordinary martyr, is also still considered to be living and not dead in the ordinary sense.

Perhaps the Wahhabis have made a mistake in understanding the Quranic verse which states: 'You cannot make the dead hear, nor can you make the deaf listen to your call when they turn their backs,'<sup>1</sup> However, they have ignored the fact that this verse is referring to ordinary people and not people such as the Prophet (s), the righteous, and the pure believers. Should the Wahhabis further refrain from giving up their erroneous stance in this regard, one must ask them that if they believe this, then why do they give their greetings to the Prophet (s) during the course of their daily prayers, saying: Peace be upon you O' Prophet (s) and the mercy of Allah!

If the Prophet (s) is dead and unable to hear, then why is this said in each and every one of the five daily prayers? Have the Wahhabis not read the verse in the Quran which states: 'Indeed Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who have faith! Invoke blessings on him and invoke Peace upon him in a worthy manner.'<sup>2</sup> This is an issue which is valid for all times, since the daily prayers have also incorporated this set of greetings upon the Prophet (s). Allah and the believers send their greetings and invoke peace upon the Prophet (s) and there is no point in doing so if he cannot hear and receive them. This shows us that the Wahhabis have misunderstood this issue as well.

It is also interesting that the Wahhabis have inscribed this verse of the Quran above the grave of the Prophet (s): 'O you who have faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak aloud to him like you shout to one another, lest your works should fail without your being

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Naml, Verse 80.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Aḥzāb, Verse 56.

aware.<sup>1</sup> If the Wahhabis believe that the Prophet (s) cannot hear after his death, then why have they inscribed this verse as a reminder to the Muslims who visit him? It is not possible to speak loudly to the Prophet (s) if he is unable to hear due to death. The Wahhabis should have a bit more fairness in this issue and acknowledge that they have made a very clear mistake.

### **E) The Concept of Supplications in the Quran**

Another concept which the Wahhabis have greatly misunderstood and through which they call other Muslims disbelievers is that of supplications according to the Quran. The Wahhabis believe that if anyone supplicates to the Prophet (s) or any other righteous figure, then they are polytheists and disbelievers. A supporter of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhābby the name of Ṣan‘ānī, has written a book entitled “Tanzīyat al-‘itiqād”, in which he has made the following claim: ‘Allah has considered supplications as a type of worship where he has stated: ‘Your Lord has said, ‘Call Me, and I will hear you!’ Indeed those who are disdainful of My worship will enter hell in utter humiliation.’<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, those who call upon (supplicate) the Prophet (s) or any other righteous servants of Allah in order that they may help them or intercede before Allah on their behalf, have performed an act of worship. This includes such things as asking such individuals to seek a cure from Allah on their behalf or on behalf of their family members. This also includes asking them for help in paying off their debts or any other similar type of request.

Asking the Prophet (s) or the righteous for anything is considered to be a type of worship according to Ṣan‘ānī; in fact, it is considered as the very essence of worship by him. Anyone

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<sup>1</sup> Hujarāt, Verse 2.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Ghāfir, Verse 60.

who performs such acts of 'worship' is in reality worshipping other than God and he is a polytheist and disbeliever. According to him, true monotheism is defined as seeking everything from God and considering all others as being weak and unable to do anything.<sup>1</sup> This excerpt from Ṣan'ānī can also be found in many of the books of the Wahhabis; it is a common theological concept amongst them.

The Wahhabis refer to the aforementioned verse in proving that such people are disbelievers, and they also reference the following verses in order to substantiate their stance:

1) 'The places of worship belong to Allah, so do not invoke anyone along with Allah.'<sup>2</sup>

2) '[Only] to Him belongs the true invocation; and those whom they invoke besides Him do not answer them in any wise...'<sup>3</sup>

3) 'Indeed those whom you invoke besides Allah are creatures like you. So invoke them: they should answer you, if you are truthful.'<sup>4</sup>

The Wahhabis refer to these verses in concluding that asking others for anything is a type of supplication and that, supplications are considered as being a type of worship. This means that no one is allowed to even say: "O' Messenger of Allah, please intercede on my behalf with Allah". Anyone who says such a thing becomes a disbeliever and worthy of death. This misunderstanding of the concept of supplication is one of the key reasons why the Wahhabis have killed thousands upon thousands of innocent Muslims.

Let us now go back to the Quran and see what the true meaning of the term supplication is in order to clarify this is-

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<sup>1</sup> Tanzīyat al-I'tiqād.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Jinn, Verse 18.

<sup>3</sup> Surah Ra'ad, Verse 14.

<sup>4</sup> Surah A'rāf, Verse 194.

sue. We need to define what exactly a supplication is and if it is different from worshipping beings other than Allah. It is interesting to note before moving on that whenever we see some people incline towards certain Wahhabi-like ideologies in our own religious seminaries, they tend to be poorly informed people who have had difficulty understanding the Islamic sciences.

In any case, when we look at the word Supplication (Du'ā) in the Quran, we find the following meanings:

1) The term is used to mean worship, such as the 18<sup>th</sup> verse of Surah Jinn: 'The places of worship belong to Allah, so do not invoke anyone along with Allah.'<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'so do not invoke anyone along with Allah' is telling us not to make anyone an equal or partner with Allah and that we should not worship anyone other than Him. The 20<sup>th</sup> verse of this same chapter also states: 'Say, 'I pray only to my Lord, and I do not ascribe any partner to Him.'" Every Muslim knows that the term supplication in this sense belongs only to Allah and that no one is His equal or partner.

2) The second meaning of supplication is that of calling someone towards something. An example of this can be found in the Quranic verses in regards to Prophet Noah (a) when he said: 'He said, 'My Lord! Indeed, I have summoned my people night and day but my summons only increases their evasion.'<sup>2</sup> This type of supplication is a reference to the invitation of Prophet Noah (a) to monotheism from his people. Such an invitation is the very essence of faith and it was an obligatory action for the prophets of Allah to invite their people to the truth. Similarly, the Quran has thus commanded the Prophet of Islam (s): 'Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Jinn, Verse 18.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Noah, Verses 5 and 6.

advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best...'<sup>1</sup> This is another reference to this same issue.

3) The third meaning of a supplication is the seeking of the fulfillment of one's desires through various means. For example, a verse in the Quran states: '...The witnesses must not refuse when they are called...'<sup>2</sup> Such a type of supplication is something completely ordinary and does not make anyone a disbeliever; in fact, it can be a duty in some cases. In other situations, this kind of fulfillment can come through miracles and other extraordinary ways. These can be divided into two distinct types: In some cases, people will seek the fulfillment of their wants and desires from an entity other than Allah with the assumption that it is independent from Allah in their power. In other cases, it is with the understanding that a notable figure will fulfill their desires through the permission and power of Allah.

The first kind of belief is a type of polytheism since it is believed that an individual has power which is independent from Allah's power. The reality is that the only one who actually holds power is Allah and everyone who has any level of power has received their power and potential from Allah. If we seek the fulfillment of something from someone, they can only give it to us through the power of Allah and nothing else. The Quran has stated the following in this regard: 'Say, 'Invoke those whom you claim [to be gods] besides Him. They have no power to remove your distress, nor to bring about any change [in your state].'<sup>3</sup> There is no aware and faithful Muslim who holds such a belief since it goes against everything that Islam teaches.

With the second kind of belief, however, one's belief in monotheism remains intact. When someone makes another person a medium to intercede between him and Allah, while

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nah̄l, Verse 125.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Baqarah, Verse 282.

<sup>3</sup> Surah Isrā', Verse 56.

considering Allah to be the ultimate cause, then there is no contradiction with monotheism and the belief that Allah is omnipotent and the Cause of all causes, and that no one has any power alongside Him. Here, one is simply making another individual who is closer to Allah a medium so that they supplicate to Allah on their behalf.

The Holy Quran has mentioned that the Children of Israel came to Prophet Moses (a) and asked him to pray on their behalf so that Allah would give them different types of food (other than the Manna and Salwā which they were already receiving). The Quran has narrated in this regard: ‘And when you said, ‘O Moses, ‘We will not put up with one kind of food. So invoke your Lord for us, so that He may bring forth for us of that which the earth grows—its greens and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions.’...’<sup>1</sup>

Prophet Moses (a) never criticized his people for saying ‘Oh Moses’ rather than going directly and supplicating to Allah. He never told them that they had committed polytheism and had become disbelievers for their action. In fact, he accepted their request, prayed to Allah on their behalf (a type of intercession) and Allah also granted their request. The only thing he told them was that the foods which they had with them were better for them and that they were leaving something superior for something which was inferior.

### *Conclusion*

From our discussions above, it is clear that the Wahhabis do not bother looking at all of the verses of the Quran. Instead of taking all of these verses and comparing them altogether, they have instead singled out a few distinct verses and then imposed their own understanding of these specific verses upon the rest of the Muslim world. Their branding of the majority of Muslims as polytheists and disbelievers is based upon this in-

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah, Verse 61.



correct and deviant interpretation. Even more unfortunate is the reality that not only have they considered the majority of Muslims as being disbelievers and polytheists in theory, but they have also implemented their deviant beliefs and had many pure and sincere believers executed based on such flimsy reasoning. A great deal of wealth has similarly been taken by them and many families have been permanently separated.

### **F) Innovation in religion as reflected in the Quran and the Tradition**

The sixth Quranic concept which has been incorrectly understood by the Wahhabis is that of innovation in religion. In the 27th verse of Surah Ḥadīd, the Quran has censured the act of monasticism: ‘...But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah...’<sup>1</sup> This verse explains that the Christians invented monasticism for themselves while Allah had not ordained any such thing. Allah had only ordained that the believers should seek his good pleasure but the Christians did not even abide by this.

By examining the practice of monasticism, one realizes that it was not a practice which originated with Jesus (a), but rather it came about many centuries after him due to certain defeats which the Christians suffered. After these defeats, some of them were forced to live in the deserts and mountains and it was at this time that the concept of religious monasticism came about in a distinct and organized fashion. In the beginning, the monasteries were exclusive to men but over time, women joined these movements and created their own monasteries as well.

An incorrect custom which came about in the midst of monasticism was the concept of celibacy, i.e. the complete rejection of marriage. Obviously, this was something which went

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Ḥadīd, Verse 27.

against the divine teachings of Allah, as well as the nature of man; in the end, many forms of corruption emerged as a result of this deviant practice. The well known Western historian, Will Durant, has discussed the issue of monasticism in some detail in his historical text. Admitting that women began to join monasteries only during the fourth century A.D, he has also explained how the movement grew in popularity, reaching its peak in the tenth century AD.<sup>1</sup>

Even though the monks engaged in various types of social services throughout history, a comprehensive examination of the effects of their lifestyle reveals that the ensuing corruption was greater than the positive aspects, as is the case with all innovations in religion. These negative effects have been dealt with in the references on the history of Christianity and it is best that we do not go into details about them here.

In any case, in addition to the aforementioned verse, there are many traditions which censure innovations in religion. In one of the very well known traditions on this topic, the Prophet (s) has stated: 'Every kind of innovation in religion entails misguidance.' This tradition has been narrated in many books including Musnad Aḥmad, Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, Sunan Bayhaqī, Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ Ṭabrānī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah.<sup>2</sup>

Citing such traditions as evidence, the radical Wahhabis stand up in opposition to anything new, without really bothering to actually examine the definition of innovation in religion. This reached the point in their history where they were opposed to new inventions such as the bicycle and they called it the 'mount of Satan'. When telephones began to appear in Saudi Arabia, they opposed it as an 'innovation in religion'. Ironically, when they saw that the entire world was advancing

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<sup>1</sup> The History of Will Durant, vol. 13, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> Masnad Aḥmad, vol. 4, p. 126; Mustadrak al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, vol. 1, p. 97; Sunan Bayhaqī, vol. 10, p. 114; Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ Ṭabrānī, vol. 1, p. 28; and Sunan Ibn Mājah, vol. 1, p. 16.

due to technology, they quickly submitted before it. Not only did they begin to allow all of these devices but they ended up virtually drowning in them.

Today, when one travels to Saudi Arabia, one sees that all of the latest and most well built cars are available there, all of the latest household gadgets and all types of new food products can be found in their supermarkets. They went from considering a bicycle as a 'mount of Satan' all the way to allowing in everything which was Western in origin. In spite of this, they continued to oppose other things which tended to be religious in nature such as building shrines near graves, celebrating the birth of the Prophet (s) and other religious figures, as well as mourning for the martyrs. Whoever attempts to go after such things is labeled as one who has introduced an innovation in religion and is strongly criticized.

The question arises though as to what exactly an innovation is and when is it prohibited because of being considered as innovation in religion? Even though we discussed this issue previously, it is necessary at this point to go into some further detail with regard to this concept of innovation in religion. As it was discussed above, the literal meaning of the Arabic word "Bid'ah", refers to any kind of good or bad innovation. According to jurisprudents, its technical meaning refers to anything which is made a part of religion while it is not a part of religion. So if we were to place something, within our religious practices or beliefs, which is not a part of it then we have introduced an innovation in religion.

An innovation in religion can occur in two distinct ways: it occurs either when an obligatory action is made unlawful or an unlawful action is made obligatory, or when an allowable action is made prohibited or a prohibited action is made allowable. For example, if someone looks at the banking system of today and says that since there is no way around usury, therefore it is allowed in Islam, this is an innovation in religion. An-

other example is if someone says that the Hijāb (female covering) is something which is related to the past and since we live in a different era, therefore it is no longer obligatory in Islam; this is again considered to be an innovation in religion. In essence, if anyone attempts to make something religiously unlawful into something lawful or vice versa, then they have introduced an innovation in religion.

In some other cases, some people may attempt to make something which is not found in the Quran or the tradition as a part of the religion. For example, people may attempt to claim that mourning ceremonies held for the dead on the third, seventh, and fortieth day after their passing is one of the instructions of Islam. This is while such things are not specifically religious in origin; they are rather cultural manifestations of grief. Another example of innovation in religion is if someone attempts to make one of the celebrations in honor of certain Islamic figures into an obligatory part of the religion.

Thus, when we examine the issue of innovations, we see that there are three distinct types of them:

1) Innovations regarding common practices of the people which have no relationship whatsoever to religious issues. These include industrial and technological innovations as well as those developed in natural sciences, various instances of which were also seen during the time of the Prophet (s) and the infallible Imams (a), as well as all throughout history. Knowledge is something which is always advancing and so the human mind is always busy inventing various new things. These new inventions are in fact part of the good innovations which help human beings in their day to day lives. Any logical person will accept that this category of innovations is a positive phenomenon and there is no one (or at least very few) who will object to such things. It also doesn't matter where these innovations emanate from; they are seen as positive things regardless of their country of origin.

2) The second type includes common innovations which are related to religious issues but which are not considered as a part of religion or given a religious aspect. One example of this can be a mosque which is constructed in a specific and new way. Perhaps the minarets can be different in shape, or the tile work can incorporate some new designs, or even the bathrooms can have automatic faucets and other such things. While it is evident that none of these things existed during the time of the Prophet (s), is there anyone who will consider such things to be religious innovations that are unlawful?

When we look at many of the mosques around the Muslim world (even in Saudi Arabia, which is the center of Wahhabism), we see that they are all full of these types of innovations. Even the Masjid Al-Harām in Mecca contains so many innovations that it is completely unrecognizable in comparison to how it looked during the time of the Prophet (s). It now even contains a second storey for the Saī ritual where the pilgrims walk between Şafā and Marwah. Similarly, the area where the pilgrims symbolically stone the Satan has undergone drastic changes and the place where the sheep are slaughtered is now outside of Minā. All of these innovations are common culture-based changes which take place all throughout time. They take place in order to alleviate certain difficulties due to increased numbers of mosque visitors or pilgrims, or in order to prevent certain dangerous situations from arising. No one considers these changes to be from the core religious principles where something is made a part of the religious code of law.

Another example of this kind of innovation is the creation of Quran recitation competitions where contestants are gauged on their recitation skills and someone is selected as the overall winner. It is clear that such a thing did not exist during the time of the Prophet (s) but these are later innovations created in order to help people progress in their religious duties. This all took place without them becoming a part of the religion itself.

Similarly, respecting and honoring the dead through various mourning ceremonies is something which has existed throughout all time. Today, people organize conferences in honor of notable religious figures who have passed away. They also hold celebrations on the Prophet's (s) birth day or mourning ceremonies for his passing. There are many other things which fall into this category and they all involve increasing the people's love for their religion and advancing the cause of Islam. Through these events, people's knowledge and understanding of their ideology and faith increase.

In my own life, I have experienced on numerous occasions how much effect these religious events have on people; they can sometimes create a wave of awareness and understanding in the people, particularly in the youth. These events become a means of encouraging people to seek a deeper knowledge of the Islamic sciences and the Quran, and there is no doubt in my mind that canceling such events would entail great losses for the Muslims all around the world.

In any case, all of these things are simply common cultural practices and no one performs them believing that Allah or his Prophet (s) have ordered us to do such things. In other words, they are manifestations of religion and not core principles. Hence one cannot consider them to be innovations in religion as criticized in the tradition: 'Every type of innovation in religion entails misguidance'.

3) The third type involves the forbidden kind of innovation, i.e. innovation in religion, which we mentioned in the beginning of this discussion. In this type of innovation, something which is lawful is made unlawful in the religious code, or something which is unlawful is made lawful in the religious code. It can also involve the adding in of something which is not a part of the religious code. All of these innovations are considered as part of the unlawful innovations which are forbidden in our faith.

Unfortunately, due to their lack of knowledge regarding Islamic jurisprudence and the principles of deriving rulings from the Quran and the traditions, the Wahhabis have become entangled in great confusion concerning what an innovation in religion actually is. In their confusion, they have condemned other Muslims for their association with ‘innovations in religion’ and for their ‘polytheism and disbelief’. Let us finish this section by a quote from Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī Mālīkī, one of the well known teachers of the Masjid Al-Harām in Mecca. In his text ‘Mafāhīm Yajib ‘An Taṣiḥḥah’, this well known teacher has stated the following:

‘Some of the ignorant, biased, and narrow minded individuals, who attribute themselves to the ‘Pious Predecessors’, stand up in opposition against everything which is new. They consider every beneficial invention to be a type of innovation in religion and so they consider them all to be some type of misguidance. They reject all of these things without making any distinction between what is an unlawful innovation in religion and what is a beneficial common innovation. This kind of distinction and differentiation is something which every logical mind accepts and great scholars such as Nawawī, Suyūṭī, Ibn Ḥajar, and Ibn Ḥazm have all accepted this.

Whenever we take all of the prophetic traditions and place them next to one another, we end up reaching this same conclusion. When we examine the tradition which states: ‘Every type of innovation in religion entails misguidance, it is clear that it is in reference to negative innovations in religion which have no roots in the Islamic code.’ He has then continued and added: ‘The term Bid‘ah (innovation) is not an unlawful concept in itself. That which is unlawful and deviant is the innovation that is added to religion and given a religious hue and color. This is when something is ascribed to religion as if Allah had himself ordered it.

Yet, ordinary, day to day innovations are things which are related to the worldly affairs and these things are not forbidden. Therefore, innovations can be divided into the two categories of good and bad in light of its lexical meaning, while innovations in religion are of only one type which is forbidden. If the opponents of this division knew the true meaning, they would certainly never rise up in opposition and they would know that it is a simple matter of a difference in the meaning of these words. There is no doubt that in worldly innovations there are many beneficial things. These beneficial things must be accepted. At the same time, there are things which are of a negative nature which entail nothing but evil and corruption.<sup>1</sup>

## **A Cry Which Rose Up From Mecca**

### **Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī and his Courageous Critique**

Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī was a courageous scholar who resided in the city of Mecca. His scholarship was well regarded and many people attended his class sessions. He was well respected by the great scholars of Mecca, as well as the political elite of Saudi Arabia. He only recently passed away, leaving behind a wave of regret and sorrow amongst his many admirers. Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī called himself a 'servant of the sacred knowledge in the land of the Holy Shrine' and he was a follower of the Mālikī school of thought. He was also a descendent of Fāṭimah Zahrā (a) and this is why he was called by the title of Al-Ḥasanī.

His class sessions in the Masjid Al-Harām were one of the most well attended of classes there and he was also the author of many works. He was greatly opposed to the ways of the Radical Wahhabis and he ended up publishing his text: *Mafāhīm Yajib 'An Taṣiḥḥah* as a critique against them. The tone which he used in his text is a very courteous and scholarly one (just as it appears from the title of the text). He furthermore relied upon the verses of the Quran and the prophetic

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<sup>1</sup> *Mafāhīm Yajib 'An Taṣiḥḥah*, p. 102 and onwards.



traditions from the authentic books of the Ahl al-Sunnah as proof for his arguments. He also based his discussions on such reliable references that even the most radical Wahhabis could not reject.

Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī understood that there were many concepts amongst his people which had been incorrectly understood and these deviant ideas had caused them to consider a great many of the Muslims to be disbelievers and polytheists, worthy of death and the loss of their property. When we examine this book, it is clear that it is something quite unique for the following reasons:

1) This book was printed over ten times in a span of ten years. In one year alone, it was reprinted four times and received a lot of attention by the vast majority of the Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia.

2) Numerous prominent Sunni scholars from Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Bahrain, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, as well as other countries wrote commendations in regard to the book and praised the work, as well as the courage of Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī in authoring it. Twenty three of these commendations can be found in the beginning of the book, taking up well over seventy entire pages. These commendations show a type of consensus as regards the contents of the text, furthering its authenticity and veracity.

3) Another interesting point is that although this book was published in Dubai (in the United Arab Emirates) and the Saudis typically censor any books which critique their ideology, this book was allowed to be sold in the bookstores of Mecca and we actually purchased our own copy from there. This shows us that the new generation of Wahhabis does not wholly agree with the opinions of the Radical Wahhabis of the past generation and they consider a reformulation of their ideology to be something completely necessary.

## **An Example of the Commendations Issued for the Text**

Let us look at three examples which praise the text in order to better understand how the Muslim world views the Radical Wahhabi sect. We have adopted these in a summarized format for greater ease and brevity:

1) Dr. 'Abd al-Fattāh Barakah', the head of the Majma' Buḥūth Islāmī in Cairo, has written the following: In this valuable book, a great scholar has put much effort in creating unity amongst the ranks of the Muslims and wiping away the effects of bias regarding side issues which are jurisprudential in origin. This is particularly true in the matter of attributing disbelief and polytheism to Muslims, particularly with respect to the issues of intercession and visiting the grave of the Messenger of Allah (s), as well as other sensitive things. We hope that this valuable book will have a profound effect on creating unity amongst the Muslims and on removing the grounds upon which conflict is created.<sup>1</sup>

2) Shaykh Aḥmad al-'Awḍ is the head of the Aftā' Sharī council of Sudan. He has written the following about this book: All praise belongs to Allah that I became aware of this book, Mafāhīm Yajib 'An Taṣiḥḥah by Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī Mālikī Makkī Ḥasanī. This book attempts to correct various errors in relation to three primary things. The first of them involves the ideological issues which certain groups utilize to present certain interpretations of the concepts of disbelief and misguidance. He has shown clearly that such groups have gone astray. The second discussion involves the Prophet (s), the reality of his prophethood, and the issue of gaining blessings from him and his relics. He has proven the validity of this issue through definitive proofs. The third discussion is on life in the Barzakh, the legitimacy of visiting the Prophet (s), as well as other related

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<sup>1</sup> Mafāhīm Yajib 'An Taṣiḥḥah, p. 29 and 30 (with a slight amount of summarization).

issues. The author of this text has gone over all of these issues and corrected the mistakes which some people have made in regard to them.<sup>1</sup>

3) ‘Abd al-Salām Jabrān is the head of the group Majma‘ ‘Ilmī Aqlīmī in Morocco. He has made the following comment with regard to this text: When this book was examined by the aware and knowledgeable scholars, they all accepted it and sent praise upon its author for doing something which was obligatory upon all scholars... The members of this intellectual committee have similarly studied this work and after much thought and reflection, have given their complete approval to what it contains. They are thankful to the author for his valuable work and congratulate him for what he has successfully completed.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Contents of the Book**

Just as mentioned above, this text is a critique of the Radical Wahhabi ideology based upon three primary foundations. Through the use of Quranic verses and authentic traditions, it has shown the weakness of their ideology.

### **The First Foundation**

This section relates to the issues of faith and disbelief. Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has openly stated: “Many of the people ( and by people he means Wahhabis), may Allah guide them to the right path, hold mistaken beliefs concerning the realities of what makes a person a believer or a non believer. They have taken this issue to the point where they consider anyone who disagrees with their viewpoint as being a disbeliever and this includes the vast majority of the Muslims whom they consider as being such.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī was of the opinion that the leader of the Wahhabis (Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) was not of this opinion. In his book, he has referred to a tradition which censures those who call other Muslims disbelievers<sup>1</sup> and kill them. He has then methodically determined the border between faith and disbelief and clarified the mistakes of the Wahhabis in this regard. Through this line of reasoning, Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has shown the error of the ideology of the Radical Wahhabis.

It is interesting to note that, in some sections of the book, his tone changes and becomes harsher in relation to Radical Wahhabis, and this is particularly true regarding the parts where he reproaches them for the offensive language with which they refer to their enemies. For example, concerning various miracles, he has narrated that the Radical Wahhabis say: ‘The people sometimes seek things from the prophets (a) and the righteous which can be given to them by Allah alone. This is nothing but polytheism and disbelief’. In response, Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has stated: “Such a statement results from a lack of understanding regarding something which has been with the Muslims from the earliest of days. The people ask these noble personalities for their prayers so that they may pray that Allah resolves certain unresolvable problems for them.

When we look at the authentic Islamic traditions, we see that such requests were commonly asked from the Prophet (s). Examples of such requests included the healing of those who were terminally ill, the descent of rain (during a drought), the revelation of a spring due to the touch of the Prophet (s), the blessing of food which was small in quantity in a way where it fed a large multitude, as well as other such things.” Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has concluded by saying: “Do these individuals understand the meaning of monotheism and disbelief better than the Prophet of Islam (s)? These are words which no ignorant person, much less a great scholar, would be willing to enter-

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<sup>1</sup> سِيَابُ الْمُسْلِمِ فُسُوقٌ وَ قِتَالُهُ كُفْرٌ<sup>1</sup>

tain.”<sup>1</sup> The tone of Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī is courteous all throughout the text and the most severe of it is what can be found in the section above.

### **The Second Foundation**

In this section, Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has made clear the lofty position of the Prophet of Islam (s) according to the verses of the Quran and the Islamic traditions. He has then moved on to explain the concept of seeking blessings from the Prophet (s) and how this does not have any connection to the issue of polytheism. He has then narrated many examples found in the traditions and the explanations of the scholars showing how seeking blessings from the Prophet (s) is something which was and is permissible.

These examples include kissing the hands of the Prophet (s), seeking blessings from a bowl which he drank from, seeking blessings from the Prophet’s (s) house, seeking blessings from his pulpit and noble grave, as well as seeking blessings from the relics of the past prophets (a) and righteous individuals. Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has narrated so many examples from the well known books of the Ahl al-Sunnah that there is really no room left for any doubt regarding this issue. He has similarly listed the names of many companions who sought blessings from the relics of the Prophet (s). Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī expresses surprise that a group can close their eyes and simply reject this issue<sup>2</sup> in spite of all of these traditions and other forms of proof!

### **The Third Foundation**

In this section of the text, Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī has dealt with various miscellaneous issues. One of the most important of these is the recommended nature of visiting the Prophet’s (s) grave in Medina, as well as supplicating to Allah next to the grave. Another issue is the seeking of blessings from the relics

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<sup>1</sup> Mafāhīm Yajib ‘An Taṣiḥḥah, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> A summary of the text Mafāhīm Yajib ‘An Taṣiḥḥah, pgs. 194-242.

of the Prophet (s). Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī has narrated many remarks from various prominent scholars in regard to these issues. In the end of this section, he has mentioned an interesting point which was greatly criticized by the Radical Wahhabis and this point was that the Muslims should celebrate the day the Prophet (s) was born, the day he immigrated to Medina, the day he was commissioned with prophethood, the day the Quran was revealed, the day when the Muslims were victorious at the Battle of Badr, as well as other auspicious days.

Just as we discussed previously, the Wahhabis are of the opinion that all of these things are innovations in religion (Bid'ah) and they try their hardest to prevent them from taking place. In response, Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī has made the following logical argument: "These celebrations are something cultural and no one performs them as something which is found in the religious code of Islam; therefore, they have nothing to do with the issue of innovation in religion. At the same time, it entails various valuable benefits which we should not ignore. Through such gatherings, we have the opportunity to spread the message of Islam amongst people. In the end of the text, he also adds: These gatherings are truly valuable treasures and we must preserve and protect them in the best of ways. Those who oppose such gatherings and do their best to prevent them are a group of ignorant and narrow minded individuals."<sup>1</sup>

## **A Necessary Reminder**

Our aim in mentioning this text and narrating various parts of it should not be misconstrued as an outright endorsement of the text, and our intention is not to say that the respected author did not make any mistakes. In spite of his level of scholarship, Yūsuf ibn 'Alawī is still a human being and human beings are naturally subject to error. Our goal in narrating from

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of the third portion of the text *Mafāhīm Yajib 'An Taṣīḥḥah*, pgs. 243-318.

his text is to show that the basis of his arguments is real and is accepted by a very large group of scholars all across the Muslim world, including Saudi Arabia.

When a book of this nature is met with such widespread acceptance all across the Muslim world, it is a potent sign that the ideology of Radical Wahhabism is not considered as something acceptable and that it is reaching the end of its rope. At the same time, when Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī wrote this valuable text, he was not met with silence from the Radical Wahhabis. Many books were written against him and he was condemned as a disbeliever. These books include such titles as ‘Discussions with Mālikī’ and ‘A Critique against al-Mālikī in Regards to his Deviation’.

However, these books were not well regarded in the Muslim world and Al-Azhar even considered them as a ‘service to Zionism’ and ‘a blow to Muslim unity’. Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī was initially removed from his position as a teacher in the Holy Shrine of Mecca due to the pressure of the Radical Wahhabis. He was taken to court and forced to defend himself. At a later point in time, he was reinstated by the Saudi government as a counterweight to Radical Wahhabism. When he passed away, his funeral was attended by tens of thousands and many of the Saudi notables personally came to give their condolences to his family. This was a fairly heavy blow to the cause of the Radical Wahhabis!

## **A New Trend in Wahhabism**

### **A) A New Type of Wahhabi**

It is clear that the ideology of Radical Wahhabism is in decline. This group consists of those who believe that all of the Muslims outside of their own specific ideological framework are disbelievers and that the lives and wealth of such people are forfeit. This relates to the Muslims and things get much worse when it comes to their beliefs in regard to non Muslims.

In spite of this (or perhaps due to it), a new group has emerged amongst the Wahhabis which is more moderate in nature. This new group is primarily composed of younger and more educated individuals and they possess the following particularities which set them apart from the more extreme Wahhabis:

1) They don't accuse Muslims of polytheism and they reject bloodshed. They respect the ideologies of others and they don't accuse them of disbelief and innovations in religion.

2) They welcome friendly discussion and debate with other Islamic schools of thought. They are willing to listen to what others have to say and they also read the books explaining other points of view.

3) They don't consider new inventions which did not exist 1,400 years ago to be innovations in religion. They distinguish between cultural manifestations of religion and actual changes to the code of law related to religion.

4) They allow women to seek knowledge and become educated.

5) They believe that they must abstain from the severe and bloody behavior of the previous Wahhabis and that they should only fight in defending themselves. With such an ideology, this group will slowly take the place of the more extreme Wahhabis and this slow change is completely apparent in the Hajj pilgrimage, as well as other places. Similarly, one can find the influence of these groups in the different types of books which are now being published in Saudi Arabia.

We feel that the decline of the radicals and the rise of the moderates can help usher in a new era and this will hopefully change the image of Islam for the better throughout the world. We also hope that this will make up for the damage which has already been done and subsequently increase the people's attraction towards the faith. All of the Muslims welcome this change amongst the Wahhabis and see such a moderate group



as an important element in strengthening the foundations of Islamic brotherhood and unity.

This is particularly true when faced with enemies whose primary tool in weakening the Muslims is disunity. It is necessary for the Saudi rulers to open their ideological borders and allow books and ideas to enter their country from the rest of the Muslim world. Through creating the means of discussion and debate with other Muslim sects, they can allow this transformation to take place in a quicker and more efficient manner. This is both in their best interest, and in the interest of the rest of the Muslim world.

### **B) The Dangers Posed by the Exaggerators**

One of the factors which helps in the advancement of the Radical Wahhabis are the ignorant radicals who step in to supposedly counteract them by overexaggerating the rank and position of some of the notables in Islam. They raise these notables to the rank of being worthy of worship and divinity. Without any doubt, the danger of these exaggerators is no less than the danger posed by the Wahhabis to the Muslim world. They also function to create an excuse for the Wahhabis in implementing their own radical policies. Without them, the Wahhabis would be much more hard pressed to make the claims which they do.

People should never attribute titles which are particular to Allah (such as 'the Creator of the heavens and the earth' and 'the most merciful') to those who have a high rank with Allah. These are titles which belong only to Allah and to no one else! Those who are near to Allah would never be happy with such titles and such things go against the very teachings of Islam. The insistence of some ignorant people on these things has caused a group amongst the Wahhabis to go to extremes in their own ideology with the assumption that such extremes are necessary in order to counter those other extremes. In light of such things, the Radical Wahhabis go as far as saying that the

Prophet (s) is unable to do anything after his death and thus seeking intercession and prayers from him, or visiting his grave is an act of religious deviation and therefore religiously forbidden.

Similarly, people who have taken up a series of superstitions such as believing that a horseshoe brings good luck, the number thirteen brings back luck, or the sound of a particular bird is a good omen have all strayed from the reality of the religion and have forgotten the creator which made all of these things. Imam 'Alī (a) is narrated to have said: 'Two groups of people are doomed because of their stance about me: those friends who exaggerate my rank and those enemies who hate me.'<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to also note that the Khawārij and the Nāṣibīs (those who hate the Ahl al-Bayt (a)) helped to bring about the Ghullāt (those who exaggerate the rank of the Ahl al-Bayt (a)), while the existence of the Ghullāt paved the way for the further spread of the beliefs of the Khawārij and the Nāṣibīs.

It is for this reason that the scholars of Islam are obligated with a very heavy duty during our time. On the one hand, they must help to guide those who exaggerate the rank of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), while on the other, they must help to guide the Radical Wahhabis who have gone to the other extreme. This is a very difficult task for one must take the path of moderation and have a very high level of knowledge and patience. Sometimes we even see that some individuals who appear to be well educated scholars have inclinations to one of these two sides. May Allah protect us from falling into any extreme and may He guide us to the Straight Path.

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<sup>1</sup> Nahj al-Balāghah, Words of wisdom 117.

## **Another Call from another Courageous Author**

### **The Book: ‘A Reformer, Not a Messenger’!**

It is now time to discuss the book ‘A Reformer, Not a Messenger’. The full title of the book reads ‘A new critique of the school of thought of the Wahhabi leader with regard to the issue of Takfīr’. This is a book which has recently been published and has become well known all through the Arabian Peninsula, as well as other regions. Let us first look at the particularities of this text and then move on to its specific content.

1) The author of this text is Shaykh Ḥasan ibn Farḥān Mālikī, one of the well known Sunni scholars of Saudi Arabia. He is a follower of the Mālikī school of thought and has acknowledged that he follows a moderate version of the Wahhabi sect. Due to this reason, he respects the Wahhabi leader, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb but he simultaneously critiques some of his ideas without feeling that such an act is contradictory. He openly states that: I respect him while simultaneously considering him someone who is capable of making mistakes. In fact, I believe that he has made numerous mistakes.

2) The methodology which he uses in this book is a very courteous one based on logic and reason. It is interesting to note that when he begins his critique, he goes all the way without being worried of any attacks by the more radical Wahhabis.

3) He is well versed in the Islamic sourcebooks and the details of his own sect’s ideology. He has even dedicated one section of his book to the contradictory statements made by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

4) He believes that the Radical Wahhabis who believe in killing other Muslims and taking their wealth are greatly in error due to their narrow mindedness and their blind following. He

considers this to be a great danger to Islam, as well as the Muslims. In addition, his writing is filled with great fluency and logical strength.

5) He focuses much of his criticism on the books *Kashf al-Shubbhāt* and *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*. These two books are the two most important works of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. In addition, he has quoted heavily from the text *Al-Durar al-Sanīyah*. It is worth noting that the book *Al-Durar al-Sanīyah* was composed by a person named ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Qāsim al-Ḥanbalī and is, in fact, a compilation of all of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s books, treatises, and letters, as well as the works of other Wahhabi leaders since the emergence of the ideology until the modern era.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Qāsim al-Ḥanbalī passed away in the year 1392 AH. Bin Bāz, the well known Wahhabi jurist who passed away just recently, considered this text to be a very important one and even used it as a course-book in his classes. The book is more than ten separate volumes and it is a very good source for examining the ideology of the Wahhabi school of thought.

6) The courageous author of the book ‘A Reformer Not a Messenger’ did not remain safe from the attacks of the Wahhabis and was in the end condemned by them as a disbeliever (in the same way Yūsuf ibn ‘Alawī was condemned as a disbeliever). It is not clear what will happen to this author in the future but he has definitely done a great service to the Islamic world through the publication of this work. He has proven that the Radical Wahhabi brand of calling others disbelievers and shedding their blood is something antithetical to Islam. He has shown that this kind of ideology arises from a weakness of reason and deviant thinking.

7) In the introductory discussions of his book, he has made the following remarks: “The truth is that I compiled this work before the events of September 11, but when that event took

place, I feared that certain people would take advantage of it and blame the Muslims for what had taken place. Yet, as time went on, I realized that the extremists amongst the Wahhabis were continuously organizing conferences exonerating the leader of this sect, Shaykh Muḥammad. Therefore, I found it necessary to publish the truth in order to show the error of the Shaykh in his ruling on considering others as disbelievers.”<sup>1</sup>

8) He has begun his discussion in a particularly delicate manner by saying: “Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was a reformist not a prophet!” He then made this the title of his book. He then adds: “We are now left with two radical groups: some people consider him to be corrupt and a disbeliever, while others consider him to be much like a prophet and take his words and actions as such where they will not allow anyone to criticize him.” He then explains that both of these groups are mistaken. After this introduction, Shaykh Ḥasan ibn Farḥān Mālikī moves on to his critiques in regards to the ideas and ideology of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

9) In another section of his book titled: ‘Knowledge and inviting to it are not exclusive to the Shaykh’, he has said: “Some of the followers of the Shaykh assume that he was the only knowledgeable person of his time. They further believe that all the Muslim countries, which did not accept his invitation, are lands of polytheism and disbelief and their scholars are ignorant individuals who know nothing about Islam.”<sup>2</sup>

He then goes on and adds: “Unfortunately, I have found evidence where the Shaykh accuses others of disbelief and considers other Muslim lands (which did not accept his teachings) as the lands of disbelief. He has furthermore considered the scholars of these lands to be disbelievers and I will narrate the evidence which I have found for this. However, there is no doubt that the Shaykh and his followers were mistaken in this

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Reformer and Not the Messenger’, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

belief of theirs.” He then continues and states: “Some of the errors of the Shaykh and many of his followers, particularly his condemnation of other Muslims as disbelievers, have resulted in great bloodshed (in various parts of the world...”

10) The modesty of many of the scholars in Saudi Arabia in refraining from mentioning the mistakes of the Shaykh has created a situation where it is obligatory on those who can, to openly point out these errors. I consider this to be an imperative duty on those who are able to and it was this issue which compelled me to write this text. It is obligatory on every scholar and citizen of the country (Saudi Arabia) to do whatever it will take to extricate us out of the bloodshed which is taking place. Likewise we must do everything in our power to bring about a day when we are no longer considering others as disbelievers. This applies to all of us even if we feel that such actions will have no effect in the short term.

We must purify our religion and our nation from the corruption of considering others as disbelievers and the shedding of the blood of innocents. These things must be made to come to an end! It goes without saying that every day we hear news of the barbaric actions which are taking place in Iraq. Every day several people or even hundreds of people are devoured by this beast of violence and barbarity. By examining the various methods of these attacks, it becomes clear that the people carrying them out (through suicide bombings) consider everyone else to be disbelievers, while considering only themselves to be true believers. It is based on the ideology that takes a large number of Muslim people as disbelievers and their lives and wealth to be forfeit that such actions are carried out.

These are the same teachings of the school of thought of the Shaykh which originated in the Hejaz region, later moving into Jordan and then to Iraq.

It is interesting that the author of this work has mentioned something in the footnotes of this section in regard to the role

of the West, and in particular the US, in creating the current day situation in Iraq, as well as other nations in the Middle East. He holds them as the primary creators and sustainers of this chaotic situation. In another section, he pursues the origins of this issue of Takfir (the condemnation of others as disbelievers), which has created so much chaos (even in Saudi Arabia).

He eventually comes to the conclusion that the teachings of the Shaykh and his school of thought are the primary cause behind the chaos and destruction which has taken over so many nations in the Middle East. He details the barbarity of an extremist group called Ikhwān in Najd, then moves on to the things which have taken place in the Holy Shrine of Mecca. He also details the bombings which have taken so many lives in various parts of Saudi Arabia, and he finally concludes all of these things to have roots in the ideology of the Shaykh.

He then adds: “The people who have brought about these explosions and barbaric actions are not unknown individuals from foreign lands who have entered Hejaz; rather, they are the Wahhabis of this same land. If we were to say that they have all taken inspiration for their actions from the teachings of the Shaykh, then we have not fallen far off the path. Whoever looks at the words of these people will see this reality and openly acknowledge it.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Summarized Excerpts from the Book**

### **‘A Reformer, Not a Messenger’**

Now that we have covered the basic aspects of this book, let us move on to the actual contents. As it was discussed above, Ḥasan ibn Farḥān Mālikī, the author of this text, critiqued certain ideas of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, particularly his easy condemnation of others as disbelievers simply

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Reformer and Not the Messenger’, pgs. 62 and 63.

because they did not accept his ideology. Unlike other Wahhabis, the author did not believe that everything which the Shaykh had said was correct, since he was only a man and certainly capable of making mistakes. In any case, the text is composed of five primary sections, through which various aspects of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s ideology have been examined.

In the first chapter, the main work of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kashf al-Shubbhāt*, has been critiqued in a very open manner. The second chapter deals with the rest of his works on the issues of polytheism and monotheism. The third chapter examines the issue of whether the founder of the Wahhabi sect later renounced his beliefs in condemning the Muslims as disbelievers (for not following his ideology) and concludes by looking at many of the contradictions inherent in the teachings of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in a logical manner.

The fourth chapter deals with the important issue of whether the followers of the Wahhabi leader have continued to blindly follow him as regards the issue of *Takfīr* (considering other Muslims as disbelievers) or whether they have openly examined the issue and critiqued it. The final and fifth chapter deals with the critiques from the enemies of the Wahhabi leader. The author distinguishes between the radical and moderate followers of the Wahhabi school of thought and he identifies himself as being one of the moderates.

It is interesting to note that in the end the author has stated: “The end result of all of these discussions is that the Shaykh has made a mistake regarding the issue of *Takfīr*.” He has then added: “Acknowledging this reality through the clear reasoning which we have before us is an easy matter for those who are fair minded and unbiased. Neither the religion will be destroyed through such an acknowledgement, nor will the sun



fail to rise. It is only the case that a human being (who is naturally capable of falling into error) has made a mistake.”<sup>1</sup>

In turn, we must also add that such critiques will in reality cause progress and advancement in the religion. It will free the image of the faith from the barbarism and inhuman behavior perpetrated by the adherents of this school of thought. At the very least, it will allow the moderate Wahhabis to take the place of their more extreme brothers. Let us now review each of the sections of this book in more details:

### **Section One: A Critique of Kashf al-Shubbhāt**

Although the book Kashf al-Shubbhāt is one of the Shaykh’s most popular books, it is surprisingly small in size, consisting of about seventy pages. In his critique of this work, Ibn Farḥān has mentioned thirty three distinct points, particularly focusing on the Shaykh’s beliefs concerning Takfīr. Ibn Farḥān also expresses surprise as to how the Wahhabi scholars could simply ignore such obvious mistakes from the Shaykh and just pass them by.

Ibn Farḥān has then added: “If some of these scholars had simply addressed a few of these errors, then I would not feel obligated in writing this book but I feel that I have no choice since everyone has chosen the path of silence.” Let us focus on the first and last critiques (out of the thirty three) which have been mentioned in this text:

### **Exaggeration and Excess Regarding the Righteous**

In the beginning of his book Kashf al-Shubbhāt, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb has stated: “Monotheism is the creed of the prophets who were sent from Allah to mankind. The first of them was Noah, who was sent to his people by Allah during a time when they exaggerated with regard to the position of the righteous.” In reaction to this remark, Ibn Farḥān has stated

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, pgs. 28 and 29.

that the first part of it is correct but the ending is incorrect and has paved the way for Takfir!

He has further explained that, in reality, Allah sent Noah in order to invite his people towards the One God and away from polytheism since the people of Noah had taken idols such as Wadd and Sawā' in worship. The problem of the people of Noah was not exaggeration with regard to the ranks of these figures but rather the fact that they worshipped them. It is possible that exaggerating a person's rank can sometimes lead to polytheism but it is not the case that every exaggeration will lead to polytheism. It is through this excuse that so many Muslims have been killed (in order to prevent the supposed danger of exaggerating someone's rank).

Ibn Farḥān has added: "I am not saying whatsoever that going to extremes in regard to the ranks of the righteous or engaging in some superstitious ceremonies is correct; I am saying that they are mistakes but they do not make someone a Kāfir (one who has left the religion of Islam). It appears that, through these remarks, the Shaykh wished to respond to those who criticized him and said that the people whom he considered to be disbelievers and whom he fought against and killed were Muslims. They objected to the Shaykh that those people prayed, fasted, and performed the Ḥajj pilgrimage. The Shaykh then wrote this in explaining that since those other Muslims exaggerated the rank of the righteous, they were therefore disbelievers and even worse than the polytheists of the pre-Islamic era."<sup>1</sup>

In short, the accusation of disbelief, particularly the terminology of 'The Greatest Polytheism', is no small accusation and one may not easily declare that another Muslim has left the faith and his blood and wealth are forfeit, simply because he has exaggerated about a religious figure.

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, p. 33 (with slight summarization).

Ibn Farḥān has mentioned with surprise that the same people who accuse their opponents of exaggeration have themselves greatly exaggerated concerning Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. They have considered him to be above any error and one follower has gone so far as to call him the ‘Shaykh al-Wujūd’, or the Scholar of Existence.<sup>1</sup> This is a title which they do not consider permissible for even the Prophet of Islam (s).

In his last critique of the errors of the Shaykh, Ibn Farḥān addresses the Shaykh and says that on the seventieth page of his book, he has stated that the only exception to the issue of disbelief is one who is forced to say something and he cites a verse in the Quran.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Farḥān has added another exception, namely those who reject some part of religion out of ignorance or an incorrect understanding while believing in the main principles of Islam. According to the verses of the Quran and the traditions, such people are also exempt and are not considered to be disbelievers. He has further added: “One of the errors in the methodology of the Shaykh is that he takes one verse or one tradition and neglects all the other ones (which are on the same subject), and this is a great mistake.”

In the second chapter of his book, Ibn Farḥān moves on to the book Al-Durar al-Sanīyah’ and mentions forty mistakes that the Shaykh has made in that text. One of these mistakes is the Shaykh’s assertion<sup>3</sup> that none of the scholars and judges of Najd had understood the meaning of the statement of the faith ‘There is no deity but Allah’.<sup>4</sup> The Shaykh further states that these people do not understand any of the differences between the religion of Muḥammad and the religion of ‘Amr ibn Laḥī (one of the famous idol worshippers of the pre Islamic

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1 Ibid, p. 14.

2 (إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ...)

3 Al-Durar al-Sanīyah’, vol. 10, p. 51.

4 لا إله إلا الله

era). In fact, these scholars hold the religion of ‘Amr ibn Lahī in higher regard and consider it to be valid!

In this way, the Shaykh has considered all of the scholars and jurists of the region to be polytheists and disbelievers. Ibn Farḥān has specifically mentioned this and shown how the Shaykh has made a great mistake in considering everyone to be disbelievers. The following have been presented by Ibn Farḥān as two examples where the Radical Wahhabis have fallen into extremism and exaggeration regarding Takfir:

1) The first relates to the condemnation of the Shia Muslims as disbelievers: Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb has stated that anyone who doubts in the Kufr (disbelief) of the Shias is himself a disbeliever!<sup>1</sup> Ibn Farḥān has added here that: “This is while Ibn Taymīyah, with all of his hatred and animosity against the Shia, considered them to be Muslims but deviant and he would explicitly state that they were not disbelievers.”<sup>2</sup> When we examine such statements, it is clear that it was through exactly these types of inhumane and un-Islamic statements that the Wahhabis felt authorized to shed the blood of the Shias and plunder their wealth. Such bloodshed continues to this very day!

2) Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb has stated that: “Anyone, who curses (any one of) the companions of the Prophet (s), is a disbeliever.”<sup>3</sup> This is while Ibn Farḥān writes that Mu‘āwīyah, according to the explicit text of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim<sup>4</sup>, had ordered ‘Alī (a) to be cursed and he was cursed for many long decades on top of the pulpits of the Muslim world. In accordance with this ruling of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, can Mu‘āwīyah still be considered a Muslim?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Durar al-Saniyah, p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Durar al-Saniyah, vol. 10, p. 369.

<sup>4</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, p. 86.

Another interesting point is that Ibn Farḥān says: “Many times, Shaykh Muḥammad has stated that: “My enemies accuse me of condemning others as disbelievers with the least proof or of condemning ignorant persons, who have not been properly guided as disbelievers. This is a great slander and they only wish to push people away from the religion of Allah and his prophet.””<sup>1</sup> Ibn Farḥān further states here that: “This statement from the Shaykh is in itself a condemnation of others for it encompasses anyone who does not accept the Wahhabi school of thought. When he mentions the ‘religion of Allah and his prophet’, he is, in fact, speaking about his own ideology and considering anyone who rejects it as being a disbeliever in Allah and his prophet!”<sup>2</sup>

### **Contradictions in the Words of the Shaykh**

Ibn Farḥān then moves on to the explicit contradictions inherent in the words of the Wahhabi leader and maintains: “Numerous mistakes and errors have been attributed to the Shaykh, and while he has spoken out against them, a predominant number of them are explicitly found in his own words!”

Ibn Farḥān has then listed twenty five of these issues, along with their sources. Some of these issues are as follows:

1) Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb rejects the books of the four Sunni schools of thought.

2) He believes that anyone who implores the righteous is a disbeliever.

3) He asserts that if he gains the ability, he would destroy the dome and shrine of the Prophet of Islam (s) (just as he did with the shrines of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) and other Islamic notables).

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Durar al-Sanīyah’, vol. 10, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, p. 107.

4) He considers the visitation of the grave of the Prophet (s) to be prohibited.

5) He considers everyone to be a disbeliever, except for those who follow his specific ideology.

It is interesting that although he attempts to say that he does not believe in such things, evidence of these beliefs can easily be found in his books, sermons, as well as other sources.

### **Section Three: Continuing on the Path**

Ḥasan ibn Farḥān Mālikī has then made the following remarks in the third section of his book *A Reformer Not A Messenger*: ‘Unfortunately, the students and followers of the Shaykh continued on his path concerning the issue of Takfīr. They condemned many of the Arab and non Arab groups as disbelievers, and this condemnation even encompassed some of the well known Muslim scholars.<sup>1</sup> Some examples of this are as follows:

1) The explicit condemnation of the people of Mecca and Medina (who had not accepted the Wahhabi ideology at that time) as disbelievers.<sup>2</sup>

2) Anyone who has accepted the ideology of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb themselves but who believes that his forefathers left the world as Muslims (since they were not of the Wahhabi ideology) is a disbeliever. This individual must be made to repent and if he refuses to repent of this belief (that his forefathers were actually Muslims), then he must be struck with a sword and killed. His wealth will then be taken and placed into the public treasury. Similarly, if such an individual has performed the Ḥajj pilgrimage before accepting the Wah-

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<sup>1</sup> In reality, they considered all of the Muslims to be disbelievers.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Durar al-Saniyah*, vol. 9, p. 285.

habi ideology, he must repeat his Ḥajj for he was a polytheist before that.<sup>1</sup>

3) The Ottoman government is counted as disbeliever and whoever does not consider them to be disbelievers is a disbeliever himself.<sup>2</sup>

4) The Asharites (Sunnis of the four schools of thought) are disbelievers and they do not understand the meaning of the 'Statement of Faith'.<sup>3</sup> The Mutazilites (another Sunni school of thought) are also disbelievers.<sup>4</sup>

5) The one who does not pay the Zakāt is a disbeliever.<sup>5</sup>

6) Those who hire non-Muslims in their homes, offices, and places of business... are disbelievers...<sup>6</sup>

After enumerating twenty seven instances where the students and followers of the Shaykh had ruled a large majority of Muslims as disbelievers, Ḥasan ibn Farḥān stated: 'After all of this excess in Takfir, a group of Wahhabi scholars then continued their attacks by condemning individuals and groups such as Sayyid Quṭb, Mawdūdī, Ikhwān al-Muslimīn, and Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr as being disbelievers. It is true that these groups committed excess regarding certain political issues but their excess is nowhere near what has been committed by the Wahhabis with respect to their extremism in politics, ideology, jurisprudence, cultural issues, as well as social issues. It is not a bad thing to be fair in such matters!'<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Farḥān has then added: 'One must contemplate over the aforementioned issues; is there anything really left which

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, vol. 10, pgs. 138 and 143.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 429.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. 1, p. 364.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 357.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vol. 10, p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, vol. 15, p. 486.

<sup>7</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, p. 117.

the Wahhabis have not said or done?"<sup>1</sup> He has also explained how, after the death of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, this issue of Takfīr even swept up the Wahhabis themselves. Some of them would condemn other Wahhabis as being disbelievers and take their wives as captives. Ibn Farḥān has mentioned many examples of such things as narrated in the book *Al-Durar al-Sanīyah*.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Farḥān has ended this chapter on a brighter point and mentioned the following: 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad was the son of the founder of Wahhabism. After the fall of the city of Dar'iyah (one of the cities in the Ḥijāz region), 'Abdullah ended up going to Egypt. During that time, Egypt naturally had a more open atmosphere than Saudi Arabia. After living there for a time and becoming aware of other Islamic opinions, he himself moved closer to moderation. He ended up rejecting the condemnation of the Muslims as disbelievers for simply following a different school of thought. He only considered people disbelievers if they actually rejected some of the main tenets of the Islamic faith or did something which caused one to leave the faith according to Muslim consensus.<sup>3 4</sup>

In the fourth chapter of this book, Ibn Farḥān goes on to speak about the opponents of the Shaykh who condemned the Shaykh and his followers as being disbelievers. He then defends the Shaykh and his followers and states: "This kind of condemnation is not religiously valid and they should only have mentioned the errors of the Shaykh, particularly with regard to the issue of Takfīr."

Ibn Farḥān has also mentioned twenty two well known Sunni scholars (many of whom lived in Najd and Mecca, as well as Damascus, Iraq, Tunisia, and Morocco) who stood up in op-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pgs 123 and onwards.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Durar al-Sanīyah*, vol. 10, p. 244.

<sup>4</sup> *The Reformer and Not the Messenger*, p. 125.



position to the Wahhabis. Some of them even wrote books, refuting the Wahhabi ideology or disproving certain beliefs of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.<sup>1</sup> In this way, Ibn Farḥān has shown that the majority of those opposed to him were from his own region or even from his own relatives!

## **The Most Important Accusations against The Wahhabi Leaders**

Ibn Farḥān has listed the most important criticisms which the well known Sunni scholars have mentioned in relation to Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. These can be summarized in the four points below:

- 1) The condemnation of Muslims as disbelievers
- 2) Claims of prophethood (which were mostly implicit rather than explicit)
- 3) Believing in the corporeality of Allah.
- 4) Rejecting the miracles of the religious notables.

Ibn Farḥān has stated that the main issue which the Shaykh is accused of is his condemnation of the Muslims as disbelievers and this is so clear and well known that no one can deny it. Ibn Farḥān has then narrated an excerpt from Shaykh Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān’s book *Da’awī al-Munāwī’in*: “The Wahhabis do not consider anyone to be a true monotheist unless they follow everything which they say!”<sup>2</sup> He has also narrated from another well known scholar named Zahāwī who said: “if someone asks me what Wahhabism is and what the end result of this ideology is, I will tell them that the answer to both of their questions is the condemnation of all Muslims worldwide as disbelievers. This is a wholly sufficient answer to such questions.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformer and Not the Messenger, pgs. 127-133.

<sup>2</sup> *Da’awī al-Munāwī’in*, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 167.

Ibn Farḥān has attempted to clear the Shaykh from the other three criticisms, but the first criticism (Takfīr) is not a small matter and the Shaykh can in no way be cleared of it. The Quran has directly ordered the Muslims to stay away from condemning others as disbelievers. It is not even allowed to condemn those who are only Muslims outwardly (so long as they do not go against the foundational aspects of the Islamic faith):

(وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْفَىٰ إِلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا)

‘O you who have faith! When you issue forth in the way of Allah, try to ascertain: do not say to someone who offers you peace, ‘You are not a believer,’ seeking the transitory wares of the life of this world.’<sup>1</sup> This verse is very clear and it directly tells the Muslims that they are not allowed to condemn others as disbelievers.

Another issue is that when the Wahhabis condemn others as disbelievers, they believe that they have the right to kill them and plunder their wealth. The murder of human beings, and in particular, a Muslim, is considered a very grave offense in the eyes of Allah. The Quran has mentioned in this regard: ‘Should anyone kill a believer intentionally, his requital shall be hell, to remain in it [forever]; Allah shall be wrathful at him and curse him and He shall prepare for him a great punishment.’<sup>2</sup>

This verse is a truly frightening one and it clearly shows that anyone who kills a believer intentionally will end up in Hell forever. There are some sins whereby one is allowed to eventually leave the Hellfire, but this sin is one where the person will remain in the Fire forever. What is interesting is that the punishment of remaining in the Fire forever is something particular to those without faith and so this shows that those who kill innocent Muslims certainly have no faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisā’, Verse 94.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Verse 93.

Just imagine what the state of those who kill innocent believers will be on the Day of Judgment. Those who slaughter people who busy themselves with the worship of Allah and spend their days fasting and their nights in prayer. Unfortunately, the Wahhabis have engaged in such actions and they have killed many such innocent human beings. Even women, children, and the elderly have not been spared in such attacks. The worst thing is that such acts are done in the name of Islam and the Wahhabis consider themselves worthy of divine favor and salvation for committing such crimes! When we refer to the Quran, however, we see one verse which states: ‘and Satan has made their deeds seem decorous to them—thus he has barred them from the way [of Allah], so they are not guided—’<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, many of the followers of this ideology have realized their mistake in recent times and they now know that condemning other Muslims as disbelievers is a grave sin. Even if these persons are religiously deviated, this does not justify such a condemnation and it is only an opportunity to gently help guide them to the truth. We hope that this realization will help purify the Muslim ranks of violence and terrorization, in turn allowing the people of the world to see Islam in its full reality. The two texts of *Mafāhīm Yajib ‘An Taṣīḥḥah* and *Dā‘iyah’ wa Laysa Nabīyā* have gone a long way in this regard.

In order to conclude this section on a positive note, let us finish by focusing on a statement issued recently by a group of moderate Wahhabi scholars, jurisprudents, and traditionalists. This statement has been published in a wide variety of newspapers but we are narrating it as found in the book *Mu‘jam Ṭabaqāt al-Mutakallimīn*...

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Naml, Verse 24.

## A Statement by 'The Grand Scholars Council' of Saudi Arabia

Let us first begin by presenting the Arabic text of this statement which goes on to condemn the barbarous actions performed by the Wahhabis:

بيان من هيئة كبار العلماء

الحمد لله، و الصلاة والسلام على رسول الله، و على آله و صحبه و من اهتدى  
بهده، أما بعد:

فقد درس مجلس هيئة كبار العلماء في دورته التاسعة و الأربعين المنعقدة  
بالبائف ابتداء من تاريخ 1411/4/2 هـ، ما يجرى في كثير من البلاد الاسلامية و  
غيرها من التكفير و التفجير، و ما ينشأ عنه من سفك الدماء، و تخريب المنشآت و  
نظراً الى خطورة هذا الامر، و ما يترتب عليه من إزهاق أرواح بريئة، و إتلاف أموال  
معصومة، و إخافة للناس، و زعزعة لأمنهم و استقرارهم، فقد رأى المجلس إصدار  
بيان يوضح فيه حكم ذلك نصحاً لله و لعباده، و ابراء للذمة، و إزالة للبس في  
المفاهيم لدى من اشتبه عليه الأمر في ذلك، فنقول و بالله التوفيق:

اولاً: التكفير حكم شرعى، مردّه الى الله و رسوله، فكما أنّ التحليل و التحريم  
و الإيجاب، الى الله و رسوله، فكذلك التكفير، و ليس كل ما وصف بالكفر من قول  
أو فعل، يكون كفراً أكبر، مخرجاً عن الملة.

و لما كان مردّ حكم التكفير الى الله و رسوله لم يجز أن نُكفّر إلا من دلّ  
الكتاب و السنّة على كفره دلالة واضحة، فلا يكفى في ذلك مجرد الشبهة و الظن،  
لما يترتب على ذلك من الأحكام الخطيرة، و إذا كانت الحدود تُندراً بالشبهات، مع

أن ما يترتب عليها أقل مما يترتب على التكفير، فالتكفير أولى أن يدرأ بالشبهات؛ وذلك حذر النبي (صلى الله عليه وآله) من الحكم بالتكفير على شخص ليس بكافر، فقال: «أيما امرئ قال لآخيه: يا كافر، فقد باء بها أحدهما، ان كان كما قال و إلا رجعت عليه». وقد يرد في الكتاب والسنة ما يفهم منه أن هذا القول أو العمل أو الاعتقاد كفر، ولا يكفر من اتصف به، لوجود مانع يمنع من كفره، وهذا الحكم كغيره من الاحكام التي لا تتم إلا بوجود أسبابها وشروطها، وانتفاء موانعها كما في الإرث، سببه القرابة - مثلاً - وقد لا يرث بها لوجود مانع كاختلاف الدين، وهكذا الكفر يُكره عليه المؤمن فلا يكفر به. وقد ينطق المسلم بكلمة الكفر لغلبة فرح أو غضب أو نحوهما فلا يكفر بها لعدم القصد، كما في قصة الذي قال: «اللهم أنت عبيد وأنا ربك» أخطأ من شدة الفرح.

و التسرع في التكفير يترتب عليه أمور خطيرة من استحلال الدم والمال، ومنع التوارث، وفسخ النكاح، وغيرها مما يترتب على الردة، فكيف يسوغ للمؤمن أن يقدم عليه لأدنى شبهة.

وجملة القول: أن التسرع في التكفير له خطره العظيم؛ لقول الله عز وجل: (قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَالْأثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)<sup>1</sup>

ثانياً: ما نجم عن هذا الاعتقاد الخاطيء من استباحة الدماء وانتهاك الأعراض، وسلب الأموال الخاصة والعامة، وتفجير المساكن والمركبات، وتخریب المنشآت، فهذه الأعمال وأمثالها محرمة شرعاً بإجماع المسلمين؛ لما في ذلك من هتك لحرمة

<sup>1</sup> Surah A'rāf, Verse 33.

الأنفس المعصومة، و هتك لحرمة الأموال، و هتك لحرمات الأمن و الاستقرار، و حياة الناس الآمنين المطمئنين في مساكنهم و معاشهم، و غدوهم و رواحهم، و هتك للمصالح العامّة التي لا غنى للناس في حياتهم عنها.

و قد حفظ الإسلام للمسلمين أموالهم و أعراضهم و أبدانهم و حرم انتهاكها، و شدّد في ذلك و كان من آخر ما بلغ به النبي(صلى الله عليه وآله) أمته فقال في خطبة حجّة الوداع: «إنّ دماءكم و أموالكم و أعراضكم عليكم حرام كحرمة يومكم هذا في شهركم هذا، في بلدكم هذا». ثم قال(صلى الله عليه وآله): «ألا هل بلغت؟ اللهم فاشهد». متفق عليه.

و قال(صلى الله عليه وآله): «كل المسلم على المسلم حرام دمه و ماله و عرضه».

و قال عليه الصلاة و السلام: «اتّقوا الظلم فإنّ الظلم ظلمات يوم القيامة».

و قد توعدّ الله سبحانه من قتل نفساً معصومة بأشدّ الوعيد، فقال سبحانه في حقّ المؤمن: (وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فِجْرًاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا)<sup>1</sup>

و قال سبحانه في حقّ الكافر الذي له ذمّة، في حكم قتل الخطأ: (إِلَّا أَنْ يَصِدُّوْا فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوِّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةً)<sup>2</sup> فاذا كان الكافر الذي له أمان إذا قتل خطأ، فيه الدية و الكفارة، فكيف إذا قتل عمداً، فان الجريمة تكون

<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisā', Verse 93.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Verse 92.

أعظم، و الإثم يكون أكبر. و قد صحَّ عن رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) إنه قال:  
«من قتل معاهداً لم يرح رائحة الجنة».

ثالثاً: إنّ المجلس اذ يبين حكم تكفير الناس بغير برهان من كتاب الله و سنّة  
رسوله (صلى الله عليه وآله) و خطورة اطلاق ذلك، لما يترتب عليه من شرور و آثام،  
فإنّه يعلن للعالم أنّ الإسلام برىء من هذا المعتقد الخاطئ، و أن ما يجرى فى بعض  
البلدان من سفك الدماء البريئة، و تفجير للمساكن و المركبات و المرافق العامّة و  
الخاصّة، و تخريب للمنشآت هو عمل إجرامي، و الإسلام برىء منه، و هكذا كلّ  
مسلم يؤمن بالله و اليوم الآخر برىء منه، و إنّما هو تصرف من صاحب فكر  
منحرف، و عقيدة ضالّة، فهو يحمل إثمه و جرمه، فلا يحتسب عمله على الإسلام، و  
لا على المسلمين المهتدين بهدى الإسلام، المعتصمين بالكتاب و السنّة،  
المستمسكين بحبل الله المتين، و إنّما هو محض إفساد و إجرام تأباه الشريعة و  
الفطرة؛ و لهذا جاءت نصوص الشريعة قاطعة بتحريمه، محرّرة من مصاحبة أهله...

رئيس المجلس

عبدالعزیز بن عبدالله بن باز

صالح بن محمد اللحيان عبدالله بن عبدالرحمن البسام عبدالله بن سليمان بن

تقنيع عبدالعزيز بن عبدالله بن محمد آل الشيخ

محمد بن صالح العثيمي ناصر بن حمد الراشد

عبدالله بن محمد بن ابراهيم آل الشيخ محمد بن عبدالله السبيل محمد بن

البدردعبدالرحمن بن حمزة المزروقي راشد بن صالح بن خنيند. عبدالله بن

عبدالمحسن التركي عبدالله بن عبدالرحمن الغديان د. عبدالوهاب بن ابراهيم  
أبوسليمان محمد بن ابراهيم بن جبير محمد بن زياد آل د. صالح بن فوزان  
الفوزان د. صالح بن عبدالرحمن الأطرمحسن بن جعفر العتمى د. بكر بن عبدالله  
ابوزيد

## The Translation of the Statement

All praise is due to Allah and may his salutations and peace be upon his Messenger, upon his family, his companions, and whomever is guided by the truth.

The board of 'Kibār al-'Ulamā' held its forty ninth meeting in the city of Ṭā'if on 4/2/1419 to investigate the bloodshed and destruction caused by the issue of Takfīr. Considering that this issue has brought about the killing of many innocent people, the creation of fear and insecurity, as well as the loss of a great deal of wealth and property, the board decided to issue a statement in order to announce the ruling regarding such evils and in order to guide those who are entangled in error concerning certain Islamic concepts. The following points have been mentioned as a reminder in regard to this issue:

1) Condemning someone as a disbeliever (Takfīr) is an issue which comes about from religious law and its exact details are set forth by Allah and his Prophet (s) in the same way as the Ḥalāl (lawful) and the Ḥarām (unlawful) are determined. Moreover, the concept of disbelief which is mentioned in the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah does not refer to the 'Great Disbelief' which takes one out of the religion completely. Therefore, since the ruling of disbelief must be issued by Allah and his Prophet (s), it is not permissible for us to declare someone a disbeliever unless we have clear proof from the Quran and the Sunnah in regard to their disbelief.

Suspicion is not considered sufficient in this regard for this issue brings about very severe consequences. Furthermore, in



issues far less important than the issue of Takfir, such as the issue of ordained punishments, the related religious laws dictate that we are not permitted to administer such punishments unless we are absolutely certain. Therefore, we must certainly be even more cautious regarding the issue of Takfir, since it can lead to far more catastrophic consequences compared with the issue of ordained punishments. This is particularly true when it comes to an issue such as the religion and faith of a Muslim. It was due to the importance of this issue that the Prophet (s) severely warned the Muslims against condemning others as disbelievers (who were not actually disbelievers): 'if anyone calls their Muslim brother a disbeliever, they will be afflicted by one of two outcomes: if they have told the truth, then the opposing side will be afflicted by divine punishment and if they have lied, then the punishment will return back to them.'

Sometimes, we find certain terminology which is used in the Quran and the traditions where certain words, actions, or beliefs are described as bringing about disbelief. At the same time, there are certain factors that exist which can prevent such an issue (disbelief) from becoming current. This is similar to many other rulings in Islam which can not take place unless all the necessary conditions are met. One example of this can be found in the issue of inheritance which takes place in families but which can be suspended due to a difference of religion amongst them.

In other cases, an individual may be forced to say words of disbelief while they do not actually disbelieve in the religion; in such a case, the individual is clearly not a disbeliever since he was forced in the things he said. In yet other cases, people may say things about Allah due to extreme happiness or anger which they do not really mean. Since they do not have any intent in such matters, they do not become disbelievers. There is one well known story where a man became intensely happy and accidentally said: "Oh God, you are the servant and I am

the master". His words were accidental and not based on any intent. Such a person clearly does not become a disbeliever.

Being reckless and heedless regarding the issue of Takfir can lead to disastrous consequences. These can include killing the people, plundering their wealth, depriving them of their right to inheritance, and separating them from their wives, which are all punishments of apostasy (if proven). Therefore, how can it be permissible for Muslims to engage in Takfir so easily and accept so heavy a responsibility regarding it?!

When we look at the issue of Takfir, we see that it entails many potentially dangerous consequences. The Quran has mentioned in this regard: 'Say, 'My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, the outward among them and the inward ones, and sin and undue aggression, and that you should ascribe to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you should attribute to Allah what you do not know.'<sup>1</sup> This verse explains that Allah has forbidden all indecent acts, as well as oppression and associating others with Allah.

2) The end result of the invalid ideology of Takfir is that bloodshed has been considered as permissible, the dignity of people has been taken from them, their wealth has been plundered, and homes and vehicles have been destroyed. These are all things which are considered unlawful and a grave sin according to the consensus of the Muslim scholars. Such actions take away the peace and security of the people which is so necessary in day to day life.

This is while Islam has given sanctity to the lives, property, and wealth of the Muslims and the religion does not permit anyone to exceed these set boundaries. This issue is of such great importance that it was also addressed by the Prophet (s) in the sermon that he delivered in his final Hajj pilgrimage: 'Your blood, wealth, and properties are honored and protected

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<sup>1</sup> Surah A'rāf, Verse 33.

in relation to one another just like the honor given to this day (‘Īd al-Aḏḩā), the honor of this month, and the honor of this land (Mecca). Therefore, be witness oh Lord that I have said what I had to say.’ This is a tradition which is accepted by all of the narrators of tradition. The Prophet (s) is also narrated to have said: ‘All of the possessions of the Muslim is unlawful for another Muslim; this includes his blood, his wealth, the women in his family, and his properties. He then added: ‘Abstain from oppression for oppression is darkness on the Day of Judgment.’

Allah has warned those who spill the blood of the innocent that they have to await the severest of punishments: ‘Anyone who kills a faithful believer on purpose will be punished with the Hellfire and he will remain therein forever. God will subject him to his wrath and his curse and he has set aside a great punishment for him.’<sup>1</sup> Another verse of the Qur’an has mentioned the following about the accidental killing of a disbeliever who is under the protection of the Muslim state: “His family must be compensated (with the Dīyah and Kaffarah).”<sup>2</sup> In an authentic tradition from the Prophet (s), it has been mentioned that anyone who kills a non Muslim who has a pact with the Muslims will never smell the scent of Paradise!

3) In light of the ruling made above concerning the Takfīr of the people without any solid reasons from the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, and in light of the evil consequences and sins which entail from such an act, we announce to the entirety of the people of the world that Islam rejects such false ideologies. The acts which are seen in some countries, such as the shedding of the blood of innocents, various bombings which destroy homes and vehicles, and the destruction of public and private properties are criminal acts which are rejected by the religion of Islam. Similarly, any Muslim who has faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment rejects such actions. These crimes are

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisā’, Verse 93.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Nisā’, Verse 92.

only perpetrated by those who have deviant beliefs and are misguided. Therefore, such criminal acts must be blamed only on their perpetrators and not on the religion of Islam and its true adherents. These acts are a great evil and corruption which Islam and human nature both reject. We have the solid proof against such things in the Islamic traditions and we are forbidden from even associating with such people. This statement is then concluded with various Quranic verses and traditions which show how Islam is a religion of love and friendship and how it is based upon goodness, piety, logical discussions, and the rejection of any kind of barbarity and harshness.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Brief Analysis of this Statement**

This statement was signed by some of the most well known Wahhabi scholars in Saudi Arabia, including ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Bāz, and it contains various points of importance which are worthy of further scrutiny:

1) Although it would have been better if this statement had been published before all of the bloodshed, plunder, and destruction which took place, it is still a positive effort for it can play a role in stopping or at least lessening such things in the future. It serves as a solid piece of proof against the Radical Wahhabis, who believe that they are taking their evidence and inspiration from Islamic law; this shows them that they are misguided and Islam does not condone such behavior.

2) This statement has effectively opened the door for the critique of the beliefs and ideology of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. At this juncture, even Wahhabis can critique the ide-

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<sup>1</sup> This statement was published in a variety of newspapers and other types of publications in Saudi Arabia. We have used the text Mu‘jam Ṭabaqāt al-Mutakallimīn (vol. 4, p. 100) as our source as narrated in this text.

as of their leader without losing face. This will allow a more moderate version of Wahhabism to develop and gain strength.

3) Through the use of well thought out words, this statement announces to the Radical Wahhabis that their era of Takfir is over and they are no longer permitted to consider everyone who differs with them as disbelievers. It is no longer permitted to kill people and plunder their wealth on such flimsy excuses.

4) This statement serves to benefit Islam all around the world through disassociating the religion with the evil (and very public actions) of this radical group. This disassociation allows the public face of the faith to be improved amongst the people of the world through showing that Muslims (even Wahhabis themselves) are horrified at the actions of this group and unequivocally reject them. Although it will take a long time to fix this negative image and it is not really an easy matter, the statement still takes this first step of disassociation and takes away any pretext from various parties in making the claim that such acts represent the true reality of Islam. We take refuge with Allah from the excesses of these ignorant people and we hope that Allah will guide all of them to the right path, away from the tricks and traps of Satan.

## **A Friendly Piece of Advice to the Scholars of Hejaz**

I humbly advise all of the Wahhabi scholars who tread the path of moderation to take advantage of the current historic conditions which are leading to a reformation of Wahhabism, to not lose out on this opportunity and to take this time to repair the rift which has been created amongst the Muslims. This will be of great benefit to the Muslim nation and it will harm the end goals of the enemies tremendously. I humbly advise the following:

1) They should not allow others to condemn Muslims as disbelievers and polytheists over issues which are, at most, personal judgments of Islamic jurisprudence. Let them advise their followers to follow the Quranic injunction which states: ‘...do not say to someone who offers you peace, ‘You are not a believer,’ ...’<sup>1</sup>

2) They should condemn in the most severe terms any terrorist actions (rooted in Takfir or other such ideologies) which take place in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, or any other nation. These barbaric actions not only create great destruction and bloodshed in the Muslim nations, but they also serve to blacken the image of Islam throughout the world. Many innocent men, women, and children are killed in such violence and it only serves as a powerful propaganda tool for the enemies of the religion. Such actions effectively serve to destroy the positive efforts of Muslim missionaries and intellectuals in promoting Islam. Therefore, the Wahhabi scholars should do their best in condemning such ideologically motivated actions.

3) The scholars should open the door for logical and friendly discussions amongst the various groups in the Muslim world. They should sit down and discuss the points where they differ and approach the matter as the Quran has instructed: ‘who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [sense] of it...’<sup>2</sup>

4) The scholars should open the ideological and geographical boundaries of their thinking towards the books and ideas of other Islamic schools of thought. They should not fear that such a thing is dangerous to them. In addition, there should be an exchange of students with other Muslim countries.

5) The barriers created by a lack of trust and suspicion separating the Wahhabis and the rest of the Muslims must be brought down. The various schools of thought must associate

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisā’, Verse 94.

<sup>2</sup> Surah Zumar, Verse 18.

with one another and an intellectual exchange should take place.

6) The scholars must warn their followers from absolutism in matters of jurisprudence where they feel that only they possess the truth and everyone else is on the path of misguidance and guilty of introducing innovations in religion.

We hope that these six pieces of advice are followed so that unity can predominate over the affairs of the Muslims and that their ranks may be strengthened. Through this, we pray that all Muslims may 'Hold on to the rope of Allah' and the religion will be allowed to manifest its true reality to the people of this world.

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