

THE DOCTRINE OF AHL AL-SUNNA VERSUS THE "WAHABI-SALAFI" MOVEMENT

*"And say: Truth has come and falsehood
has vanished away. Lo! falsehood
is ever bound to vanish."*

(17:81)

Praise belongs to Allah Who has made truth clearly distinct from error, who puts down innovation and innovators and raises high the Sunna of the Prophet, Peace be upon him, and the people who follow it. Praise belongs to Allah Who in every century inspires a group of scholarly people to defend the Way of the Prophet, Peace be upon him, from the distortions of the ignorant -- those who call the majority of Muslims mushrik (idolaters) and mubtadi` (innovators) and kafir (disbelievers), falsely claiming that they alone are saved. Salutations and greetings upon the Prophet, his Family, and his Companions who are the exemplars and guardians of the Sunna.

This brief but excellent book by the Iraqi scholar al-Zahawi (1863-1936) is published in English for the first time, by Allah's grace, to give our Muslim brother in the West the necessary historical background on important questions of belief and methodology which are currently under attack from certain quarters of our Community. It is a companion volume to our two books entitled Islamic Doctrine and Beliefs According to Ahl al-Sunna.[1]

Islam, in our understanding and that of the majority of Muslims, both scholars and non-scholars, is the Islam of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama`a -- The People of the Way of the Prophet and the Community of Muslims. Chief and foremost among them are the true Salaf of Islam: the Companions, the Successors, and their Successors according to the Prophet's sound hadith in Muslim: "The best century is my century, then the one following it, then the one following that." All the scholars understood by that hadith that the true Salaf were the models of human behavior and correct belief for us Muslims and for all mankind, that to follow them was to follow the Prophet, and that to follow the Prophet was to achieve salvation according to Allah's order: "Whoever obeys the Prophet obeys Allah" (4:80).

In our time, however, the name Salaf has been usurped by a movement which seeks to impose its own narrow interpretation of Religion towards a re-fashioning of the teachings of Islam. The adherents of this movement call themselves "Salafi." Such an appellation is baseless since the true Salaf knew no such school as the "Salafi" school nor even called themselves by that name; the only general name they recognized for themselves was that of Muslim. As an eminent scholar has stated, the Salafiyya is not a

recognized school of thought in Islam, rather, it refers to a blessed historical period of our glorious past.

In reality, today's so-called "Salafi" movement, now about thirty years old, is the modern outgrowth of an two-century old heresy spawned by a scholar of the Najd area in the Eastern part of the Arabian peninsula by the name of Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). This scholar has been refuted by a long line of scholars both in his time and ours. Their names and the titles of some of their excellent refutations are found in the bibliography given at the end of this introduction.

In essence, Salafism and Wahhabism are the same, but the latter is identified by its founder while the former takes the name of the Salaf and makes it its own. Yet both Salafism and Wahhabism depart from the belief and practice of the Salaf, as the present book abundantly makes clear.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Al-Zahawi displays a profound mastery of the proofs of Ahl al-Sunna which he presents in a clear and systematic style. The book is divided into concise sections tracing the origins of the Wahhabi/Salafi movement and the teachings that this movement promotes in isolation of the doctrine of the majority of Muslims. After a brief historical overview of the bloody origins of Wahhabism and the "Salafi" creed, the author turns to investigate the foundations of the shari`a which have been targeted by the Wahhabi/Salafi movement for revision, namely:

- the Wahhabi/Salafi tampering of the doctrine of the pious Salaf concerning Allah's essence and attributes, and his freedom from body, size, or direction;

- their rejection of ijma` (scholarly consensus) and qiyas (analogy);

- their rejection of the sources and methodological foundations of ijihad (deriving qualified judgment) and taqlid (following qualified judgment).

The author then narrows down on the Wahhabi/Salafi practice of takfir, which is their declaring Muslims unbelievers, according to criteria not followed by the pious Salaf but devised by modern-day "Salafis." The author shows that the "Salafis" went out of bounds in condemning the Umma (Muslim Community) on the question of taqlid, declaring unbelievers all those who practice taqlid, that is, the majority of Muslims. Finally, the author turns to the linchpin of "Salafi" philosophy: leaving the ijma` of the true Salaf in declaring unbelievers all Muslims who use the Prophet Muhammad's intercession, Peace be upon him, as a wasila or means of blessing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Al-Shaykh Jamil Effendi al-Siqdi al-Zahawi was the son of the Mufti of Iraq and a descendant of Khalid ibn al-Walid. He was educated in the Islamic sciences chiefly by his father and, besides going on to become the greatest Arabic and Persian poet of modern Iraq, was also a literary master in the other two Islamic languages of the time: Turkish and Kurdish.

Al-Zahawi gave early proofs of his scholarly talents. By the age of forty he had served on the board of education in Baghdad, as the director of the state printing office, as editor of the chief state publication, al-Zawra', and as a member of the Baghdad court of appeal. The second half of his life was devoted to writing, journalism, and teaching. He taught philosophy and Arabic literature in Istanbul and law in Baghdad. A prolific writer, at one point he declined the office of court poet and historian of Iraq offered him by King Faysal. In addition to the above he was scientifically inclined and wrote papers on various scientific topics such as electricity and the power of repulsion, all this despite a chronic disease of the spine which had crippled him from his twenty-fifth year.

At the turn of the century Arabia had witnessed the return of the Wahhabis to power and the open rebellion of their forces against the Caliph of the Islamic community. What was worse, the Wahhabi heresy was knocking at the gates of Baghdad, and the scholars of Ahl al-Sunna spoke out in order to stem its rising tide. In 1905 at the age of 42 and upon the request of his father al-Zahawi published this eloquent indictment of the sect's innovations in doctrine and jurisprudence, refuting its tenets one by one. He named the book, of which the present work forms the major part, al-Fajr al-sadiq fi al-radd `ala munkiri al-tawassul wa al-khawariq ("The True Dawn: A Refutation of Those Who Deny The Validity of Using Means to Allah and the Miracles of Saints"). The title indicates Zahawi's opinion, reminiscent of that of other scholars who wrote similar refutations, that the Wahhabi position on tawassul represents the essence of their deviation from the beliefs of Ahl al-Sunna, although it is but one of their many divergences with Sunni Muslims.

Zahawi's brilliant style, his acute sense of balance and moderation, and his luminous logic and concision gave this brief book an undisputed place of honor among modern works of heresiology. May Allah reward him with His generosity, as well as those who collaborated on this timely and all-beneficial translation for the edification of English-speaking Muslims. We warmly recommend this book to all the sincere students and teachers who are interested in the growth and dissemination of sound Islamic belief in the West. As Sayyidina `Umar said, "This Religion is our flesh and our blood, so watch from whom you take it": in our time it is a duty to inform ourselves as to the soundness of the religious teaching which we are receiving and passing on to our children. For our own sake and theirs, we must discern the sources of such teaching with extreme caution, sifting the sound from the unsound, correcting what is wrong with our hand, our tongue, and our heart.

Muslims of the twenty-first century should beware of the renewed onslaught on their beliefs being conducted today from within our Communities East and West. In the name of Qur'an and Sunna, but actually supported by certain regimes pursuing specific ideologies, "Salafis" are taking over the mosques built by Ahl al-Sunna in Europe and North America -- mostly Indian and Pakistani immigrants -- by means of elections and fundings. It is the duty of all Muslims to ascertain that the mosques of Allah continue as centers of sound Islamic practice, not "Salafi" practice. This can only be done if one first appraises oneself of the reality of "Salafi" beliefs which are different from those of the main body of Muslims.

The Prophet said, Peace be upon him: "My Community will split into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in the fire except one group." They asked: "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Those that follow my way and that of my companions." [2] This is a rallying-cry to the Firm Rope of 1,418 years of mainstream Islam and an invitation to reject the absurd claim of the "Salafi" movement that it is they, and not Ahl al-Sunna, who are the Saved Group. As Zahawi asks -- may Allah have mercy on him: If the saved group are those who came after Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab, then what is the status of all those who came before him, and that of the majority of those who came after him -- that is, Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama`a?

This warning is not meant as an attack on Islamic unity. On the contrary, our cry of alarm must be understood as a reaffirmation that the Saved Group which the Prophet mentioned in his hadith are the People of the Way of the Prophet and their scholars. Those scholars have spoken in no uncertain terms in condemnation of the innovations of Wahhabis and "Salafis" in our time, as the present book and the bibliography below, al-hamdu lillah, prove beyond doubt.

May Allah give victory to those who stand truly for the way of His Prophet, Blessings and Peace be upon him. O Believers, read this book and take heed of its message. We conclude this brief introduction with a selective list of authors and works of Ahl al-Sunna scholars in whose pages the deviations of Wahhabis and Salafis are exposed time after time and conclusively refuted. We look forward to their translations and recommend every one of them. And all praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

Shaykh Hisham Muhammad Kabbani
Los Altos, California
1 Muharram 1418
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AHADITH ON THE KHAWARIJ WHICH THE SCHOLARS CONSIDER TO APPLY TO THE WAHHABIS

These ahadith are cited in the Six Books of authentic traditions for the most part. They have been collated for the most part from the following two books written in refutation of the Wahhabi heresy:

a) al-Sayyid al-`Alawi ibn Ahmad ibn Hasan ibn `Abd Allah ibn `Alawi al-Haddad: Misbah al-anam wa jala' al-zalam fi radd shubah al-bid'i al-Najdi al-lati adalla biha al-`awamm ["The Lamp of Creatures and the Illumination of Darkness Concerning the Refutation of the Errors of the Innovator From Najd by Which He Had Misled the Common People"] published 1325H.

b) al-Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zayni al-Dahlan (d. 1304/1886). Mufti of Mecca and Shaykh al-Islam in the Hijaz region of the Ottoman state: Khulasat al-kalam fi bayan umara' al-balad al-haram ["The Summation Concerning the Leaders of the Holy Sanctuary"] (A History of the Wahhabi Fitna in Najd and the Hijaz) p. 234-236.

The Prophet said, Peace be upon him

1. "They [Khawarij = those outside] transferred the Qur'anic verses meant to refer to unbelievers and made them refer to believers."
2. "What I most fear in my community is a man who interprets verses of the Qur'an out of context."
3. "The confusion [fitna] comes from there (and he pointed to the East = Najd in present-day Eastern Saudi Arabia)."
4. "A people that recite Qur'an will come out of the East, but it will not go past their throats. They will pass through the religion (of Islam) like the arrow passes through its quarry. They will no more come back to the religion than the arrow will come back to its course. Their sign is that they shave (their heads)."
5. "There will be in my Community a dissent and a faction, a people with excellent words and vile deeds. They will read Qur'an, but their faith does not go past their throats. They will pass through religion the way an arrow passes through its quarry. They will no more come back to the religion than the arrow will come back to its original course. They are the worst of human beings and the worst of all creation. The one who kills them or is killed by them is blessed. They summon to the book of Allah but they have nothing to do with it. Whoever kills them is closer to Allah than they. Their sign is that they shave (their heads)."
6. "A people will come out at the end of times, immature, foolish and corrupt. They will hold the discourse of the best of creation and recite Qur'an, but it will

not go past their throats. They will pass through religion the way an arrow passes through its quarry. If you find them, kill them, for verily whoever kills them will have his reward from Allah the Day of Judgment."

7. "There will be people in my Community whose mark is that they shave (their heads). They will recite Qur'an, but it will not go past their throats. They will pass through religion the way an arrow passes through its target. They are the worst of human beings and the worst of all creation."

8. "The apex of disbelief is towards the East [Najd]. Pride and arrogance is found among the people of the horse and the camel [Bedouin Arabs]."

9. "Harshness and dryness of heart are in the East [Najd], and true belief is among the people of Hijaz."

10. "O Allah, bless our Syria and our Yemen!" They said: "Ya Rasulallah, and our Najd!" He didn't reply. He blessed Syria and Yemen twice more. They asked him to bless Najd twice more but he didn't reply. The third time he said: "There [in Najd] are the earthquakes and the dissensions, and through it will dawn the epoch [or horn] of shaytan."

11. A version has, "The two epochs [or horns] of shaytan." Some scholars have said that the dual referred to Musaylima the Arch-liar and to Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab.

12. Some versions continue with the words: "And in it [Najd] is the consuming disease," i.e. death.

13. Some books of history mention the following version in the chapters devoted to the battles against the Banu Hanifa:

"At the end of times a man will come out of Musaylima's country and he will change the religion of Islam." Note: Most of the Khawarij were from the Najd area, from the tribes of Banu Hanifa, Banu Tamim, and Wa'il. Musaylima was from the Banu Hanifa, and Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab is from Tamim.

13a. Abu Bakr said concerning the Banu Hanifa (the tribe of Musaylima the Liar): "Their valley [Najd] will not cease to be a valley of dissensions until the end of time, and the religion will never recover from their liars until Judgment Day," and in another version: "Woe to al-Yamama without end."

13b. When `Ali killed the Khawarij, someone said: "Praise be to Allah Who has brought them down and relieved us from them." Ali replied: "Verily, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, some of them are still in the loins of men and they have not been born yet, and the last of them will fight on the side of the Antichrist."

14. "A people that recite the Qur'an will come out of the East, but it will not go past their throats. Every time a generation of them is cut down another one will come until the last one finds itself on the side of the Antichrist."
15. "There will be a huge confusion within my Community. There will not remain one house of the Arabs except that confusion will enter it. Those who die because of it are in the fire. The harm of the tongue in it will be greater than that of the sword."
16. "There will be a dissension (in which people will be) deaf, dumb and blind (this means they will be blind and not see the true issue nor listen to the voice of truth): whoever tries to control it, the dissension will control him."
17. "A shaytan will appear in Najd by whose dissension the Arabian island will quake."
18. On the authority of al-`Abbas: "A man will come out of the Wadi Abu Hanifah [in Najd] (whose appearance is) like a bull that lunges against its yoke. There will be much slaughter and killing in his time. They will make the possessions of Muslims lawful for themselves and for trade among themselves. They will make the lives of Muslims lawful for themselves and for boasting among themselves. In that confusion the despised and the lowly will attain positions of power. Their idle desires will keep company with them the way a dog keeps company with its master."
19. On the authority of Abu Sa`id al-Khudri: "Verily in the wake of this time of mine comes a people who will recite Qur'an but it will not go past their throats. They will pass through religion the way an arrow passes through its quarry. They will kill the Muslims and leave the idolaters alone. If I saw them, verily I would kill them the way the tribe of `Aad was killed [i.e. all of them]."
20. "There will be towards the end of time a people who will say to you what neither you nor your forebears ever heard before. Beware of them lest they misguide you and bring you confusion."
21. "They will pass through Islam like an arrow passes through its quarry. Wherever you meet them, kill them!"
22. "They are the dogs of the people of Hell."
23. "They recite Qur'an and consider it in their favor but it is against them."
24. "There will be thirty dajjals (antichrists) after me, all claiming prophethood."

25. "Some people will be standing and calling at the gates of hell; whoever responds to their call, their will throw him into the Fire. They will be from our own people [i.e. Arabs] and will speak our language [Arabic]. Should you live to see the m, stick to the main body (jama`a) of the Muslims and their leader. (If there is no main body and no leader,) isolate yourself from all these sects, even if you have to eat from the roots of trees until death overcomes you while you are in that state."
26. "Just before the Hour there will be many liars." Jabir ibn Samurah said: "Be on your guard against them."
27. "The Hour will not come until thirty dajjals appear, all of them lying about Allah and His Messenger."
28. "There will be Dajjals and liars among my Community. They will tell you something new, which neither you nor your forefathers have heard. Be on your guard against them and do not let them lead you astray."
29. "The time of the Dajjal will be years of confusion. People will believe a liar, and disbelieve one who tells the truth. People will distrust one who is trustworthy, and trust one who is treacherous; and the ruwaybidha will have a say." Someone asked: "Who are they?" He said: "Those who rebel against Allah and will have a say in general affairs."
30. "If the leadership is entrusted to those unfit for it, expect the Hour."
31. "You will see the barefoot ones, the naked, the destitute, the shepherds and camelherds take pride in building tall structures in abundance."
32. "One of the signs of the change of religion is the affectation of eloquence by the rabble and their betaking to palaces in big cities."

Jamil Effendi al-Zahawi's
al-Fajr al-sadiq
fi al-radd `ala munkiri al-tawassul wa al-khawariq