

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Islam in Saudi Arabia: The Homogeneous Portrayal and Heterogeneous Reality**

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of the School of Divinity  
in Fulfillment for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in Global Studies

by

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Athens, GA

April, 2017

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction To The Problem

When questioned on how to offer a proper response to someone who labels a Muslim a Wahhabi, Shaykh Abdur Raheem Green, chairman of the Islamic Education & Research Academy (IERA), states that his response is, “What is a Wahhabi?” To those who are attempting to pinpoint the label he adds: “most of the time do not know and have no idea. They have just learned this term to throw at you when they hear certain things. So, most of the time they have no idea what a Wahhabi is.”<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Green’s response sheds light on the reality that *Wahhabi* is a term loosely thrown around by most without proper knowledge and is the target of multiple, often conflicting, interpretations regarding the beliefs, practices, and affiliations of practicing Muslims. Adding to the problem of properly identifying Wahhabism is the inseparable relationship of the Saudi royal family and Wahhabi clerics’ interwoven rule in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia portrays itself unified under the Islamic interpretation of Wahhabism.

However, the recent development of new agencies, such as Anti-Witchcraft Units, within the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV) to address prohibited behaviors, along with the rise of secularism and terrorism within the Kingdom, exhibit a country that is divided religiously from within. To illuminate the divergent spectrum of perspectives regarding life in Saudi Arabia, simultaneously the Kingdom has remained a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act for severe violations of religious freedom.<sup>2</sup> Yet, according to Gallup International Research polls, in 2015, Saudi

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<sup>1</sup> “If someone labels you a -Wahabi. Abdur Rahim Green.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BqQStL4P0k&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upq7r-iofswV7XJ&index> (accessed March 8, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> “ICL - Saudi Arabia Index.” ICL - Saudi Arabia Index. Accessed March 09, 2016. [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa\\_\\_indx.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa__indx.html).

Arabia tied Fiji as the second “Happiest Nation in the World.”<sup>3</sup>

For those with a differing Islamic interpretation, let alone a conflicting worldview and culture, Saudi Arabia is a locked door, unwelcoming of their doctrine and influence. Wahhabi cleric, Shaykh Dr. Nasser Ibn Suleiman Ibn Mohammed al-Omar, is most well-known internationally as the Saudi cleric who tearfully called for the execution of Hamza Kashagari, a 23-year-old Saudi writer in Jeddah. According to al-Omar, Kashagari committed apostasy when he posted remarks about Muhammad on Twitter in 2012.<sup>4</sup> In clarifying the reasoning behind the rejection of modernization in Saudi Arabia, which he equates with Westernization, al-Omar makes two points: (1) that “Saudis have never interfered with American curriculum, regardless of the apparent flaws and, therefore, neither should Americans (Westernizers) interfere with Saudi curriculum by attempting to Americanize it;” and (2) that “There is not an issue here... We do not have a problem here,” holding that most of those who take issue against their stances are non-Muslim, or those influenced by non-Muslim culture, “. . . and, therefore, their judgment does not count.”<sup>5</sup>

It becomes apparent that a polychotomy of perspectives persist regarding religious life in Saudi Arabia, making a heterogeneous Sunni interpretation of Islam plausible. In a Wahhabi/Salafi interpretation of Islam, one’s level of faith is believed to continuously fluctuate, and the result of a weakened faith is susceptibility to negative actions and influence from the

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<sup>3</sup> Yusuf Estes. "Saudi in Top Happy Nations!" Islam News Room. January 19, 2016, accessed March 26, 2016, <http://www.islamnewsroom.com/news-we-need/2489-saudi-in-top-happy-nations>. Roughly 65,000 people from 68 countries around the world were questioned in this 2015 poll, Saudi Arabia and Fiji received a Happiness International Index rate of 82%, which was only surpassed by Columbia with 85%.

<sup>4</sup>David Wood. “Sheikh Nasser al-Omar Calls for Execution of Hamza Kashagari for "Shameful" Comments about Muhammad on Twitter.” *Answering Muslim*. February 9, 2012, accessed March 3, 2017.<http://www.answeringmuslims.com/2012/02/sheikh-nasser-al-omar-calls-for.html>

<sup>5</sup> *House of Saud*. DVD. Directed by Jihan El-Tahri. Frontline, 2005. Sheikh Al-Omar’s comments are specifically in response to how school textbooks portray women. He holds that Islam honors women like no other religion, such writings are written for their protection, and that “Man is physically perfect and has natural powers” while “the female is inferior physically, mentally, and emotionally.”

seen and unseen world. According to Wahhabism/Salafism, Allah is located far above His Throne, while the earth is filled with fiery-tempered *jinn* who are believed to be able to affect an individual based upon his level of faith and actions. The problem becomes whether in times of need the individual remains steadfast in his faith and the worship of Allah alone, or if they seek intercession or worship elsewhere. Specifically, the problem is spiritual warfare, covered by the depiction of a unified Wahhabi/Salafi adherence blanketing Saudi Arabia.

## 1.2 Purpose For Thesis Topic

The purpose of this research is three-fold: (1) To trace the development of Wahhabism in order to create a working knowledge of its fundamental beliefs and, therefore, attempt to answer the question, what is a Wahhabi? (2) To identify and evaluate the depicted ideal religious devoutness within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the actual beliefs and practices of Saudi citizens and expatriates in order to pinpoint gaps between the portrayal of unity under the Wahhabi/Salafi methodology and, specifically, what is often referred to as “folk” Islamic practices. (3) To equip current and future cross-cultural students with a proper insight into the religiousness of Saudi Arabia by uncovering, most importantly, not what happens in Saudi Arabia but why it happens.

Three specific statements have considerably created and influenced the overall purpose of this research thesis. First, the American actor Henry Winkler, elevated his status as an armchair philosopher when he expressed, “Assumptions are the termites of relationships.”<sup>6</sup> Knowing that the presence of termites is usually only detectable once extensive internal damage has been done allows one to see the value in Winkler’s statement by concluding that assumptions within any

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Greenberg and Jack Reznicki. “Assumptions Are the Termites Relationships.” *The Copyright Zone*. Accessed March 1, 2016. <http://thecopyrightzone.com/?p=1320>.

relationship erode connections, trust, and reality. Cross-cultural studies mandate that individuals must battle the assumptions that they possess when confronted with evidence conflicting pre-held biases.

The second statement comes from a story in Duane Elmer's book, *Cross Cultural Connections*. Elmer relays the story of a monkey stranded on an island who spots a fish who was obviously, from the perspective of the monkey, in dire need of help as the fish was struggling to swim against the current. Risking his own safety, the monkey climbed a tree and somehow pulled the fish from its inevitable despair. Upon rescuing the fish, the monkey takes the fish back to his shelter and soon the fish falls peacefully to sleep. "Joy and satisfaction swelled inside the monkey. He successfully helped another creature."<sup>7</sup> Individuals must see the attributes that they share with the monkey in the story and grasp the fact that without a proper understanding of the actual needs of the fish, even the best intentions may have disastrous results.

The third statement which shaped this research is from an interview I conducted with Norman Bowman in 2013, who along with his wife, Gwendolyn, have been missionaries in Spain for over 30 years. Bowman stated that, "In our 30 years of experience the number one problem of all missionary endeavors is the lack of contextualization or even a basic understanding of contextualization – in spite of college and seminary training, and in spite of the mission agency's training sessions on the issue."<sup>8</sup> Bowman holds that few missionaries even have a clue about the historical and cultural shaping documents of their target audience, which is where a breakdown of understanding or ability to break through to a culture first occurs. While the above three stories are not the topic of this thesis, they form the intended purpose, which is to

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<sup>7</sup> Duane Elmer. *Cross Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World*. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2002). Elmer attributes the story of the fish and the monkey to Ann Templeton Brownlee, however, the original source not located. His story is this version, and the above is paraphrased.

<sup>8</sup> Personal Interview. 2013.

lay aside assumptions and survey the intended ideals and reality of Wahhabism/Salafism in the lives of its adherents and those under its influence in Saudi Arabia. The desired goal of this thesis is to better equip the reader to contextualize the gospel for a Saudi or Salafi audience, without stripping individuals of their culture or the gospel of its truth. Timothy Tennent furthers these perspectives by stating that “Christ does not arrive in any culture as a stranger.”<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 Need For Research

It is almost exclusively agreed upon that the term Wahhabism is a derogatory, pejorative term ascribed by opponents. However, it remains the prominent title fixed to those who adhere to the reform teachings of the Eighteenth-Century Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab (1703-1792). Those called Wahhabis make a singular claim to being the saved sect of Islam, which creates a multi-faceted problem, being that several “sects” claim the exclusive status. One of the largest stumbling blocks in properly understanding the movement or sect, or the only pure Islam as its adherents claim, is found in surveying preferred titles, such as *ahl Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*, *ahl Sunnah*, *ahl Hadith*, *Salafi*, etc.

One of the advantages of Wahhabism being regarded as the religion of Makkah and Madinah since the formation of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Twentieth-Century is that, historically, the two holiest cities in Islam are viewed by Muslims and non-Muslims “as a source for the purity of faith.”<sup>10</sup> Wahhabism is heavily criticized for its non-tolerant stances, a likely result of which is that it has also acted as a shield against inquires of unorthodox practices by its adherents. Stories of members of the royal family abusing power, violations of human rights, apparently absurd *fatwas*, and extremist funding with petrodollars constitute the majority

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<sup>9</sup> Timothy C. Tennent. *Theology: in the context of World Christianity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). 69

<sup>10</sup> Nazeer Ahmed. *Islam in Global History: From the Death of Prophet Muhammed to the First World War*. (Concord, CA: Kazi Publications, 2000). 205.

of headlines associated with Saudi Arabia. Yet, seemingly little research has been conducted, beyond that of Muslim scholars, into the vast pre-occupation with the spirit-world within Saudi Arabia. Ironically, “folk Islam” has been at the forefront of missiology teachings on contextualizing the gospel for Muslims, since Samuel Zwemer wrote extensively about the immense difference between what he studied of Orthodox Islam and what he experienced first-hand working with Muslims. This research proposes that Saudi Arabia is no different in regards to the practice of folk Islam, yet, instead of being unbridled, such practices are acknowledged, forbidden, and punished. Understanding the importance of removing harmful practices and beliefs from a Wahhabi perspective, in this researcher’s eyes, is unequalled in value for the contextualization of the gospel for one who follows the methodology of Wahhabism/Salafism

#### **1.4 Literature Review**

The contents of this thesis are owed to the extensive research of countless authors in the East and West, who range in their interpretation on the identification, beliefs, actions, and motivations of Wahhabis/Salafis inside and outside of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sources used in this research can unambiguously be categorized into three vast categories: (1) Muslims who adhere to Wahhabism/Salafism, (2) Muslims who oppose Wahhabism/Salafism, and (3) non-Muslims.

##### **1.4.1 Wahhabi/Salafi Sources**

First, the most valuable source that I have obtained in this research is a Salafi imam who I have met with one-on-one several times. I purposely have omitted his name from the bibliography, but I greatly admire him in his mixture of kindness to take extensive time to guide

me to many scholarly Islamic sources and his knowledge of the way of the Salaf.<sup>11</sup> Several of Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab's writings, such as *Kashfush Shubhatt (The Removal of Doubts)*, *Shuroot as-Salaat wa Arkaanuhaa wa Waajibaatuhaa (The Conditions, Pillars and Requirements of the Prayer)*, *Fada il-e-Qur'an (The Excellent Qualities of the Holy Quran)*, and *Kitab At- Tawhid (The Book of Tawhid)* have laid a solid foundation for the contents of Wahhabi/Salafi's belief and the methodology that they follow. Ibn Taymiyyah's *Sharh Al-Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyah (Fundamental Beliefs of Islam and Rejection of False Concept of its Opponents)* has been invaluable to further trace back the roots of the modern Wahhabi/Salafi movement and create a separation from the term *Wahhabi*, yet show adherence to a similar methodology. Ahmed Ibn Hanbal's writing, *Usool-us-Sunnah (Foundations of the Sunnah)*, gives a clear point-by-point declaration of the actions and beliefs that one must uphold to be on the same methodology as Muhammad. The writings and lectures of some current and deceased Salafi recognized scholars, such as former Saudi Grand Mufti's Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Ash Shaykh and Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdullah Ibn Baz, and current Grand Mufti Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdullah al-Ash Shaykh have been the clearest sources on shedding light into the modern religious ideal of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, their teachings have also been helpful in identifying the deficiencies of those within the Kingdom in upholding the model.

Two of the most instrumental sources utilized in this thesis are Dr. Abul Mundhir Khaleel Ibn Ibraaheem Ameen's book *The Jinn and Human Sickness: Remedies in the Light of the Qur'aan and Sunnah* and *Jinn* by Shaykh Dr. Muhammad Raslan. The majority of non-Muslim authors writing on "folk Islam" around the world tend to portray such issues as *jinn possession*, magic, witchcraft, and sorcery (*sihir*) as overlooked within the "higher" or Orthodox Islam.

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<sup>11</sup> Also, I met with one other Salafi imam one occasion, and corresponded through email with another.

These two works not only shed needed light on the fact that “overlooked” is the opposite of reality, supplementing and supporting non-Islamic writings that such “folk” practices are common occurrence within the Kingdom. Together, the writings and lectures of the scholars and the books by Dr. Ameen and Dr. Raslan show a large range of Islamic practice within Saudi Arabia. The director of Masjid as-Salaf in Birmingham, England, Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid, is a prolific modern Salafi writer and lecturer, who has been strongly utilized in this research to define Salafism in modernity and antiquity.<sup>12</sup> Almost daily, Abdul-‘Abbaas Moosa Richardson, Educational Coordinator at al-Masjid al-Awwal in Pittsburgh, PA, adds lectures to the *masjid’s* website, which have also greatly aided in understanding the methodology of the Salaf.<sup>13</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Non-Wahhabi/Salafi Muslim Sources

Second, of those Muslims who oppose Wahhabism/Salafism, to varying degrees, Yasir Qadhi and Stephen Schwartz are two of the most well-known. Yasir Qadhi is the Dean of Academic Affairs at AlMaghrib Institute, received a portion of his education in Saudi Arabia, and is a former Salafi, who has since split with the methodology. He is modestly critical of the trends within modern Salafism. Not ironically, many Salafi shaykhs have, as a result, recently responded by claiming that Qadhi is leading people astray. Stephen Schwartz, co-founder and Executive Director of the Center for Islamic Pluralism (CIP) in Washington, D.C., is openly and vehemently opposed to Wahhabism. Schwartz converted to Islam in 1997. His pro-Sufi, anti-Wahhabi stance can be seen in articles such as “Confronting the Wahhabi” (2006), “Defeating Wahhabism” (2002), “Getting to know the Sufis (2005),” and in his book *The Other Islam*:

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.abukhadeejah.com>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.firstmuslimmosque.com/new2/>

*Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony* (2008). It is important to note his adherence to Sufism, not to discredit his attacks on Wahhabism, but to identify his perspective.

#### 1.4.3 Non-Muslim Sources

Third, with regard to non-Muslim sources, the recent efforts of four writers, David Commins, William Ochsenwald, Thomas Hegghammer, and Simon Ross Valentine, stand out as pillars on the Saudi/Wahhabi connection and how it functions in modern Saudi Arabia. David Commins' books, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (2006) and *Islam in Saudi Arabia* (2015), along with Simon Ross Valentine's *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice* (2015) shed unparalleled first-hand accounts of light into the daily religious life in Saudi Arabia and the role of religion in politics, and vice-versa. David Commins, a professor at Dickinson College, is a leading expert on Middle Eastern and Islamic studies. Simon Ross Valentine, a freelance lecturer and writer in Islamic and Religious studies, drew from his three years of experience teaching throughout Saudi Arabia to compile *Force and Fanaticism*. From an honest perspective, these three books have greatly aided and challenged this research in that during the first six months of research, the questions I posed to research were all adequately addressed by Commins and Valentine. Consequently, this required a new direction of research, using such sources as a foundation, rather than a finish-line.

While Commins' and Valentine's writings are historically substantial, Emeritus Professor Dr. William Ochsenwald of Virginia Tech, who specializes in Middle Eastern History, draws needed focus to the often disregarded importance of the 400-year occupation of the Ottoman Empire in the Western portion of modern Saudi Arabia and its impact on the

development of Saudi Arabia.<sup>14</sup> Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, Thomas Hegghammer, represents a new generation of scholarship, which has been largely shaped by violent Islamism over the last 40 years. Hegghammer is an expert on Saudi Jihadism, and his website yields prodigious sources on Islamic militancy.<sup>15</sup> Hegghammer suggests that Saudi Islamism is a heterogeneous phenomenon, which needs to be broken down into smaller components. Drawing from a study he participated in, Hegghammer concluded that three distinct Islamist currents can be identified in the Kingdom: rejectionism, reformism, and jihadism.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.4.4 Uniqueness Of This Research

While Hegghammer is discussing Islamism, little research has been conducted with the same application toward the personal religious lives and practices of those in Saudi Arabia outside of political slants. This is not to imply broad categorizations such as Sunni, Shi'a, Sufi, or non-Muslim for such a research. Instead, it is to identify the forgotten group within the Kingdom, those Sunni Muslims in Saudi Arabia who piously or loosely adhered to Wahhabi/Salafi doctrines, yet seek additional aid for immediate unmet needs. The chasm that this research sets out to bridge is to arrive at what non-Muslim authors categorize as folk practices, by surveying what Wahhabism/Salafism believes causes one to risk falling outside the folds of Islam. One of the unique approaches of this paper is the choice to exclude discussing at

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<sup>14</sup> See William Ochsenwald. "Ottoman Arabia and the Holy Hijaz, 1516-1918," *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective*: Vol. 10: No. 1, Article 3. Accessed October 4, 2016. <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jgi/vol10/iss1/3.1>. & Ochsenwald, William. *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, ed. Robert Wuthnow. 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1998), 670-672.

<sup>15</sup> <http://hegghammer.com>

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Hegghammer. "Islamist violence and regime stability in Saudi Arabia." *International Affairs* 84: 4 (2008). Accessed July 15, 2016. pgs701-715.[http://hegghammer.com/\\_files/Hegghammer\\_-\\_Islamist\\_violence\\_and\\_regime\\_stability\\_in\\_Saudi\\_Arabia.pdf](http://hegghammer.com/_files/Hegghammer_-_Islamist_violence_and_regime_stability_in_Saudi_Arabia.pdf).

great lengths Saudi and Wahhabi connections with modern extremism, terrorism, or Islamism. This is by no means a dismissal of such charges. Even leading clerics within the Kingdom point out that the methodologies are near exact and the separation comes often only in choice of action.<sup>17</sup> Instead, the choice to omit such discussions is a result of: (1) profound current research, to which this research could add little, and (2) many researches have used it as a means to an end, which comes with the price of only a surface discourse into Wahhabism/Salafism methodologies as the focus of such works become an “extremist interpretation on an extremist interpretation.

Furthermore, many studies on the Wahhabi movement start with Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab in the Eighteenth-Century context of his lifetime. These studies strive to simultaneously make a forward connection to the modern manifestation of Wahhabism and a backward connection to the time of the Muhammad. Therefore, the structure of the first half of this thesis is to locate the proposed conduit from Muhammad to modern Wahhabism/Salafism. The second portion of this research arises out of a needed response to human rights violations within Saudi Arabia. While Saudi Arabia is often dismissed as cruel and backward, this thesis addresses a needed investigation into their “justification” for such punishments, which reveals a country that believes it is protecting its people from a greater harm.

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<sup>17</sup>Robert Spencer. “Senior Saudi Salafi Cleric: ‘ISIS Is a True Product of Salafism.’” *MEMRI*, November 4, 2014, accessed September 9, 2016. <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2014/11/senior-saudi-salafi-cleric-the-islamic-state-is-a-true-product-of-salafism>. - In two articles in the daily *al-Riyadh*, Shaykh al-Kalbani suggested to the clerics should remove their heads from the sand, particularly in rejecting anything deemed, new. Robert Spencer states that al-Kalbani believes that “the call to blindly reenact the path of the Prophet Muhammad and of the forefathers of Islam stems from a faulty grasp of the essence of this path, and that Muhammad himself had rejected blind adoption of the perceptions of the past and blind following of the path of his predecessors, choosing instead a rationalistic approach appropriate for a changing reality...”

## 1.5 Questions Addressed And Limitations

Deduced to its fundamental form, this thesis is an attempt to answer three questions: (1) What is Wahhabism/Salafism and is it the same path that Muhammad and his Companions were on? (2) How does Wahhabism function in Saudi Arabia; i.e. at what level does it represent the religious beliefs and needs of the people? (3) Is folk Islam practices of *bid'ah* and *shirk*, and when is it considered to be outside of the fold of Islam?

Regarding limitations of this research, the most monumental limitation has been the result of a lack of translations from Arabic to English for many valuable sources.<sup>18</sup> Fortunately, through assistance from imams and Arabic-speaking friends and colleagues, this hurdle has been minimized. However, I am quick to acknowledge that often the best translation is no translation as a result of the impossibility to properly translate abstract and figurative language from one language to another.

An additional limitation of this research has been in identifying the motivations of multiple researchers on Wahhabism, specifically, and Islam, in general. As mentioned above, it is imperative to recognize the stance of a source. For example, Stephen Schwartz's attacks on Wahhabism comes from a *Sufi* perspective. Throughout this research, I have relied on the recently completed *Study Qur'an*, released by Harper Collins Publications. The main editor Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a well-known and respected Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University. The *Study Qur'an* has been the recipient of great praise by most for its academic rigor and precise translation. However, it is equally important to note that it has received harsh criticism from many Salafis, including British Salafi Abu Eeas Niamatullah, who

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<sup>18</sup> Various spellings of translated Arabic words is a monumental task, and this thesis has attempted to maintain uniformity, with the exception of direct quotes. Variations within quotes do not render misspellings, but a varied spelling.

cautioned others to “avoid it like the Plague.”<sup>19</sup> Niamatullah holds that more than possessing mistakes, “it is dangerous,” believing that “to the 99 percent of people here, those who don't have the detailed tools necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff.”<sup>20</sup> In response to negative Salafi response, Nasr claims that Salafism “was not in the mainstream of the Muslim tradition,” as “it rejected centuries of Islamic thought.”<sup>21</sup> Such contradicting stances are common occurrences and for this research, which attempts to distinguish the religious beliefs and actions of the average Saudi Sunni. Therefore, it becomes an arduous task to filter opinions from facts.

### **1.6. Chapter Summaries**

In addition to this introductory chapter, Chapter Two is focused on laying a proper foundation to identify Wahhabism. One of the primary goals of any religious movement, claimed or ascribed as a “sect,” is to trace its teachings to the source of its revelation. In Islam, this is to trace one’s methodology back to that of Muhammad and his Companions. Therefore, the pursuit of any reform movement in Islam is to remove what has strayed Muslims from the practices and beliefs of Muhammad and his Companions. In this chapter, the first step is to address what the primary sources of Islam, the *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah*, revealed as the right path for a Muslim to be upon to remain within the folds of Islam. The next step is to identify the Companions of Muhammad and the development of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, in particular the school of Hanbali. The final section of this chapter is a discussion on the methodology and works of Ibn Taymiyyah to re-clarify this same path that Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab is proposed to have taken in his message of Islamic reform.

In discussing al-Wahhab, the overbearing point of Chapter Three is to recognize and

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<sup>19</sup> Katie Zavaski. “The America Quran Pissing Off the Saudis.” *The Daily Beast*. February 29, 2016, accessed January 3, 2017. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/02/29/the-american-quran-pissing-off-the-saudis.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. The use of God instead of Allah is one of the biggest issues Salafis likely have in this “translation.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. “not in the mainstream”: becomes important in translations of *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah* later in the paper.

identify that within the plethora of writings about al-Wahhab there exists various interpretations of who he was, the motivations behind his teachings, and writings that often skew his message. After exploring several of these perspectives, this chapter discusses the life and teachings of al-Wahhab, with the specific goal of defining Wahhabism, and comparing and contrasting it with the core doctrines of Salafism. The final section of this chapter progresses to explore the importance of relying on the scholars in Wahhabism/Salafism, which brings about the need for the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Four is focused on the religious connection between the descendants of al-Wahhab and the Saudi royal family, who together are the ruling families of modern Saudi Arabia. It is well-known that politics and religion are deeply intertwined in Saudi Arabia, to the point that attempting to isolate either renders an inaccurate perspective at best. Extensive studies have already been undertaken regarding the establishment and function of the political realm in the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this chapter will only briefly address the topic as necessary to further the comprehension of the Saudi enforcement of its Constitution (the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*), along with the Basic Laws. Again, the question that will hopefully be answered in this chapter is: What does Wahhabism look like in Saudi Arabia and how does it represent the people?

In attempting to answer the proposed question, much of this chapter focuses on what the religious establishment and royal family believe they are protecting the people from. This is shown, from a religious perspective, in the abundantly clear ambition of promoting what is believed to yield virtue and protection from what is believed will yield vice. In seeing the enforcement against what is held as vice from a Saudi/Wahhabi angle, it becomes apparent that within Saudi Arabia, folk practices commonly occur, but are expressed as acts of *bid'ah* and

*shirk*.

As a result, Chapter Five is focused on specific cases of *bid'ah* and *shirk* within Saudi Arabia and the actions taken in punishment and offering possible cures. The vast portion of this chapter will be focused on *jinns* and *sihr*, which, I hold, illustrates the fight for *tawhid* in Saudi Arabia greater than any other aspect. While news such as the decapitation of those accused of witch-craft or sorcery reach the world, the more often-used weapon of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* to combat evil is largely ignored or not identified. It is my belief that a deeper understanding into the spirit-world is the key to properly identifying the unmet spiritual needs of those in Saudi Arabia.

## CHAPTER 2: THE PATH OF MUHAMMAD FROM A WAHHABI PERSPECTIVE

### 2.1 *Qur'an* And *Sunnah*: Revealing Paths To Stay Within The Folds Of Islam

Muslims refer to the *Qur'an* as the verbatim word of Allah, or more specifically, the “Speech of Allah,” where “His principles are given.”<sup>22</sup> It is believed that the recitation and memorization of the *Qur'an* are so transformative to a heart that “the student would benefit from the *baraka* of the *Qur'an* even if he did not understand its meaning.”<sup>23</sup> In *Surah al-Anam*, the path of Allah is revealed to Muhammad, culminating in *ayat* 153, “This indeed is My path made straight; so follow it, and follow not other ways, lest they separate you from His way . . .”

(6:153) Remaining on this straight path is arguably the main principle of the *Qur'an*, which is dependent upon one’s avoidance of “that which your Lord has forbidden you” (2:150) and the partaking of that which He has been permitted. In *Surah al-Nabl*, it is revealed to Muhammad that “. . . We have sent down the Reminder (*Qur'an*) unto thee that thou mightest clarify for mankind that which has been sent down unto them, that haply they may reflect” (16:44).

Muslims interpret the meaning of this *ayat* is that Allah revealed the *Qur'an* to Muhammad because he, being the best of all mankind, is the only one properly equipped to clarify the principles of Allah given in the *Qur'an*, and that reflecting his actions and sayings is to properly follow the straight path of Allah. In Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips’ book, *The Methodology of Hadith Evaluation*, the correlation given is that “if one is to understand the meaning of *Qur'aan*, he or she must consider what the Prophet (r) said or did regarding it.”<sup>24</sup> For example, in the *Qur'an* Allah mandates the believers to offer *salat* (formal prayer) and pay *zakat* (obligatory

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<sup>22</sup> From a personal “interview” with Salafi Imam. March 2017.

<sup>23</sup> William Shephard. *Introducing Islam*. (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2009). 116. *Baraka* (blessing)

<sup>24</sup> Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. *Usool Al Hadeeth- The Methodology of Hadith Evaluation*. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, 2007).

charity), perform *haji*, etc. Dr. Philips explains that, “However, in order to obey these instructions correctly, one must study the methodology of the Prophet.”<sup>25</sup>

The methodology (*manhaj*) of the Prophet is known as the *Sunnah*, which linguistically means a path, course, a simple road, rule or manner of acting or conduct of life.<sup>26</sup> The *Sunnah* is commonly held within Islam to be the sayings, actions, and the manners of Muhammad, and, in many ways, is synonymous with the term *hadith*. The simplest definition of *hadith* is an item of news, a story, conversation, tale, or report. However, after the time of Muhammad it has universally become understood to refer to the “reports that spoke of his actions and sayings.”<sup>27</sup> Yasir Qadhi explains that “The *Sunnah* is the abstract concept of the Prophet’s life and the *hadith* is opening up Bukhari and Muslim, and seeing it in print. The *Sunnah* is preserved in the *hadith*.”<sup>28</sup> Another way of viewing the slight differences between the *Sunnah* and *hadith* is through an understanding that *hadiths* are reflections Muhammad made pertaining to his own life, and, therefore, can be seen as an autobiographical account; whereas the *Sunnah* regards obligations to Islamic life overall: religious, social, and legal.<sup>29</sup> From a legal aspect, Qadhi gives the three opinions held by the scholars on the status of the *Sunnah* in Islam: (1) in weight of legal terms, the *Qur’an* is first and the *Sunnah* second; (2) held by the majority of scholars, from a legal perspective, the two hold equal weight to the point that if Muhammad claims something as forbidden or permissible, it is like Allah said the words,<sup>30</sup> yet regarding *baraka*, the *Qur’an* is

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “Sunni Beliefs Regarding the Companions of Prophet Muhammad.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS43U-YynBw>. (accessed February 1, 2017). & Philips, Abu Ameenah Bilal. *Usool Al Hadeeth*.

<sup>27</sup> Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. *Usool Al Hadeeth*.

<sup>28</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “Sunni Beliefs Regarding the Companions of Prophet Muhammad.”

<sup>29</sup> Hunt Janin & Andre Kahlmeyer. *Islamic Law: The Sharia from Muhammad’s Time to the Present*. London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2007.1-3.

<sup>30</sup> An example of this connection is given in the following paragraph, Sunan Ibn Majah Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 3.

superior as it is the speech of Allah; and (3) not a publicly held position, but that “the *Qur’an* is more in need of the *Sunnah* than the *Sunnah* is in need of the *Qur’an*.”<sup>31</sup>

Salafi scholar Shaykh ‘Abd al-Azeer ar-Rayyis pulls from the teachings of Imam Malik (who will be discussed later), who drew a parallel between the *Sunnah* and Noah’s Ark, believing that “Whoever rides it will be saved and whoever has missed it is destroyed.”<sup>32</sup> In Sunan Ibn Majah, Jabir Ibn ‘Abdullah said: “We were with the Prophet (PBUH), and he drew a line (in the sand), then he drew two lines to its right and two to its left. Then he put his hand on the middle line and said: ‘This is the path of Allah.’...”<sup>33</sup> This *hadith* demonstrates Muhammad attempting to clarify to the people what was revealed to him in the *Qur’an*.

While the above *hadith* is largely accepted and non-contradictory to other *ahadith*, it is important to acknowledge that it is graded as a *da’if* (weak) *hadith*. The composition of each *hadith* consists of two parts: (1) the *isnaad* (chain of transmitters) beginning with the last transmitter to the collector of the *hadith* and terminating with the Companion who took it directly from Muhammad, and (2) the *matn* (text) which includes the words, actions, physical characteristics, approvals and disapprovals of Muhammad. A *da’if hadith* is one that contains a discontinuity in the *isnaad*, meaning that along with the possibility of their being a break in the chain of transmission from the reporter back to the words or actions of Muhammad, it may instead imply that the character of the narrator, (e.g. known for mistakes, involvement in innovation, or lies) is in question.<sup>34</sup> Moosa Richardson, in discussing a *da’if hadith*, regarding the use of amulets made from seashells, offers the insight that because of a weak chain, “a *hadith*

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<sup>31</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “Sunni Beliefs Regarding the Companions of Prophet Muhammad.”

<sup>32</sup> “Sh Abdul Aziz ar Rayyis on holding onto Sunnah and being kind to Ahlus Sunnah.flv.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcNUqDHSieg>. (accessed March 8, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Sunan Ibn Majah (Vol. 1, Book 1, *Hadith* 11).

<sup>34</sup> Suhayb Hasan. "Introduction to the Science of Hadith." *Sunnah Online*. Accessed October 4, 2016. [sunnahonline.com/library/fiqh-and-sunnah/277-introduction-to-the-sciences-of-hadith#h3-7-5-da-if](http://sunnahonline.com/library/fiqh-and-sunnah/277-introduction-to-the-sciences-of-hadith#h3-7-5-da-if).

does not need to be completely thrown out because the scholars can see if they match up with a *sahih* narration or if they correspond with another *hadith*.<sup>35</sup> If the *hadith* cannot be elevated by these means, Richardson teaches that it still can be beneficial to take the meaning from the narration, but clarifies that it is mandatory when using such a *hadith*, to first say, “if it is authentic, then the likely meaning of it is...”<sup>36</sup>

So while being considered a *da'if hadith* does not render it unauthentic, it does raise questions about its authenticity as *hadith* are categorized as: either *sahih* (sound), *hasan* (good), *da'if* (weak), or *madu'* (fabricated, forged). It would be incorrect, however, to establish practice or blindly attribute the text to Muhammad from anything less than *sahih hadith*. Highlighting the importance of *isnaad*, ‘Abdullaah Ibn al-Mubaarak, one of Bukhari’s teachers declared, “The *isnaad* is from the religion. Were it not for the *isnaad* anyone could say anything he wishes.”<sup>37</sup> As will become apparent in the later portions of this research, many attacks toward Wahhabi/Salafis come from claims that they utilize weak and unauthentic *ahadith* to justify their doctrines.

It is, therefore, common practice for most to take *hadith* from *Sahih* Bukhari and *Sahih* Muslim, to avoid such accusations. Not to dismiss Sunan Ibn Majah, the collection of *hadith* compiled by Imam Muhammad Ibn Yazid Ibn Majah al-Qazvini is largely understood as the one of the six canonical collections of *hadith*, *Kutub al-Sittah* (six major *hadith* collections) in Sunni Islam, and contains an abundance of *sahih ahadith*. For example, his collection opens with “Abu Haurairah narrated that: The Prophet said: ‘Whatever I have commanded you, do it, and whatever I have forbidden you, refrain from it.’” Two *ahadith* later Abu Haurairah again

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<sup>35</sup> Moosa Richardson. “Amulets and Talismans are Polytheism (Part 2).” *Speaker*. March 8, 2017, accessed March 12, 2017. <http://www.speaker.com/user/radio1mm/amulets-and-talismans-are-polytheism-par>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. *Usool Al Hadeeth*.

narrated that the Muhammad said: “Whoever obeys me, obeys Allah; and whoever disobeys me, disobeys Allah.”<sup>38</sup> Illustrating the interconnectedness of the *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah*, Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi gives the analogy that the *Qur’an* is to the *Sunnah* what the foundation is to the building or the soul to the body.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.1.1 *Tawhid, Shirk & Bid’ah*

When discussing Wahhabism/Salafism, the three most common words used to define the range of one’s practice of Islam are: *tawhid* (the oneness and uniqueness of Allah); *bid’ah* (innovation); and *shirk* (ascribing partnership to Allah, polytheism). Each of these will be addressed extensively in subsequent sections and chapters. It is necessary to first establish a working understanding of each term.

*Surah al-Ikhlās* (112), also known as *Surah al-Tawhid*, reads “Say, ‘He, God is One, the Eternally Sufficient unto Himself. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And none is like unto Him.’” In *Sahih* Bukhari, Abu Sa’id al-Khudri narrates that upon hearing a man reciting *Surah* 112 repeatedly, another man asked Muhammad if the recitation of that *Surah* by itself was enough. In response, Muhammad said, “By Him in Whose Hand my life is, it is equal to one-third of the *Qur’an*.”<sup>40</sup> This frequently referred to *hadith* confirms the importance and necessity within Islam to ascribe no partnership to Allah, and see Him as a completely unique singularity. According to Nazeer Ahmed, *tawhid* is the central pole around which Islamic history revolves.<sup>41</sup> Taking that *tawhid* unites all of Islam, and seeing a vast spectrum within Islamic thought, there is little surprise that there also exists a vast range of interpretation within *tawhid*. The opposing

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<sup>38</sup> (Vol. 1, Book 1, *Hadith* 1 &3)

<sup>39</sup> Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi. “Inter-Relation Between the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the Hadith.” *Islam Calling*, December 7, 2010, accessed July 18, 2016. <https://islamcalling.wordpress.com/2010/07/12/inter-relation-between-the-qur%E2%80%99an-the-sunnah-and-the-hadith/>.

<sup>40</sup> Bukhari (Vol.6, Book 61, *Hadith* 533).

<sup>41</sup> Nazeer Ahmed. *Islam in Global History*. 203

outer ends of the range of *tawhid* are what many hold as being represented within Sunni Islam by Salafism and Sufism. At one end is Salafism's interpretation of Allah being beyond analogy or similarity to His creation, and at the other end, Sufism's search to experience Allah through the spiritual realm.<sup>42</sup> Grand Mufti Shaykh Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdullah al-Ash Shaykh holds that *tawhid* is what united all the Messengers, as well as being the core message they all preached.<sup>43</sup>

To develop a stronger grasp of *tawhid*, knowledge of what constitutes *shirk* is beneficial. A boiled-down definition of *shirk* is the act of associating others with Allah in worship, or in regards to His nature, either of which constitute an act of polytheism, according to a proper understanding of *tawhid*. In answering a Muslim sister's question on the difference between *kufir* (a disbeliever) and *shirk*, Shaykh Ibn Baz describes *shirk* as an action verb, stating, "Shirk is to devote the acts of worship to anything besides Allah, such as those who seek the help of the dead, the absent, the *jinn*, idols, the stars, and so on or those who offer sacrifices or make vows to them."<sup>44</sup> *Shirk* is the antithesis of *tawhid* and there are two types of *shirk*: *shirk akbar* (major) and *shirk asghar* (minor). *Shirk akbar* is *shirk* that is unforgivable and ensures that one is outside of the fold of Islam, and as a result, is assured of not entering *Jannah* (Heaven). *Shirk akbar* can further be broken down into two sub-categories: (1) *shirk akbar jali* (clear), which is the obvious worship of anything in place of Allah; and (2) *shirk akbar khafi* (subtle), which is "when one prays or supplicates to something other than Allah" or "when one takes a lawgiver or lawmaker other than Allah."<sup>45</sup> Yusuf Qardawi, a prominent Egyptian Islamic theologian, who has long-time

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 202-205.

<sup>43</sup> "Tawheed and the Mission of The Messengers - Sheikh Abd al-Aziz Aal al-Shaykh." *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSbZMeykxkk&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=5> (accessed July 16, 2016).

<sup>44</sup> "Fatwas of Ibn Baz: 'What is the Difference Between Kufr and Shirk?'" *Quran Sunnah Educational Programs*. Accessed September 22, 2016. [http://www.qsep.com/modules.php?name=ilm&d\\_op=article&sid=888](http://www.qsep.com/modules.php?name=ilm&d_op=article&sid=888).

<sup>45</sup> "Shirk: Polytheism." *Mission Islam*. Accessed January 12, 2017. <http://www.missionislam.com/knowledge/Shirk.htm>. The reference for this articles is from Yusuf Qardawi *the Meaning of Tawheed (Malay translation by Pustaka Salam) 1987*.

ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, points out that while *shirk asghar* is classified as minor *shirk*, by no means does that mean that it is not as serious as *shirk akbar*.<sup>46</sup> Instead, these forms often go undetected or unnoticed by others, meaning that any form of *shirk* has major consequences and renders one's actions and deeds unacceptable to Allah. Forms of *shirk asghar* include the use of talisman and amulets for protection, swearing by a name other than Allah, the excessive praising of oneself, and the excessive praise of prophets, imams, or leaders.<sup>47</sup>

*Bid'ah* translates to innovation, and, in the Islamic sense, it refers to a practiced action or belief that was not practiced by Muhammad and his Companions, or even simpler, the addition of something prohibited. In many ways *bid'ah* can be seen as the gateway to *shirk*, as Saudi Salafi scholar Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzan clarifies, "The Devil is always and continuously with innovation; he calls to it, and desires it, due to his knowledge that it (*bid'ah*) lead to *Shirk* (associating partners in worship with Allah)."<sup>48</sup> Sheik Hasan Ali, founder of the Safar Academy in London, gives the example of how visiting a grave can go from an action approved in the *Sunnah*, to *bid'ah* and then to *shirk*. He states that the *Sunnah* is supportive of one going to the grave of another Muslim to make *dua* (invocation, prayer, supplication) to Allah and to recite the *Qur'an*. However, when people start bringing flowers and burning candles *bid'ah* has occurred, and once they start to make *dua* to other than Allah, circle the grave like it is the *Ka'ba*, etc., it is now *shirk*.<sup>49</sup> Shaykh Saalih al-Ash Shaykh, Minister of Islamic Affairs in Saudi Arabia, maintains that supplicating the dead is in fact *bid'ah* as well as *shirk*, He calls it an "innovated form of shirk," given that it was not a practice of the people of *Jahilayyah* (pre-Islamic

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Abu Aa'isha Amjad. "The Devil calls to innovations? Ash Shaykh Saalih Al Fawzaan" *Salafi Center*. March 9, 2016, accessed June 12, 2016. <http://www.salaficentre.com/2016/03/the-devil-calls-to-innovations-ash-shaykh-saalih-al-fawzaan/>.

<sup>49</sup> "Salafi vs. Sufi & Bid'ah - 2/2 - Shaykh Hasan Ali." *You Tube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVuP-Gf4PoA&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Up7r-i0fswV7XJ&index=3> (accessed August 3, 2016).

ignorance), who instead sought closeness to their deities to supplicate for them instead of the dead.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.2 The Companions Of The Prophet

From various *ayats* in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the elevated status of Muhammad's Companions is made clear. In the *Qur'an*, it is said of the Companions, "You are the best community brought forth unto mankind, enjoying right, forbidding wrong, and believing in God."<sup>51</sup> Muhammad further separated them from all previous and future generations, saying that "The best of the people are my generation, then those after them, then those after them. . ." <sup>52</sup> It was best explained to me, that one way of understanding this, is that the Companions were the ones who first-hand walked and talked with Muhammad. Therefore, it would be like telling a story about someone you met and lived with, where your personal encounters validate the likelihood and authenticity of the story. If your father had the experiences and passed them down to you, and you shared his experience with another, there would still be value. Yet, there would be some separation. If your grandfather told your father about his own experiences, and, in turn, your father passed them down to you, and, in turn, you passed the story along, there would be further separation, fewer details, less accuracy as the story continues to subsequent generations.<sup>53</sup>

Those who belong to the generation of Muhammad and his Companions are known as *sahaabah*. Yasir Qadhi points out that there are various interpretations of who is an actual *sahaabi*. Some hold that one is considered a *sahaabi* only if he or she lived with Muhammad at least one or two years and fought in at least one or two battles with him. Others, such as Bukhari,

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<sup>50</sup> "Shaykh Saalih Aal ash-Shaykh on Asking the Dead to Intercede." *Bakkah*. July 27, 2013, accessed January 15, 2017. <http://www.bakkah.net/en/shaykh-saalih-aal-ash-shaykh-on-asking-the-dead-to-intercede.htm>.

<sup>51</sup> (3:110)

<sup>52</sup> This is reported by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'ee and others.

<sup>53</sup> From interview with Salafi imam. March 2017.

believe that anyone who even saw Muhammad alive should be considered a *sahaabi*.<sup>54</sup> Qadhi takes a moderate and majority-held definition, which holds that “anyone who met the Prophet while believing in him and dying in the belief” is a *sahaabi*.<sup>55</sup> Imam Muslim’s teacher, Abu Zur’ah, taught that the *sahaabah* were 114,000 in number.<sup>56</sup> The second generation is known as the Successors (*taabi’oon*) and the following generation the Successors of the Successors (*taabi’ut-taabi’een*). Together these three generations are *salaf* which means “predecessors” or “ancestors.” Thereby, a *Salafi* is one who follows the *salaf* and the highest term to be used for the first three generations is *as-salaf as-salih*, which translates as “the righteous predecessors.”<sup>57</sup>

Along with being regarded as the best of mankind, the importance of remaining on the path of Muhammad and his Companions comes from the warning in the *hasan hadith*, where Muhammad stated that, “The Jews split into seventy-one sects, or seventy-two sects, and the Christians similarly, and my *Ummah* will split into seventy-three sects.”<sup>58</sup> Another version is recorded in the *da’if hadith* where ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Amr narrates that Muhammad said: “What befell the children of Isra’il will befall my *Ummah* . . . Indeed, the children of Isra’il split into seventy-two sects, and my *Ummah* will split into seventy-three sects. All of them are in the Fire except one sect.” He said: “And which is it O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “What I am upon and my Companions.” Instead of Muhammad answering that the saved sect is that of what he and his Companions are upon, in Sunan Ibn Majah the identification of the saved sect is “the main body,” in some translations and *al-Jama’ah* in others.<sup>59</sup> At-Tirmidhi recorded a *sahih*

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<sup>54</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “Sunni Beliefs Regarding the Companions of Prophet Muhammad.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Danladi Babangida. “Shi’a And Ahalul Sunna: Who Insult (Abuse) The Sahaba?” *News Rescue*. May 5, 2016. Accessed May 27, 2016. [http://newsrescue.com/shia-and-ahalul-sunna-who-insult-abuse-sahaba/#\\_axzz4XUzXjaOf](http://newsrescue.com/shia-and-ahalul-sunna-who-insult-abuse-sahaba/#_axzz4XUzXjaOf).

<sup>57</sup> Louay Fatoohi. “Using “al-Salaf al-Salih (the righteous predecessors) to Misunderstand and Misrepresent Islam.” Louay Fatoohi’s Blog. July 20, 2012, accessed October 22, 2016. <http://www.louayfatoohi.com/2012/07/islam/using-al-salaf-al-salih-the-righteous-predecessors-to-misunderstand-and-misrepresent-islam/>

<sup>58</sup> At- Tirmidhi. (Vol.5, Book 38, *Hadith* 2641).

<sup>59</sup> Both *ahadith* in Sunan Ibn Majah use the same terminology, and #3992 is hasan & #3993 sahih.

*hadith*, where Ibn ‘Abbas narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: “Allah’s Hand is with the *Jama’ah*.”<sup>60</sup>

### 2.3 *Ahl Sunnah Wa’l Jama’ah*

If divisions exist among the *ummah*, according to Muhammad, all but one group are not following the path he was on and will enter the Hell-Fire. Clearly, any sect in Islam will claim that they are on the correct path and, therefore, are the saved sect or *al-Jama’ah*. Abu Iyaad holds that linguistically, *jama’ah* is rooted in the word *ijtima*, which means “a gathering, where people come together, i.e. a unification.” From that understanding, he concludes, “The *Jama’ah* are a people who have united together on a certain matter/faith.”<sup>61</sup> As is the case with multiple Islamic doctrines, opposites are used to define each other, such as *bid’ah* is the opposite of *Sunnah*; *tawhid* the opposite of *shirk*; prohibited the opposite of permissible. The same applies to *jama’ah*, where the opposite would be division or separation within the *ummah*. Additionally, mirroring other Islamic terms, proper identification can only be discovered in the context of the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*.

In the *Qur’an*, the importance of the unity within the *ummah* is also clearly held, as seen in *Surah al-Imran* (3:103), which states “. . . hold fast to the rope of God, all together, and be not divided,” and in *Surah al-Mu’minun* (26:52-53) which proclaims “. . . truly this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so reverence me. But they made their affair to be founded upon different scriptures, each party exulting in what it had.” In *Sahih Muslim*, Abdullah (b. Mas’ud) narrated that Muhammad stood up and said: “. . . the blood of a Muslim who bears the testimony that there is no god but Allah, and I am His Messenger, may be lawfully

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<sup>60</sup> At-Tirmidhi, (Vol.4, Book7, Hadith 2166).

<sup>61</sup> Abu Iyaad. “The Meaning of Ahlus-Sunnah wa’l-Jama’at.” *Sunnah Online*. Accessed October 9, 2016. <http://sunnahonline.com/library/beliefs-and-methodology/71-meaning-of-ahl-us-sunnah-wal-jamaat-the>.

shed only in case of three persons: the one who abandons Islam, and deserts the community (Ahmad, one of the narrators, is doubtful whether the Prophet (PBUH) used the word (*li'l-jama'ah* or *al-jama'ah*) and the married adulterer, and life for life.”<sup>62</sup> While probable that the term *jama'ah* is excluded from this *hadith*, its placement is strengthened by other *ahadith*, and the word choice of “community” lends itself to a greater understanding of what is meant by *jama'ah*.<sup>63</sup> From this *hadith*, it can be deduced that either Muhammad did use *jama'ah* to specifically identify those on the same path as he and his Companions, or that the Companions deemed the term appropriate to identify the united community of believers that Muhammad was specifying.

The preferred terminology of any sect within Islam is, therefore, *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah*, which translates to “the people of *Sunnah* and the community of believers.” In September 2016, over 100 of the top Sunni Muslims in the world gathered in Chechnya to,

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<sup>62</sup> Muslim (Book 16, *Hadith* 4154).

<sup>63</sup> Other sahih ahadeeth to support *jama'ah* referring to the unified community following the Sunnah include: (1) Sunan an-Nasa'i, 'Abdullah narrates: “The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: ‘By the One besides Whom there is no other god, it is not permissible to shed the blood of a Muslim who bears witness to La ilaha illallah (there is none worthy of worship except Allah) and that I am the Messenger of Allah, except in three cases: One who leaves Islam and splits away from the *Jama'ah*, a person who has been married and then commits adultery, and a life for a life.” (Vol.5, Book 37, *Hadith* 4021).

(2) From Sunan an-Nasa'i, 'Arfajah Ibn Shuraih Al-Ashja'i said: “I saw the Prophet (PBUH) on the Minbar addressing the people. He said: ‘After me there will be many calamities and much evil behavior. Whoever you see splitting away from the *Jama'ah* or trying to create division among the Ummah of Muhammad (PBUH), then kill him, for the hand of Allah is with the *Jama'ah*, and the Shaytan is with the one who splits away from the Ummah, running with him. (Vol. 5, Book 37, *Hadith* 4025).

(3) At-Tirmidhi recorded as Ibn 'Umar narrated: “‘Umar delivered a Khutbah to us at Al-Jabiyah. He said: ‘O you people! Indeed I have stood among you as the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) stood among us, and he said: ‘I order you (to stick to my Companions, then those who come after them, then those who come after them. Then lying will spread until a man will take an oath when no oath was sought from him, and a witness will testify when his testimony was not sought. Behold! A man is not alone with a woman but the third of them is Ash-Shaytan. Adhere to the *Jama'ah*, beware of separation, for indeed Ash-Shaytan is with one, and he is further away from two. Whoever wants the best place in Paradise, then let him stick to the *Jama'ah*. Whoever rejoices with his good deeds and grievers over his evil deeds, then that is the believer among you.” (Vol. 4, Book 7, *Hadith* 2165).

(4) In Sunan Ibn Majah it is recorded that: It was narrated from 'Abdullah, who was Ibn Mas'ud, that the Messenger of Allah said: “It is not lawful to shed the blood of a Muslim who bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah (SWT), and that I am the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), except in one of three cases: a soul for a soul; a married person who commits adultery, and one who leaves his religion and splits from the *Jama'ah*.” (Vol. 3, Book 20, *hadith* 263).

among other things, clarify who constitutes *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah*, and who is excluded. Shaykh Ahmad al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, stated that “*Ahlus Sunna wa'l Jama'ah* are the Ash'arites or Muturids. In matters of belief they are followers of any of the four schools of thought and are also the followers of pure Sufism in doctrines, manners and purification.”<sup>64</sup> An important reflection from al-Tayeb's definition is that he “allegedly excluded the “Salafists” stating that they are not from among the *Sunnah*.”<sup>65</sup> Saudi Salafi clerics quickly rebutted al-Tayeb's statement by acknowledging the conference as “an attempt by the Russian government to deepen the gap between Saudi Arabia and Egypt.”<sup>66</sup> While this is not the first attempt to omit Salafis from being considered part of *ahl Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*, the consensus of multiple, largely Sufi-oriented leaders, is monumental.

Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, a well-known Sufi imam labeled Wahhabi/Salafi adherents as promoters of “isolation of the doctrine of the majority of Muslims.”<sup>67</sup> Specifically, Kabbani argues that Salafism/Wahhabism has deviated from the path of Muhammad and his Companions in their rejection of *ijma* (scholarly consensus), *qiyas* (analogy), and the practice of *takfir* (declaring another Muslim to be an unbeliever).<sup>68</sup> While these are common attacks against Salafis/Wahhabis, it must be recalled that Kabbani and al-Tayeb are both adherents of Sufism. It is estimated that at least 70 % of all Muslims follow some type of Sufism.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, one can see that commonly, *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah* is interpreted from a Sufi perspective as the

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<sup>64</sup> Ghulam Rasoo Dehlvi. “Islamic Conference in Chechnya: Why Sunnis are Disassociating Themselves from Salafists.” *First Post*. September 9, 2016, accessed November 8, 2016. <http://www.firstpost.com/world/islamic-conference-in-chechnya-why-sunnis-are-disassociating-themselves-from-salafists-2998018.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> “Ahlu-Sunnah versus the Ashari/Sufi Movement: A Refutation Against the Successive Generations and the Warning from the Innovations of the Ash'aris and the Sufis.” *Al-Mustaqeem Productions*. Accessed October, 19, 2016. <http://al-mustaqeem.tripod.com/id115.html>.

<sup>68</sup> 51 “Ahlu-Sunnah Versus the Ashari/Sufi Movement: A Refutation.

<sup>69</sup> Phil Parshall. *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective On Folk Islam*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006).

majority of the *ummah* following the *Sunnah*. Shi'as also make the claim of being those who Muhammad named as the sect that will remain on the correct path. According to Shi'a *ahadith*, *jama'ah* is instead referred to with Shi'a specific words such as *Ahl al-Bayt*, *Imamah*,<sup>70</sup> or *Shi'a*.<sup>70</sup> Shi'as do not adhere to the Sunni collection of the *Sunnah*, largely stemming from the result that they do not recognize Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman as the correct successors of Muhammad, but instead hold Ali as the first correct *Caliphate*. Following these beliefs, Shi'a hold that the six major Sunni *hadith* collections are not reliable, as most of those who narrated, would have deviated from the correct path by following Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. Instead, *Shi'a* Muslims draw from their four main books of *Shi'a hadith*, known as *Kutab al Arba'* (Four Books).

#### 2.4 Schools Of *Fiqh*

Shaykh al-Fawzan says that from the “doubt by which they opposed the call” of Muhammad ibn Abdul al-Wahhab, his opponents claim that he created a fifth *madhhab* (school of thought) outside the fold of the four *madhhab*, which they contribute the name *Wahhabi madhhab*.<sup>71</sup> Shaykh al-Fawzan explains that rather than birthing a new *madhhab*, al-Wahhab was in *fiqh* (jurisprudence, or literally a deep understanding) of the school of Imam Hanbal (780-855 or 164AH-241AH), but a Salafi in his *aqeedah* (beliefs), and, therefore, a Hanbali Salafi.<sup>72</sup> It is commonly held that Imam Hanbal can be thought of as the great-grandfather of Wahhabism, and while clearly a string can be tightly strung between Wahhabism and Imam Hanbal, as Fawzan states, following the school of Imam Hanbal, does not imply marriage to it.<sup>73</sup> It appears to be

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<sup>70</sup>“The Ummah Will be Separated in 73 Sects.” *Purified House*. Accessed March 1, 2017. <http://purifiedhousehold.com/the-ummah-will-be-separated-in-73-sects/>

<sup>71</sup> “Madhhab and Aqidah of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab - Shaykh Saleh al Fawzan.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4luQ8ljO8Dk>. (accessed March 9, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*.

more accurate to see that the *aqeedah* of the Salafi should be to search for the strongest association with the “Righteous predecessors,” while being open to the truths of each school of *fiqh*, being those of Imam Hanaf, Imam Malik, Imam Shaf’i, and Imam Hanbal.

In answering which of the four imams was closest to the *Sunnah*, Maulana Ishaq points out that it is a great misunderstanding (even a sin) to not see that each of the four great imams were sincere seekers of the *Sunnah*; and none turned away from it.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, he purports that as a result of no codified collection of *hadith* being left behind, each of the four great imams was left to the task of discovering the *Sunnah* in his own way. Therefore, each took a slightly different approach, as a result of the imams doing their own *ijithaad* (effort; the use of independent reasoning).<sup>75</sup>

In developing their *fiqh*: (1) Imam Hanaf relied heavy on the Companion Ibn Mas’ud whom the *Sahaabah* praised as one closest to Muhammad in manners and behavior, believing from Ibn Mas’ud the truest *Sunnah* could be found; (2) Imam Malik, who never left Madinah, did so as a result of his belief that the greatest way to discover the *Sunnah* was to see the practices of those in Madinah during his lifetime as they were the descendants of those who imitated Muhammad from first-hand experience; (3) Imam Shaf’i focused on the strength of narrations over a particular person or place in discovering the *Sunnah*; and (4) Imam Hanbal, a student of Imam Shaf’i, is known for his extensive search for authentic narrations and was held by Shaf’i to be the one who was closest to the way of the prophet, due to his wide range of authentic *ahadith* he drew from and the efforts he undertook in travel to obtain.<sup>76</sup> The take-away point that Ishaq attempts to solidify is that each of the imams were followers of the *Sunnah*, and,

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<sup>74</sup> “Which of the Four Imams was closest to the Sunna?| Maulana Ishaq . *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPERdg6xT4w> (accessed February 9, 2017.)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

therefore, their efforts should each be praised, respected, and studied; and fanaticism should be applied to none.<sup>77</sup>

## 2.5 Ibn Hanbal

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was born an orphan<sup>78</sup> in Baghdad, Iraq. Though engaging in extensive travels, he spent the majority of his life in Baghdad and died there. The praises of his contemporaries reveal Ibn Hanbal as one who was steadfast and scarcely distracted by worldly pursuits and possessions. During a gathering of the major scholars (*al-Kibar al-'ulama*) of his day, it is narrated that among praises of the virtues of Hanbal, one stated, “Do not become too plentiful in the mentioning of his praise over and over.” Yahya Ibn Ma’een responded, “Being plentiful in the praise of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal is being too plentiful? Indeed, if we had a gathering just for the purpose of praising Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, we would still not be able to mention his virtues rightly due to him.”<sup>79</sup> Other reflections from the scholars who lived among Hanbal mirror his elevated status as imam, to the point he was considered, “among the greater Tabi’een,” “had no equal,” and possessed “more excellence than Malik and Shaf’i.”<sup>80</sup>

Hanbal is often remembered for standing against the belief that the *Qur’an* was created held by the Abbasid Caliphate of his day. While Hanbal is seen as a heroic figure who retained

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> In Islamic law, an orphan is defined as one who has lost one or both of their parents to death, and the *baraka* that results in caring from an orphan is highly sought. Muhammad was an orphan, which aids the special status of orphans.

<sup>79</sup> Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid. “Benefits in the Manhaj by Studying the Life and Legacy of the Imam of Ahlus-Sunnah Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (161 AH to 241 AH) – Benefits from the Noble Shaikh Muhammad Ibn Hadee (Adapted from a lecture).” *Salafi Publications*. February 17, 2017, accessed March 9, 2017. <http://www.abukhadeejah.com/benefits-in-the-manhaj-by-studying-the-life-and-legacy-of-the-imam-of-ahlus-sunnah-ahmad-ibn-hanbal-161-ah-to-241-ah-benefits-from-the-noble-shaikh-muhammad-ibn-hadee-adapted-from-a-lecture/>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. - Imam Ibn ‘ilal, author of *Kitabul-‘ilal*, held that the other three Imams had equals, such as while Malik was in Madinah, Al-Shaf’i was in Iraq. Therefore, within each region there were equals, however, during Hanbal’s time there were no equals in any country or region. Some also give favor to Hanbali, in that he is the last of the four great imams, meaning that he was able to work as a starting point off of what the others had already established and discarded.

his *aqeedah*, even during years of imprisonment and torture, Abul Qasim, as narrated by Abu Bakr al-Khalial, said, “Most people think that Ahmad Ibn Hanbal is remembered mostly due to the inquisition and the trials surrounding the tribulation of the creation of the *Qur’an* - but that is not the case. Indeed if Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was asked about an affair, it was as if the knowledge of the world was before his eyes.”<sup>81</sup>

In Hanbal’s treaty, *The Foundations of the Sunnah (Usool us-Sunnah)*, the *aqeedah* and *manhaj* of Wahhabism/Salafism are made clear. Hanbal lists 75 foundational aspects of *aqeedah* that are mandatory for one to be of the *ahl Sunnah wa’l jama’ah*. Two additional treaties by Hanbal are often attached to *Usool us-Sunnah*: (1) *The Sunnah Upon Which the Messenger of Allah Died*, and (2) *A Description of the Believer from Ahlus-Sunnah wal- Jamaa’ah*.

Summarizing the 75 points that constitute *Usool us-Sunnah*, the first three points lay the foundation upon which the remaining points are stacked. The first point Hanbal gives is “holding fast to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were upon;” the second, “taking them (and their way) as a model to be followed;” and the third, “the abandonment of innovations and every innovation is misguidance.”<sup>82</sup> Again, *Sunnah*, therefore, is the opposite of *bid’ah*, and it is obligatory to not only avoid *bid’ah* but hate it, warn others of it, and restrain from the company of those who practice *bid’ah*.

As can be concluded, Hanbali *fiqh* holds that the *Sunnah* is void of analogical reasoning, where no likenesses can be made to it (Point 9), and above the grasp of intellects (Point 10), but instead is understood as a result of following and depending upon it (Point 11).<sup>83</sup> Points 13- 26

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ahmed Ibn Hanbal. *Foundations of the Sunnah (Usool-us-Sunnah) English Text*. Accessed October 15, 2016. <https://abdurrahman.org/2014/09/22/foundations-of-the-sunnah-usool-us-sunnah-imam-ahmad/>. 8-9. Other points of precedence given to the Companions include points 39-48(p.25-38).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 9-11.

call for those who are part of the *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah* to belief in *qadar* (predeterminism – good and evil) and *ru'yah* (that Allah will be seen in heaven), without engaging in *kalaam* (theological rhetoric), because arguing over such doctrine, that Hanbal holds is clearly stated in the *Qur'an* and the *aathaar* (narrations), would be a result of disbelief, as *kalaam* is regarded as innovation.<sup>84</sup> Points 28-36 discuss life after death. Specifically, Iman Hanbal states that from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, one can be assured of the coming Judgment Day where all will be judged for their actions; that there will be “punishment in the grave,” where one will be questioned about the identity of his Lord and his Prophet; and that Muhammad will intercede for his people at judgment.<sup>85</sup> The remainder of Hanbal’s treaty (points 49-75) largely revolves around maintaining allegiance to one’s ruler, and when it is permissible and when it is forbidden to reprimand or kill an opponent of *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah*.<sup>86</sup>

Through a strong chain of narration, came Hanbal’s treaty entitled, the *Sunnah Upon Which the Messenger Died*, which, it claims, is the *Sunnah* that if you “stick fast to it you will be safe.”<sup>87</sup> According to Hanbal this treaty was unanimously agreed upon by “90 men from among the Taabieen, the scholars of the Muslims and of the Salaf and the Jurists of the various cities.”<sup>88</sup> Of the 15 points offered, only “wiping off the khuffs [leather socks]” (Point 4) and that none from the people of *tawhid* are declared a disbeliever “even if they commit major sin,” (Point 11) are additional points to those in *The Foundations of the Sunnah*. Of the 23 identifying characteristics given in *A Description of the Believer from Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah*, none

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 11-13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 22-25. This issue of punishment in the grave will be further explained in the subsequent chapters, but here it can be noted that the issue of one’s state in the grave is monumental in the issue of grave worshipping.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 38-43

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 44

differ the points given in the two above mentioned treaties; but importantly, this treaty closes with, “This is what the Scholars in all the horizons have agreed and united upon.”<sup>89</sup>

## 2.6 Ibn Taymiyyah

As Imam Hanbal is portrayed as the great-grandfather of Wahhabism, Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah is regarded as the grandfather. In the just over four-hundred years between the death of Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal and the birth of Ibn Taymiyyah in 1263 (d.1328), the religious and political landscape of the Muslim world had dramatically altered in growth and adherence. At least partially due to the growth in numbers of opposing beliefs and the wide-spread practice of what is considered *bid'ah*, the unified praise given to Imam Hanbal was not reciprocated to Ibn Taymiyyah. He is considered by many as the great reformer of his time, the one who called Muslims back to the pure Islam of the *as-Salaf-as-Salih*, a prolific writer, a *jihadist* war-hero against the Mongols, and *hadith* scholar. On the other hand, he is subject of bitter attacks from several leading Muslims of his era and of modern times.

Showing the range of perspectives held regarding Ibn Taymiyyah, one of the strongest, well-known attacks, came in *Reliance of the Traveler*, written by Ahmad ibn al-Naqi al-Misri (d.1367), regarded as a manual of Shaf'i *fiqh*. Al-Misri claimed that many scholars considered Ibn Taymiyyah an innovator and heretic, and that some scholars concluded that Ibn Taymiyyah's writings were *kufir*.<sup>90</sup> The Hanafi scholar Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari (d.1951) wrote about Ibn Taymiyyah saying, "Whoever thinks that all the scholars of his time joined in a single conspiracy against him from personal envy should rather impugn their own intelligence and understanding, after studying the repugnance of his deviations in beliefs and works, for which he

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>90</sup> Muhud Murad. “Where is Allah?” *Sunnah Online*. Accessed June 19, 2016. <http://sunnahonline.com/library/beliefs-and-methodology/180-where-is-allah>.

was asked to repent time after time and moved from prison to prison until he passed on to what he'd sent ahead."<sup>91</sup> Instead, al-Kawthari's offers that he is sharply criticized,<sup>92</sup> as the result of his deviations from the path of Muhammad and his Companions.

Feasibly, the greatest opposition to Ibn Taymiyyah has arisen from his views on anthropomorphism (attributing human traits and characteristics to Allah), such as found in his statement, "It is well-known that the Book, the Sunna, and the Consensus (of scholars) nowhere say that all bodies are, nor that Allah Himself is not a body. None of the imams of the Muslims ever said such a thing. Therefore, if I also choose not to say it, it does not expel me from religion nor from shari'a."<sup>93</sup> In his writing, *Sharh Al-Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyah (Fundamental Beliefs of Islam and Rejection of False Concept of its Opponents)*, Ibn Taymiyyah prolifically expounds upon his view and its alleged adherence to the *Sunnah* and *Qur'an*, saying:

The Attributes with which He has qualified Himself, those Attributes of His Self are not denied by Ahlus *Sunnah* wal Jama'ah, nor do they commit *Tahreef* (changing the meaning of a word) on the basis of reasoning by different statements, nor do they indulge in wrong *Ta'weel* (different interpretations of an obvious meaning of a word) of the Names of Allah and His verses, nor do they regard His Attributes as like the Attributes of the creatures and nor do they describe their states. The reason is that nothing is in the likeness of Allah, nor is anything comparable or partner to Him. Not to follow analogy from amongst His creatures to demonstrate likeness and comparability with Him.<sup>94</sup>

Summarizing Ibn Taymiyyah's perspective, the literalist approach of the *Sunnah* and *Qur'an* that he follows, (and in many ways paves), takes that from *ayats*, such as, "Build the Ark

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> It should be noted that the Wahhabi/Salafi perspective of Ibn Taymiyyah does hold that much of the persecution of Ibn Taymiyyah was a result of jealousy for Taymiyyah's celebrity-like status, and the unprecedented attendance at his funeral is used to strengthen this stance.

<sup>93</sup> "The Sources of Ibn Taymiyyah's Ideas! Bedrock of Wahhabi/Salafi Aqeedah." *Salafi Aqeedah : The Flaming Falcon Swooping Down on the Dissenters of the Hanbali Madhhab*. November 13, 2010, accessed August 15, 2016. <http://salafiaqeedah.blogspot.com/2010/11/pure-anthropomorphism.html>. (From al-Ta'sis al-radd `ala asas al-taqdis).

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah. *Sharh Al-Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyah: Fundamental Beliefs of Islam and Rejection of False Concept of its Opponents*. Dar-Us-Salam Publications. Accessed February 12, 2016. <http://www.allahsword.com/ebooks/Aqeedah/Sharh%20Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyah.pdf>. 37.

before *Our Eyes* and by our revelation (11:37)” and “coursing under *Our Eyes* as a recompense for one who was rejected.”(54:15), as meaning that Allah is attributing “attributes” upon Himself. Following this analogy, it was explained to me by a Salafi imam, that it would be far different for one to compare the “eyes” of Allah to those of a human or any other known creature but to take from it that Allah does indeed *see* His creation with two “eyes.”<sup>95</sup> According to him, there are three types of Muslims: (1) those who hold that Allah has no features; (2) those who hold that he has attributes and form like those of a human; and (3) those who (Salafis) hold that Allah has what it says in the *Qur’an*, two eyes, etc. but that does not mean that He has eyes like a human.

One of the most insightful principles that Ibn Taymiyyah expounds upon is the belief that faith (*eeman*) fluctuates for an individual, rising with obedience and decreasing as a result of sin. Hanbal also made this point throughout his treatises. Ibn Taymiyyah calls it a principle of the *ahl Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah* to accept the fluctuation of one’s faith, saying that it is impermissible to call a Muslim *kufir* on the grounds of committing even major sins but instead exclaims that “we say that he is a man of deficient faith or he is a faithful believer by virtue of faith and a corrupt man because of committing major sins. So he will not be assigned to an absolute category nor an absolute category will be snatched away from him.”<sup>96</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah describes *eeman* and religion (*deen*) as names of “profession and practice,” where profession (*deen*) is made by the heart and tongue, and practice (*eeman*) is the actions by the heart, tongue and limbs.<sup>97</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah shows that Muhammad taught that when

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<sup>95</sup> I was additionally told a story about a boy who lived in the desert with his father, however, have been unable to verify the source of this story, and unfortunately, I have likely thwarted the specifics, yet the overall message is intact. The boy sees a rat every day and one day his father tells him about an ant, but the boy does not recognize it because it does not look like the rat.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 191. The one point, is that this must be realized that it is in reference to one who is identified as part of *ahl Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah*.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 191.

a believer commits such acts as illegal sexual intercourse, drinking alcohol, and robbery, the believer during the act is not a believer.<sup>98</sup> He further explains that “if a corrupt person holds fast to Islam, he is not denied of Islam as a whole, nor is it said that he will always live in Hell as the *Mu’tazilah*.”<sup>99</sup> Taymiyyah’s statements specifically adhere to two points made by Hanbal in *The Foundations of the Sunnah*, “60. And we do not testify for anyone from among the people of the qiblah, on account of an action that he has done, that he is in Paradise or in Hell-Fire . . .,” and “34. To have faith in the Intercession of the Prophet (PHUB) and that some people will be brought out of the Fire after they have been burnt therein and reduced to charcoal. [That] it will be ordered for them to be placed in a river by the door of Paradise, as has been reported in the narration . . .”<sup>100</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah also taught that part of the principle of ahl *Sunnah* is the testimony and belief in *karamat* (miraculous acts or extraordinary occurrences which Allah manifests through an individual) by the *auliya* (friends of Allah or righteous people close to Allah).<sup>101</sup> He holds that “*karamat* are still in existence in this Ummah and will be found till the Doomsday.”<sup>102</sup>

Nevertheless, he warns of innovators and misguided people who call themselves *Sufi*, who claim such acts as entering into fire, striking one’s body with weapons, catching hold of snakes, and foretelling about the unseen, etc. are acts of *karamat*.<sup>103</sup> Instead of *karamat*, which are performed by *auliya*, Ibn Taymiyyah tells that such acts are performed instead by *shaytans* (devils).<sup>104</sup>

These acts are obviously *shirk*, but it must be made clear that to take from Ibn Taymiyyah

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<sup>98</sup> “When an adulterer commits illegal sexual intercourse, then he is not a believer at the time of stealing, and when a robber robs, and the people look at him, then he is not a believer at the time of doing robbery” (Bukhari 3/394).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 191.

<sup>100</sup> Ahmed Ibn Hanbal. *Foundations of the Sunnah* .25 &32.

<sup>101</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah. *Sharh Al-Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyah*. 212.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 121.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 213.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 213 The importance of Ibn Taymiyyah’s recognition of such acts with satans will become apparent in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

that all Sufis are such innovators and misguided people, would be a false assumption. Such as in the above case, he is speaking of the particular actions of certain people who claim to be Sufis. While many hold that the hatred toward Sufism held by Wahhabis/Salafis is largely attributed to the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah, Henri Laoust, (d. 1983) an expert on Hanbali *fiqh*, wrote that “one would search in vain to find in his works the least condemnation of Sufism.”<sup>105</sup> Nabil Mouline makes the connection that the majority of the “Hanbali ulama of the medieval period were also leading Sufis,” and strengthens Laoust’s conclusion, saying that while Ibn Taymiyyah furiously opposed pantheistic perspectives and many of the popular mystic practices of his day, he “was never an enemy of Sufism.”<sup>106</sup> Overall, Ibn Taymiyyah, though highly controversial, played a pivotal role in the development of al-Wahhab’s methodology.

## 2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown the necessity of a movement within Islam to trace its *aqeedah* and *manhaj* back to that of Muhammad and his Companions. It has been shown that the reform teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah, followed the *aqeedah* of Imam Hanbal’s painting of the borders of the *Sunnah* against innovation, as narrated by the *as-Salif as-Salih*, who took from the sayings and actions of Muhammad, as a result of what was claimed to be revealed to Muhammad by Allah. In working toward surveying Wahhabism in the following chapter, this frame-work is needed to comprehend that al-Wahhab, as adherents claim, came upon this path, and did not create a path, or *madhhab*. The declaration of being *ahl Sunnah wa’l jama’ah*, introduced in this

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<sup>105</sup> Henri Laoust. *Essai sur les idées sociales et politiques d’Ibn Taimiyya* (Le Caire: Publications de L’Institut Français Archéologie Orientale, 1939), 89 et passim; cited in Georges Makdisi “The Hanbali School and Sufism” *Actas IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos* (Leiden 1971) p. 121

<sup>106</sup> Nabil Mouline. *The Clerics of Islam: Religious Authority and Political Power in Saudi Arabia*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). 26 – 38.

chapter, will be seen to be the common thread which binds the teaching of al-Wahhab to those who claimed it before him.

## CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPMENT AND DEFINING OF WAHHABISM

### 3.1 Muhamad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab- Range Of Interpretations.

Born in 1703 in the city of Uyainah, 70 kilometers northwest of modern Riyadh and 375 years after the death of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab has been both highly scrutinized and praised as a shaykh. It is a likely fact, that globally, little would be known of his life and the movement that has been recognized by the ill-received term Wahhabism had it not been for his allegiance with al-Saud and the subsequent development, influence, and financial surplus of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, regardless if Wahhabism remained in the desert of Najd or became the largest global representative of Islam in the world, the question would still remain: did the teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab reflect the path of Muhammad and his Companions?

The most arduous task of attempting to pinpoint the *aqeedah* and *manhaj* of al-Wahhab is to weed through the varying perspectives about his motivations. Such various perspectives about the life of al-Wahhab paint him as a great reformer of Islam, a British brain-washed creation, a pious peaceful preacher, the horn of *Shaytan*, or a *jihadist* who used religion for territorial control. While the most beneficial insight into the life and teachings of al-Wahhab are derived from his own words, alternate claims must be addressed.

#### 3.1.1 British Creation

In what is arguably the harshest attack on the conception of Wahhabism is the claim that it is the result of a British tactic to send out spies to create divisions within the Muslim *ummah* in the Middle East under Ottoman control, with hopes that such divisions would lead to internal conflicts, the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, and, ultimately, the spread of British Imperialism. The story of one particular British agent, Hempher, who allegedly recruited al-

Wahhab is recorded in a writing called “Hempher’s Diaries,” which first appeared in 1888 in a five-volume work by Ayyub Sabri Pasha.<sup>107</sup> Daniel Pipes, who stands opposed to Wahhabism, claims that the story is utter non-sense,<sup>108</sup> and that it would have been far more believable if the author of the diaries had at least put some of the teachings that correlate with al-Wahhab’s own writings into that with which Hempher supposedly indoctrinated him. According to the diaries, Hempher was in search of a capable, yet impressionable young man, whom he claims was found in Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdul al-Wahhab of Najd, calling him an “ignorant and morally depraved man,” to “demolish Islam from within.”<sup>109</sup> Within the diaries, it is claimed that even before meeting Hempher, al-Wahhab believed that there was no need to adhere to one of the four *madhhabs*, as he is purported to have said “Allah’s Book does not contain any evidence pertaining to these madh-habs.”<sup>110</sup>

Hempher’s alleged agreement with al-Wahhab is seen in his reflection that Sunni Islam was shrinking in numbers. They believed that all Sunnis could do was imitate one of the four imams, resulting from the idea that the gates of knowledge were closed and *ijtihad* forbidden after the four imams. Hempher held that the continued practice of *ijtihad* by Shi’as was the natural cause of their inevitable growth, stating “*ijtihad* is like a weapon.”<sup>111</sup> Some of the most offensive claims against al-Wahhab were his moral depravity, as it is written that Hempher,

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<sup>107</sup> Abu Iyaad. “Use of the Hempher Diary Forgeries to Malign the Call and Integrity of Shaykh Ibn Abd Al-Wahhaab Is Indicative of Dishonesty and Lack of Intellect.” *Wahhabis.Com*. August 20, 2011, accessed October 4, 2016. <http://www.wahhabis.com/print.cfm?lvtoq>. Professor in Near Eastern Studies at Harvard University, Bernard Haykel, concludes that Pasha was the likely author of the diaries, and was likely written as anti-Wahhabi propaganda, and has no independent historical proof of neither Hempher, nor his mission and writings.

<sup>108</sup> Pipes, Daniel. “The Saga of ‘Hempher,’ Purported British Spy an extract from ‘The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy,’ pp. 211-12.” January 1996, accessed October 3, 2016. [www.danielpipes.org/1648/the-saga-of-hempher-purported-british-spy](http://www.danielpipes.org/1648/the-saga-of-hempher-purported-british-spy).

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*

<sup>110</sup> “Wahhabi and the Memoirs of Mr. Hempher, The British Spy to The Middle East Part II.” *Sunnah Info*. Accessed October 4, 2016. <http://www.sunna.info/antiwahabies/wahhabies/htm/spy1.htm>. This claim is obviously, in starch opposition to what al-Wahhab wrote and taught.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*.

acting as a close friend and mentor, encouraged al-Wahhab to fornicate with a Christian woman (named Safiyya), who was brought in by the British to seduce al-Wahhab and encourage him to drink strong alcoholic drinks. Hempher stated that, “From then on Safiyya and I completely took control of Muhammad of Najd.”<sup>112</sup>

While the “Diaries of Hempher,” hold no authority and are almost universally disregarded as conspiracy theory, their impact is massive. Opponents of al-Wahhab and Wahhabism commonly hold that Wahhabism is a British creation. The allegations of Hempher’s diaries have recently resurfaced with additional propaganda aimed at further discrediting Wahhabism.

In 2002, a top-secret report appeared entitled “The Emergence of Wahhabism and its Historical Roots,” claimed to be released by an Iraqi Military Defense Directorate. In addition to the story of Hempher’s manipulation of al-Wahhab, additional claims of his Donmeh Jewish roots are alleged, which mirror the claims of D. Mustafa Turan, in his book, *The Donmeh Jews*, stating that al-Wahhab’s grandfather was “Tjen Shulman, a member of the Jewish community of Basra, Iraq.”<sup>113</sup> The report also claims that King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, the first king of Modern Saudi Arabia, was also of a Jewish descendent from Mordechai bin Ibrahim bin Moishe, also from Basra, Iraq.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, the document suggests that in 1943, in an attempt to cover up such heritage ties, the Saudi Ambassador to Egypt, Abdullah Ibn Ibrahim al-Muffadal, commissioned a forged family tree that pictured “the Sauds and Wahhabs were one family descended directly from the Prophet.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Wayne Madsen. “The Dönneh: The Middle East’s Most Whispered Secret (Part II).” *Strategic Culture Foundation Online Journal*. October 10, 2011, accessed January 12, 2017. <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2011/10/26/the-doenneh-the-middle-east-s-most-whispered-secret-part-ii.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

Countless other stories have been offered showing Saudi Arabia to be a British puppet creation, backing Britain in the establishment of Israel, and being rewarded the modern Kingdom as a result of weakening the Ottoman authority in the region.<sup>116</sup> While clearly the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has business and political ties with Britain (which is a subject outside the purpose of this paper), what is necessary to understand is that such accusations are the root of claims, such as, that the House of Saud is “no more Islamic than Billy Graham.”<sup>117</sup>

### 3.1.2 Horn Of *Shaytan*

In *Sahih* Bukhari, Ibn ‘Umar narrates that Muhammad said: “Oh Allah! Bless our Shaam and our Yemen.” People said, “Our Najd as well” The prophet again said, “O Allah! Bless our Shaam and Yemen.” They said again, Our Najd as well.” On that the Prophet said, “There will appear an earthquake and affliction and from there will come out the side of the head of Satan.”<sup>118</sup> This *hadith* is used by opponents of Wahhabism to show that they are the ones Muhammad warned about as deviators, and their presence is seen as a sign of the end-times. Shaykh Imran Hosein deduces that the interpretation of “out of the side of the head” means the “horn” or “time” of Satan.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, Shaykh Hosein believes that the uprising of the “unholy Wahhabi Alliance” from Najd has “given the hand of Arabia to the Zionists,” with its allegiance to the House of Saud, and subsequently brought about the “age of Shaytan” (the end of times).<sup>120</sup> Hosein believes that the name of Najd was changed to Riyadh in a sinister attempt to distance the Wahhabi/Saudi allegiance from the *hadith*, and regardless of the name change, is still the

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<sup>116</sup> David Livingstone. "Globalists Created Wahhabi Terrorism to Destroy Islam and Justify a Global State." *Serendipity*. 2012, accessed March 26, 2016. <http://www.serendipity.li/wot/livingstone.htm>.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Bukhari (Vol. 2, Book 17, Hadith 17).

<sup>119</sup> “Sheikh Imran Hosein - Saudi Wahhabi Alliance, The Satanic Age Coming Out Of Najd (Riyadh).” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yv3pYadXjj0&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=5> (accessed August 4, 2016).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

location that Muhammad warned about, not an obscure place as Wahhabis claim “like in Iraq or somewhere in Disneyland.”<sup>121</sup>

Yusri Rushdi al-Sayyid Jabr al-Husni, a religious scholar from al-Azhar, says that regardless what you call them: Wahhabis, Salafis, Najdis, Horners, etc., they are all names of the same ideology or school of thought, the Horn of the Devil, as termed by Muhammad.<sup>122</sup> Al-Husni warns that this is a satanic faith, which has resulted in “division, debate, dishonesty, mistrust of Muslims...and the violation of their honors by stabbing them in what is most precious to them, which is their religion.”<sup>123</sup> Their method of attack, according to al-Husni is to declare another Muslim a polytheist or *kufir*, because of visitations to graves, which is a permitted act in Islam.<sup>124</sup> Dr. Shaykh Jameel Haleem says one of the clearest signs of deviance from Wahhabis is their attributing *shirk* to most of the Companions, which Haleem believes has resulted in the destroying of Islam, “by declaring the Companions of the Prophet as *kuffar*.”<sup>125</sup> Dr. Umar Abdullah separated Ibn Taymiyyah from Wahhabism, saying that Taymiyyah was a “wonder of Islam,” and shows that by mere adoption of his legacy and writings, Wahhabis have incorrectly applied his teachings by the use of bloodshed.<sup>126</sup> As narrated by Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, Bukhari reports that Muhammad said:

There will emerge from the East (Najd) some people who will recite the *Qur'an* but it will not exceed their throats and who will go out of the religion as an arrow passes through the game, and they will never come back to it unless the arrow, comes back to the middle of the bow (by itself) (i.e., impossible). The people

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> “Scholar from al-Azhar: Wahhabism is a Satanic Faith, the Horn of the Devil that Muhammad Predicted.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufxTUFapylw&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=31> (accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> “Wahhabism the Horn of Shaytan.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvJOYfcwpU&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=70&spfreload=10> (accessed March 4, 2016).

<sup>126</sup> “The Wahabi Movement by Dr. Umar Abdullah.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tBIyODHbk&index=5&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ> (accessed May 2, 2016).

asked, What will their signs be? He said, Their sign will be the habit of shaving (their heads).<sup>127</sup>

Simon Ross Valentine concludes that the majority of mainstream Muslims reject Wahhabism as a reform movement. Instead, he sees it as an innovation, a new faction, or a “vile sect,” suggesting that where there are good deeds, such as the financial provisions for educational and religious institutions across the globe occur attached to Wahhabism, the motivation behind the act is not philanthropy but propagating its beliefs.<sup>128</sup>

### 3.1.3 Mujaddid

In a *sahih hadith*, Abu Dawud reports that Abu Hurayrah narrated that Muhammad said: “Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for it.”<sup>129</sup> The term ascribed to such a renovator or reformer is *mujaddid*, and while absent from most lists, Wahhabis/Salafis hold al-Wahhab as the *mujaddid* of the Eighteenth Century. While al-Wahhab is often criticized for his lack of scholarly skills and body of work by opponents, the same cannot be said of the influence of his writings at his time and up until the present. His most well-known book, *Kitab at-Tawhid*, along with other writings of his are among the most referred to and taught books in Salafi *masjids* around the world. Yusef Estes recalls the story of a current big-named “scholar” of Islam, who, in his attack of Wahhabism, said that *Kitab at-Tawhid* is a bad book and urged others not to read it. Later, the same scholar was given the same book without a cover and when asked what he thought about it, he said, “he loved It,” and said, “This is the belief system of a real Muslim.” When he saw the cover, he said he “made a

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<sup>127</sup> Muslim. (Book 93 Hadith 651).

<sup>128</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. (New York: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd. 2015). 31.

<sup>129</sup> Abu Dawud. (Book 38, *Hadith* 4278).

big mistake.”<sup>130</sup>

Yasir Qadhi gives the greatest response to those who say he was an unprolific writer, saying, “In his works, the Muslim finds that the author hardly speaks himself, rather, he lets the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah* do the talking for him,” and offers the suggestion that among the confusion and false propaganda that exists around al-Wahhab, “perhaps the easiest way to clarify this Imam’s message is to read his works.”<sup>131</sup> In introducing a recent biography on the life of al-Wahhab, his descendant, Shaykh Aziz Abullah al-Ash Shaykh, identified al-Wahhab as the reviver of the *deen* of Islam (pure Islam). He writes, “The *deen*, at times, suffers negligence when its own adherents forsake it under the influence of deviant people, and at times, it is eagerly upheld as the result of the revivalists who revive for people what has been effaced of their *deen*.”<sup>132</sup> As the conflict of Hanbal’s era was opposing viewpoints over whether the *Qur’an* was created or eternal, in Ibn Taymiyyah’s era, the conflict regarded the attributes of Allah. The religious landscape during al-Wahhab’s life was dominated by what he deemed as acts of *bid’ah* and *shirk* among the *ummah*, resembling *Jahiliyyah*, from which al-Wahhab called all Muslims to *tawhid*.

### 3.2 The Life Of Al-Wahhab

Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab was born into a family of Hanbali scholars, including his father, Shaykh Adbul Wahhab Ibn Sulaiman, and most notably his ancestor, Shaykh

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<sup>130</sup> “Who Are The Salafis and Wahhabies Yusuf Estes Islam.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeNhCqddhs&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Up7r-iofswV7XJ&index=4> (accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>131</sup> Yasir Qadhi. *An Explanation of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abul- Wahhab’s: Four Principles of Shirk*. (Mecca, Saudi Arabia: al- hidaayah, 2002). <https://www.kalamullah.com/four-principles-of-shirk>.

<sup>132</sup> Mahmoud bin Ridha Murad. *The Life & The Aqeedah of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Printed as donation on behalf on His Royal Highness Prince Abbdulah Ibn Abdulaziz Al-Saud: 1990). Accessed August 22, 2017. <https://islamhouse.com/en/books/330820/>. Xi.

Sulaiman Ibn Ali, who was chief of the scholars in Najd.<sup>133</sup> After memorizing the *Qur'an* at a young age and studying the narrations under the guidance of his father, as his biographer Mahmoud Bin Ridha Murad, relays, al-Wahhab quickly realized that Najd was “overtaken by ignorance and un-Islamic rituals (*bida'*).”<sup>134</sup> As a result the “*deen* was reduced to myths, superstitions and polytheistic rituals.”<sup>135</sup> After being met with strong opposition from scholars within the region he was forced to leave. Reasons for his departure vary according to the interpretation of various writers, was either due to their own corruption and participation in such activities or the harshness and questionability of al-Wahhab’s message. His travels took him to Makkah to perform *hajj*, then to Madinah, and then to Basra, Iraq. During each stay he studies under leading scholars of the day. He returned to his homeland and then moved to Huraymila to be with his relocated father where he wrote *Kitab at-Tawhid*. Al-Wahhab began to draw large crowds of supporters and opponents, which resulted in an unsuccessful assassination attempt, forcing him to return to al-Uyainah.<sup>136</sup>

Upon his return to Uyainah, al-Wahhab “presented da’wah” (shared his faith) and the Ameer Muhammad al-Mu’ammal accepted the shaykh’s call to *tawhid*. He agreed to allow al-Wahhab, in effort to rid innovated practices, to: (1) demolish the shrine built over the grave of the Companion Zayd ibn al-Khattab<sup>137</sup> of which people were traveling from afar to worship and from which to seek intercession; (2) enforce the prescribed Islamic punishment for acts such as fornication; and (3) cut down a grove of trees that the people would hang items in their branches

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<sup>133</sup> Muhammad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab. *Kitab At-Tawhid*. Translated by Abdul Malik Mujahid. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 1996).

<sup>134</sup> Mahmoud bin Ridha Murad. *The Life & The Aqeedah of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab*.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>136</sup> “Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab Biography.” *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Accessed April 4, 2016. <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-A-Bu-and-Obituaries/Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab-Muhammad.html>.

<sup>137</sup> Instead of “destroying the grave,” al-Wahhab had them levelled them in accordance to the hadeeth in which Ali narrated that Muhammad told him “Do not go past a grave except that you level it, and do not go past an image (or statue) except that you efface it.”

to receive *baraka*.<sup>138</sup> As with every other aspect of his life, narratives range that either as a result of the heretical nature of his teachings, or due to the jealousy of neighboring leaders of the influence and unity brought to Uyainah; Ameer Muhammad al-Mu’ammār was coerced to exile the Shaykh for fear of his own life or the shaykh’s.<sup>139</sup>

Al-Wahhab went to Dir’iyyah (on the outskirts of modern Riyadh), to stay as a guest with one of his students.<sup>140</sup> Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid explains that Dir’iyyah was not unlike other small villages of its time, plagued with polytheistic practices.<sup>141</sup> The Ameer of the small village was Muhammad Ibn Saud, and at the request of his wife, the Ameer eventually met with al-Wahhab, resulting in the formation of an alliance between Ibn Saud and al-Wahhab. It has been recorded that the agreement between the two parties, consummating with the statement of al-Wahhab that “blood is blood and destruction is destruction,”<sup>142</sup> consisted of Ibn Saud’s support and protection of the reform message of al-Wahhab, with the condition that he would not leave Ibn Saud and support a tax Ibn Saud placed upon the people of Dir’iyyah.<sup>143</sup>

As the shaykh began to teach those in Dir’iyyah, again conflicting stories of his influence appeared. One side portrays al-Wahhab as gaining the support of students and scholars across the region and the admiration of scholars from a far through his letters of clarification. Alternatively, his opposition recorded that, due to his un-Islamic interpretations, he declared all who did not

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<sup>138</sup> Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid. “Kitāb at-Tawhīd: An amazing authorship and journey into the history of the Saudi link with Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhāb: Part 2. *Salafi Publications*. January 21, 2017. <http://www.abukhadeejah.com/kitab-at-tawhid-an-amazing-authorship-and-journey-into-the-history-of-the-saudi-link-with-muhammad-ibn-abdul-wahhab-part-2/>. Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid expounds that al-Wahhab, following the Sunnah, “established the prescribed punishment under the Ameer al-Mu’ammār, where only able to be established by the ruler in authority.”

<sup>139</sup> Pro al-Wahhab sources such as Mahmoud bin Ridha Murad. *The Life & The Aqeedah of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab* and Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid. “Kitāb at-Tawhīd...” Holds that Mu’ammār remained loyal to al-Wahhab and his mission, and that al-Wahhab left with his blessings.

<sup>140</sup> Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid. “Kitāb at-Tawhīd...”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> In a pledge (*bai’at al-Aqabah*) made between Muhammad and a group of his early followers, Muhammad declared, “If your blood be sought, my blood be sought, and your abode shall be my abode.”

<sup>143</sup> Mahmoud bin Ridha Murad. *The Life & The Aqeedah of Muhammad Bin Abdul-Wahhab*.

adhere to his call to *tawhid* to be disbelievers. History is no stranger to religious-political unifications that have been used to justify the actions of one another. Understanding that the perspective of history is determined by who commissioned its recording, rather than spending pages and pages determining whether the spread of al-Wahhab's message was an offensive or defensive *jihad*, it is advantageous to instead reflect on the writings of al-Wahhab to determine his message.

Regarding the history of the first Saudi State, three specific points Hanbal laid out in the *Foundations of the Sunnah* must be understood to recognize the depth of the allegiance between al-Wahhab and Ibn Saud, regardless of the circumstances. Hanbal stated in point 53 that “whoever revolts against a leader from among the leaders of the Muslims, after the people have agreed upon him and united themselves behind him, after they had affirmed the *khilaafah* for him, in whatever way this *khilaafah* may have been . . . then this revolter has contradicted the narrations of the Messenger of Allah.”<sup>144</sup> Hanbal also reveals in point 48 that “Participation in battles along with the leaders, be they righteous or sinful, is an everlasting affair up until the Day of Judgement” and in point 54 that “the killing of the one in power is not lawful, and nor is it permissible for anyone amongst the people to revolt against him. Whoever does this is an innovator, upon other than the *Sunnah* and the path.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, after the allegiance between the Ameer and the Shaykh, disbandment was not an option.

### 3.3 Core Teachings Of Al-Wahhab

In a letter to his contemporary ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn ‘Abd Allah, al-Wahhab writes that he is a follower and not an innovator whose creed and religion is the “school of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-*

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<sup>144</sup> Ahmed Ibn Hanbal. *Foundations of the Sunnah*. 29.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-31.

*Jama'ah*, which the leading scholars of Islam are upon such as the Four Imams and those who follow them until the establishment of the Hour.”<sup>146</sup> His letter is clearly written in response to questions about his use of *takfir* (excommunication of Muslims by claiming that they are outside the fold of Islam due to their actions and beliefs), which he offers the response that “I exonerate myself in front of Allah from this statement which does not emanate except from the defective in intellect, absent of comprehension.”<sup>147</sup> Al-Wahhab continues that he only makes *takfir* “of the one who came to know [the reality] of the religion of the Messengers and after he came to know it, reviled it, prohibited the people from it and showed enmity towards whoever acted upon it. This is the one who whom I declare a disbeliever, and the majority of the [Muslim] nation – and all praise is due to Allah - are not like that.”<sup>148</sup> As for fighting, al-Wahhab makes the claim that they fight only as a means of defense to protect their “lives” and “sanctity.”<sup>149</sup> Furthering his recognition of various attacks on his methodology and clarifying his calling, al-Wahhab concludes his letter saying, “what has been mentioned about me of [the employment of] ways besides [simply] calling the people to Tawhid and prohibition against Shirk is all from slander.”<sup>150</sup>

In his book the *Three Fundamental Principles*, al-Wahhab speaks that it is obligatory for one to have knowledge of: (1) Allah, (2) His Prophet, and (3) the *deen* of Islam. From that knowledge is a mandate of action upon that knowledge,<sup>151</sup> a calling others to that knowledge,

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<sup>146</sup> Abu ‘Iyaad Amjad Rafiq, trans. “Letter of Clarification by Shaykh Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Abd Allāh.” ‘Wahhabis’.com. Accessed October 22, 2016. <http://www.wahhabis.com/articles/acnuaiq-letter-of-clarification-by-shaykh-muhammad-bin-abd-al-wahhab-regarding-his-call.cfm>.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> In one Salafī masjid I visited the slogan written on the masjid sign was “Knowledge before action,” following this principle, that knowledge of Allah, his Prophet, and the *deen* is a prerequisite to action.

and patiently preserving and bearing any harm encountered upon that way.<sup>152</sup> Accordingly, al-Wahhab states that if one asks, what are the three principles which a person must know? “Then say the servant’s knowledge of His Lord and His Deen and His Messenger Muhammad.”<sup>153</sup> Regarding the *deen*, al-Wahhab holds that there are three levels of submitting to Allah with *tawhid* and the absence of *shirk*, which are : (1) Submission to Islam and obedience to Allah - through the five pillars (*shaadah, salat, zakat, fast Ramadhaan, and hajj*); (2) *Eeman* - true belief of the heart, speech and action through six pillars (belief in Allah, His angels, His book, His Messengers, The Last Day, *qadar*); and (3) *Ihsaan* - perfection of worship (to worship Allah as if you see Him.)<sup>154</sup>

In his commentary on the *Three Fundamental Principles*, Muhammad Ibn Gaalih al-Uthaymeen, who studied under Ibn Baz, explains that *tawhid* is a verb, and, therefore, can only be properly understood as seen in the action of “singling out Allah, the Most Perfect, with all that is particular to Him.”<sup>155</sup> Additionally, he offers that *tawhid* is of three types, as clarified by al-Wahhab: (1) *Tawhid* of Allah’s Lordship - exalted as creator of everything, (2) *Tawhid* of Worship – to worship and do acts of devotion to Allah as a singularity, and (3) *Tawhid* of Allah’s Names and attributes - to single out Allah with the self-affirmed names and attributes for Himself.<sup>156</sup>

To combat the common excuses people of his day made for their participation in the acts that al-Wahhab considered *shirk*, particularly in the case of making intermediaries between

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<sup>152</sup> Muhammad ibn Gaalih Al-Uthaymeen. *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islam (Salafi): Sharh Usool ath-Thalatha of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahaab*. Translated by Aboo Talhah Daawood ibn Ronald Burbank. (Birmingham, UK: Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, date unknown).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. To which al-Wahhab states Surah al-Bararah (117), and Surah al-Qamar (49) as proofs of these pillars of *eeman*.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

themselves and Allah, al-Wahhab produced *The Removal of Doubts*. One of the leading claims of those who claimed such intermediates, according to al-Wahhab, was the seeking of nearness (*taqarrub*) to and intercession with Allah.<sup>157</sup> He holds that none gain anything from the intercession, and no angel, nor prophet, is brought near to one who attempts to use such intermediaries. Instead, such *mushriks* would be influenced by the enemies of *tawhid*, who “may sometimes have many types of knowledge, books, and arguments, but who are enemies of the Prophets - *shayaateen* (devils) from men and *jinn*, inspiring one another with beautiful speech as a delusion.”<sup>158</sup> Al-Wahhab echoes this reality in his book, *The Excellent Qualities of the Qur’an*, in the chapter of “The Fate of Those Who Seek Guidance from Other than the Holy Qur’an,” quoting, “And he whose sight is dim to the remembrance of the Beneficent, We assign unto him a devil.”(43:36)<sup>159</sup>

Hanbal stated that, “. . . whoever abandons the prayer then he has disbelieved. There is nothing from among the actions, the abandonment of which constitutes disbelief except for the prayer. Whoever abandons it is a disbeliever and Allah has made killing him permissible;”<sup>160</sup> Following Hanbal’s teaching on *salat*, in his short treaty, “The Conditions, Pillars, and Requirements of the Prayer,” al-Wahhab expounds upon the importance of *salat*. He first gives the nine conditions that one must undertake before *salat* in order for it to be valid. If these prerequisites (conditions) of *salat* are met, the pillars must properly be followed in exact order, less the *salat* be rendered void (due to intentional or unintentional actions) and, therefore

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<sup>157</sup> Muhammad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab. *Kashf ush Shubuhaat: The Removal of the Doubts*. Translated by Abu Abdirrahmaan Nasser ibn Najam Alvi. Accessed July 14, 2016. <https://www.troid.ca/media/kunena/attachments/42/kashf-matn2.pdf>.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Taking from *Surah al-An’aam (6): 112*.

<sup>159</sup> Muhammad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab. *The Excellent Qualities of the Holy Quran*. Translated by Muhammed Iqbal Siddique. Accessed November 12, 2016. <https://www.kalam.ullah.com/Books/Excellent%20Qualities.pdf>.

<sup>160</sup> Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, *Foundations of the Sunnah*. 25.

abandoned.<sup>161</sup> Regarding the eight requirements of *salat*, al-Wahhab states that if any portion is omitted intentionally, it is considered abandonment, while an unintentional omission can be “made up” with additional prostrations.<sup>162</sup> While this book is often overlooked it renders important insight into the aqeedah of al-Wahhab, especially when understood in light of the abandonment of *salat* being equated with automatic disbelief.

In his most well-known book, *Kitab-at-Tawhid*, al-Wahhab draws almost exclusively from Quranic passages and *ahadith* to first lay a foundation of what constitutes *tawhid* and an explanation of its superiority. Subsequent chapters each lay out specific acts of *shirk*. In what was not an isolated event, al-Wahhab opens *Kitab at-Tawhid* with the cornerstone Quran *ayat* of *tawhid*, in which Allah states: “And I (Allah) created not the *Jinns* and men except they should worship me (Alone)” (51:56). The key concept to retain is to understand that the core of *tawhid* resides within the fact that Allah alone is uncreated and the creator of all, stressed by al-Wahhab’s call to reembrace the “peculiarity of Jesus being created as *Kalimat Allah* (the Word of Allah)” and the knowledge that “Jesus is a spirit from Allah (*Ruhan Minhu*).”<sup>163</sup> A fundamental aspect of al-Wahhab’s teaching on *tawhid* is his focus on the concept that knowledge, action, calling to, and preserving under it, as mentioned in *The Three Fundamentals*, exposes what he calls the superiority of *tawhid* as through it, sin is believed to be removed.<sup>164</sup> As opposed to those who see al-Wahhab’s writings as a core source of extremists’ doctrine driven by external *jihad*, the vast majority is focused upon the identification of what is forbidden as *bid’ah* or *shirk*, and how the recognition of these acts reveals *tawhid*. The majority of *Kitab at-*

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<sup>161</sup> Muhammad Ibn Abdul Al-Wahhab. *The Conditions, Pillars and Requirements of the Prayer*. Translated by Isma’ Eel Alarcon. (USA: Al-Ibaanah, 2003).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> ibid

<sup>164</sup> Uses hadeeth to strength stance. “Indeed Allah has forbidden for Hell the person who testifies: ‘There is nothing worthy of worship in truth (no true God) but Allah’, seeking thereby nothing but Allah’s Face (pleasure). (Al-Bukhari, Muslim).

*Tawhid*, following this pattern, is the classification of practices of *shirk*, such as: wearing amulets, seeking refuge in other than Allah, sorcery, soothsaying, *sihr*, worship at graves, excessive praises, etc.

David Commins holds that while al-Wahhab and his followers have been well-criticized for the destruction of graves, he believes the majority of enmity stems from his definition of an unbeliever.<sup>165</sup> In reviewing Michael Crawford's book, *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab*, Commins elaborates that it is rooted in al-Wahhab teachings that, "Any deviation from that requirement is not a mere lapse but a sure sign of kufr, unbelief."<sup>166</sup> This view is easily strengthened, as shown above in the conditions, pillars, and requirements of *salat* of which al-Wahhab wrote, where intentional and unintentional (except for in the case of the requirements) omission of any part renders the *salat* invalid and is considered abandonment. Commins additionally states, "An important corollary to the doctrine of *tawhid* is al-Wahhab's position on the question of how to define belief: What does it consist of? Can it grow and diminish?"<sup>167</sup> These questions mirror questions that have etched deep divisions within the realm of Christian theology and plague Islam as well. Is faith enough? Is faith dead without actions? What are the visible signs of being born-again? Is a fruitless life the result of disbelief?

The writings of al-Wahhab clearly show that the life of a believer will result in action to promote *tawhid* and protect from *shirk* and *bid'ah*. The overall point of this research, again, is to identify the core teachings of Wahhabism/Salafism and paint a verbal portray of these beliefs in action in Saudi Arabia. However, it should suffice to say that, for better or worse, al-Wahhab

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<sup>165</sup> David Commins. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006) .20.

<sup>166</sup> David Commins, review of *'Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab*." *SCTIW Review*, August 20, 2015, accessed November, 19, 2016. <http://sctiw.org/sctiwreviewarchives/archives/684>.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

brought about Islamic reform by attempting to eliminate practices that threatened *tawhid* through action as a result of ones acquired knowledge of Allah, His Messengers, and His *Deen*. For al-Wahhab it seems apparent that his action was driven by such *ahadith* as “Whoever uses, attaches or wears a talisman to himself, will have that talisman put in charge of him,” (Ahmad & Tirmidhi) and “Whoever cut an amulet or talisman from anyone, it would be equal to liberating a slave.”(Ahmad) Arguably, the longevity and prominence of *Kitab at-Tawhid* and the influence of al-Wahhab adds weight to Saudi scholar Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzan’s statement that “If there was any going beyond bounds or negligence in (the *Dawah* of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Abdil Wahhab) it would not have lasted.”<sup>168</sup>

### 3.4 Defining Wahhabism

The clear answer to what is a Wahhabi, or what is Wahhabism, is that it refers to those who follow the *aqeedah* and *manhaj* of Muhammad Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab, who subsequently trace their *manhaj* through al-Wahhab to scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Hanbal, back to the four imams, and prior to that the teachings of Muhammad and his Companions upon the path that Allah revealed to them in the *Qur’an*. In much the same way that the chain of narration is imperative to validating *ahadith* as *sahih*, it can be held that for those who adhere to Wahhabism, the teachings of al-Wahhab, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Hanbal are the chains that authenticate their *manhaj* in the present to that of the Prophet and the first three generations. From this understanding, those referred to as Wahhabis make their claim as the true *ahl Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah* and *as-salif as-salih*. In a message I sent to Shaikh Abdul Aziz Al-Tarefe’s Facebook page, inquiring to discover what those called “Wahhabis,” such as he, prefer to call each other.

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<sup>168</sup>Amjad Abu Aa’isha. “Dawah of Shaykul Islaam Muhammad ibn Abdil Wahaab – Ash Shayk Saalih Al Fawzaan.” *Salafi Center*. February 27, 2016, accessed April 8, 2016. <http://www.salaficentre.com/2016/02/dawah-of-shaykul-islam-muhammad-ibn-abdil-wahaab-ash-shaykh-salih-al-fawzaan/>.

The page administrator wrote back stating, “A more respectful term is that we refer to ourselves as *Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah* upon the way of the *Salaf Salih* (righteous predecessors).”<sup>169</sup> In a follow up message, I requested the terminology used in Saudi Arabia when quoting the scholars, to which I was given the reply, “The scholars of *Ahl-us-Sunnah* who follow the methodology of the *Salaf* say. . .” and was additionally told “they are also referred to as *Salafs*.”<sup>170</sup>

As previously described in this chapter, the claim of this title is not singular as it has explicitly been tied to the saved sect, who is following the *Sunnah* of Muhammad. In one of my discussions with a Salafi imam from Somalia, who received his higher education in Saudi Arabia before coming to America 20 years ago, he explained that terms like Wahhabi are used in countries where there is division among Sunnis. He further explained that in Somalia, everyone who is not under the umbrella of Sufism is called a Wahhabi, regardless of ties with Salafism. Mufti Menk, who meets large crowds and mixed reviews from within Islam, in discussing the confusion of name calling recalls that he continuously gets letters from people saying that he is being called a Wahhabi, a Sufi, a Salafi, a Deobandi, etc. He replies, “Some of these I do not know even what they mean. . .I was waiting for the day that they say someone calls you a chocolate man, because that is true.”<sup>171</sup> While he attempts to draw humor into the situation, he is also quick to further his statement, with the fact that if he were to turn from his work to address such name calling, he would be part of the problem, making it bigger, and becoming a fighter himself.<sup>172</sup> The issue of names used to identify Wahhabism is mandatory to discuss. However, Menk does make the point that one must rise above and be more intelligent than the label, as

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<sup>169</sup> Shaikh Abdul Aziz Al-Tarefe. Private Facebook Message with site administrator. October 26, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/abdulazizaltarefe/>.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> “Problem of labelling Wahhabi, Ahle Sunnah wal Jamaah, etc ~Ask Mufti Menk.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbqlaeqBOxo&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=1&t=212s>. (accessed October 9, 2016).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

terms like Wahhabism, in spite of alternative options, rarely cease to exist largely due to their promotion by enemies.

Simon Ross Valentine offers that Wahhabis see themselves as *Muttaqun*, “the pious believer’s ones” and *al-Abrar*, “the pious believers of Islamic monotheism,” claiming to be the “pure and true, reform Islam.”<sup>173</sup> However, as a result of three years within the Kingdom, Valentine identifies Wahhabism as an “intolerant, supremacist sect which...regrettably distorts and misrepresents Islam,” and which can be “traced right back to the Kharijites.”<sup>174</sup> Valentine further holds that Wahhabis justify their actions from a literalist interpretation of the *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah*, while romanticizing the past as the ideal.<sup>175</sup> They are left, according to Saudi scholar Muhammad Ibn Khalifa al-Tamimi, to emulate, as opposed to setting precedents, and follow, instead of innovate.<sup>176</sup> From Valentine’s first-hand encounters within Saudi Arabia, he relays the various responses of Muslims in Saudi Arabia to being called Wahhabi. He concludes that while some see the term as offensive or at least misleading, others see it as an example of *shirk*, believing that it implies worship to al-Wahhab. Still others hold that there is no problem with the term, as it merely represents the reform theology of al-Wahhab.<sup>177</sup> Valentine concludes that while the majority simply prefer to refer to themselves as Muslim, they maintain that they are just the Muslims “that have the right interpretation and the more than one billion other non-Wahhabi Muslims are wrong.”<sup>178</sup>

Further recognizing the difficulty in naming the “doctrine preached” by al-Wahhab, David Commins, shows that early enemies followed the same reasoning as Valentine, classifying

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<sup>173</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. Preface and 29.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., Preface and p.6

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 29. . Valentine holds that they generalize ayats and intentionally or unintentionally bi-pass context, and use authentic and unauthenticated hadith to justify their interpretations.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 6 & 29

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 130.

it as a “Kharijite sectarian heresy,” while stating that the original chosen name given by al-Wahhab and his followers was “the folk who profess God’s unity” (*ahl al-tawhid and al-muwahhidun*), later called “the Najdi call” (*al-Ja’wa al-najdiyya*).<sup>179</sup> Nabil Mouline submits two further titles that early followers of al-Wahhab’s methodology used: ‘*ulama’ al-Da’was al-Islamiyya* (the *ulama* of Islamic predication) and *A’immat al-Da’wa al-Najdiyya* (the guides of Najdi predication).<sup>180</sup> Believing that Wahhabis claim to be followers of the Hanbali *fiqh*, Mouline offers the term Hanbali Wahhabism as the term that “most closely captures the doctrinal specificities, legal-political principles, and historical trajectory of the corporation of ulama who identify with the life and teaching of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab.”<sup>181</sup> While this title may be closer, and much credit to Mouline is deserved, it does seem to be a term that remains derogatory in nature, just more specific in *fiqh*.

Some further hold that the term Wahhabism is false, because it is actually named after his father ‘Abd al-Wahhab of Najd, who in various accounts broke away and warned others of his son. Yet, in other accounts, he made amends with his son later in life. Furthermore, if the reform movement or sect was to be named after Shaykh Muhammad, they would be called *Muhammadiyah*, which would be cause for greater misunderstanding, since it would likely be directly attributed to the Messenger Muhammad.<sup>182</sup> Mujtaba Hussain Siddiqui better known as Brother Imran, while not a Wahhabi/Salafi, points out that Wahhab is a name for Allah, specifically one of his attributes.<sup>183</sup> Agreeing with Brother Imran, Yusuf Estes warns about using

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<sup>179</sup> David Commins. "From Wahhabi to Salafi."

<sup>180</sup> Nabil Mouline. *The Clerics of Islam*. 9 -10.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>182</sup> Ayatullah Ja’far Subhani. “Wahhabism.” Al-Islam. Naba Organization. Accessed September 16, 2016. <http://www.al-islam.org/wahhabism-ayatullah-jafar-subhani>

<sup>183</sup> Islamic Audios.net. “Wahhabis who are they-Brother Imran Wahhabi kaun hai.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nu7W5XZWYA&index=30&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ> (accessed May 14, 2016).

a name of Allah's to identify a group, saying, "Catch yourself before you say that, stop yourself. In Arabic, it means 'to bestow, to give.' If you say al-Wahhab you must be very careful, you just said Allah's name. Allah is *al-Wahhabi*- he is the bestowed, so you do not take Allah's name and play with it like that."<sup>184</sup>

While consensus is lacking, many writers have likened the reform efforts of al-Wahhab to various Christian movements, if for nothing else, to create a familiar perspective to strengthen an understanding of the goal al-Wahhab strived for. Karen Armstrong identifies his goal as an urge to call "all Muslims to reject the learned exegesis developed over the centuries by the *ulema* ('scholars') and interpret the texts for themselves."<sup>185</sup> Following her statement, Armstrong further holds that al-Wahhab, despite rejecting other forms of Islam, personally refrained from *takfir*.<sup>186</sup> She states that instead al-Wahhab maintained that only Allah could truly read one's heart, and that it is was only after his death that Wahhabism become offensively violent.<sup>187</sup> In that al-Wahhab wished to return to the earliest teachings of Islam, Armstrong makes the comparison of al-Wahhab to one like Luther.<sup>188</sup> Mouline also points out that often al-Wahhab is compared to Luther, while Shaykh Hosein compares the Wahhabi insistence on literal interpretation of scripture as synonymous with Christian Protestantism.<sup>189</sup> Yasir Qadhi says, "That is exactly the point. Salafi Islam is the Protestant reformation in Sunni Islam." Since Salafis view themselves as the reformers and purifiers of Islam to vanquish "the syncretic

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<sup>184</sup> "Who Are The Salafis and Wahhabies Yusuf Estes Islam?"

<sup>185</sup> Karen Armstrong. "Wahhabism to ISIS: How Saudi Arabia Exported the Main Source of Global Terrorism." *New Statesman*, November 27, 2014, accessed December 29, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2014/11/wahhabism-isis-how-saudi-arabia-exported-main-source-global-terrorism>.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Nabil Mouline. *The Clerics of Islam*. 10. & "What is a Wahabi? Who are Wahabis? Leading Muslim figures Speak..." *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5yoQB9JzmA&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=12> (accessed March 8, 2016).

practices that have crept in over the centuries, in the exact way that Martin Luther saw Christianity that had been corrupted by the church, by culture, practices and customs.”<sup>190</sup>

### 3.5 Salafi

The official use of the term *wahabiya* was prohibited in 1929 by King Abd al-Aziz, blatantly highlighting the undesirable connotations of the name near the establishment of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The term he offered in preference was *al-salafiyya*.<sup>191</sup> Stephen Schwartz is one of the few to recognize the difference between the recent (late nineteenth – early twentieth century) developments of the claim of Wahhabis to be referred to as Salafi, in comparison to the claim that one’s doctrine is Salafi (following the righteous predecessors).<sup>192</sup> Following the same line of thought, Yusef Estes says, “And when somebody says, ‘We are Salafi,’ first of all I am going to guess that he does not know the Arabic language, or he said it so much that he forgot what it means. Salaf means somebody who is dead and gone.”<sup>193</sup> Estes further claims that the scholar, Albanian Sheikh Muhammad Nasir-ud-Dīn al-Albani (d.1999) was one of the first to ascribe this term to identify a specific group who followed the predecessors, which Estes believes “unfortunately led to groups self-identifying themselves as Salafi.”<sup>194</sup> Mark Durie confirms such claims, as according to his article, the Muslim Brotherhood’s website, they self-proclaim themselves as Salafis.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> “EXCLUSIVE: The Salafi Movement & The Evil Cult of Najd & Why I Left, Shaykh Yasir Qadhi.” *YouTube*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_j6W\\_mCHww&index=5&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upp7r-iofswV7XJ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_j6W_mCHww&index=5&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upp7r-iofswV7XJ) (accessed February 3, 2016).

<sup>191</sup> Nabil Mouline. *The Clerics of Islam*. 9. Additionally Mouline offers a warning for using Salafi as a “catch-all” term in a two-fold error: “to designate protean sociohistorical realities and making a value judgment that legitimates a given individual or group.”

<sup>192</sup> David Commins. “From Wahhabi to Salafi.” In *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*, edited by Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix, 151-66. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). 152

<sup>193</sup> “Who Are The Salafis and Wahhabies Yusuf Estes Islam?”

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Mark Durie. “Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood: What is the Difference?” *Middle East Forum*. June 6, 2013, accessed March 3, 2017 <http://www.meforum.org/3541/salafis-muslim-brotherhood>.

Therefore, one can see the necessity of knowing the difference between claiming to be Salafi and being upon the way of the Salaf. Ibn Baz seemed to distinguish the two, stating, that Wahhabism was not a fifth *madhhab* but rather a call to the *aqeedah* of *Salafiyyah*.<sup>196</sup> According to the Salafi Research Institute, part of their belief is “to clarify and repel the doubts of the *Mushrikeen* and *Ahlul Bidah*” from all groups and individuals who have “turned away from the way of the *Quran*, *Sunnah* and *Salaf*, regardless of whether they belong to any *Jama’ah*, *Jamiyyah Hizb*, *Sufi Tariqah* or party.”<sup>197</sup> The point of their comment is that the identification of one being a Salafi is by their beliefs and actions, not by ascribing themselves the title. Further defining themselves, separate from being pigeon-holed into one of the four *madhhabs*, they state that “The Imam of the Salafis is Muhammad.”<sup>198</sup> In one of the greatest tools for Salafis to gauge their adherence, non-Salafis to gauge their denial, and non-Muslims to gain understanding, Abu Khadeejah answers the question “What is Salafiyya” by giving 79 points that spell out the *Salafiyya Da’wah*, which along with Hanbal’s Foundations of the *Sunnah*, is one of the clearest point-by-point clarifications of the beliefs that trace themselves back to Muhammad.<sup>199</sup>

Yasir Qadhi explains that within Salafism “there are multiple movements that disagree on many issues and, in particular, issues of politics and issues of militancy. You have pacifist Salafis, you have militant Salafis. So Salafi Islam is a trend and not one monolithic movement.”<sup>200</sup> From this understanding he deduces that, “the Wahhabi phenomenon is

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<sup>196</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. 29.

<sup>197</sup> “About SRI.” *The Salafi Research Institute*. Accessed January 15, 2017. <http://www.salafiri.com/about-sri/>

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. Given in answer to their identification of the Imam in Surah al-Isra(17):71, “On that day the people shall be called (to account) with their Imams.”

<sup>199</sup> Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wahid. “WHAT IS SALAFIYYAH?” *Salafi Publications*. Accessed February 19, 2017. <http://www.abukhadeejah.com/our-call-dawah/>.

<sup>200</sup> “EXCLUSIVE: The Salafi Movement & The Evil Cult of Najd & Why I Left, Shaykh Yasir Qadhi.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZv5eKzoA8Y&index=2&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upp7r-iofswV7XJ> (accessed May 9, 2016).

Salafism in a particular geographical setting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>201</sup> Mohamed Ibn Ali and Muhammad Saiful Alam Ibn Sudiman, of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies hold that all Wahhabis are Salafis, but not all Salafis are Wahhabis;<sup>202</sup> and, as Qadhi purports, “Salafism is a trend in Sunni Islam, all Salafis are Sunnis, but not all Sunnis are Salafis.”<sup>203</sup> So for clarification purposes, it can be said that Wahhabis are from within a large group of Salafis, which are themselves from within a larger group that makes up Sunnis.

Qadhi says that he eventually “outgrew” the Salafi movement due to it not being as “intellectually stimulating” as he would like.<sup>204</sup> Yet, what initially attracted Qadhi to the Salafi movement is the same that he believes attracts other followers: “the empowerment of being able to understand your religion straight from the texts,” rather than being reliant upon clerics, who operate under “their cultural version of Islam.”<sup>205</sup> While this is convenient and holds much truth, in a response to those who say, “I am a Sunni and I am not a Salafi,” Shaykh Dr. Salih al-Suhaymee says that whoever uses such talk is “very far from the Manhaj of the *Sunni* which is the *Manhaj* of the *Salaf*.”<sup>206</sup> To which Hasan Ibn Adb al-Wahhab al-Bannah states, “Know that there is no flag, nor slogan, nor personality (to follow or to hold onto) except the creed of *Ahl*

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Mohamed Bin Ali & Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman. “Salafis and Wahhabis: Two Sides of the Same Coin?” *RSIS Commentary*. No 254, October 11, 2016, accessed November 12 2016. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CO16254.pdf>.

<sup>203</sup> “EXCLUSIVE: The Salafi Movement & The Evil Cult of Najd & Why I Left, Shaykh Yasir Qadhi.”

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> “Who is a Scholar (‘aalim)?” *Islam Question and Answer*. General Supervisor: Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid. July 19, 2011, accessed August 12, 2016. <https://islamqa.info/en/145071>. Additionally he remarks that “Ahl-ul-Sunnah, the Salaf, the followers of the Salaf, the Firqat an-Najjeeyah, the Taifat-ul-Mansoorah, the Jamaa’ah, the Salafi and the Sunni, all of these mean one title: and they are the Jamaa’ah, and they are similar to those whom were upon what the Prophet -sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam- and his Companions were upon.” [Taken from the Shaykh’s lesson from the ‘Explanation of ‘an-Nasihah al-Waladeeyah liAbee al-Waleed al-Bajee Rahimullaah-‘ end of tape one.]

*al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*.”<sup>207</sup> He urges those unsure with regards to an issue to ask the people of knowledge where they are, and if it is possible then to call and ask those abroad.<sup>208</sup> Those abroad he is speaking of are the “scholars,” of whom, from my interviews with a Salafi imam, seemingly are just a phone call away.

### 3.5.1 Scholars

A secular Saudi Arabian proverb states: "He who knows not and knows not he knows not is a fool. Shun him; He who knows not and knows he knows not is simple. Teach him; He who knows and knows not he knows is asleep. Wake him; He who knows and knows he knows is wise. Follow him. . ."<sup>209</sup> Truth can be taken from Yasir Qadhi's statement that he was attracted to Salafism largely because it enables one to go straight to the text. However, the problem is that the path of the Salaf was singular, and the interpretation of the modern Salafism is plural. For this reason, the prominence of the scholars of *ahl Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah* as opposed to other claimed scholars is foundational to understand as a Salaf, is one who was of the first three generations of Islam, but is also a term for the Scholars of *ahl Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*. A Salafi describes “one who truly adheres himself to the salaf.”<sup>210</sup>

A *hadith* collected by Abu Dawuud, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maajan, Ibn Hibban, and Hakim, who authenticated it, claims that Muhammad stated: “. . .the scholars are the inheritors of the prophets and indeed the prophets do not leave behind as inheritance dinar nor dirham, they leave behind as inheritance the knowledge, so whoever takes from it then he has grasped an abundant

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<sup>207</sup> Hasan Ibn Abdul al-Wahhab al-Bannah. “General Advice to Masjid Daar us Sunnah.” *Telelink via Masjid Daar us Sunnah*, 2010, accessed October 8, 2016. <http://dusunnah.com/artic e/general-advice-to-masjid-daar-us-sunnah-shaykh-hasan-ibn-abd-al-wahhab-al-bannah/>.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid.

<sup>209</sup>Sonya Schrer. “Saudi Arabian Americans.” *City-Data*. Accessed August 21, 2016. <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Saudi-.Arabian-Americans.html>.

<sup>210</sup>“An Introduction to the Salafi Da'wa. The Qur'an and Sunnah Society. Accessed February 12, 2017. <http://www.qss.org/articles/salafi/text.html>.

fortune.”<sup>211</sup> Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid believes that the words *‘aalim*, *faqeeh*, and *mujtahid* all refer to the Scholars, but only the ones who strives to reach *shar’i* ruling and are equipped with the ability to “derive *shar’i* ruling from the evidence,” which is a result of meeting the “prerequisites of *ijtihad*.”<sup>212</sup> These five prerequisites given by al-Shawkaani are that one should: (1) have knowledge of the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*, knowing what is *sahih* and what is *da’if*; (2) be knowledgeable in the issues of consensus; (3) be well versed in Arabic; (4) have knowledge of *usool al-fiqh* as it is the foundation for deriving rulings; and (5) have “knowledge of what abrogates and what is abrogated.”<sup>213</sup>

In responding to a question of how can the ordinary Muslim know who the scholars are, Shaykh al-Munajjid reiterates the qualifications, and in addition, shows that one of the “most prominent signs of the true scholar” is that they do not attribute themselves to a group or claim to be part of anything other than “the *ummah*,” past and present, throughout all of Islam.<sup>214</sup> The only acceptable term a scholar is to exist under, therefore, is being part of *ahl Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah*, showing how adherence to any of the four *madhhab* in particular or any group name (Wahhabi, Bareilawis, Deobandis, etc.) is considered a deviation and the exclusion of one as a scholar. Another defining point of who should be recognized as a scholar is the recognition of their sound methodology and character by other scholars, rather than as a result of popularity or a self-appointed title. It is said of Shaykh Ibn Baz that he learned at the feet of such a scholar as

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<sup>211</sup> Hassan Al-Banna. “BIOGRAPHY OF SHAYKH MUHAMMAD IBN ABDUL WAHAAB AL-BANNA.” *YouTube*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LhRpeQ03\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LhRpeQ03_Y). (accessed March 11, 2016).

<sup>212</sup> Who is a Scholar (‘aalim)?” *Islam Question and Answer*. The importance of claim of being equipped for *ijtihad* cannot be overestimated, as it is largely in the salafi methodology that the doors of *ijtihad* were closed after the four great imams, are a foundational aspect of “imitate rather than innovate.” He is not saying that the Scholars do *ijtihad* but they are equipped to. He also uses the disclaimer that these are terms are technical terms, each with specific meanings, and, therefore, should be used with extreme caution in application.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>214</sup> “How Can the Ordinary Muslim Know Who the Scholars Are?” *Islam Question and Answer*. General Supervisor: Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid. September 29, 2015, accessed September 9, 2016. <https://islamqa.info/en/198487>.

Shaykh Muhammad Ibrahim Ibn Abdl al-Ash Shaykh, who prepared him and added to the qualifications of Ibn Baz to become a Scholar. The practiced tradition is that knowledge is only qualified and obtained through recognized official authorities and, while reading books is beneficial, it would never qualify an individual to even teach, and by no means, obtain the status of scholar.<sup>215</sup>

Shortly after the death of Shaykh Ibn Baz, his former student, al-Munajjid, wrote an article reflecting on Ibn Baz's life and status as a scholar. Al-Munajjid, stated that the salvation of the people is connected to (or dependent upon) the presence of the scholars. He draws this conclusion from the *hadith* reported by 'Abdullad Ibn Amir al-'As who narrated that he heard Muhammad say: "Allah does not take knowledge away by taking it from people's (heart's); He takes knowledge away by taking away the scholars, and when there is not one scholar left, the people will turn to ignorant leaders who, when they are consulted, will give fatwas without knowledge. They are misguided and they misguide others."<sup>216</sup> Imam Ahmad said, "People need knowledge more than they need food and drink, because they need food and drink two or three times a day, but they need knowledge all the time . . . because the death of the entire tribe is less serious than the death of one scholar."<sup>217</sup> It is commonly held by Salafis that the numbers of the scholars today has diminished greatly, while the numbers of academics and speakers has multiplied exponentially, rendering a proper recognition of the scholars imperative, lest one be led astray.

Dr. Ahmed Iftakhar explains that ignorance has taken over *ilm* (knowledge) leading to a

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<sup>215</sup> "How Can the Ordinary Muslim Know Who the Scholars Are?"

<sup>216</sup> Muhammad Salih Al-Munajjid. "Abdul-'Aziz ibn 'Abdullah ibn Baz." Sunnah Online. Muharram 27, 1420H, accessed January 31, 2017. <http://sunnahonline.com/library/biographies/98-baz>.

<sup>217</sup> (Majma Az-Zawa'id, 1/201).

mix up between the scholars, students of knowledge, speakers, and pious worshippers.<sup>218</sup> In particular, Salafis have taken offense to the teachings of one of the most prominent speakers in the West, Yasir Qadhi. Moosa Richardson believes that Qadhi is the number one proponent of such talk that distances people from the scholars, who say things such as “we love the scholars over there with all their magical speech, but with all due respect, they do not live in America and they do not know what we are going through, so we have our own scholars.”<sup>219</sup> Richardson says that speakers, such as Qadhi will ultimately lead people astray from the scholars and instead lead them to himself, by making surface connections between *ahl Sunnah* and *ahl Bid’ah*, while covering up the essential differences.<sup>220</sup> According to Salafis, the West is void of scholars and, therefore, it is of utmost importance to remain attached to the scholars as a lifeline to imitate in order stay afloat in the presence of *bid’ah*.

### 3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to define Wahhabism after first, discussing varied interpretations of al-Wahhab’s motivations, and then examining recounts of his life and core teachings. From this chapter, it can be summarized that in order to define Wahhabism, two perspectives can be taken. For those who oppose Wahhabism, it is an austere, harsh, oppressive, and selective interpretation of Islam that, by overlooking centuries of development within Islamic thought, it ascribes established Islamic practices as being forbidden practices that at least, questions one’s salvation. From an adherent’s perspective, while still vehemently opposing

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<sup>218</sup> Ahmed Iftakhar. “It is a Must to Differentiate Between a Scholar, Preacher, Admonisher, Literary Writer, Student of Knowledge, Pious Worshipper and Others by Shaykh ‘Abdul’Azeez bin Rayyis ar-Rayyis.” *Tawheed Movement*. February 24, 2013, accessed August 22, 2016. <https://tawheedmovement.com/category/scholars/abdulazeez-bin-rayyis-ar-rayyis-scholars/>

<sup>219</sup> Moosa Abul-‘Abbaas Richardson. “Yasir Qadhi Will Separate You from the Scholars.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYi9bplr3O0>. (accessed February 3, 2017.)

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*.

the terminology, it can be said that Wahhabism is the return to *tawhid* as practiced by those of *ahl Sunnah wa'l jama'ah* from previous generations, by abandoning any practices that would compromise the singularity of Allah in worship; and, therefore, assuring one's safety from the Hell-Fire.

## **CHAPTER 4: SAUDI ARABIA GOVERNMENT- ORGANIZATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

### **4.1 Founding**

The history of Saudi Arabia is broken into three periods: the First, Second, and Third Saudi State. The First Saudi State, known as the Emirate of Dir'iyah, began with the pact between al-Wahhab and al-Saud in 1744 and continued through the time period of the al-Saud/al-Wahhab expansion, which culminated in the capture of Makkah and Madinah in 1803. After a short reign in the Hejaz region, Ottoman forces quickly regained Makkah and Madinah impeding the movement and driving it back to Dir'iyah. The First Saudi State terminated shortly thereafter in 1818 when Dir'iyah was destroyed and the ex-communicated leader, Abdullah Ibn Saud (grandson of Muhammad Ibn Saud), was executed in the Ottoman capitol for crimes against the cities of Makkah and Madinah.<sup>221</sup> The Second Saudi State, known as the Emirate of Najd, began in 1824 as pieces of the shattered house of Saud came together. Yet, throughout the movement, due in part to Egyptian opposition and ultimately to internal conflict, the Second State never expanded outside the Najd region. The Second Saudi State ended in 1891, as they were defeated by their northern enemies, the Rashidis of Ha'il, and forced into exile in Kuwait. The Third State of Saudi Arabia began in 1902 when Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud arose from exile in Kuwait to recaptured Riyadh, and it continues through the present.

In a span of 30 years, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud conquered all of modern Saudi Arabia, and in 1932 he officially established the unification of the new state as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with himself as the king.<sup>222</sup> Enemies of Saudi Arabia believe that the rapid unification was the

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<sup>221</sup> Abdullah Ibn Saud was charged with crimes against the two holy cities as a result of damage to the masjids during their capture of the two cities and in their intended defense against the Ottoman retaliation.

<sup>222</sup> William Ocheswald. *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, ed. Robert Wuthnow. 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1998), 672.

result of Western alliances that Ibn Saud created. The acquisition of British weapons and influence, along with the coinciding collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, created the perfect opportunity for Ibn Saud. Qadhafi, in a United Nations meeting, echoed this thought by saying, “I would like to take this opportunity to say to my brother (Saudi King) Abdallah: For six years you have been running away, fearing confrontation (with me). Let me assure you that you shouldn’t be afraid. After six years, it has become clear that the lie stands behind you and the grave stands before you. You were created by the British and you are protected by America... (microphone cut off).”<sup>223</sup> It is undeniable that these played a pivotal role, for without such timing and allegiances, the Kingdom could not have been established as it was. However, this would discount the domestic brilliance of Ibn Saud, who utilized what Peter Wilson states are the two roots of Saudi Arabia, Arab traditionalism (tribalism) and Islam.<sup>224</sup>

It can be said that one of Ibn Saud’s greatest attributes was his claim to be the tribal leader of all of Arabia, which resulted in unification by absorption rather than conquest. Wilson further shows that the product of the two roots of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud and subsequent kings of Saudi Arabia, are held to be not only the head of state, but additionally, the leader of the tribe and imam.<sup>225</sup> Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner state that the “patrimonial values of tribalism” in Saudi Arabia is the foundation for “group identity and enable both rank-and-file tribesmen and the royal family to preserve that identity.”<sup>226</sup> Dr. Abdullah Ansary, an expert in Saudi Arabian law, states, “National unity was realized because Abdul-Aziz applied the doctrine of Islam to

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<sup>223</sup> Sheikh Imran Hosein. “Israel & Saudi Arabia are Sisters!” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on5YzNfQew8&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=14>. (accessed February 1, 2016).

<sup>224</sup> Peter W. Wilson and Douglas F. Graham. *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm*. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994). 36.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>226</sup> Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds. *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990). 18.

public policy, justice, and all other fields of life.”<sup>227</sup> Coupling the two roots, empowered Ibn Saud to raise such an army as the *Ikhwans*, who fought with religious convictions and the mandate of their tribal head. David Commins submits that the condensing of political power to Ibn Saud revitalized the Wahhabi *da'wah* and allowed it to attain “uncontested supremacy in Najd,” and become the official religion of the kingdom.<sup>228</sup> However, their supremacy was compromised as “political considerations dictated the pace and extent to impose Wahhabi norms.”<sup>229</sup> Compromise is the key concept to understanding the union of the political control in the hands of Ibn Saud’s descendants and the religious authority in the hands of the descendants of al-Wahhab. So, from its earliest inception as a modern kingdom to the present, the question still remains about the interaction between the two ruling families in Saudi Arabia.

#### 4.1.1 Law

Apart from being the only nation named after its founder family, Saudi Arabia is also the only nation to place the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* as its Constitution. While a Wahhabi interpretation is understood from an outsider’s perspective, technically Sunni Islam is the official religion of the country, and religious freedom is not protected under the law, if outside of their singular interpretation.<sup>230</sup> In 1926, five years before the unification of the kingdom, Ibn Saud approved a “comprehensive constitution called the Basic Regulations,” which laid out the structure of the government against the backdrop of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, to impose on the Hejaz province.<sup>231</sup> Additional tribes that were conquered or absorbed into the House of Saud also

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<sup>227</sup> Abdullah F. Ansary. “Saudi Arabia A General History: A Brief Overview of the Saudi Arabian Legal System.” *Hauser Global Law School Program*. July 2008, accessed March 09, 2016. [http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Saudi\\_Arabia.html](http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Saudi_Arabia.html).

<sup>228</sup> David Commins. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. 70-71.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>230</sup> "International Religious Freedom Report for 2014." U.S. Department of State. 2014, accessed March 26, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014>.

<sup>231</sup> Abdullah F. Ansary. “Saudi Arabia A General History.”

were under the Basic Regulations until they became law with the unification of Saudi Arabia. Propelled by the discovery of unimaginable oil reserves, the Kingdom grew rapidly. Despite the successive appointment of additional bodies of government, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1930), the Ministry of Finance (1932), the Ministry of Defense (1944), the Council of Ministers (1954), and the Ministry of Justice (1970), by the 1980's a committee was formed to prepare a new constitution.<sup>232</sup> On March 5, 1992, during the reign of King Fahad, The Basic Laws of Governance were issued. The first article states: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion shall be Islam and its constitution shall be the Book of God and the *Sunnah* (Traditions) of His Messenger, may God's blessings and peace be upon him...."<sup>233</sup> Additionally, the Basic Law defines Shari'a as the "foundation of the kingdom," that governance is to be monarchical and limited to the sons of Abdul-Aziz and the sons of his sons. Each state has authority: judicial, executive and regulatory (legislative), yet it is clearly defined that the King is their final authority.<sup>234</sup>

#### 4.2 Religious Authority In Saudi Arabia.

One of the most difficult aspects to understand in the Saudi Arabian legal system is the Hanbali *fiqh* interpretation used in legal matters. David Commins illustrates, "it is true that Wahhabi *qadis* generally follow Hanbali tradition, but they are not obligated to do so, and there is no formal rule to ensure consistency in legal verdicts."<sup>235</sup> This leads to confusion and unpredictability, as it lacks a uniform legal code. Dr. Ansary offers the clearest dissecting of law in Saudi Arabia, saying, "To learn the law of Saudi Arabia, one turns first to *fiqh*, of Islamic

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> "Basic Law of Governance" Royal Order No. (A/91) 27 Sha'ban 1412H – 1 March 1992. Published in Umm al-Qura Gazette No. 3397.

<sup>234</sup> Hunt Janin & Andre Kahlmeyer. *Islamic Law: The Sharia from Muhammad's Time to the Present*. 1-3.

<sup>235</sup> David Commins. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. 114-115.

Law. In other words, one turns not to state legislation or court precedents but to the opinions, the *ijtihad*, of religious-legal scholars from both the past and the present who, by their piety and learning, have become qualified to interpret the scriptural sources to derive laws.”<sup>236</sup>

In 1928, in an effort to settle inconsistencies, the Judicial Board, with approval from the King, issued a resolution that rulings must be in accordance with Hanbali *fiqh* because of: (1) the ease and clarity of its books and references; (2) the consensus of Hanbali scholars; and (3) “the presentation of evidence addressing whichever problems happens to be under consideration.”<sup>237</sup> Within the resolution is the proclamation that judges rely on two late Hanbali authoritative works by Mansur ibn Yunus al-Bahuti al-Hanbali (d. 1642) *Sharh Muntaha al-Iradat* and *Sharh al-Iqna*.<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, if the answer is not found in either of al-Hanbali’s works, two summaries of *al-Muqni* and *al-Iqna* are the next sources used. If no answer can be obtained, then other authentic laws books from Hanbali *fiqh* are allowed.<sup>239</sup> While verdicts rarely make it to this stage, it is clearly seen that this is a Hanbali legal system. One important exception is offered in paragraph (B) of the 1928 resolution. Here it states that, depending on circumstances, there are certain cases where the *fiqh* of other Sunni *madhhab* are permissible or even preferred, if it is determined by the courts that they would “reach a more appropriate ruling which would best serve the public welfare.”<sup>240</sup> It is at this point that a unified calling of Saudi Arabian law breaks from being known as Hanbali, a fact that has already been pointed out by statements from the scholars who say they are on the *madhhab* of the Messenger. Therefore, statements such as those in the 2014 International Religious Freedom Report by the U.S. Department of State are correct

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<sup>236</sup> Abdullah F. Ansary. “Saudi Arabia A General History.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

in saying, “the legal system is based on the Hanbali School of Sunni Islamic Jurisprudence.”<sup>241</sup>

The Board of Senior *ulama* heads the religious authority in Saudi Arabia. Its size varies between fifteen to twenty-five of the highest senior scholars in the Kingdom.<sup>242</sup> The Board is recognized and defined in the Basic Laws where it is stated, “The Law set forth the hierarchy and jurisdiction of the Board of Senior *Ulama* and the Department of Religious Research and Fatwa.”<sup>243</sup> For the first time ever, in 2009, King Abdullah’s appointment of additional clerics resulted in the *ulama* consisting of representatives from all four Sunni *madhhabs*.<sup>244</sup> While most of the *ulama* are paid from the state budget and hold positions such as lawyers, university teachers, *qadis* and imams, very few of them “wield real power.”<sup>245</sup> Yet, it is a mistake to discount their lack of political power to equal a lack of influence. Nawaf E. Obaid clarifies that the king can never completely ignore the *ulama* but must consider their views in every decision he makes.<sup>246</sup>

Ondrej Beranek shows that the “internal composition” of the *ulama* has dramatically altered in recent years due to varying perspectives, chiefly by what he calls the rise of the “other” *ulama*.<sup>247</sup> This “other” *ulama* consists of a younger generation who are unsympathetic of their distaste for the royal family, and the conservative *ulama*. The conservative *ulama* have been referred to by names such as “the scholars of trivialities; (for their obsession with a whole range

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<sup>241</sup> "International Religious Freedom Report for 2014."

<sup>242</sup> Ondrej Beranek. “The Sword and the Book: Implications of the Intertwining of the Saudi Ruling Family and the Religious Establishment.” *Crown Center for Middle Eastern Studies* .July 2002, accessed March 2, 2017. <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB28.pdf>. Abdullah F. Ansary. Puts the numbers between 30 and 40 members in “Saudi Arabia A General History.”

<sup>243</sup> Basic laws.

<sup>244</sup> Nabil Mouline. *The Clerics of Islam*. 9-10.

<sup>245</sup> Nawaf E. Obaid. “The Power of Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Leaders.” *Middle East Quarterly*. September 1999. Vol. 6. No. 3. 51-58, accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.me-forum.org/482/the-power-of-saudi-arabias-islamic-leaders>. & Ondrej Beranek. “The Sword and the Book: Implications of the Intertwining of the Saudi Ruling Family and the Religious Establishment.”

<sup>246</sup> Nawaf E. Obaid. “The Power of Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Leaders.” 51-54.

<sup>247</sup> Ondrej Beranek. “The Sword and the Book: Implications of the Intertwining of the Saudi Ruling Family and the Religious Establishment.”

of issues from false eyelashes to athletic centers) . . . and “blind people living in medieval times.”<sup>248</sup> One thing that has been constant since the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the ebb and flow of the religious authority’s power that rises when the political realm suffers and diminishes when the political realm flourishes.

#### 4.2.1 The Allegiance Of Wahhabis To The Royal Family

While the power of the King is unmatched in Saudi Arabia, it is important to remember that it is “religious bound.”<sup>249</sup> Responding to a question regarding the appropriate advice in answering to a ruler who wages war against the religion and causes repression against the believer, Shaykh al-Fawzan, (obviously realizing that the question was in reference to the Saudi royal family) answers, “The Saudi state ever since it began has always aided the religion and its adherents.”<sup>250</sup> Additionally, al-Fawzan reverts the question back to the issuer, saying that, “this reality is a thorn in the throats of the people of evil, hypocrisy, and dissension;” which the questioner must be. Al-Fawzan does eventually get to the point that *ijtihad* can enter into matters such as permitting the ruler to allow the selling of alcohol, *ijtihad* can be taken up to show that while this may be a major sin, it is not *kufir*. Using “judgment by secular laws,” a ruler can be excused by his justification.<sup>251</sup> For example, when non-Muslims are in their lands and the prohibition of alcohol may make them leave.<sup>252</sup>

An important aspect to recall in understanding this relationship, as has been shown in the principles given by Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah, and al-Wahhab, is summarized in the *Sahih* Muslim

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> "ICL - Saudi Arabia Index." ICL - Saudi Arabia Index.

<sup>250</sup> “Shaykh Abdul-Azeez ar-Raajihee on Secular Laws, Changing the Whole of the Deen, and the Accusation of Irjaa’ Against Ahl us-Sunnah.” *Salafi Publications*. Accessed August 15, 2016. <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps/downloads/pdf/MNJ050019.pdf>.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

*hadith* “narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: ‘It is obligatory for you to listen to the ruler and obey him in adversity and prosperity, in pleasure and displeasure, and even when another person is given (rather undue) preference over you.’”<sup>253</sup> In one of the clearest representations of the inner workings of the Saudi/Wahhabi relationship in modern Saudi Arabia, upon addressing the scholars, King Abdullah (d. 2015) said, “Command what is good and forbid what is evil according to your capabilities.” To which, Grand Mufti Abdul Aziz al-Ash Shaykh responded, “The Scholars strengthen those in authority and love them and invite the people to love them as well.”<sup>254</sup>

There is no shortage of critics regarding the unique relationship between the political and religious establishment in Saudi Arabia. Shi’a author, Muhammad Husayn Ibrahim, says that, “In reality, Wahhabism is a political movement under the religious cover of identifying with the Sunnis, and it wants to prevent the unity of the Islamic schools of thought. It is trying to kindle the flame of discord among Muslims especially between the two main sects- Sunni and Shia’ – so as to make the imperialist hegemony permanent over the Muslim.”<sup>255</sup> Shaykh Hosein says he has never written an attack on the Wahhabi religious movement. What he does say is that he is concerned with an alliance between the Wahhabi movement at a particular time in history and the Saudi family. “That alliance proceeded to betray Islam, in a monstrous betrayal.”<sup>256</sup> Regardless of critics, the internal climate has changed with domestic terrorism and the weakening of the *ulama* in unification. As Nawaf E. Obaid stated in his 1999 article, “This

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<sup>253</sup> Muslim. (Book 20, *hadith* 4525).

<sup>254</sup> “King of Saudi Arabia advising the Scholars! - with comment of the Mufti Shaykh Abdul-Aziz.” *YouTube*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za9bAK\\_D9Fw&index=33&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJArabia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za9bAK_D9Fw&index=33&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJArabia) (accessed April 9, 2016).

<sup>255</sup> Muhammad Husayn Ibrahim. “A New Analysis of Wahhabi Doctrine.” Translated by Mansoor Limba. *ABWA Ahl al-Bayt*. 2007, accessed June 22, 2016. <https://www.al-islam.org/new-analysis-wahhabi-doctrines-muhammad-husayn-ibrahimi/life-account-shaykh-ibn-abd-al-wahhab-and>.

<sup>256</sup> “Sheikh Imran Hosein’s Stance on the ‘Wahhabi’ Movement.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7-40Q5ZSnE&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=3> (accessed December 15, 2015).

cooperative and consensual relationship has provided the kingdom with one of the most stable societies in the region and has allowed it to avoid the war and revolution that has wracked nearly every one of its neighbors.”<sup>257</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Al-Ash Shaykh

Al-Ash Shaykh is the name given to the descendants of al-Wahhab and, translated, means the family or house of the Shaykh. While their numbers are still claimed to be in the hundreds, and many are in high-ranking positions in Saudi Arabia, their status appears to be diminishing as the once strong inter-marriage between al-Ash Shaykh and al-Saud has almost vanquished and the younger generation of al-Ash Shaykh have become less inclined to pursue a religious career. Another fracture in the al-Saud/al-Ash Shaykh allegiance occurred at the end of the Second Saudi State when the leader of the *ulama*, Abd Allah Ibn Abd al-Latif, rather than choosing exile in Kuwait, sided with the Al-Rashid who defeated al-Saud, splitting with al-Saud.<sup>258</sup> After Ibn Saud’s recapture of Riyadh, al-Latif reconciled with Ibn Saud. Yet, it would be hard to imagine that the eleven-year split did not have long-lasting consequences that remain today.

Therefore, it is likely that Ibn Saud used al-Ash Shaykh to help legitimize his conquests religiously.<sup>259</sup> In turn, Ibn Saud offered protection and gave them wealth and prominent religious positions.<sup>260</sup> Al-Latif died in 1920. His distant cousin, Abd Allah Ibn Husayn (d. 1958), became the chosen shaykh of Ibn Saud. This led to Husayn’s eventual appointment as imam of the Grand mosque in Makkah, and Ibn Saud’s approval to enforce the command of rights and forbiddance

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<sup>257</sup> Nawaf E. Obaid. “The Power of Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Leaders.” 51-54.

<sup>258</sup> Alexander Bligh. “The Saudi religious elite (Ulama) as participant in the political system of the kingdom.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 17: 37–50. 1985, accessed February 12, 2017. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-middle-east-studies/article/the-saudi-religious-elite-ulama-as-participant-in-the-political-system-of-the-kingdom/8CC8E501168D8B9B88CC934ED73D1BFD>.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> “The Al ash- Sheikh.” *Revolvy*. Accessed January 14, 2017. <https://www.revolvy.com/topic/Al%20ash-Sheikh&item type=topic>.

of wrong, that developed into the Committee for Commanding Rights and Forbidding Wrong in 1953.<sup>261</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, another descendant of al-Wahhab, Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Adb al-Lafit al-Ash Shaykh, was instrumental in reforming and restructuring the judicial system. From 1953 to his death in 1969, he was the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia (Head of the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Issuing Fatwas).<sup>262</sup> The current Grand Mufti is also a descendent of al-Wahhab and is currently the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia.

#### 4.2.3 *Fatwas*

The value of a *fatwa* varies depending on the audience who receives it. A *fatwa* can be understood as a religious ruling based on the opinion of a scholar or scholars on issues of Islamic law. The purpose of a *fatwa* is largely to determine if an act, not directly specified in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, is permissible or forbidden, based on conclusions reached by referring to authoritative *fiqh* writings and less likely, but possible, *ijtihaad*. A sizeable portion of *fatwas* are created in response to personal and collective requests for a *fatwa* on a specific issue. *Fatwas* are issued with the intent to be taken as authoritative. Yet, rarely is enforcement based on *fatwas* alone, as *fatwas* involving policy usually only appear in the aftermath of the decision-making process, and only when they agree with and advance the policy. As a result of controversial *fatwas* being issued by unauthoritative sources in Saudi Arabia, as laid out in a royal edict (2010), now only clerics who are part of, or at least associated with, the Senior Council of *ulama* are allowed to make authorized *fatwas*.<sup>263</sup> Skeptical about the purpose of the decree, Christopher Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, believes that the edict was “about

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<sup>261</sup> David Commins. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. 92&108.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>263</sup> Boucek, Christopher. “Saudi Fatwa Restrictions and the State-Clerical Relationship.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. October 27, 2010, accessed October 13, 2016. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=41824>.

bureaucratizing and institutionalizing state control “over the *ulama* above all else.”<sup>264</sup> Schwartz follows this belief stating harshly, “The aim of ‘fatwa fanatics’ is not religious; it is political and totalitarian.”<sup>265</sup>

In reviewing *fatwas* issued by Saudi clerics, looking at the purpose behind the ruling is one of the best ways to identify the Islamic interpretation of the *ulama*. In the summer of 2016, the Grand Mufti issued a *fatwa* that Saudi authorities should burn all Bibles in university libraries, and ban the display of crosses and other religious symbols not approved by the *ulama*.<sup>266</sup> A member of the religious police in Saudi Arabia interprets the purpose of this *fatwa* as protection of “our society’s moral probity.”<sup>267</sup> Historically, Shi’a are the most warned against. For example, in addressing the Iranian political regime in particular, he stated that they are not Muslims, but Zoroastrians and haters of true Muslims. Al-Mamouri believes that while it was stated as an attack, his choice of words and the context of the statement easily can be understood as calling all Shi’as non-Muslims.<sup>268</sup> In 2012, the Grand Mufti, declared that, while not forbidden, they (the *ulama*) could not recommend a person kiss the *Qur’an* because, “This has not reached us from the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah.”<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ifran Al-Alawi and Stephen Schwartz. “Fatwa Fanatics – The Deobandi-Wahhabi Lust for Control Over Personal Life.” *Millat Times* [India]. March 11, 2013, accessed August 20, 2016. <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/2206/fatwa-fanatics-the-deobandi-wahhabi-lust-for>.

<sup>266</sup> “The Saudi Grand Mufti Abdul-Aziz al-Shaykh Orders Holy Bibles and Christian and Jewish Books to be Burned; Say reports.” *Top News*. July 7, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016. <http://awdnews.com/top-news/the-saudi-grand-mufti-abdul-aziz-al-shaykh-orders-holy-bibles-and-christian-and-jewish-books-to-be-burned-say-reports1467893220>.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Al- Mamouri. “The Shiism-Wahhabism conflict is expanding among other Islamic denominations, as several Sunni schools are taking actions against Wahhabism.” *Al-Monitor*. September 11, 2016, accessed September 30, 2016. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/anti-wahhabism-shiism-sufism-muslims-world-saudi-sunnism.html>.

<sup>269</sup> “Kissing the Mushaf(Quran) Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez Aal ash-Shaykh 2012.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBT15Oq1kl8&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upp7r-iofswV7XJ&index=6> (accessed August 3, 2016). Even though the Sahaabi ‘Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl is reported to have kissed the *Qur’an* and saying “This is the book of my Lord.”

Many *fatwas* are directed toward the social and recreational aspect of life regarding activities that did not exist at the time of the Muhammad. In 2014, on his weekly television show, “Fatwa,” Grand Mufti al-Ash Shaykh called Twitter “a source of lies,” but holds that if it was used correctly it could be of great benefit. However, instead “it’s exploited for trivial matters.”<sup>270</sup> In January 2017, he stated that “concerts and cinemas are forbidden (*haram*) in Islam as they corrupt morals and values.”<sup>271</sup> Gender mixing and the introduction of foreign non-Muslim ideas are the main morals and values at risk of corruption that influenced this *fatwa*. In a late 2015 *fatwa*, al-Ash Shaykh said that chess was forbidden in Islam because it could lead to rivalry and enmity between players, and more importantly, it could be used for gambling and to distract players to forget their obligatory acts, such as *salat*.<sup>272</sup> Ironically, using Twitter as their medium, critics responded that the *fatwa* forbidding chess is rather a means to control the population and shun intellectual and critical thinking.<sup>273</sup>

*Fatwas* are also issued to counter non-authoritative *fatwas*, such as in the case of a prominent but unauthorized cleric who stated that it was permissible to “mark” birthdays and wedding anniversaries with parties as long as the word *eid* (feast) is not used.<sup>274</sup> Shaykh al-Ash Shaykh quickly denounced the unauthoritative *fatwa*, saying that, “It’s not permissible to take part in them, “as “birthday parties are an innovation.”<sup>275</sup> Along with innovation, another guiding

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<sup>270</sup> “Saudi Grand Mufti Terms Twitter ‘Source of All Evil.’” *Dawn*. October, 2014, accessed March 10, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/113943>.

<sup>271</sup> Ezzoubeir Jabrane. “Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia: ‘Concerts and Cinema are Haram.’” *Middle East GCC*. January 15, 2017, accessed January 28, 2017. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/01/205912/grand-mufti-of-saudi-arabi>.

<sup>272</sup> Ben Curtis. “Saudi Arabia’s Top Cleric Says Chess is ‘Forbidden,’ Sparking Outcry and Criticism Online.” *The Associated Press*, January 21, 2016, accessed January 29, 2016. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/saudi-arabia-top-cleric-chess-forbidden-article-1.2505404>.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>274</sup> Donna Abu-Nasr. “Don’t Let Them Eat Cake, Saudis’ Top Cleric Says.” *Los Angeles Times*. November 09, 2008, accessed December 2, 2014. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/nov/09/news/adfg-saudibirthday9>.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*.

principle that was regarded in determining birthday parties as forbidden, was given the principle that excessive celebration is a form of *shirk*. Another aspect which has led to the tightening of the reigns on *fatwas* are the appearance of *fatwas* that surface without official recognition, such as the recent *fatwa* which states that Shaykh al-Ash Shaykh declared it permissible for a starving man to eat his wife.<sup>276</sup> Saudi sources claim that the shaykh never issued such a *fatwa*, and that it is likely a fabricated *fatwa* created by the Iranian media.<sup>277</sup> The *fatwa* does not appear on any official list of *fatwas*, strengthening the Saudi's claim of fabrication. However, while merely speculating, it would not be outside the realm of possibilities that such a *fatwa* was issued, but suppressed for political interests. From a Western (or even Saudi) perspective, many of the *fatwas* appear to be oppressive and an attempt to control people. However, it would be an error to overlook the reality that the main purpose of a *fatwa* is to expose and warn people of acts of *bid'ah* and *shirk*.

### 4.3 What The Saudi Government Is Protecting

Other than *fatwas* being used to warn of *bid'ah* and *shirk*, Saudi Arabia operates under the conviction that, taken from al-Wahhab's teaching, knowledge must lead to action. It is largely believed within the Kingdom that the actions of one person effects the entire *ummah*. Things like the abundance of wealth in Saudi Arabia are believed to be *baraka* from Allah, for adhering to the call to *tawhid*. Therefore, protection against *bid'ah* and *shirk* is a national interest. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawy (d. 2010) felt that "Saudi Arabia leads the world in the protection of human rights because it protects them according to the shari'a of God. . ."<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> "Top Saudi Mufti Reportedly Issues Fatwa Allowing Starving Husbands to Eat Wives." *The Jerusalem Post*, April 9, 2015, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Not-Just-News/Top-Saudi-mufti-reportedly-issues-fatwa-allowing-starving-husband-to-eat-his-wife-396657>.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Robert R. Reilly. *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis*. (Wilmington, Delaware, ISI Books, 2010).

Shaykh al-Ash Shayk says, “This county is envied because of its religion, its safety, its leadership, affluence and rich resources, and its unity and uniformity,”<sup>279</sup> and that “The seeker of knowledge does not make himself busy by attacking so and so from the people, but he is busy by rectifying and calling people to the good.”<sup>280</sup> Ifran Ahmed reports that the *ulama* say they are trying to rescue Islam from what they consider innovations, deviances, and idolatries.<sup>281</sup> In Saudi Arabia, things are a matter of black and white (i.e. right vs. wrong), exemplified by the use of a one-stringed instrument representing that there is only one way.<sup>282</sup> This can most clearly be seen in the continued practice of leveling graves and the establishment and enforcement of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV).

#### 4.3.1 Grave Smashing

Brother Imran states that the majority have a false interpretation of the history of al-Wahhab in using the philosophy of *jihad* to fight *kufirs*, when, in reality, he fought no battles with the *kufirs* but instead, initially a Wahhabi, was one who demolished graves.<sup>283</sup> During the First Saudi State, tombs were destroyed throughout the country, particularly in Makkah and Madinah. However, shortly after regaining control of the region, the Ottoman Empire ordered the rebuilding of domes, mosques, and tombs over the graves of many of the *salaf* and family of

<sup>279</sup> “Abdul 'Aziz Ali-Shaykh on Abandoning the Scholars & Disobeying the Rulers.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZROIJtCLw0&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8hS2YC9bMo-7BMV5y26AR-&index=32> (accessed August 5, 2016).

<sup>280</sup> “Grand Mufti and Saudi Arabia.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iTViQJsN5A&index=39&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ> (accessed May 2, 2016).

<sup>281</sup> Ifran Ahmed. “Saudi Wahhabis: Destroying the Holy Sites in Mecca and Medina.” *Islamic Magazine*, Issue 15, p. 71. August 6, 2012, accessed December 22, 2015. <http://islamicmagazine.com/?p=424>.

<sup>282</sup> *House of Saud*. DVD

<sup>283</sup> Islamic Audios.net. “Wahhabis who are they-Brother Imran Wahhabi kaun hai.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nu7W5XZWYA&index=30&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ> (accessed May 14, 2016).

–Brother Imran further holds that the graves at that time in Mecca and Medina were those of non-Sunni Muslims, of which al-Wahhab was aware – so he encouraged al-Saud to demolish these graves under the order given by Muhammad.

Muhammad. With the rise of the Third State of Saudi Arabia, one of the first actions undertaken was to commission the Ikhwan with re-destroying the monuments built over the grave. The stance of the *ulama* is that in destroying monuments built over graves, is again, that they are trying to rescue Islam from innovations and idolatries.<sup>284</sup>

In a 1994 edict from the *ulama*, it was stated “that preserving historical buildings might lead to polytheism.”<sup>285</sup> Muhammad clearly stated that it is forbidden to build structures over graves, make them a place of prayer, or to make it a place of worship.<sup>286</sup> One of the most referred to *hadith* regarding building over graves, Abu Hayat reported that Ali Ibn Abu Talib, said to him: “Shall I not send you on a mission as the Messenger of Allah, (PHUB) sent me? Do not leave an image without effacing it and do not leave an elevated grave without leveling it.”<sup>287</sup> Instead, the tradition of Muhammad is for the grave to be raised a hand span and be leveled (or some scholars prefer it rounded).<sup>288</sup> These *hadith* are sufficient in the minds of the Saudi *ulama* to “flatten” anything above a hand span used to mark a grave. In at least five of his books, Shaykh al-Albani called for the demolition of the Green Dome of the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah and for taking Muhammad’s grave outside the Mosque.<sup>289</sup> Regarding the Prophet’s Mosque, Dr. Sami Alawi, founder of the Hajj Research Center, affirms that, “People visit the

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<sup>284</sup>Ifran Ahmed. “Saudi Wahhabis: Destroying the Holy Sites in Mecca and Medina. 71

<sup>285</sup>Laith Abou-Ragheb. “Dr. Sami Angawi on Wahhabi Desecration of Makkah.” *CIP*. July 12, 2005, accessed August 4, 2016. Developers and Purists Erase Mecca's History <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/467/dr-sami-angawi-on-wahhabi-desecration-of-makkah>.

<sup>286</sup> - Jabir reported: “The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, prohibited plastering the graves, sitting upon them, and building structures over them.” Muslim 970, (Sahih) -Abu Sa’eed Al-Khudri reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “The entire earth has been made a place of prayer except for the graveyards and the latrine.” At-Tirmidhi 317 (Sahih). -Jundub reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said five days before he passed away: “Verily, those before you turned the graves of their prophets and righteous men into places of worship, so do not take graves as places of worship. I forbid you from doing so.” Muslim 532. (Sahih).

<sup>287</sup> Muslim 96. (Sahih).

<sup>288</sup> Muslim 968. (Sahih).

<sup>289</sup> SalafiDawahNZ. “Some Questions Answered by Musa Richardson.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-yjTwIcDCw>. (accessed February 3, 2017).

chambers, which are the rooms where the Prophet's family lived, and turn towards the burial chamber to pray."<sup>290</sup> The only answer to date to cease the *shirk* that occurs in the Prophet's Mosque appears to be to "get him out and into the cemetery."<sup>291</sup>

While there is heavy opposition over the destruction of graves and early Islamic architecture, much of the focus is what it is being replaced with. Dr. Angawi worries, "We are witnessing now the last few moments of the history of Makkah," as "Its layers of history are being bulldozed for a parking lot."<sup>292</sup> Shaykh Hamza Yusuf says that Makkah looks like Los Angeles, as the first thing you see when you come into the city is the Golden Arches of McDonalds.<sup>293</sup> Yusuf holds that in order to prevent *bid'ah* and *shirk*, Salafis in Saudi Arabia are committing *bid'ah*, as in Makkah not even a tree is supposed to be moved, while mourning that "it is really sad to see mountains being moved, history is being removed."<sup>294</sup> The current expansion project at the Grand Mosque will allow 1.2 million additional Muslims to perform *hajj* each year. However, as Dr. Angawi points out, the problem is not the "expansion for prayer and pilgrimage, but the expansion for commercialization."<sup>295</sup> He further states that throughout Islamic history, it has been held that the Ka'ba is supposed to be the highest thing in Makkah,

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<sup>290</sup> Andrew Johnson. "Saudi Arabia's Proposal to Destroy Prophet Mohammed's Tomb and Move Remains to Anonymous Grave Risks New Muslim Division." *Belfast Telegraph*. March 9, 2014, accessed June 15, 2016. <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/saudi-arabias-proposal-to-destroy-prophet-mohammeds-tomb-and-move-remains-to-anonymous-grave-risks-new-muslim-division-30557589.html>.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Laith Abou-Ragheb. "Dr. Sami Angawi on Wahhabi Desecration of Makkah." *CIP*. July 12, 2005, accessed August 4, 2016. Developers and Purists Erase Mecca's History <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/467/dr-sami-angawi-on-wahhabi-desecration-of-makkah>.

<sup>293</sup> "What is a Wahabi? Who are Wahabis? Leading Muslim figures Speak..." *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5yoQB9JzmA&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ&index=12> (accessed March 8, 2016).

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> "Saudi Wahabies are destroying every historical holy sites in Makka & Madina". *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8CXmDBJHmK&index=4&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ>. (accessed April 9, 2016).

yet, it is currently dwarfed by towers surrounding it on all sides. Ifran al-Alawi of the Islamic Heritage Center says, “It seems like we are living in Las Vegas.”<sup>296</sup>

#### 4.3.2. CPVPV And Its Enforcement

The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (CPVPV), also known as the *mutaween* (the pious), the *hay'a* (the commission), or the religious police, can be seen as the “executive arm of the *ulama*.”<sup>297</sup> Simon Ross Valentine identifies their primary role as the duty of *hisbah*: enjoying what is right (*ma'rouf*) and forbidding what is wrong (*munkar*).<sup>298</sup> In addition to issuing *fatwas*, the destruction of possible places of grave worship and the CPVPV are seen as obligatory to undertake *hisbah*. Valentine further explains that the belief is held that the abandonment of *hisbah* “will be the cause of fitnah (chaos and disorder) in a society...and the failure to forbid *munkar* makes them just as guilty as those who commit the wrong.”<sup>299</sup> Hence, it is relayed that it is the business of everyone to prevent *munkar*. It has been well-documented that in Saudi Arabia, neighbors, friends and co-workers often report suspicious activities to the CPVPV. *Mutaween* are seen as enforcers of morality in the public sphere and operate with authority to investigate infringements in areas such as: gender mixing between unrelated men and women; participation in prayer; practicing non-Islamic faiths; selling media with questionable content contrary to Islam; buying, selling or consumption of alcohol; unapproved celebration; ensuring that *salat* is undertaken five times a day; illicit sexual conduct; the practice of magic or sorcery; adherence to proper dress attire; playing music; gambling; on-line activities; and other such activities that are deemed *haram*.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup>“International Religious Freedom Report for 2014." *Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain*. March 2, 2015, accessed May 30, 2016. <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/03/mapping-the-saudi-state-an-introduction>.

<sup>298</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. 135

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>300</sup> "International Religious Freedom Report for 2014." & *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*.

According to the 2014 International Religious Freedom Report conducted by the U.S. Department of State, the CPVPV consists of 12 branch offices, 12 sub-commission offices, and 345 information centers throughout the kingdom reporting to the King through the royal courts as well as to the Ministry of Interior (MOI).<sup>301</sup> In 2005, the Human Rights Watch reported that the CPVPV made 400,000 arrests.<sup>302</sup> With an estimated 4,000 *mutaween* employed through the CPVPV that is an average of 100 arrests per year for each *mutaween*.

As the result of the tragic deaths in 2002 at a girls' school in Makkah where *mutaween* prohibited firemen from entering the burning building in fear that the girls inside the burning building would not be wearing the *hijab*, and several car chases that ended in death, the agency has gone under dramatic reform over the last seven years. *Mutaween* no longer carry sticks, which they were notoriously known for in the years prior. In one interview with a former Saudi resident, she recalls the *mutaween* walking behind "immodestly" dressed women and hitting them with their sticks wherever bare skin was exposed. Early in the 2000's, Prince Turki bin Faisal al-Saud investigated the CPVPV after being flooded with stories of corruption and abuse within the CPVPV. The investigation revealed that a frightening number of *mutaween* were ex-convicts, who, in order to have a reduced prison term, had memorized portions of the *Qur'an*.<sup>303</sup>

Following the Arab Spring in 2012, the CPVPV underwent drastic changes in 2013 under the order of King Abdullah. CPVPV investigations have been narrowed to the "harassment of women, alcohol and drug related offenses, witchcraft, and sorcery;" recruits 'must be of good reputation. They must now wear badges to make their identity known, and volunteers who were once allowed and encouraged to join the *mutaween* in forbidding *munkar*, are now prohibited.

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<sup>301</sup> "International Religious Freedom Report for 2014."

<sup>302</sup> "Mapping the Saudi State: An Introduction," *Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain*. March 2, 2015, accessed May 30, 2016. <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/03/mapping-the-saudi-state-an-introduction>.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*.

To strengthen the enforcement of changes, King Abdullah appointed Sheikh Abdul Latif Abdul Aziz al-Ash Shaykh as Cabinet Minister, leading the CPVPV and reporting directly to the King.<sup>304</sup>

Shayk Abdul Latif quickly reaffirmed that one of the CPVPV's most important functions was "rooting out sorcerers."<sup>305</sup> In fact, 41 specific hotlines have been set up dedicated to reporting black magic.<sup>306</sup> It is reported that practitioners of sorcery and witchcraft in Saudi Arabia are frequently, but not exclusively, "foreign workers who bring unfamiliar traditional religious or folk customs from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Africa, or elsewhere" to Saudi Arabia.<sup>307</sup> A main point of the following chapter will be to show many of these "unfamiliar traditional religious or folk customs" are not as foreign to Saudi Arabia as most would believe.

According to Valentine, in 2013 "*sihr* accounted for 6% of all offences committed in the kingdom."<sup>308</sup> While arrest numbers have lowered over recent years, which would alter the current numbers (possibly significantly), taking that Valentine reports 6% of offences involving *sihr* and applying it to the 400,000 arrests made by the CPVPV in 2005, show a potential of 24,000 offences or arrests involving *sihr* in 2005.

#### 4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the development of modern Saudi Arabia from a religious perspective to illustrate that it is held to be the duty of the *ulama* and leading political figures, i.e. the king, to encourage and spread *tawhid*, while preventing and punishing that which is believed to compromise the principles of *tawhid*. It has been shown that the religious authority within the

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<sup>304</sup> Louise Lief. "With Youth Pounding at Kingdom's Gates, Saudi Arabia Begins Religious Police Reform." *The Christian Science Monitor*. May 23, 2013, accessed January 22, 2016. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/0523/With-youth-pounding-at-kingdom-s-gates-Saudi-Arabia-begins-religious-police-reform>.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> "Mapping the Saudi State: An Introduction,"

<sup>308</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. 191.

Kingdom is dependent upon the “health” of the political state and that religious authority is often bridled unless it promotes political advances. However, nothing within Saudi Arabia is without at least a religious undertone, as seen in the destruction of graves and enforcement of the CPVPV. Boiled down, this protection against acts of *bid'ah* and *shirk* are undertaken as acts of spiritual warfare, to defeat evil.

## CHAPTER 5: RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN SAUDI ARABIA

### 5.1 Represented By Wahhabism

In 1998 the United Nations estimated that Saudi Arabia consisted of 20 million people, of which five million were foreign workers.<sup>309</sup> As of July 2014, the United States government estimated the total population to be 27.3 million, and the proportion of foreign presence has remained fairly consistent (30%).<sup>310</sup> It is estimated that 85 to 90% of Saudi citizens, and one can only be a citizen if they are Muslim, are Sunni.<sup>311</sup> Numbers vary greatly as to the percentage of Saudis who adhere to Sunni Wahhabi. In an interview of BNPTV, Nick Griffin, obviously speaking of the entire Wahhabi “movement,” puts the number of Wahhabi Muslims globally in the 100 millions, with probably several million in Britain alone.<sup>312</sup> In 1994, Peter Wilson claimed that the “fundamental vision of Islam, known to outsiders as Wahhabism, is followed by 85 to 90% of Saudis.”<sup>313</sup> A different opinion comes from Shaykh Dr. Umar Farooq Abdullah, who states that “most Saudis are not Wahhabis, most Saudis do not like the Wahhabis.”<sup>314</sup> Patrick Bascio reports that less than 40% of the Saudi population adhere to Wahhabism.<sup>315</sup> Shaykh Mohammad al-Hilli, calling Wahhabism an “ultra-orthodox, socio-

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<sup>309</sup> Sonya Schrer. “Saudi Arabian Americans.” *City-Data*. Accessed August 21, 2016. <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Saudi-.Arabian-Americans.html>

<sup>310</sup> Ibid. The numbers of foreigners is likely much higher due to undocumented workers and a recent influx of refugees.

<sup>311</sup> “International Religious Freedom Report for 2014.” Additionally, it is also estimated that within the Kingdom there are 1.2 million Christians, 310,000 Hindus, 180,000 who identify with no religion, 90,000 Buddhists, 70,000 adherents of folk religions, and 70,000 followers of other faith (e.g. Baha’i, Zoroastrian, etc.)

<sup>312</sup> BNPTV. “The Wahhabi Islamist Project.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2M CZ4QAV7A4&index=12&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ>. (accessed April 2, 2016). Griffin strongly opposes Wahhabism and believes that the only solution to Islamic terrorism is its eradication.

<sup>313</sup> Peter W. Wilson and Douglas F. Graham. *Saudi Arabia*. -Wilson appears to have used statistics for the percentage of Saudi residents who adhere to Sunni Islam, not a Wahhabi perspective.

<sup>314</sup> “What is a Wahabi? Who are Wahabis? Leading Muslim figures Speak...”

<sup>315</sup> Patrick Bascio. *Defeating Islamic Terrorism: An Alternative Strategy*. (Wellesley, MA: Branden Books, 2007). 60. Interestingly he also reports that over 95 % of prisoners in Saudi Arabia are Shi’a.

political movement,” makes the estimation that today roughly 8% of the population in Saudi Arabia follow the Wahhabi ideology.<sup>316</sup>

Valentine believes that Wahhabism is not as monolithic as portrayed in the Kingdom, since the strictness found in Riyadh greatly differs from that found in Jeddah.<sup>317</sup> Commins reports that young women in “liberal Jeddah” now regularly appear in public without their faces veiled, wearing their *abayas* and *niqabs* decorated with beads and designer sunglasses, and toting handbags.<sup>318</sup> It can be concluded that the farther one gets from Najd, the looser it gets. This is similar to the oft-used phrase that the further one gets from Makkah, the less Islamic it becomes. Mai Yamani describes that Ibn Saud’s gradual process of integrating the Hijaz region into the unified Kingdom was due to the fact that it was “too complex and sophisticated a state to assimilate in one go.”<sup>319</sup> With the advent of modernity in the Kingdom, there appear traces of an opposite trend where the gradual integration of modernity is slowly absorbing the minds and hearts of many young Saudis who are less concerned with Wahhabi identification and practice. Commins concluded that the “the Wahhabi mission’s 200- year reign as a hegemonic religious culture is in jeopardy” . . . and . . . “From this vantage point, early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the religious field in Saudi Arabia appears to be in flux, its horizons hazy and the destiny of the 18<sup>th</sup> century call from Najd uncertain.”<sup>320</sup> What is clear is that while Saudi Arabia appears to be blanketed by adherence to a Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, it does not represent the practice of the majority within the Kingdom.

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<sup>316</sup> "Top Saudi Mufti Reportedly Issues Fatwa Allowing Starving Husbands to Eat Wives." *The Jerusalem Post*, April 9, 2015, accessed January 22, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Not-Just-News/Top-Saudi-mufti-reportedly-issues-fatwa-allowing-starving-husband-to-eat-his-wife-396657>.

<sup>317</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. Preface.

<sup>318</sup> David Commins. *Islam in Saudi Arabia*. 87.

<sup>319</sup> Mai Yamani. *Cradle of Islam: The Hijaz and the Quest for an Arabian Identity*. (New York, NY: I.B.Taurus, 2004). 8-9.

<sup>320</sup> David Commins. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. 204-206.

## 5.2 Folk Islam

The idea of folk, low, or popular Islam hardly needs to be introduced as a result of the life works of some of the leading experts, such as Paul Hiebert, J. Dudley Woodberry, Richard Love, Edward L. Smither, Bill Musk, Phil Parshall, and Vivienne Stacey. It is now commonly held that at minimum, 70% of all Muslims<sup>321</sup> participate in acts that could be classified as folk Islam. In discussing folk Islam and attributing such practices to the majority of practicing Muslims around the world, it must be remembered that, those who are classified as practitioners of folk practices consider themselves to be Muslims following what was revealed to Muhammad and written about his speech, deeds, and habits by his Companions.

The term lends itself to an unappealing label of one who is uneducated, or considered lower class. However, it pervades all realms of Islam, from the kings to the peasants. In his 2012 book, *Facing Islam, Engaging Islam: Constructive Dialogue in an Age of Conflict*, Alexander Pierce holds that from a numbers stance, it appears that theologically, a mixture of orthodox (only from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*) Islam united with folk religion would, therefore, represent the “mainstream” Islam.<sup>322</sup> Bill Musk teaches the approach that orthodox and popular Islam “may well operate in veiled partnership within any one single Muslim.”<sup>323</sup> In the same breath, Musk also adds, “It is plain that the beliefs and practices of ordinary Muslims contradict many formal aspects of Islamic faith.”<sup>324</sup>

Indeed, “the student of Islam will never understand the common people unless he

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<sup>321</sup> Given Pew Researches estimation that as of 2010 the Muslim world population was 1.6 billion, at least 1.12 billion would practice, to a degree, folk Islam, and many knowledgeable writers set the number at greater than 80%.

<sup>322</sup> Alexander Pierce. *Facing Islam, Engaging Islam: Constructive Dialogue in an Age of Conflict*. (Enumclaw, WA: Redemption Press, 2012.)

<sup>323</sup> J.D. Tangelder. “Folk Islam.” *Reformed Reflections*: John D. Tangelder. Accessed April 2, 2017. <http://www.reformedreflections.ca/other-religions/i-folk-islam.html>.

<sup>324</sup> Andy and Berit Kjos. “Four Faces of Islam.” *News With Views*, January 14, 2003, accessed March 12, 2016. [www.newswithviews.com/BeritKjos/kjos7.htm](http://www.newswithviews.com/BeritKjos/kjos7.htm).

knows the reason for their curious beliefs and practices.”<sup>325</sup> To date, folk Islam has been identified widely from a non-Muslim perspective. I hold that there is great value that can be added to the research and understanding of “folk Islam” by addressing it from the perspective of “orthodox” Islam. Vivienne Stacey states, “At the present moment we are getting a clear definition of folk or popular Islam from the modern, rigorous conservatives, especially the Wahhabi movement.”<sup>326</sup> In order to understand a Salafi/Wahhabi interpretation of folk Islam, requires an individual, at least temporarily, to dis-associate many of the practices in this chapter as being Islamic, since from a Salafi/Wahhabi perspective, they will take one outside of the folds of Islam. Sebastian Maisel writes that from al-Wahhab’s writings it can be seen that the Arabian Peninsula was once filled with folk customs but “today it is difficult to find forms of popular Islamic practices because of the efforts of the reformer . . .”<sup>327</sup>

Rather than recognize them as folk or popular traditions, al-Wahhab and those who adhere to a Wahhabi interpretation, identify them as acts of *bid’ah* and *shirk*. Al-Wahhab clearly defined *bid’ah* as the path to *shirk*, and held both to be the enemies of *tawhid*. Vivienne Stacey further adds that despite the reform movements, such as Wahhabism, “popular or folk Islam continues to be the Islam that many people know. It meets their sense of needs.”<sup>328</sup>

The two most important concepts to understand in order to properly delve into the category of folk Islam are animism and syncretism. Animism is the belief that in the seen (observable) and unseen (hidden) world, objects such as trees, rocks, stars; and creatures such as *jinns*, animals,

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<sup>325</sup> "Folk Islam - Message for Muslims." *Message for Muslims RSS*. Accessed January 20, 2016, accessed February 12, 2016. <http://www.message4muslims.org.uk/islam/folk-islam/>.

<sup>326</sup> Vivienne Stacey. “Encounter with Folk Islam.” *St. Francis Magazine*, Vol. 4, 2008, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.stfrancismagazine.info/ja/Encounter%20with%20Folk%20Islam%20%281%29.pdf>.  
*St. Francis Magazine*, Vol. 4, 2008, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.stfrancismagazine.info/ja/Encounter%20with%20Folk%20Islam%20%281%29.pdf>.

<sup>327</sup> Sebastian Maisel. *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arab States Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Arab States, Volume 1 and 2*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009). 165.

<sup>328</sup> Vivienne Stacey. “Encounter with Folk Islam.”

etc., are alive as spirits which have the ability to interact in human affairs. Syncretism simply means the mixture of two or more ideas or practices integrated together to comprise a singular belief.

After concluding that most Arab-Muslims are syncretistic “in mixing official Islam with animistic practice,” Dr. Edward L. Smither identifies four motivations for the mixture: (1) a desire to connect with the divine; (2) because of fear; (3) due to the absence of the presence of Allah and the presence of *jinn*s; practitioners are searching for real solutions; and (4) the desire for power and control.<sup>329</sup> While the reality and practice of syncretism is abundant, from a Salafi/Wahhabi perspective, the Russian Proverb, “you cannot sit on two chairs” summarizes syncretism.<sup>330</sup> Therefore, according to Wahhabism, one cannot simultaneously “sit on” (practice) *tawhid* and *shirk* (or *bid'ah*).

### 5.3 Specific Cases In Saudi Arabia Of Folk Islam

In 2009, within Saudi Arabia rumors quickly spread that certain models of Singer sewing machines contained small amounts of red mercury. While the existence of red mercury has never been affirmed, many Muslims believe that it is the key needed ingredient in creating a supreme chemical weapon. More important for this research, it is also held to be the food of choice for *jinn*. If one possesses the substance, the belief is that it enables them to summon *jinn* who will eagerly aid the possessor in locating and digging up buried treasure and in the “performance of various magic.”<sup>331</sup> Such beliefs resulted in the particular Singer models skyrocketing overnight, from SR100 to as high as SR150,000.

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<sup>329</sup> Edward L. Smither. “Bridging the Excluded Middle: The Case of Brazilian Evangelical Missionaries Serving Among Arab-Muslims.” *Global Missiology English*, Vol 2, No. 8 (January 2011).

<sup>330</sup> Alexander Pierce. *Facing Islam, Engaging Islam*.

<sup>331</sup> Shaheen, Abdul Rahman. “Saudis Flock to Grab Singer Machines Despite Warnings.” *Gulf News*. April 15, 2009, accessed March 21, 2016. <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudis-flock-to-grab-singer-machines-despite-warnings-1.1857>.

During a 2006 raid of a “magical hideout,” in Madinah, *mutaween* came across a naked sorceress who they said “flew like a bird” out of a window to escape. While they eventually found, covered, and arrested her, she was found in possession of incense, talismans, and videos about magic. One of the senior *ulama*, after describing it a tragedy that such an event would occur where the Prophet is buried, also answered, “Some magicians may ride a broom and fly in the air with the help of *jinn*.”<sup>332</sup>

In 2007, an Egyptian pharmacist was beheaded after being convicted of practicing magic and sorcery, adultery, and desecration of the *Qur’an*. *Mutaween* were tipped off when they found a *Qur’an* in the masjid restroom. Later he was accused of “disrupting a man’s marriage through spell work,” the possession of books on black magic, foul smelling herbs, and “a candle with an incantation ‘to summon devils.’”<sup>333</sup>

In 2006, Fawza Falih was charged with “witchcraft, recourse to *jinn*, and slaughter of animals.” Falih was sentenced to death with little to no legal liberties, but died in prison.<sup>334</sup> Additionally in 2013, two Asian maids were charged with performing magic on their boss’ family, causing them to faint and have seizures. The two maids were sentenced to 1,000 lashings and 10 years in prison.<sup>335</sup>

During a search for the body of an 18-year-old girl off the coast of Jeddah in the Red Sea, Saudi patrols reported that they found “magical” underwater discoveries, bottles with names written on paper inside the bottle, with some including jewelry or hair. *Al-Madinah* newspaper confirmed that they were magic spells. Specifics vary, but such spells usually involve the

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<sup>332</sup> Ryan Jacobs. “Saudi Arabia’s War on Witchcraft.” *Atlantic*. August 19, 2013. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/saudi-arabias-war-on-witchcraft/278701/>.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*.

person's name written on a piece of paper and a personal stolen item. Discoveries of such bottles are commonly found in the Red Sea. Shaykh Faisal Ibn Salman, a member of the *ulama*, personally tracked down one of the names from the bottle and reported that he had been suffering massive headaches since the exact day of the spell, 20 days prior.<sup>336</sup>

In 2011, Amina Nassar was beheaded after being convicted of practicing sorcery and witchcraft. Reports said that Nassar claimed to be a healer and charged customers up to \$800 for services. Herbs, glass bottles with unknown liquids, and a book on witchcraft found in her possession brought about the conviction.<sup>337</sup>

In 2016, a man was sentenced to 15 years in jail and 1,500 lashes for killing his four-month old child and causing the death of his wife. The man, who was high on drugs, threw the infant out the window of his moving vehicle because he believed it was possessed by a *jinn*. As a response to his action, his wife jumped out of the vehicle and was hit by on-coming traffic.<sup>338</sup>

In 2000, at an all-girls school in Jeddah, several teachers were reported to have had epileptic-like seizures, due to *jinn* possession (or haunting). Doctors blamed mass-hysteria, but a cleric asserted that it was indeed due to the presence of *jinn*.<sup>339</sup> In 2015, at another all-girls elementary and middle school in southern Madinah, 181 students refused to attend after nine students claimed that *jinn*s made them sick. The students were reported to have experienced

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<sup>336</sup> "Black Magic in Saudi Arabia." *Arab News*. July 18, 2009, accessed August 18, 2016. <http://elderofziyon.blogspot.com/2009/07/black-magic-in-saudi-arabia.html>.

<sup>337</sup> Judy Molland. "Saudi Woman Beheaded For 'Sorcery.'" *Care2*. December 12, 2011, accessed October 23, 2016. <http://www.care2.com/causes/saudi-woman-beheaded-for-sorcery.html>.

<sup>338</sup> Habib Toumi. "Father Sentenced to 15 Years in Jail For Killing 'Jinn' Baby in Saudi Arabia." *Gulf News*. June 8, 2016, accessed June 30, 2016. <http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/father-sentenced-to-15-years-in-jail-for-killing-jinn-baby-in-saudi-arabia-1.184>.

<sup>339</sup> Benjamin Radford. "Genies Blamed for School Sickness in Saudi Arabia." *Discovery News*. May 24, 2015, accessed May 22, 2016. <https://www.sott.net/article/296861-Genies-blamed-for-school-sickness-possession-in-Saudi-Arabia>.

fainting and spasms, leading parents to blame *jinn*s.<sup>340</sup>

A popular destination in Saudi Arabia is *Wadi Jinn* (Valley of the *Jinns*) north of Madinah, where it is believed that water travels up hill, and *jinn* will push a car uphill when put in neutral.<sup>341</sup> Many sufficient scientific explanations have been offered for the illusion, of which similar stories occur worldwide. Yet, *Wadi Jinn* remains a popular destination where interaction with *jinn* is thought to occur. Multiple on-line videos document Saudi residents and visitors attempting to “experience” *jinn*s.

In 2009, one Saudi family took a *jinn* to court on charges of theft and harassment. The family reported first hearing strange noises. Shortly thereafter, they claimed that the *jinn* started to leave them threatening voicemails, stole their cellphones, and threw rocks at them when they would leave the house at night.<sup>342</sup>

In 2014, a Saudi judge claimed innocence in the charges that he embezzled SR600 million in public funding. The defendant claimed that he was possessed by *jinn* (devils) when the event happened and was currently seeking aid from an exorcist to break the curse. He held that during the possession he had no control over his actions. To the surprise of many, he was charged as guilty since the decision was based merely on empirical evidence, rather than religious convictions. One commentator lauded the system for not buying his plea of *jinn* possession, but he ended his statements saying, “But again, maybe those officials who are getting away with embezzlement have stronger, more powerful and more influential *jinn*s on their

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<sup>340</sup> “‘Jinns’ Cause Mass Absence at School.” *Arab News*. May 16, 2015, accessed March 22, 2016. <http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/news/747496>.

<sup>341</sup> Benjamin Radford. “Genies Blamed for School Sickness in Saudi Arabia.” *Discovery News*. May 24, 2015, accessed May 22, 2016. <https://www.sott.net/article/296861-Genies-blamed-for-school-sickness-possession-in-Saudi-Arabia>.

<sup>342</sup> Mohammed Jamjoom. “Saudi Family Sues Genie, Alleges Harassment.” CNN. July 13, 2009. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/07/13/saudia.arabia.genie.suit/>.

sides.”<sup>343</sup>

In 2011, members of the CPVPV’s Anti-Witchcraft Unit responded to the appearance of a severed wolf head in women’s lingerie. Those believed to be under the spell remained unknown. However, the agency reported that the victims were “liberated from the jaws of the wolf,” as they claimed to have broken the spell.”<sup>344</sup>

I was told of a young man who was studying in Madinah. The young man’s father was a prominent shaykh in the United States, and on his death bed, he called his son home from Saudi Arabia. Upon his arrival, the father asked the son if he wanted his power and fame. Accepting, the shaykh told his son to arrive at a specific location and wait for a camel to appear. The story that the young man told my friend was that indeed the camel did appear and told the young man to get on him and that he would take him to Makkah. He claimed that the camel then flew him across the ocean, and landing in the middle of the African desert, the camel told him to get off. The camel then asked if he would like the same power that his father had, and upon saying yes, the camel told him that the only thing he had to do was bow down and worship him, just like his father had done. As it was relayed to me, the young man would not bow down, and the camel flew away, leaving him in the desert.

Grand Shaykh Adel Ben Taher al-Maqbil, President of the Farouq Center in Riyadh, recalling one of the strangest and most diabolical experiences he ever saw, stated that he received an urgent telegraph from the Prince of Riyadh in the middle of the night, requesting follow-up on reports of strange, dim lights and disturbing voices coming from an abandoned house. Joined by

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<sup>343</sup> Debapriya Chatterjee. “Saudi Judge Blames Jinns For Making Him Embezzle 600 Million Riyals.” Atheist Republic Blog.. June 19, 2014, accessed May 31, 2016. <http://www.atheistrepublik.com/news/saudi-judge-blames-jinns-making-him-embezzle-600-million-riyals>.

<sup>344</sup>David E. Miller. “Saudi Arabia's 'Anti-Witchcraft Unit' breaks another spell.” Jerusalem Post. July 20, 2011, accessed March 23, 2016. <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Saudi-Arabias-Anti-Witchcraft-Unit-breaks-another-spell>.

brothers of the “general presidency,” he tells that upon arrival, symbols were seen written all over the walls. At the end of the symbols was a nail with several tied knots fastened with locks and chains. On the other end of the symbols were a pair of underwear with a drawing of a naked woman, with the “utterances of exaltedness” written on her private parts. The same was found in another room and the picture of the naked woman this time in addition to the utterance written on her privates, she was sketched with her foot on the *Qur’an*. In a room covered with trash a man was found naked, with “hair drooping in an ugly manner.” The man said that “the shaytans commanded me to sleep in these places between trash so it will do what I want.”<sup>345</sup>

From the above examples and the clarification that the CPVPV’s main purpose since reform is to root out sorcery, it is apparent that animistic beliefs and practices are rampant in Saudi Arabia. The CPVPV created a specialized Anti-Witch Unit, in 2009 to investigate claims of sorcery, confiscate their illicit properties, educate the public about the evils of sorcery, and break spells, or, as reported by the Saudi Press Agency, “to combat manifestations of polytheism and reliance on other Gods.”<sup>346</sup>

From the nine units spread throughout the Kingdom, there were 181 convictions of “practicing magic” in 2009, and 215 sorcerers convicted in 2012.<sup>347</sup> Shaykh Adel Faqih, a director of the CPVPV’s witchcraft units, stated that arrests are not made off of tips or complaints of one practicing magic but did say that arrests can be made based off of the purchase of animals with certain features. He gives an example of one asking for “a sheep to be killed without mentioning Allah’s name or asking to stain the body with the animal’s blood,” or other

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<sup>345</sup> Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. “Sorcerer's Plot |Arabic |English Subtitles | Every Muslim must watch this video.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf6lVgW6RkA&index=49&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upp7r-iofswV7XJ> (accessed January 22, 2016).

<sup>346</sup> David E. Miller. “Saudi Arabia's 'Anti-Witchcraft Unit' breaks another spell & Ryan Jacobs. “Saudi Arabia’s War on Witchcraft.”

<sup>347</sup> David E. Miller. “Saudi Arabia's 'Anti-Witchcraft Unit' breaks another spell.”

such unusual things as justification for arrests.<sup>348</sup>

Multiple cases have been documented in Saudi Arabia involving foreign workers who claim mistreatment, sexual abuse, non-payment, etc., who, in turn, are counter-charged by their employers or co-workers to be witches, hoping to dismiss the case and turn the blame on the unrepresented foreigner. Abdullah Jaber, a political cartoonist for the Saudi Daily al-Jazirah, noted that, “In accordance with our Islamic tradition we believe that magic really exists.”<sup>349</sup> However, he believes that the superstitions held by those particularly of the older generation in rural communities, is due to ignorance. He recalled that while recovering from a recent arm injury, many older people told him that he was “afflicted by the evil eye and should be treated by a Sheikh.”<sup>350</sup> Given the examples of this section, it can be concluded that in a Wahhabi/Salafi interpretation of Islam, animism is very real, and of utmost concern.

## 5.4 Hidden World

A common thread that ties the stories above together is the effects of the unseen world on the seen world. In each circumstance, and an array of other situations from the failure of a marriage or business to health problems, many Muslims are quick to search for causes outside of themselves for their misfortunes. The two most common sources identified, from which refuge and protection is sought against are *jinns* and *sihr*.

### 5.4.1 *Jinn*

Yasir Qadhi declares that *Jinn* are the cause of *sihr* and that you cannot have *sihr* without *jinns* since the magician holds no power of his own, but instead any power that he seems to

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

possess is the power of the *jinn*.<sup>351</sup> Therefore, it is preferable when writing to begin with *jinns* before discussing *sihr*, which can be seen as the problem or symptom. Dr. Ibraaheem Kamaal Adham says in his, book *Al-Sihr Wa'l-Sahrah*, researching the topic of the *jinn* is one of the most difficult of subjects, especially since it has to do with finding out about a hidden world that is not visible and cannot be measured in physical or empirical terms.”<sup>352</sup> The belief in *jinns* is an article of faith in Islam. To deny the existence of *jinns*, is disbelief in the *Qur'an* as *jinn* are a major topic in the *Qur'an* with an entire *Surah* (72- *al-Jinn*) describing their existence and purpose. According to *Surah Adh-Dhariyat* 51:56, Allah “created not the *jinns* and humans except they should worship Me (Alone).” Linguistically, *jinn* translates “concealment,” meaning hidden from sight. Dr. Muhammad Saeed Raslan, in his recent book, *Jinn*, shows how similar Arabic words, such as: *janin* (fetus), *mijan* (armor), *majnoon* (insane or the covering of ones intellect) provides insight into further understanding that *jinn* refers to that which lives among man but cannot be seen.<sup>353</sup> Shaykh Hasan Ali spoke that “no person can see the unseen except through the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, and to understand *jinn* one must first see what the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* say about them.”<sup>354</sup>

*Ayats* 15:27 and 55:15 in the *Qur'an* reveal that *jinn* were created before man and made from smokeless fire. Dr. Raslan adds that *maarij* is the word used to describe the substance *jinn* were created from, which refers to the very tip of a flame, the portion that is almost completely

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<sup>351</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “The Reality of Sihr (Black Magic) Exorcisms & Jinns – Part II ~ Dr. Yasir Qadhi | 31st October 2014.” *Youtube*.<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szMpZQL9HZo&t=7s&index=7&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h5KdNk3Upg7r-iofswV7XJ>. (accessed November 17, 2016).

<sup>352</sup> Abu'l-Mundhir Khaleel Ibn Ibraaheem Ameen. *The Jinn and Human Sickness: Remedies in the Light of the Qur'aan and Sunnah*. Translated by Nasiruddin Al-Khattab. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Darussalam, 2005). 33

<sup>353</sup> Muhammad Saeed Raslan. *Jinn*. Translated by Rasheed ibn Estes Barbee. (MTWS Publishing, Durham, N.C., 2014). 7.

<sup>354</sup> The Ink of Scholars Channel. “The Best lecture on Jinns- By Shaykh Hasan Ali.” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G2zhgY1Nw0&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8h4fan-cDdxORHC3UIE8FY&index=11> (accessed September 25, 2016).

unseen.<sup>355</sup> In al-*Jinn* 72:1, Muhammad tells that it was revealed to him that a group of *jinn*, numbering between three and ten, listened to him recite the *Qur'an*, to which they purported to have answered, “Verily! We have heard a wonderful Recital!” *Jinns* are created with free will, just as humans (who were created from clay), as deduced from al-*Jinn* 72:2 saying “it guides to the Right Path, and we have believed . . .” implying that a choice is available. Al-*Jinn* 72:3 confirms that *Iblis* (Satan) is a *jinn* who refused to “prostrate to Adam,” choosing to disobey Allah. Shaykh Abdullah al-Faisal concludes that al-*Jinn* 72:4 -5 clarifies that the *shaytan* (devils) among mankind and the *jinn* speak and act against Allah, by way of deception. Al-*Jinn* 72:6 states “And verily, there were men among mankind who took shelter with the masculine among the *jinns*, but they (*jinns*) increased them (mankind) in sin and disbelief.” Al-A’raaf 7:27 says that the *shaytans* were made to be friends of the disbelievers. From this *ayat*, it is held in Islamic teachings that *jinns* vary in classification, can be male or female, and most importantly that interaction with *jinns* will only lead to sin and disbelief.

Al-*Jinn* 72:14 -15 reveals that there are three broad categories of *jinn*: Muslims, *kufirs*, and hypocrites.<sup>356</sup> From that basic division, Dr. Abul Mundhir Khaleel Ibn Ibraaheem Ameen gives the six specific names for certain *jinns*, when a *jinn*: (1) is described in general- *jinni*, (2) lives in a house with people – ‘*aamir* or dweller, (3) interacts with children –*arwaah* or spirit, (4) is wicked- *shaytaan* or devil, (5) is worse than a Shaytan – *maarid* or demon, (6) is worse than a Shaytan and stronger – *ifreet*).<sup>357</sup> Dr. Raslan shows that Muhammad believed there are three categories of *jinn*: (1) a category that flies in the air, (2) a category of snakes, and (3) a category of dogs (meaning that they take the form of black dogs and the form of snakes, specifically house

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<sup>355</sup> Muhammad Saeed Raslan. *Jinn*. 8.

<sup>356</sup> Al-Faisal, Abdullah. “Tafsir Qur’an Surah Al JINN.” *Authentic Tauheed*. March 10, 2014, accessed October 9, 2016. <http://www.authentictauheed.com/2014/03/tafsir-quran-surah-al-jinn-noted-march.html>.

<sup>357</sup> Abu’l-Mundhir Khaleel Ibn Ibraaheem Ameen. *The Jinn and Human Sickness*. 32.

snakes).<sup>358</sup> As for snakes outside of the house, the Muslim is ordered to kill them.<sup>359</sup> In one *hadith*, it was narrated that Abu Dharr said:

The messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: When anyone of you stands to pray, then he is screened if he has in front of him something as high as the back of a camel saddle. If he does not have something as high as the back of a camel saddle in front of him, then his prayer is nullified by a woman, a donkey or a black dog. I (one of the narrators) said: What is the difference between a black dog, a yellow one and a red one? He said: I asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) just like you' and he said: 'The black dog is a shaytan.'<sup>360</sup>

Almost exclusively Muslims believe that the number of *jinn*s far outweigh the number of men, to which Qadhi adds the belief that every *jinn* has procreated thousands of *jinn*s, given their lifespan of hundreds, if not thousands of years.<sup>361</sup> Along with procreation, *jinn* do share many qualities with humans. They eat, marry, die, laugh and it is believed that they will be present with mankind on the Day of Judgment.<sup>362</sup> Just as the Muslim believes that this life is a test, for the *jinn* it is believed the same; but that the test Allah has given the *jinn* is what they will do with the abilities and powers that He bestowed on them.<sup>363</sup> Qadhi also states that while the *jinn* are powerful, they are not all-powerful. Instead, it is that "Allah has given them some strengths which we do not have and given us some strengths which they do not have."<sup>364</sup> As Muhammad showed, it is believed *jinn* have the ability to fly, shapeshifting to take on the form of animals, trees, rocks, and humans. It is also believed that they do have the ability to become visible if desired, by shifting into a "small window of the color spectrum so we can see them."<sup>365</sup> *Jinn* are thought to be able to project their voices to be heard audibly, and that while they can, and do

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<sup>358</sup> Muhammad Saeed Raslan. *Jinn*. 14.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>360</sup> Sunan An Nasai. (Book 9 *hadith* 751).

<sup>361</sup> Yasir Qadhi. "The Reality of Sihr."

<sup>362</sup> "The World of the Jinn (Part 1 of 2)." *Islam Religion.com*. December 17, 2007, accessed March 1, 2016. <http://www.islam.religion.com/articles/669/viewall/world-of-jinn>.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> Yasir Qadhi. "The Reality of Sihr."

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

interfere with people, generally they keep to themselves. It is also believed that evil *jinn*s frequently reside in impure places like toilets, while “good Muslim *jinn*” usually live in places like masjids or in the woods where they can worship Allah. Shaykh Salim Ghisa holds that there are some scholars who can control *jinn*, however, they usually keep it disclosed.<sup>366</sup>

King Solomon (Sulaiman), regarded as a prophet in the *Qur’an*, was the recipient of preferred *baraka* from Allah (27:15). It is told that the Allah subjected the wind to his power (54:12, 38:36, and 21:81). Sulaiman could understand and talk with birds, animals, and insects (21:17), and Allah gave him the power over *jinn*s and the shaytans to work and fight for him (34:102-103, 21:17).<sup>367</sup> Dr. Raslan teaches that, “the *Jinn* have knowledge of construction and industrialization . . . greater than the knowledge possessed by humans. They have specific means of building and construction and likewise advancement in industrial development, and inventions, which man has yet to reach.”

*Al-Jinn* 72: 8-10 tells that the *jinn* do not know the future (*ayat* 10: “And we know not whether evil is intended for those on earth, or whether their Lord intends from them a Right Path.”); they attempt to reach heaven, but find it guarded (*ayat* 8); and they attempt to steal words from the angels but are ambushed by flaming fire, if caught (*ayat* 9). This is possibly one of the most troublesome concepts to understand regarding *jinn*s. *Al-Mulk* 67:5 says “And indeed We have adorned the nearest heaven with lamps, and We have made such lamps (as) missiles to drive away the *shaytan* (devils), and have prepared for them the torment of the blazing Fire.” In *Sahih* Bukhari, Qutadah said: “Allah created these stars for three purposes, i.e. as decoration of

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<sup>366</sup> Shaykh Salim Ghisa. "Black Magic & Jinn." *The Revival*. Issue 11. March 31, 2008, accessed March 26, 2016. <http://www.therevival.co.uk/article/black-magic-jinn>.

<sup>367</sup> “THE PROPHET SULAIMAN (peace be upon him).” *Islam 101*. Accessed March 12, 2016. <http://islam101.com/history/people/prophets/sulaiman.htm>.

the sky, as missiles to hit the devils, and as signs to guide travelers. So, if anybody tries to find a different interpretation, he is mistaken and just wastes his efforts in seeking something of which he has no knowledge."<sup>368</sup> This *hadith* is helpful in two ways; one, it shows that Allah did not intend stars to be objects of worship, and second, “the stars are used as missiles to stop the *Jinn* from eavesdropping on the conversation of angels.”<sup>369</sup>

The greatest clarification I have found regarding the interpretation of these three verses is from a personal discussion with a Salafi imam, who explained the following: The *jinn* are believed to be able to move around the world with incredible speed, compared to light. It is also believed that they congregate and stack themselves up one upon another until they reach the lower levels of heaven where the angels are listening to Allah and discussing His truths with one another. The belief continues that their goal is to gather truths and bring them back to the earth and distort them with lies. If caught, angels throw stars at them in a type of “star wars.” The point of the *jinn* establishing at least one truth is that with that one truth, they can influence individuals and corrupt them with a hundred lies.

In *Sahih* Bukhari, it is narrated by Sa`id Ibn al-Musaiyab that Abu Huraira said, "The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'No child is born but that, Satan touches it when it is born whereupon it starts crying loudly because of being touched by Satan, except Mary and her son.'"<sup>370</sup> Shaykh al-Faisal adds that it is great *baraka* when one is born in Ramadan, for it is the belief that during Ramadan, evil *jinn*s are in chains.<sup>371</sup> I mention this as a result of discussing and editing a Muslim friend’s essay. He wrote about Paul and Constantine being the great corrupters of Christianity by destroying what he claims was the true message of Essa (Jesus). One of the main points he made

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<sup>368</sup>Bukhari (4/107).

<sup>369</sup> Al-Faisal, Abdullah. “Tafsir Qur'an Surah Al JINN.”

<sup>370</sup> Bukhari. Vol. 6, Book 60, *Hadith* 71

<sup>371</sup> Al-Faisal, Abdullah. “Tafsir Qur'an Surah Al JINN.”

was that much of the blame was to be put on the parents of Paul and Constantine, because of not driving the *shaytans* away at the birth; therefore, allowing the *shaytans* to be the first and the guiding influence in their lives. In a recent conversation, he told me that over the past several months, he was under a spell of black magic, what he believes was an attack at least partially as a test due to his article. As will hopefully become an apparent conclusion from the following section, *jinn* possession and *sihr* are often buried away from the public eye, because based on the black magic put on Muhammad and the teachings of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, one is only affected by the level of their *eeman*. If one's *eeman* is low, he is easily overtaken and affected, whereas if one's *eeman* is strong, *jinn* and *sihr* pose little threat.

#### 5.4.2 *Sihr*

As seen above, *jinn* are the cause or source of *sihr*, or better, the agents of *sihr*. In other words, *sihr* is not possible without the *jinn*. Linguistically, *sihr* translates as that which is hidden, unseen, or covered, meaning that it is something that occurs whose cause is unknown.<sup>372</sup> This aids in understanding the correlation between *sihr* and *jinn*, as both refer to the unseen world. From a theological angle, Yasir Qadhi defines *sihr* as the invoking of “*jinn* to do something that appears from our world to be supernatural.”<sup>373</sup> Following this perspective, it is important to recall from the prior section that *jinn* are held in Islamic teachings to possess powers but not supernatural powers. Therefore, it could be said that *sihr* is the result of *jinn* affecting the seen world through the practice of their normal, but unseen capabilities. Valentine defines *sihr* as “a nebulous term covering witchcraft, sorcery and magic.”<sup>374</sup> He continues that for Wahhabis, the broad interpretation of witchcraft includes: “dowsing exorcism, astrology, money cloning,

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<sup>372</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “The Reality of Sihr.”

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. 191.

fortune telling, healing, bone-setting, potion-concocting, the use of plants for medicine, palm reading, animal calling, alchemy, psychic activity, spell-casting, and anything else deemed to be maverick.”<sup>375</sup>

*Sihr* can also be considered and even loosely translated as magic or black magic. Qadhi points out that it is not the type of magic that children practice from a kit they ordered off of Amazon, but instead he says that “magic is getting the *jinn* to do what the magician wants him to do. The magician will get the *jinn* to do something...the something is something that is physical and natural for the *jinn*.”<sup>376</sup> Shaykh Ibn Baz defined *sihr* as a “devilish action, most of which is only achieved by means of associating others with God and drawing close to the minions of Satan.”<sup>377</sup> It becomes more apparent that *sihr* is obvious *shirk* as Ibn Baz holds that it is the result of associating others with Allah by summoning other than He.

Moosa Richardson gives the modern example of wearing bracelets and threads, such as copper and magnetic bracelets, to prevent or cure some type of harm is *shirk* because it is as if the wearer is saying that Allah is insufficient.<sup>378</sup> He equates it to the *hadith* in which Muhammad tells a man wearing a brass bracelet to remove it because he would gain nothing from it, but instead it would only add to his weakness. Richardson informs that there are two ways to view such talisman or amulets. First, if it is believed that protection comes from Allah, and the bracelet, necklace, talisman, etc. are merely a symbol of Allah’s protection, that is *shirk ashgar*. The second way, is if one believes that the protection or actual healing comes from the object, that is *shirk akbar*, which according to Richardson and following Wahhabi interpretation, takes

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>376</sup> Yasir Qadhi. “The Reality of Sihr.”

<sup>377</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. 191.

<sup>378</sup> Moosa Richardson. “Amulets and Talismans are Polytheism (Part 2).”

one “out of the religion.”<sup>379</sup> This second perspective helps to understand *sihr*. When talisman or amulets are broken open, they often contain *Qur’anic* verses, with the addition of squares, numbers, backward written verses, prayers written to the *shaytan* or *jinnns*, fingernails, hair, nails, menstrual blood, etc.<sup>380</sup> This is the result of *sihr*.

One of the most insightful sources in uncovering *sihr* in Saudi Arabia is from a presentation created by the General Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (CPVPV), called the “Sorcerer’s Plot.” It was created to warn Saudi citizens of *sihr* practices and teach them how to identify and report such activities. Simultaneously, it offers the most thorough examination of *sihr* practices in Saudi Arabia. The title, the “Sorcerer’s Plot” comes from *Surah Taha* (20:69) “. . . What they have crafted is but the trick of a magician, and the magician will not succeed wherever he is.”

In the opening segment, the narrator states “Sorcery and sorcerers, witchcraft and charlatans, soothsaying and soothsayers, these are renewed old expressions. . . but there are satanic hands and blasphemously methods trying to disperse the gathering and achieve despicable goals for those who use it.”<sup>381</sup> Grand Shaykh Adel Ben Taher al-Miqbil, states that the magician is the “evil person . . . who dedicated himself to be the first helper to the out casted devils.”<sup>382</sup> Al-Miqbil defines witchcraft as knots and talisman, He states that the magician blows in the knots with impure saliva as a means of seeking help from the devil and disbelieve in Allah, and the magician ties knots around written words or items like hair or nails in order to get closer

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Presidency of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. “Sorcerer's Plot.”

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. Al-Miqbil, in one the clearest explanations regarding the Wahhabi stance of protection and punishment states that, “this talk is not the talk of the one who read or heard or was told, but the talk of one who was blessed by Allah with his county where he promotes the Virtue and forbids Vice and Allah prepared for him leaders to help him apprehend those who are centers calling for disbelief in Allah and help him apply Islamic law on them to implement the law of the Lord of the universe.”

to the devil.<sup>383</sup> He defines magic as knots or talisman that the magician writes on while swearing on it by devils in order to make people rely on it. These are mixed with a concoction of herbs upon which the magician has sworn disbelief to Allah in return for the concoction becoming effective on one's body, strength, heart, and mind. Al-Miqbil states that, "the sum of all of this is an agreement between the sorcerer and the devil. The sorcerer makes deeds to get closer to the devil. Then the devil does what the sorcerer wants and makes departure and bonding."<sup>384</sup> Grand Shaykh al-Miqbil states that "it is impossible for the sorcerer to do witchcraft except by getting closer to devils by disbelieving in Allah" and, therefore, "the sorcerer's main aim is to make servants worship other than Allah, which is also the goal of the devil."<sup>385</sup> From this statement it can be summarized that the Wahhabi belief is that the sorcerer summons the devils (*shaytans* or *jinn*) to "work" for them for the price of their worship, again showing that *jinn* are the cause or agents of *sahr*, where the magician has no power. From the call to *tawhid* to the practice of *shirk akbar*, through *sahr* (devil worshipping), the religious life in Saudi Arabia is all but homogenous.

### 5.5 Healing

It is not uncommon for individuals in the Kingdom who believe that they are under the influence of a *jinn*, as the result of *sahr*, to seek protection or healing by means of other folk practices. Tariq A. al-Habeeb conducted a survey of forty-five faith healers in the al-Qassim region of Saudi Arabia to better understand the methods and beliefs that represent a majority of Saudis in seeking healing from *jinn* possession, magic and the evil eye.<sup>386</sup> Al-Habeeb reported

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid. Bonding and departure: this is called bonding magic, where something (a smell, appearance, etc.) is put between a husband and wife to drive them apart.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup>Tariq A. al-Habeeb. "A Pilot Study of Faith Healers' Views on Evil Eye, *Jinn* Possession, and Magic in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." *Journal of Family and Community Medicine*. September – December 2003, 10(3): 31-38, accessed January 2, 2017. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3425750/>.

that over 50% of patients in Saudi Arabia “first consult the faith healers for a variety of psychiatric reasons.”<sup>387</sup> His study concluded that, the modes of therapies most frequently prescribed were “*roqaya*, regular performance of prayers, exorcism, physical punishment, temporary strangulation, cautery, *saaout* (inhalation of a herb powder), local application of a paste made of different types of herbs, drinking water mixed with herbs, water mixed with paper with written Quranic verses, and local application of oil and drinking some oils.”<sup>388</sup> While *ruqyah* will be addressed further, it can be concluded that most of these prescribed treatments are the result of “treating magic with more magic,” and, therefore, making the problem worse “by adding further magic to the initial magic.”<sup>389</sup>

The Hijama Clinic defines *ruqyah* as a “*Quranic* therapy for issues pertaining to the heart, mind and soul,” or the treatment given by Muhammad for afflictions such as *sahr*, *jinn* possession, and the evil eye.<sup>390</sup> According to Zakiyah Ibrahim Fallata, agreeing that *sahr* cannot cure *sahr*, states that “Evil is removed by good.”<sup>391</sup> This again goes back to the principle belief in Wahhabism/Salafism that *eeman* fluctuates and the correct method to defeat *sahr*, *jinn* possession, etc. is only found in the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*. In *Sahih* Bukhari, Abu Hurayrah narrates that Muhammad said: “There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its remedy.”<sup>392</sup> In the *Qur’an* it is stated that, “He alone has the keys of the unseen treasures, of which no one knows expect him.” (6:59) Therefore, *ruqyah* is permissible and encouraged when it follows the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*. This type of *ruqyah* is called “*shariah* or

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> “What is Ruqyah.” *Hijama Clinic*. 2010, accessed April 2, 2016. <http://www.hijamaclinic.net/ruqyah.php>

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Zakiyah Ibrahim Fallata. “NO NEED FOR RUQYAH CLINCS, SCHOLAR SAYS.” *Saudi Gazette*. Accessed October 4, 2016. <https://islamicarticles.wordpress.com/ruqyah/>.

<sup>392</sup> Bukhari (Vol. 7 Hadith 582).

legitimated *ruqyah*.<sup>393</sup> *Ruqyah* is forbidden when one brings in “elements of sorcery and mysticism, and uses incense, water and some herbs.”<sup>394</sup> In Saudi Arabia the increase of *ruqyah* practiced has led to investigations and tighter restrictions, because of so-called faith healers using it as a way to “exploit others, make money and become famous.”<sup>395</sup> Abundantly clear, this again for the Wahhabi/Salafi becomes an issue of *tawhid* and *shirk*. Moosa Richardson explains that Muhammad called the attempt of curing magic with magic “an action of the *shaytans*,” and that “the only true cure for magic or any other type of affliction is the *dua*’ of the believer upon *tawhid*.” This is also known as a return to *tawhid*, which was the call of al-Wahhab 300 years ago.

## 5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated that most authors agree that Wahhabism does not represent the religious beliefs and practices of Muslims within Saudi Arabia. More importantly, there is a heterogeneous aspect that exists within Wahhabism (and all interpretations) of Islam, especially in practice. It has been shown that belief in *jinn* and *sihr* are fundamental aspects of Islam, however, participation is held to only lead one to disbelief. It has also been shown that *tawhid* is the only accepted cure, mirroring the teachings of al-Wahhab that *tawhid* removes *shirk*.

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<sup>393</sup> “Some Faith Healers Exploit ‘Ruqyah.’” *Arab News*. August 15, 2016, accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/970026/saudi-arabia>.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*.

## CONCLUSION

Early in the research stage, I came across a significant writing by Mohammed al-Bishr called “Saudi Salafism. Western Writings: A Corrective View.” Al-Bishr compiles responses to multiple Western writings on Salafism/Wahhabism, and goes to great lengths to show the lack of knowledge, assumptions, and motivations many authors have when writing about Islam in Saudi Arabia. In particular, he states that:

For every phenomenon there are reasons and theoretical roots which form the mental image of this phenomenon engraved in the minds, regardless whether these reasons were true or fabricated. The case of Saudi Wahhabism in Western writings has its own fabricated and deliberate reasons that contributed in forming a false mental image in the psyche of the Western writers, and in turn in the collective mind of the Western public opinion.<sup>396</sup>

Al-Bishr’s statement has much truth and largely shifted the focus of this research. Honestly, it was my intention to attempt to objectively survey Wahhabism and Islamic practice in Saudi Arabia, with a conclusion already composed. However, after reading the multiple examples of writers making bold claims about Salafism/Wahhabism while exploiting their ignorance of such a “movement,” al-Bishr gives the specific examples of those who equate Salafism with Hanbali *fiqh* exclusively, while clearly have no idea about the *manhaj* of Imam Hanbal.<sup>397</sup>

Therefore, in conclusion, this thesis has gone to great lengths to follow the claimed chains that bind the teachings of al-Wahhab to the path of Muhammad and his Companions. The term *Wahhabi* must be revised. I conclude, agreeing with al-Bishr that while not ideal, a more accurate term is *Saudi Salafi*. To answer if the path of Muhammad is the same path of al-Wahhab turns out to be much larger than this research, but it can be concluded that taking a literalist

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<sup>396</sup> Mohammed al-Bishr. “Saudi Salafism. Western Writings: A Corrective View.” *Center for Global Thought on Saudi Arabia*. 2014, accessed April 4, 2016. [http://www.cgtsa.com/salaf\\_en.pdf](http://www.cgtsa.com/salaf_en.pdf). 54.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-8.

approach and clinging to an understanding of *ahl Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*, the teachings of al-Wahhab seldom appear to differ from those of Muhammad. What can be thoroughly concluded from this research is that through examining the Salafi/Wahhabi call to *tawhid*, a bi-product is the exposure of those practices considered “folk” by outsiders. Yet, from a Saudi Salafi perspective, if *bid'ah* such practices are leading one to *shirk*, if *shirk asghar* the participant is on the edges of the fold of Islam, and if *shirk akbar* the Muslim has moved outside of the folds of Islam.

Therefore, Saudi Salafism interprets folk Islamic practices as disbelief and puts one near or in a state of apostasy. The specifics that separates Saudi Salafism from other Islamic interpretations is largely that apostasy is attributed to one's actions as well as belief. For example, in Saudi Salafism, if one is caught in folk acts, they are considered a disbeliever or at minimum, on a slippery slope toward disbelief, regardless if they still claim belief in *tawhid*. Dr. Shabir Ally states that it became a standard law and is widely accepted in all the *fiqh* schools that the apostate should be put to death, yet he believes it is a misrepresentation of *Quranic* teachings.<sup>398</sup> In *Surah al-Baqara, ayat 53* states, “There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion.” Using this *Quranic* teaching, Ally states that “if you force a person remain a Muslim by threatening to kill them if they dare to leave, then obviously, you are contradicting the Qur'an.”<sup>399</sup> Through friendships, work experiences, internships, church, etc. speaking with Middle Eastern background Muslims and non-Muslims, the almost exclusive responded belief is that Saudi Arabia is an enemy, and Salafism is the root cause of much of the “problems” with Islam and extremism around the world.

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<sup>398</sup> “Do countries Such as Saudi Arabia Represent True Islamic Way of Life?” *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bel4y3zhkdc&index=30&list=PLGr1iuSGDA8hS2YC9bMo-7BMV5y26AR-> (accessed June 8, 2016).

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid*.

Reminding that this thesis endeavored to be a clarification on the core teachings of Saudi Salafism with the desire that it will be used as a springboard to delve further into a contextualization of the gospel, given the findings of this research, there appears to be the need to address Saudi's from two perspectives. One for those who are "pure" Salafis and another for those who engage in folk practices. For those of who piously adhere to Saudi Salafism, the initial obstacle is tolerance. For those who engage in folk practices, the initial obstacle is met needs. In both perspectives, however, the common key is the building of trust.

In Saudi Arabia, it is believed that Christians are guilty of *shirk* and, along with Jews, are those who rebelled against Allah. Valentine was told by the respected teacher, Ibrahim al-Ash Shaykh that "Christianity is merely a tool of the Western powers to undermine and disunite Islam. The West fears a strong, united Islam. Christianity is one way to keep us weak, make us disunited, for then we are weak."<sup>400</sup> Shaykh Salman al-Odeh shares this warning, stating that due to lack of success Christian missionaries are now turning to new dubious methods, which he states "are 'inspired' from the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, or from the unholy Devil himself," to trick Muslims into converting to Christianity.<sup>401</sup> Al-Odeh purports that some of these methods include: the use of Islamic expressions mixed with Christian doctrine (e.g.- "*Jesus Alaihi assalam*"), setting up churches to emulate *masjids* (exterior design, people sit on floor), changing *Qudas* (Christian ceremony) to Friday instead of Sunday, using Islamic names for themselves and their programing (Christian speaker "Shaykh Abd-Allah" calls his radio program "*Allahu Akbar*"), etc.<sup>402</sup> Khaled al-Banaa warns other Muslims to "Remember these

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<sup>400</sup> Simon Ross Valentine. *Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism History, Belief, and Practice*. 157.

<sup>401</sup> Salman al-Odeh. "Christian Missionaries Sweeping the Islamic World. Islam World. Accessed April 4, 2016. <http://www.usislam.org/pdf/responding-to-christian-missionsaries-tactics.pdf>.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

people aren't interested in dialogue or trying to improve Anglo-Muslim links but are often in SECURED PAID EMPLOYMENT to Sell Christianity, ” and “the missionary has studied Islamic beliefs for the sole purpose to ‘sell Christianity to Muslims.’”<sup>403</sup> While these attacks and accusations are delivered from an opposition to Christianity, and unsurprisingly harsh, it still reveals the fact that building trust is a foundational aspect for Christians in Saudi Arabia or among Saudis. Time after time, from Christian missionaries and Muslim converts to Christianity, I have heard that the leading factor in a conversion is the result of a Christian's character observed by a Muslim over time, through a long trust-building friendship. A long-time missionary among Muslims recently told me that the right to share Christ must be earned and is often the product of years of communication, where countless hours and cups of tea have built a brotherhood of trust. While this could be taken out of context, for a Saudi Salafi, it is likely the exact path, where evangelism will be taken form of one's actions, before their words. Dale W. Keitzmand and William A. Smalley summarize that, “Although there are Islam elements which are incompatible with the gospel, there are also elements with a degree of what has been called ‘convertibility.’ For instance, our Christian understanding of God, expressed in Luther's great cry related to justification, ‘Let God be God,’ might well serve as an inclusive definition of Islam.”<sup>404</sup> What better audience than those with a Saudi Salafi interpretation of Islam to lay a down “Let God be God,” as a foundation to build upon.

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Dale W. Keitzman and William A. Smalley. “The Missionary's Role in Cultural Change.” In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009).

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