

Abu Zahra on the Wahabiyya by GF Haddad

The Wahhabiyya are the most important sect of latter-day Islam. The late great Scholar of al-Azhar and specialist of Juridical principles (Uṣul), Imam Muhammad Abu Zahra, wrote in his book on the history of the madhahib (Schools) in Islam titled *Tarikh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya* ("History of the Islamic Schools"):

The Wahhabis appeared in the Arabian desert [...] and revived the School of Ibn Taymiyya. The founder of the Wahhabiyya is Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab who died in 1786CE. He had studied the books of Ibn Taymiyya which became inestimable in his sight, deepening his involvement in them until he brought them out from the realm of opinion into the realm of practice. [...] The Wahhabis exaggerated [and bowdlerized] Ibn Taymiyya's positions and instituted practical matters that can be summarized thus:

I. They did not restrain themselves to view worship (ʿibada) in the same way that Islam had stipulated in the Qur'an and Sunna and as Ibn Taymiyya had mentioned, but they wished to include customs (ʿadat) also into the province of Islam so that Muslims would be bound by them. Thus they declared cigarette smoking haram and exaggerated this ruling to the point that their general public considered the smoker a mushrik [idolater]. As a result they resembled the Khawarij who used to declare apostate whoever committed a sin.

II. In the beginning of their sway they would also declare coffee and whatever resembled it as haram [categorically prohibited] to themselves but it seems that they became more lenient on this point as time went by.

III. The Wahhabis did not restrain themselves to proselytism only, but resorted to warmongering against whoever disagreed with them on the grounds that they were fighting innovation (bid`a), and innovations are an evil that must be fought, and it is obligatory to command good and forbid evil.¹ [...] The leader of Wahhabi thought in the field of war and battle was Muhammad ibn Sa`ud, the ancestor of the ruling Sa`udi family in the Arabian lands. He was a brother-in-law to Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab and embraced his madhhab, defending it fervently and calling unto it by force of arms. He announced that he was doing this so as to uphold the Sunna and eradicate bid`a. Perhaps, this religious mission that took a violent turn was carrying with itself a rebellion against Ottoman rule. [...] Until the governor of Egypt, Muhammad `Ali Basha al-Albani, faced them and pounced on the Wahhabis with his strong army, routing them in the course of several battles. At that time their military force was reduced and confined to the Arabian tribes. Ryad and its vicinity was the center for this permanent da`wa that would turn violent whenever they found the strength and then lie still whenever they found violent opposition.

IV. Whenever they were able to seize a town or city they would come to the tombs and turn them into ruins and destruction [...] and they would destroy whatever mosques were with the tombs also. [...]

V. Their brutality did not stop there but they also came to whatever graves were visible and destroyed them also. And when the ruler of the Hijaz regions caved in to them they destroyed all the graves of the Companions and razed them to the ground [...]

VI. They would cling to small matters which they condemned although they had nothing to do with idolatry nor with whatever leads to idolatry, such as photography. We found this in their fatwas and epistles at the hands of their Ulema, although their rulers ignore this saying of theirs completely and cast it by the wayside.

VII. They expanded the meaning of bid`a [innovation] to strange proportions, to the point that they actually claimed that draping the walls of the noble Rawda [near the Prophet's chamber in Madina] is an innovated matter. Hence they forbade the renewal of the drapes that were in it, until they fell in tatters and became unsightly, were it not for the light that pours out to all that are in the presence of the Prophet - upon him peace - or feels that in this place was the abode of Revelation on the Master of Messengers. In fact, we find among them, on top of this, those who consider that the Muslim's expression "our Master Muhammad"

(sayyiduna Muhammad) is an impermissible bid`a and they show true extremism about this and, for the sake of their mission, use foul and furious language until most people actually flee from them as fast as they can.

VIII. In truth, the Wahhabis have actualized the opinions of Ibn Taymiyya and are extremely zealous followers and supporters of those views. They adopted the positions of Ibn Taymiyya that we explained in our discussion of those who call themselves "Salafiyya." However, they expanded the meaning of bid`a and construed as innovations things that have no relation to worship. [...] In fact, it has been noticed that the Ulema of the Wahhabis consider their own opinions correct and not possibly wrong, while they consider the opinions of others wrong and not possibly correct. More than that, they consider what others than themselves do in the way of erecting tombs and circumambulating them, as near to idolatry.² In this respect they are near the Khawarij who used to declare those who dissented with them apostate and fight them as we already mentioned. This was a relatively harmless matter in the days when they were cloistered in the desert and not trespassing its boundaries; but when they mixed with others until the Hijaz country was in the hand of the Sa`ud family,³ the matter became of the utmost gravity. This is why the late King `Abd al-`Aziz of the Sa`ud family opposed them, and treated their opinions as confined to themselves and irrelevant to others."⁴ [End of the text quoted from Imam Abu Zahra's book *Tarikh al-Madhhab al-Islamiyya* ("History of the Islamic Schools").]

Among the titles Wahhabis gave themselves are the names Muwahhidun ("Monotheists"), Islahiyyun ("Reformists"), and Salafiyyun ("Followers of the Pious Predecessors") while their opponents name them Hashwiyya ("Illiterates" lit. "Visceralists"), Mujassima ("Anthropomorphists") and Khawarij ("Seceders"). They name Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab "Shaykh al-Islam" - although he is by his own Hanbali Madhhab's account a minor figure - and name his descendants Al al-Shaykh [House of the Shaykh] while his brother Sulayman ibn `Abd al-Wahhab declares him an heretic in his fatwa printed under the title *Fasl al-Khitab min Kitab Allah wa-Hadith al-Rasul* (Sallallahu `alayhi wa-Sallam) wa-Kalam Uli al-Albab fi Madhhab Ibni `Abd al-Wahhab ("The Final Word from the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the Sayings of the Scholars Concerning the School of Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab"), also known as *al-Sawa`iq al-Ilahiyya fi Madhhab al-Wahhabiyya* ("The Divine Thunderbolts Concerning the Wahhabi School").

This book is the earliest refutation of the Wahhabi sect in print, consisting in over forty-five concise chapters spanning 120 pages that show beyond doubt the fundamental divergence of the Wahhabi school, not only from the Consensus and Usul of Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama`a and the fiqh of the Hanbali madhhab, but also from their putative Imams, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim on most or all the issues reviewed.⁵ The last point shows the fundamental dishonesty of Salafism toward the very Imams they claim as their true link to the Salaf.

Other reliable literature on that sect includes:

- The Yemeni contemporary of Muhammad Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab: Sayyid`Alawi ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Qutb `Abd Allah al-Haddad's *Misbah al-Anam fi Radd Shubuhah al-Bid`i al-Najdi al-Ladhi Adalla biha al-`Awamm* ("The Lamp of Mankind in Refuting the Insinuations Used by the Innovator from Najd to Misguide the Public" 1216); I have translated the introduction and outline of this important book in full and it is available in the UK appended to Sayyid Yusuf al-Rifa`i's 1999CE pamphlet: "Advice to our brethren the Scholars of Najd" (see excerpts of the latter at http://www.sunnah.org/aqida/Sh_Rifai/Default.htm).

- Sayyid `Abd Allah ibn Hasan ibn Fadl Ba `Alawi's *Sidq al-Khabar fi Khawarij al-Qarn al-Thani `Ashar* ("The Truthful News Concerning the Kharijis of the Twelfth Century");

- Hasan ibn `Umar ibn Ma`ruf al-Shatti al-Hanbali's (1205-1274) *al-Nuqul al-Shar`iyya fil-Radd `ala al-Wahhabiyya* ("The Legal Texts that Refute the Wahhabis");

- Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan's (d 1304) *al-Durar al-Saniyya fil-Radd `ala al-Wahhabiyya* ("The Resplendent Pearls in Refuting the Wahhabis");

- Ibrahim al-Samannudi al-Mansuri's (d 1314) Sa`adat al-Darayn fil-Radd `ala al-Firqatayn al-Wahhabiyya wal-Zahiriyya ("The Bliss of the Two Abodes in the Refutation of the Two Sects: Wahhabis and Zahiris");

- Shaykh Salamat al-`Azzami's (d 1376) al-Barahin al-Sati`a fi Radd Ba`d al-Bida` al-Sha'i`a ("The Radiant Proofs in Refuting Certain Widespread Innovations");

- and the esteemed contemporary Yemeni Shaykh of Jeddah, al-Habib Zayn al-`Abidin Al Sumayt al-`Alawi's al-Ajwiba al-Ghaliya fi `Aqidat al-Firqat al-Najiya ("The Precious Replies Concerning the Doctrine of the Saved Group [= mainstream Sunnis]").

NOTES

1. To this day, the Khawarij include al-amr bil-ma`ruf wal-nahi `an al-munkar in their books of fiqh.
2. Ironically, the Wahhabis do not consider it idolatry to plaster pictures of their kings, set up kingdoms, and name a land after a king.
3. Through non-Muslim money and arms.
4. Abu Zahra, Tarikh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya (p. 235-238).
5. The Fasl/Sawa`iq received the following editions: [1] Bombay: Matba`a Nukhbat al Akhbar, 1306/1889; [2] Cairo; [3] Istanbul: Ishik reprints at Wakf Ihlas, 1399/1979; [4] (Unannotated) Damascus, 1418/1997 (al-Sawa`iq); [5] (Annotated) Damascus, 1420/1999 (Fasl).

Allah knows best.