

Sources of Wahhabi Thought

The Wahhabi sect classified doctrines into two categories. The first category includes all those doctrines based on a text in the Quran or the Prophet Tradition. They claimed that such doctrines can be derived from these two sources directly and without resorting to the logical deductions of religious scholars regarding their meaning – even if these sources happen to be the Prophet's Companions, early Muslims or other scholars.

The second category includes all doctrines which are not based on a Quranic or Prophetic text, and in such cases the Wahhabis claim that they defer to the teachings and jurisprudence of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taimia.

Regretably, they failed in both categories by falling into contradictions and making gross errors of judgment as the following points show:

1. They relied entirely on interpretations based on the literal meaning of the texts, and thus they contradicted basic tenets and *ijam*, the consensus of religious scholars. This is why the Egyptian religious scholar of the last century, Muhammad Abdo, described them as worse than those who follow others blindly because they “believe that the literal meanings must be endorsed and adhered to without paying heed to the basic tenets on which religion is based.”¹
2. They contradicted Ahmed ibn Hanbal clearly and openly in pronouncing as blasphemers and heretics Muslims who disagreed with them though none of Ibn Hanbal's religious decrees support this. According to Ibn Hanbal, only a Muslim who intentionally refuses to perform obligatory prayers can be called a blasphemer or heretic.

Similarly, no support for this Wahhabi belief can be found in the works of Ibn Taimia. Indeed, Ibn Taimia opposed such thinking. He maintained that “whoever approved of those in agreement with him and condemned those who opposed him, created schisms in the ranks of Muslims, labeled those who disagreed with him regarding points of opinion and logical deduction as heretics, and approved waging war on them is a person who seeks to divide and create discord.” This description by Ibn Taimia fits the Wahhabis completely.²

3. If the Wahhabi doctrine on visiting shrines is endorsed then Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal and all his followers are idolators who must be denounced and their lives and possessions legally forfeited. This is in view of a report by none other than Ibn Taimia that Imam Ibn Hanbal wrote a treatise on visiting the shrine of Imam al-Hussain ibn Ali (the grandson of the Prophet) at Kербala with specific instructions for visitors. Ibn Taimia commented on this that «people at the time of Imam Ahmed [ibn Hanbal] frequented [the shrine].»³

But the Wahhabi creed considers making a journey to a shrine for the purpose of visiting it a form of idolatry which deserve the extreme punishment of loss of life and possessions. In effect, they condemned Imam Ahmed, his contemporaries and early Muslims who practiced this ritual and condoned it as idolators who must be put to death and their possessions confiscated. Furthermore, this Wahhabi decree must also extend to the Prophet Companions who approved or performed this ritual. Their claim to be followers of Imam Ahmed is thus unfounded.

The same argument applies also to their belief regarding asking for the Prophet's intercession. According to this, whoever asks for the Prophet intercession after the Prophet's death is committing a cardinal idolatry. They argue that by performing such an act, a person treats the Prophet as an idol and worships him instead of Allah. According, they considered killing such a person and confiscating his possessions a religious duty.⁴

This Wahhabi doctrine runs contrary to the practice of asking for the Prophet's intercession performed by a large number of his prominent Companions and early Muslims – whose requests, the subjects of these intercessions, were usually granted. Ibn Taimia has confirmed this in his book *Al-Ziara* on the bases of evidence by several authorities including al-Baihaqi, al-Tabarani, Ahmed ibn Hanbal and Ibn Abi al-Dunia.⁵ Nevertheless, Ibn Taimia chose to go against these authorities by banning the call for intercession. Unlike the Wahhabi, however, he refrained from calling it a cardinal act of idolatry.

To repeat, if the Wahhabi doctrine regarding intercession is endorsed then all the Companions and early Muslims who practiced it must be considered idolaters who deserve to be put to death. Not only those are idolaters, according to the Wahhabi, but also anyone who knew about this practice and refrained from opposing it and condemning those who performed it as heretics. These also must be executed and their possessions forfeited. In the final analysis, all early Muslims deserve such a sentence leaving none whom the Wahhabi could regard as the model to emulate.

1. Muhammad Abda, *Al-Islam wa al-Nasrania*, 8th edition, p. 97.

2. Ibn Taimia, *Majmi'at Fatawa ibn Taimia*, vol. 3, p. 399.

3. Ibn Taimia, *Ra's al-Hussain*, p. 209.

4. Al-San'ani, *Tat'hear al-I'tiqad*, p. 7.

5. Ibn Taimia, *Al-Ziara*, vol. 7, pp. 101–106.

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