

*The Fragmentizing Power of tabdī':
Salafī Wahhābī Selectiveness of the
Sources as Means to Forbid Dethrone-
ment of the Unjust Ruler*

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I. Introduction

I.I. Context

The scholars of these countries have persistently been combatting against the *Khawārij* during the last two centuries.¹ Among them *shaykh* Ibn Bāz, *shaykh* al-Albānī, *shaykh* Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, *shaykh* Rabī‘ Ibn Hādī, *shaykh* Muqbil Ibn Hādī, *shaykh* Aḥmad Ibn al-Najmī, *shaykh* Zayd al-Madkhalī, *shaykh* ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-‘Abbād, *shaykh* ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghudayyān, *shaykh* Šāliḥ al-Fawzān, *shaykh* ‘Ubayd al-Jābirī, *shaykh* Muḥammad Ibn Hādī, and others.²

[...] The *Khawārij* who have arisen in the different Muslim countries during the 20th century have their origin in the works and teachings of Sayyid Quṭb, an Egyptian who has immersed himself in his pre-Islamic days in European materialism. [...] When he started to write about Islam in the beginning of the ‘40’s [of the twentieth century], he fused his Communist and Socialist past together with his limited knowledge of Islam. [...] He has emphatically declared all Muslim communities apostatizing communities, in which nothing of Islam is to be found.³

[...] The leaders of *al-Qā‘idah* and ISIS are followers of the teachings of Sayyid Quṭb. Recently groups of foreign *Khawārij* intruded Syria when a revolution broke out against the Nuṣayrī leader Bashshār al-Asad.⁴

This cited text forms the kernel of a flyer which has been widely distributed among Muslims in the Netherlands on and around the Feast of the Sacrifice (*‘Īd al-aḍḥā*) of the year 2014, corresponding with September the 28th. In the Dutch city Leiden a number of Salafī Wahnābī Muslims dispersed around the new mosque Imām Mālik to distribute these warnings among Muslims who just left the mosque after the liturgical ceremonies. While the Imam was preaching, a member of the committee of the mosque handed over to the Imam a letter in which he was informed about this group of Salafī Wahnābīs, whereupon the committee decided to call the police. The police came in vain, as they witnessed no threat or disorder, nor did they see a reason to interrogate them.⁵

I.II. Focus, methodology, and layout

In this thesis I try to define an adequate answer to the question which political motivations lay at the basis of the Salafī Wahnābī dogmatic concept of *tabdī‘* (declaring someone as innovator) of non-Salafī Wahnābī advocates of demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler (hence-

¹ I use the transcription of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, except for the character ʿ for which I use ‘q’ and the character ‘j’ for ج. For the plural forms of the transcribed Arabic words I use the Arabic plural when it is a broken plural instead of the -s, except for adhering designations like eponyms. For example, the word ‘*ḥadīth*’ becomes ‘*aḥādīth*’ -as is grammatically correct-, instead of the more frequently used ‘*ḥadīths*’. Words in the singular with the *nisbah*-suffix are ended with ‘-s’ in the plural and presented in both singular and plural upright (non-italicized). For example, ‘*Ash‘arī*’ becomes *Ash‘arīs* instead of the Arabic correct plural forms ‘*Ash‘ariyyūn*’ or ‘*Ashā‘irah*’. Mu‘tazilī and Sunni become Mu‘tazilīs and Sunnīs in the plural respectively. For the initiating glottal stop no character is used, since an initial vocal starts automatically with a glottal stop in pronunciation. The *tā marbūṭah* is indicated by ‘h’ both in contextual and pausal location, as to reflect upon the accurate pronunciation.

² ‘*Shaykh*’ is a honorary title assigned to authoritative Muslim scholars. Although many *shuyūkh* (pl. of *shaykh*) nowadays bear the academic title of Doctor due to the increasing number of universities in Muslim countries which adopt the Western academic standards, it is still common to refer to them as *shaykh*.

³ The so-called *takfīrī* notion, i.e. declaring someone as an unbeliever, is discussed in more detail later on.

⁴ This text is a translated selection of a flyer which original text is not available anymore on the website of *An-Nasieha*. A picture of the front-page of the flyer can be found on <http://www.an-nasieha.nl>, last modified January, 2005.

⁵ When I asked these persons about the reason why they did not participate in the obligatory congregational prayer of the Sacrifice, they answered that they cannot pray after an Imam who uses the *minbar* (pulpit in mosques) as a stage for attacks against them. However, we will see in this thesis that the politicization of *tabdī‘* plays a more dominant role.

forward: activists).⁶ The aim is to understand how political objectives of Salafī Wahhābīs are served by the engineering of particular interpretations of *tabdī'* and *taḍlīl* (declaring someone as strayer) of their political opponents.⁷ The focus in this search is on the political breeding-ground of their understanding of *tabdī'* together with the way in which they use legal Islamic sources to justify their condemnation. Although *taḍlīl* demands also a relative dominant place in this thesis, it is mostly being discussed in light of *bid'ah*, due to the latter's emphasis on it by Salafī Wahhābīs.⁸ Herein the dogmatic attacks of Salafī Wahhābīs on activists against the unjust Muslim ruler represent the kernel of this thesis.

Notwithstanding the fact that this thesis focuses for a dominant part on the normative polemics and apologetics between advocates and opponents of obedience towards the unjust ruler, it contains a responsible and representative number of secondary academic literature. The normative discourse discussed in this work is based on the Quran, *sunnah*, and comparative literature of and about the formative and classical period of Islam. As regards our focus on the primary literature of and about the classical and formative era of Islam, these form to an emphatic degree the referential and hence the justifying sources for both the advocates and opponents of obedience towards the unjust ruler. The sub-question which derives from this focus is which sources lay at the basis of the opposing visions concerning obedience or disobedience towards the unjust ruler. As regards the normative contemporary polemics between the advocates and opponents of obedience towards the unjust ruler, they serve as an elucidation of how the opposing interpretations influence the dissension and fragmentation of the *ummah* (global Muslim community) on the one hand, and how these polemics are influenced by political interests, on the other. This is the second sub-question of this thesis.

In the following chapter I discuss the grammatical and legal definition of *bid'ah*, together with the way in which *bid'ah* is understood and given significance to by Salafī Wahhābīs and Ash'arīs. The primary dogmatic goals of Salafī Wahhābī are discussed in the third chapter. Therein I focus on the elements within Qutbism and Sufism which form the basis for the dogmatic attacks that stream from the pen and tongues of Salafī Wahhābīs. The penultimate chapter consists out of an analytic discussion of the sources on which both Salafī Wahhābīs and their opponents base their arguments. Herein I try also to explain Salafī Wahhābī methodology of text-eclecticism and interpretation engineered in favor of *tabdī'* of their opponents. The conclusion is reserved for both a retrospective commentary and for my own (as much as possible) value-free '*bid'ah*'.

⁶ It is important to stress already in this early stage of the thesis that the majority of the opponents of Salafī Wahhābīs as advocates of demonstration against and dethronement of the unjust ruler are Ash'arīs. But cautiously, as stated the majority, meaning that a generalizing reference to Ash'arīs as political activists against the unjust ruler *a priori* would be incorrect. However, when I refer to Ash'arīs as political activists against the unjust ruler, this is placed in a context where this is proven to be chiefly typical to Ash'arīs. Though the majority of the activist against the unjust ruler are either members of the Muslim Brotherhood or have core-values similar to Sayyid Quṭb's thoughts, many others do not.

⁷ Salafī Wahhābīs are Salafīs following Saudi Salafī denomination. The name *Wahhābiyyah* may be considered by some Salafīs a derogatory, but we cannot neglect the term in this discussion. When Salafī positions towards elections and revolts against unjust rulers is concerned, a careful classification of the different Salafī movements is required. Therefore I use in this particular respect the eponym a *Wahhābiyyah* and its derived forms. In our converged definition, *Wahhābiyyah* refers to Salafī scholars who are in good or neutral understanding with the Saudi government and all Salafīs - Saudis and others- who regard them as religious authorities on the right path, and more importantly in light of our survey, who are relentless opponents of activists against the Muslim rulers.

⁸ The reason why Salafī Wahhābīs are more seriously concerned with *tabdī'* than *taḍlīl* is twofold. First of all *bid'ah* is considered a more serious threat to the preservation of the pure Islam as taught by the Prophet and the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, a principle to which Salafīs thank their denominational name. Secondly, *taḍlīl* is more comprehensive and therefore in many cases too general for condemnation by Salafī Wahhābīs of their opponents. This is being elucidated in chapter four.

II. Legal Terminology and denominational typology of *bid'ah*

Bid'ah literally means innovation. In Islamic legal definitions it is consensually defined as a religious act or statement for which there is no precedence in the time of the Prophet.⁹ One of the three grand reasons, therefore, for the dogmatic severity of *bid'ah* is that it is antonymous to *sunnah*.¹⁰ The influential but relatively uncelebrated Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 1081) defines in his certainly celebrated and influential *Kitāb al-bida' wa al-ḥawādith* the term *bid'ah* as follows:

Every invented given, dogmatically or daily custom, for which there is no chain linked to or foundation for in the *sunnah* of the Prophet, Allah's blessings and peace be upon him. Thus everything which lacks a ground in this prophetic *sunnah* represents in totality blameworthy *bid'ah* in the opinion of the majority of scholars.¹¹

A second reason for the dogmatic severity of *bid'ah* is the threatening content of *aḥādīth* on *bid'ah*,¹² of which the introductory words of the Prophet's Friday-sermon form the most famous and severe.¹³ The number of *aḥādīth* dealing with *bid'ah* is no less than 20 in the six canonical *ḥadīth*-

⁹ There is a subtle but pertinently emphatic difference between an act which has not been performed by the Prophet, and an act which has not been performed during the life of the Prophet. The former means that also acts which the Companions performed may be considered authentic and hence not being defined as *bid'ah*, except when the Prophet verbally disapproved or forbade an act of a Companion. An example is the glorification of Allah with prayer-beads (*sabḥah/masbahah*) by the Prophet's wife Ṣafīyyah Bint Ḥuyyayy (d. 650) and some other Companions. The Prophet saw her doing this and said that he will show her a better way to glorify God, namely with the fingers. Some Salafīs conclude on this ground that it is *bid'ah* to use prayer-beads for glorification of Allah when seeing the prayer-beads as means by which Allah is being glorified. See: "*Mā ḥukm isti'māl al-subḥah* [tr.: What is the legal ruling of the prayer-beads?]," last modified February, 2008, <http://ar.islamway.net/fatwa/18079/ما-حكم-استعمال-السبحه> Other Salafī scholars regard unconditionally the *subḥah* a *bid'ah* by arguing that the *aḥādīth* on the *subḥah* are either weak, or that none of the Companions used it after the *ḥadīth* concerning Bint Ḥuyyayy's usage of it. See: "*Ḥukm al-masbahah* [tr.: The legal ruling of the prayer-beads]," accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.alalbany.net/4796> See for the *ḥadīth*: Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ Ibn Abī Shaybah*, "*Kitāb al-adhkār* [tr.: Book on supplications]," no. 160.

¹⁰ Muḥammad Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 989, 992.

¹¹ Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa 'l-bida'*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd Turkī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 30.

¹² The number of *aḥādīth* dealing with *bid'ah* is no less than 20 in the six canonical *ḥadīth*-compilations (Ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 870), Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875), Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nasā'ī (d. 915), Ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 892), Abū Dāwud al-Sijistānī (d. 889), and Ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 889) and the celebrated compilations of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), that of Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 795), and that of Abū Muḥammad al-Dārimī (d. 909). However, only a small number have either a warning message, or are directly related to its antonym *sunnah*. Two examples: "Verily, every act has its forcefulness. And every forcefulness has its nature, either in the *sunnah*, or in *bid'ah*. As for him whose nature is attached to my *sunnah*, for he has been guided. And for him whose nature is attached to something else, for he has destroyed [himself]". Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, nos. 5, 409: "Who has innovated an innovation and acts by it, on him is a burden of which he has innovated. Nothing of this burden will be released from him." Ibn Mājah, *al-muqaddimah* [tr.: Introduction], no. 15.

¹³ The *ḥadīth* runs as follows: "And then: Verily, the most truthful narration is the Book of Allah. And the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. And the evil matters are its [religious] inventions. And every [religious] invention is an innovation. And every innovation is aberrance. And every aberrance is in hellfire." *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, "*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer]," "*Bāb al-jumu'ah* [tr.: Chapter on the Friday-prayer]," no. 43; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan Abī Dāwud*, "*Kitāb al-sunnah* [tr.: Book on the *sunnah*]," no. 5; Al-Dāramī, *Sunan al-Dāramī*, "*al-Muqaddimah* [tr.: Introduction]," nos. 16, 23; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, nos. 3, 21, 371, 126; Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Ṣuḡhrā*, "*Kitāb al-'Aydayn* [tr.: Book on the two feasts]," no. 66; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, "*al-Muqaddimah* [tr.: Introduction]," no. 7.

compilations.¹⁴ However, only a small number have either a warning message, or are directly related to its antonym *sunnah*. Two examples: “Verily, every act has its forcefulness. And every forcefulness has its nature, either in the *sunnah*, or in *bid‘ah*. As for him whose nature is attached to my *sunnah*, for he has been guided. And for him whose nature is attached to something else, for he has destroyed [himself]”.¹⁵; “Who has innovated an innovation and acts by it, on him is the burden of which he has innovated. Nothing of this burden will be released from him.”¹⁶

A third reason for the dogmatic severity of *bid‘ah* is the complementation by humanly innovated additions of a religion which is considered completed and perfected by Allah Himself, based on several verses of the Quran which stress this idea.¹⁷

Whereas Ash‘arīs generally speaking distinguish between blameworthy (*madhmūmah*) or bad (*sayyi‘*) *bid‘ah* and praiseworthy (*maḥmūdah*) or good (*ḥasanah*) *bid‘ah*,¹⁸ Salafīs place all religious innovations under the umbrella of blameworthy/bad *bid‘ah*,¹⁹ whereby the person guilty of it is to be regarded an innovator (*mubtadi‘*).

From Islamic legal point of view Ash‘arīs refer to the praising of the second Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d.644) of the collective performance of the nocturnal Ramadan-prayers;²⁰ “*ni‘mat al-bid‘ah hādhih* (‘what a blessed innovation is this’),”²¹ and to a *ḥadīth* which states that “...whoever performs a good *sunnah* in Islam will be rewarded for it and for those who act upon it till the Day of Judgement.”²² From rational point of view Ash‘arīs base the division between good and bad *bida‘* on the objectives of the Law (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*). They look to the expected result as the decisive component for allowance or prohibition of a certain *bid‘ah*, and not merely to whether the

¹⁴ These are the following: Ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. 870), Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875), Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Naṣā‘ī (d. 915), Ibn ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 892), Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 889), and Ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 889). In addition to these six canonical *ḥadīth*-compilations the celebrated works of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), that of Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 795), and that of Abū Muḥammad al-Dārimī (d. 909) are likewise referred to in many cases.

¹⁵ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, no. 5: 409.

¹⁶ Ibn Mājah, *al-muqaddimah* [tr.: Introduction], no. 15.

¹⁷ Two most-cited examples in this respect read as follows: “This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and approved for you Islam as religion.” Q.5.3.; “We have not neglected in the Book a thing. Then until their Lord they will be gathered.” Q.6:38.

¹⁸ Al-Ṭurtūshī, *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa al-bida‘*, 15.

¹⁹ Muḥammad al-Atawneh, “*Bid‘a vis-à-vis sunna: the Limits of Change*,” *Wahhābī Islam facing the Challenges of Modernity: Dār al-iftā‘ in the Modern Saudi State* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 88.

²⁰ According to the majority of Muslim scholars the nocturnal Ramadan-prayers were performed individually during the life-time of the Prophet both at home and in mosques. When ‘Umar was brought to ears by some Companions that people were performing these prayers collectively in the mosque, he went to take a look with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn ‘Abd (d. 650?) and praised this way in the above-cited words.

²¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” “*bāb ‘an al-tarāwīḥ* [tr.: Chapter on the nocturnal Ramadan-prayers],” no. 1; Mālik Ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta‘*, “*Kitāb Ramaḍān* [tr.: Book on Ramadan],” no. 2.

²² Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-‘ilm* [tr.: Book on knowledge] no. 15,” “*Kitāb al-zakāh* [tr.: Book on charity-tax],” no. 64; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, nos. 4:36, 257, 359, 361.

act in itself is a *bid'ah* or not.²³ In the determination of any Islamic ruling the focus of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is on the (general) human good or benefit.²⁴

To Salafī Wahhābīs the praising of the collective nocturnal Ramadan-prayers by 'Umar ought not to be considered a religious innovation as aimed by the Prophet's prohibition of every religious innovation, chiefly because of two reasons. Firstly, the Salafī Wahhābīs defensibly propose that the performance of the collective Ramadan-prayers has its foundation in the *ḥadīth*. That means that the only given that deviates is their collective performance, and not the performance of these prayers in itself. Secondly, but to a certain extent related to the first element, a religious act performed or a religious statement made by a Companion, a follower of the Prophet among the second generation (*tābi'ī*, pl. *tābi'ūn*), or a follower of the followers among the third generation after the Prophet's death (*tābi'ī al-tābi'īn*, pl. *tābi'ū al-tābi'īn*) cannot be labeled as *bid'ah*, provided that the religious act or statement has its basis in the Quran or *sunnah*. Coherently, the definition *Salafīyyah* thanks exactly in this legal foundational principle its existence; *Salafīyyah* derives from *salaf*, which means forebears, referring thereby to the first three generations of the Muslim community in specific. Every act should have its foundation in either the Quran, the *sunnah*, or the example of the first three generations of Muslims through consensual proposition.

Continuing the example of the nocturnal Ramadan-prayers, probably more important than the discussions about whether these prayers are *bid'ah* or not, is the Salafī Wahhābī interpretation of the term's usage by 'Umar. Salafī Wahhābīs claim that the labeling of these prayers by 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as a blessed *bid'ah* bears no religio-legal content, but merely a linguistic content. They explain the word '*bid'ah*' used by 'Umar in this specific case to mean 'deed' or 'act'; "what a blessed act is this" would be the right way to understand the laudatory phrase, Salafī Wahhābīs argue. This is the legal perspective from which Salafī Wahhābīs approach the dogmatic principle of *bid'ah*.

As for the rational considerations, these bear no binding force according to Salafī Wahhābīs, since reason is neither recognized as a source for dogmatic, nor for legal matters. Admittedly, Salafīs of course do also use rational arguments, but claim to use them in polemical and apologetic discourse in which reason is assigned as communicative means according to which they underpin their literal understanding of the sources on the one hand, and as a supportive tool for apprehension of a particular legal rule on the other.

²³ "*Al-bid'ah al-sharī'yyah* [tr.: Legal innovation]," accessed January 17, 2015 <http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-96850/page-116>

²⁴ Muḥammad Khalīl Mas'ūd, "Ṣhāṭībī's Philosophy of Islamic Law: an Analytic Study of Ṣhāṭībī's concept of *maṣlaḥa* in Relation to his Doctrine of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* with Particular Reference to the Problem of Adaptability of Islamic Legal Theory to Social Change" (PhD diss., University of McGill, 1973), 282-284.

III. Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah's dogmatic targets

III.I. Monotheism and monopoly

In her outstanding work on the varieties of *Wahhābiyyah* under the title *Contesting the Saudi State*, Madawi al-Rasheed hits the nail on the head by stating that although *Wahhābiyyah* may be figured as a denomination from which a spirit of a fighting-force emanates, the overall and primary principle of *Wahhābiyyah* is its strict obedience towards authority.²⁵ This obedience must be observed unconditionally, thus regardless the ruler being just (*ādil*) or unjust (*zālim*), despotic (*jā'ir*), or debauched (*fāsiq*).²⁶ Al-Rasheed considers correctly, I think, unconditional obedience towards the ruler the principal hallmark of official *Wahhābiyyah*.²⁷ Al-Rasheed quotes a *fatwā* launched by Salmān al-'Utaybī especially addressing the youth in the following words:

It is clear that the rulers of the Saudi state must be given the oath of allegiance. This is an obligation. The people who tie and loose have given the king *bay'a*[²⁸]; therefore, all Saudis are under the obligation to give it. The ruler of the Saudi state must be respected. You must supplicate God to protect them [him]. You must pray behind them and pay them *zakāh*. You must perform the pilgrimage and *jihād* with them. You must advise them secretly and not in public. You must not gossip about them. You must not insult them and show their sins. It is forbidden to rebel against them. You must not help those who rebel against them even with the word.²⁹

Although hardly verifiable, it is worth mentioning the great authority that Saudi scholars in Saudi Arabia enjoy from not only its inhabitants, but also from the royal family with whom they are generally in harmonious co-existence and, more importantly, in harmonious co-rulership. Illustratively, one of *Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah's* non-Saudi icons who has been living as a teaching scholar in Saudi Arabia for more than 30 years in total, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999), restored his authority after having been warned not to object against the Saudi governmental decision to allow American troops entrance to Saudi Arabia as protecting force against the Iraqi threats during Gulf War I.³⁰ The matter was brought for religious investigation to a great number of scholars, but it was eventually the *fatwā* of the late Saudi state-*mufī* 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Bāz (d. 1999) which was institutionalized

²⁵ Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a new Generation*, ed. Charles Tripp, Julia A. Clancy Smith, F. Gregory Gause, Yezid Sayigh, Avi Shlaim, Judith E. Tucker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁷ Official *Wahhābiyyah* refers to the state-*Wahhābiyyah* of Saudi Arabia. In this thesis also Salafīs who follow the dogmatic and political principle of this *Wahhābiyyah* and who rely on the teachings of Salafī Wahhābī scholars are included in *Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah*.

²⁸ The expression 'tie and loose' bears the meaning of selective obedience towards the ruler (*al-hall wa al-'aqd*). According to this principle people then obey their ruler, then disobey him dependently on their desires and objectives, which is considered a legal violation.

²⁹ Quoted in al-Rasheed, 53.

³⁰ "*Al-Shaykh al-Albānī wa mawqifuh ḥawl dukhūl al-Amrīkān ilā al-Sa'ūdiyyah* [tr.: Shaykh al-Albānī and his opinion regarding the entrance of Americans to Saudi Arabia]," accessed January 17, 2015 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/14b2b69ac5a70fd6?projector=1>; "*Fatwā shaykh al-Albānī bi 'adam jawāz al-isti'ānah bi al-mushrikīn* [tr.: *Fatwā* of shaykh al-Albānī concerning the prohibition of asking assistance from polytheists]," accessed January 17, 2015 <http://www.djelfa.info/vb/archive/index.php/t-186247.html>

and thence brought into force.³¹ Thus instead of reversing the *fatwā* by a governmental edict, it was reversed by another *fatwā* speaking in favor of the royal family's political agenda. In this example one may observe two interesting facts: the Saudi governmental cooperation with Saudi scholars in which exactly those *fatāwā* are adopted which serve the political interests most effectively and obediently, and the Salafī Wahhābī endeavor to integrate seemingly worldly matters in religious realm (or the converse, depending on the angle from which it is being looked at).

Referring to the latter, the general dogmatic principle of *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah* is that worldly and eschatological happiness can exclusively be guaranteed by proper knowledge of Islam. Proper knowledge of Islam can on its turn exclusively be guaranteed through strict attachment to the Quran, *sunnah*, and the consensus of the righteous forebears of Islam, i.e. the first three generations of Islam (henceforward: *ijmā' al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). This attachment to these sources should be a literal observation, and not metaphorically interpreted dependently as to changes of chronological or locative circumstances. Conversely, deviation from these sources or adding something to them results in aberrance (*dalālah*) and *bid'ah*, respectively. Consequently, making oneself guilty of these violations means jeopardizing one's relationship with Allah. Wahhābī Salafīs consider proper knowledge about and worship of Allah the utmost important cause. If these are erratic, then all other matters -both religiously and mundane- are incomplete or even deviant, since the right way of knowing and worshipping Allah forms the fundament of everything. *Wahhābiyyah* assigns within this understanding all-encompassing importance to the unity of God, reflecting there-through on the first years of the Prophet's message in which the dominant message was related to monotheism and the annihilation of polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufr*), according to which in a second, but by a subtle and gradual reached stage Allah's Law could be properly established and thence executed. Alternatively, in order to observe the Law, one should be convinced of the Law-Giver's Unity. This proposition forms a bridge to the source of the author to whom *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah* thanks its name -though seldom flatteringly perceived-, namely *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (tr.: The Book of Unity) of the highly celebrated Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792). The complete title is *Kitāb al-tawḥīd alladhī huwa ḥaqq Allāh 'alā al-'abād*, of which the complement after the mentioned construct state is rarely being pronounced.³²

Notwithstanding the fact that the book is rather small-sized with an average of 90 printed pages, its influence can hardly be underestimated. It is generally being regarded by Salafī Wahhābīs the foremost foundation of Islamic monotheist revival in modern era. Influential Salafī Wahhābī scholars who did not write about the book are more an exception than a rule. Most of the current circulating books or treaties on *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* generally aim either to elucidate the book, or to propagandize it on international level. Of course, many of these works serve merely as a referential source for propaganda on the internet in the form of apologetics and polemics.³³ However, these cannot enjoy wide-spread authority and recognition without the written commentaries by Salafī

³¹ "*Ibn Bāz wa al-isti'ānah bi al-Amrīkān* [tr.: Ibn Bāz and the asking of assistance from Americans]," accessed January 17, 2015 <http://www.tawhed.ws/r1?i=2155&x=pz8piquy>

³² Tr.: 'The Unity of God which is the Right of God from His Servant'.

³³ Many, or most, of these websites are factored by non-scholars. Many of Saudi Arabia's famous scholars have their own website. Examples are that of Ibn Bāz, Al-Albānī, Al-'Uthaymīn, Fawzān al-Fawzān, Raṣlān, and many others.

Wahhābī scholars themselves.³⁴ It can be stated without any reservation, I argue, that the book represents the initiation of Saudi monotheistic emphasis on and literal understanding of Islam, and the disapprobation of *bid'ah* through which the state thanks its radical orthodox character assigned to it by many.

III.II. Monotheism versus Sufism

Although the *Kitāb al-tawhīd* does not directly touch upon obedience towards the ruler, it represents very clearly the duty of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb with which he was burdened by Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd (d. 1765): monotheistic revival. This in itself may possibly be understood as a political aim. The monotheistic and anti-innovative treaties in the *Kitāb al-tawhīd* serve the theological organization of the Saudi status quo by it demanding citizens to concentrate as much as possible on their religious lives, while distancing themselves as much as possible from possible political interference and disorder. One might possibly conclude from the seemingly theological purist content of the book that it defines accordingly the divine notion of justice in a way that nothing can manipulate it or oppose to it. However, though, the critical reader might alternatively interpret the book as a message which forces its readers' eyes to be directed towards God's throne in Heaven, while overlooking the ruler's throne here on earth. The probable result is that one has to mind attention to every step he or she makes. We read for example that not only grand polytheism (*al-shirk al-akbar*),³⁵ but also marginal polytheism (*al-shirk al-khafi*) is to be warned for.³⁶ One of the central topics is the all-encompassing devotional meaning of the first article of the profession of faith (*al-shahādah* or *shahādātān*), namely 'I witness that there is no God than Allah' (*ashhadu an lā ilāh illā Allāh*).³⁷ Instead of briefly stating that the announcement of and belief in Allah's oneness is the first condition for being a Muslim, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb understands it as the substrate of entire Islam. In contrast to many scholars who regard, for example, the honoring of trees, stones, graves, and other means to which blessings are assigned or asked from as different forms of superstitious belief, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb unambiguously defines these ways of honoring as *al-shirk al-akbar* (grand polytheism), without any exception or differentiation.³⁸

³⁴ The following examples may give an impression of the fame *Kitāb al-tawhīd* enjoys. Sulaymān Ibn 'Abd Allāh, *Al-Taysīr al-'azīz al-ḥamīd fī sharḥ kitāb al-tawhīd* (Damascus: Al-Manshūrāt al-kutub al-Islāmī, 1962); 'Abd Allāh Ibn Jār Allāh, *Al-Jam' al-farīd li al-'as'ilah wa al-'ajwibah 'alā kitāb al-tawhīd* (Riyadh: Wikālat shu'ūn al-maṭbū'āt wa al-nashr bi al-wizārah, 1999); Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn, *Al-Qawl al-mufīd 'alā kitāb al-tawhīd* (Alexandria: Dār al-baṣīrah, 1998); Sa'īd al-Jundūl, *Al-Durr al-naḍīd 'alā kitāb al-tawhīd li al-imām al-mujaddid al-shaykh Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Riyāḍ al-ḥadīthah, 1974).

³⁵ Lit. tr.: great polytheism). This is worshipping other Gods besides Allah.

³⁶ Lit. tr.: hidden polytheism). According to some *aḥādīth* worshipping God for the aim of blandishment (*riyā'*) is also polytheism. In the Quran, however, blandish worship is mentioned in the context of charities. "O, you [pl.] who believe, do not invalidate your charities with reminders and injury as does one who his gives his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and not believe in Allah and the Last Day..." (Q.2.264) See for the classification of *shirk al-khafi* by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb: Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-tawhīd alladhī huwa ḥaqq Allāh 'alā al-'abīd* (Bombay, 1926), 10.

³⁷ Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, 11-15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18, 19. Notice the difference between honoring and worshipping. Honoring is *taqdīs*, i.e. assigning either supernatural power or a holy essence to a particular person or object. Worshipping (*ibādah*) refers to an act, statement, or conviction of submission towards a particular person or object. See: Abdulaziz al-Fahad, "From Exclusivism to Accommodation: Doctrinal and Legal Evolution of Wahhabism," in *New York University Law Review* (New York: Law Journal Library, 2004), vol. 79, no. 2, pp. 491-494.

According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb polytheism is not restricted to the afore-mentioned three *modi* (grand polytheism, *shirk al-akbar*; hidden polytheism, *shirk al-khafi*), and assigning blessings to or asking blessings from creatures (*al-tabarruk*). Also asking aid from others than Allah is included within polytheism.³⁹ In addition to the worship of alleged ordinary creatures, like trees, ‘ordinary’ stones and people, etcetera, the worship of ‘special’ or ‘holy’ creatures are faced with the same severe judgment. Two are explicitly mentioned by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb: the *ka‘bah* and the Prophet. Although Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb discusses the names ‘Abd al-Ka‘bah (servant of the Ka‘bah) and ‘Abd al-Nabī (servant of the Prophet), it is clear that the prohibition of the usage of these names is a diluted deduction of the more heavier prohibition of worshipping others than Allah.⁴⁰

Also extravagant devotion to saints is not relented by *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah*. Perhaps one of the most aggressive polemical attacks on *Ṣūfīyyah* by Wahhābī Salafīs is fed by the former’s hagiographical and hyperbole sanctification (*al-ghuluww al-shirkī*) of the Prophet. In 1995 the famous Moroccan Salafī scholar ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Maghrāwī issued a *fatwā* in which he attacked a world-wide celebrated prayer-book in honor of the Prophet: *Dalā’il al-khayrāt wa shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāh ‘alā al-nabī al-mukhtār* (henceforward: *Dalā’il al-khayrāt*).⁴¹ In his *fatwā* al-Maghrāwī compels people to burn the *Dalā’il al-khayrāt*, not so much due to its superstitious content, but chiefly because of its polytheistic propaganda. All hagiographical forms of honor which he lists in his *fatwā* fall within the realm of which al-Maghrāwī defines as ‘the great catastrophe’ (*al-ṭāmmat al-kubrā*).⁴² It is of contributive value to note that al-Maghrāwī launched this *fatwā* quite shortly after his study in Mecca and Medina, the two cities in which he adopted his Salafī Wahhābī dogmatic identity after having been an Ash‘arī scholar in Morocco.⁴³

If we return to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s dogmatic teachings, we find that it is actually impossible to refer to his thought as a representative and coherent-generic frame for what nowadays is being denominated *Wahhābiyyah*. It is more the general emphasis by contemporary Salafī Wahhābī scholars and that of the Saudi government on Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s unorganized and fragmented pieces of hardly classifiable thoughts which tell us more about his place within Saudi’s *Salafīyyah*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24. It should be noted that Salafī scholars in their commentaries on the book have paid much attention to this part. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb himself does not explain clearly which form of asking aid from others than Allah is to be considered polytheism. The Salafī commentaries on this almost infinitely interpretable part show generally the same specification, namely that asking aid from others than Allah is (only) polytheism if the aid-asker believes that the expected aid is obtained by the aider him- or herself, instead of believing that this aid is given by Allah to the aider. Visit for example: “*Ma‘nā al-isti‘ānah wa al-isti‘ādah wa al-istighāthah* [tr.: Meaning of asking assistance, and seeking refuge, and seeking aid],” accessed January 17, 2015 <http://www.alfawzan.af.org.sa/node/8487>

⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, 73, 74; Abdulaziz al-Fahad, “From Exclusivism to Accommodation,” 493.

⁴¹ Tr.: ‘Way-marks of benefits and the brilliance of lights in the remembrance of blessings on the chosen Prophet’. This prayerbook contains almost exclusively blessings on the Prophet, as the title reveals. This is one of the most famous Ṣūfī books world-wide. Although enjoying generally great prestige and social influence, there is still no critical edition of the book. In the library of the Leiden University many manuscripts are preserved. Among these manuscript, the one with the oldest determined year dates from 1701. The Ṣūfī author of the book, Ibn Sulaymān al-Jazūlī (d. 1465), has been -and still is to a certain extent- subject of devotion by many Muslims, to such a level that people claimed to have seen the Messiah one day before al-Jazūlī’s death, and that after his death his blood was still circulating through his blood-vessels, and that his hair was still growing after his death. See: Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Fāsī, *Mumtī‘ al-asmā’ fī al-Jazūlī wa al-Tabbā‘ wa mā lahumā min al-atbā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-‘Amrāwī and ‘Abd al-Karīm Murād (Fez: Maṭba‘at Muḥammad al-Khāmis, 1989), 12-15.

⁴² Jan Just Witkam, *Vroomheid en Activisme in een Islamitisch Gebedenboek: de Geschiedenis van “Dalā’il al-khayrāt” van al-Jazūlī* (Leiden: Legatum Warnerianum, 2002), 80-82.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 98.

Wahhābiyyah. As a result, the institutionalization of *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah* should be understood as an organizational attempt of the Saudi government to define its long-expected clear religious identity after an era in which religious rumor dominated by peripheral and nomadic interaction between tradition (read superstition and *bid‘ah* according to contemporary *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah*) and religion have *a posteriori* been regarded an obstacle for religious revival, the latter being the foundational principle for and only way in which mundane and eschatological success could be realized, as already briefly discussed in III.I. This consideration manifests itself most clearly in the indexation of a voluminous project launched by the Saudi government: *Al-Da‘wah al-Salafīyyah*. One of its volumes discusses exclusively the teachings of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, bearing the translated title *Da‘wat al-shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb: min al-iḥyā’ wa al-iṣlāḥ ilā al-jihād al-‘ālamī*.⁴⁴ One chapter herein is devoted to the harsh Wahhābī attitude against Sufism and Shiism. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb suffices with the general condemnation that Ṣūfīs are aberrant and wrongdoers.⁴⁵ DeLong-Bas states that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not pay thoroughgoing attention to *Ṣūfīyyah*,⁴⁶ but she devotes quite self-contradictory a chapter to his radical attitude towards *sha‘wadhah* and magical prediction.⁴⁷ The complicating element is fed by the terminological ambiguity of *sha‘wadhah*.⁴⁸ By devoting non-consecutive chapters to *Ṣūfīyyah* and *sha‘wadhah*, DeLong-Bas leaves the reader the impression that these two notions are completely different from each other. However, the relentless attacks against *Ṣūfīyyah* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb are motioned not merely by denominational, but by thematic arguments in the first place. By way of exemplification, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb discusses a *ḥadīth* in the chapter about *sha‘wadhah* in which the Prophet declared three peoples destined for hellfire: 1) the alcoholics, 2) the sacrificers by means of blood, and 3) people who work with witchcraft.⁴⁹ If one compares ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s severe judgment concerning *Ṣūfīyyah*, *sha‘wadhah*, and the invocation of dead saints, the conclusion which would follow is that the two latter-mentioned are the thematic reasons for his general denominational condemnation of *Ṣūfīyyah*.⁵⁰ More punctually proposed, *sha‘wadhah* and the invocation of dead saints form together the alleged dogmatic target of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s attack, either sentenced by *taḍlīl* in general, or by *tabdī‘* or even *taskrīk* (declaring someone as atheist) in specific.⁵¹

⁴⁴ The original title is: *Wahhābī Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihād*, by Natana DeLong-Bas. It is rather remarkable that the original work is written by a Western scientist in English and nonetheless included in such a normative compendium. DeLong-Bas works at the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Foundation of Research and Archives. She was a student of John Esposito and started to focus thereafter on *Wahhābiyyah*.

⁴⁵ Natana DeLong-Bas, *Da‘wat al-shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb: min al-iḥyā’ wa al-iṣlāḥ ilā al-jihād al-‘ālamī*, trans. Ibn Ibrāhīm al-‘Askar (Riyadh: Dārat al-malik ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, 2004), 216-218.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 189-194.

⁴⁸ The term is highly sensitive for both legal and linguistic ambiguities, like the term ‘superstition’. In broader context one might possibly translate *sha‘wadhah* with superstition. However, in legal context the differentiating element is defined by the question what forms of acts and statements ought or ought not to be considered *sha‘wadhah*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 190. According to exegetes the sacrificers by means of blood have their origin in the pre-Islamic era; those who sacrificed blood for idols in return for, among others, protection and fertility.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 176-178.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 177, 178.

As stated before, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* is one of the most celebrated Sufi prayer-books on the Prophet. A second book of similar fame is *Al-Kawākib al-durriyyah fī madḥ khayr al-bariyyah* (henceforth: *qaṣīdat al-burdah*, tr.: Poem of the Mantle) by the Egyptian Sufi Muḥammad Ibn Sa'īd al-Buṣayrī (d. 1295).⁵² The book enjoys great prestige and authority in many parts of the Islamic world, especially among Moroccans in Morocco and in the West. It is used during birth-feasts, the birth-day of the Prophet, and other religious occasions, but also as means of physical and mental recovery.⁵³

Contrary to what might possibly be the expectation that the severe discussions about the dogmatic sensitivity of the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah* would be most noticeably between Egypt (the land of origin of the author) and Saudi Arabia (the land of the attacks on the book), the book lacks serious attention in Egypt. I argue that the heated polemics about the book between its advocates and opponents are most tangible in Western Europe, rather than in the Muslim world. The Salafī Wahnābī group in Leiden who distributed the flyer discussed in the introduction even renounce to pray behind the Imam of one of the two Moroccan mosques in Leiden, because the Imam used to (re)cite parts from the book during feasts. Since the only other Moroccan mosque in Leiden is also no option for them -because of the alleged attacks of its Imam against their 'sectarian radicalism'- they saw themselves forced to pray in a Turkish mosque. The result is that many of them attend an unintelligible Friday-sermon, since it is in Turkish without a Dutch translation. This is a demonstrable example of how complex and self-contradictory the Salafī Wahnābī callousness is against activists against the unjust ruler. According to the scholars of their choice, a Muslim should pray behind an Imam although he is unjust, except if it has been proven that he is an unbeliever. Exactly the same obedience towards the Muslim ruler should be pledged towards the Imam. Although in Classical Islam the ruler was usually also the Imam, separation of the functions is no reason to rule differently.

After having subjected the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah* to a critical reading, I concluded that only seven phrases might possibly meet the conditions of *sha'wadhah* and *ghuluww* as outlined by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahnāb and Fawzān al-Fawzān.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, some scholars have even defined some phrases in the *qaṣīdat al-burdah* as *shirkīyyāt* (polytheistic believes or customs),⁵⁵ a condemnation way more severe than *sha'wadhah* and *ghuluww*. Consequently, these scholars prohibit the reading of the book entirely. Sāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān states that the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah* has become an object

⁵² Tr.: 'The scintillating stars in praise of the best of mankind'.

⁵³ P.S.J. van Koningsveld, *De Burda: Flonkerende Sterren ter Lofprijzing van de Beste der Schepselen* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Oase, 2007), 1.

⁵⁴ Verse 140: I serve him with my laudatory poem by which I ask for forgiveness for the sins of a life which was devoted to poems and other paid services; Verse: 146: After all, I stay under his protection, because my name is [also] Muḥammad, and he is the most loyal fulfiller of the rules of protection; Verse 147: If he does not take me in the Hereafter merciful by the hand, how ragged would I then not be standing on my legs?; Verse 148: It is uncommon for him to reject those who hope for his protection as to leave [him] ingloriously; Verse 152: O, most noble of creations, other than you I do not have anyone to seek refuge to when the world will perish; Verse 154: Because this world and the Hereafter exist by [because of/through] your goodness. The knowledge of the Tablet [the Preserved Tablet, *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*, is a hidden dimension in which God preserves all knowledge which is, both of history, currently and of the future.] and the Pen [the Pen, *al-qalam*, is the hidden register by which Allah preserves all knowledge which is in the Preserved Tablet] are judgement of your knowledge.

⁵⁵ "*Al-ghuluww wa al-shirk fī qaṣīdat al-burdah* [tr.: Hyperbole and polytheism in the Poem of the Mantle]," accessed February 9, 2015 <http://www.khayma.com/kshf/R/goulo.htm> The *fatāwā* are of Abū Baḥīn and Ibn 'Uthaymīn.

of social gatherings, and that it contains polytheism (*shirk*) and *bid'ah*.⁵⁶ This famous scholar is also the person responsible for the justification of rather attending an unintelligible Friday-sermon in the Turkish mosque in Leiden, than praying behind an Imam who (re)cites (from) the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah*. In a YouTube film Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān was issued an *istiftā* (inquiry concerning religious matters issued to a Muslim scholar) by one of the attendees on behalf of inquirers from Europe who wanted to know what the legal ruling is of praying behind an Imam who uses to (re)cite (from) the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah*. The inquirers stated that they have been advising the Imams not to (re)cite (from) it, but that the Imams told them that they are obliged to do so by the authorities of the country of their origin.⁵⁷ Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān judged without any exception or reservation that this is strongly forbidden, as the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah* contains *shirk* (polytheism) and *bid'ah*. If these Imams are aware of this, but they refuse to ban the book, then praying after them is forbidden for those who are aware of the Imams' practice, Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān concludes.⁵⁸

Two important notices should be made given the *fatāwā* about the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah*. For one, *shirk* and *bid'ah* are being pronounced by these scholars in their condemnation of reading the book in one breath. The general context of dogmatic aberrance (*ḍalālah al-'aqā'idīyyah*) seems to include all of *bid'ah*, *shirk*, *ghuluww*, and *sha'wadḥah*. All these beliefs -after all- are regarded by these Salafī Wahhābī scholars deviation from the only right path. For another, Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān in his *fatwā* states stoically that the pressure of the authorities of the country of the origin of the Imams is no excuse whatsoever for reading the *Qaṣīdat al-burdah*, since there is no obedience towards a creature at the expense of obedience towards the Creator.⁵⁹ This is highly interesting, given the fact that scholars who advocate demonstrations against the unjust ruler are the scholars *per excellence* who use this principle in their justification of demonstrations and dethronement, and in the weakening of their opponents' interpretation of seemingly prohibiting sources on disobedience towards the unjust ruler.⁶⁰ At first sight one may possibly conclude that obedience towards the ruler ends where *bid'ah* starts. However, this should be nuanced. On the one hand we find sources used by Salafī Wahhābī scholars in which compulsion by an unjust ruler to perform *bid'ah* is absent, as can be read in IV.II. That would possibly mean that an unjust ruler who performs *bid'ah* should nevertheless be obeyed, as long as he does not compel his subjects to do the same. On the other hand there is the heated discussion about what deeds or statements exactly make a Muslim to fall in

⁵⁶ “*Hal yaḥjūz qirā'at qaṣīdat al-burdah?* [tr.: Is it allowed to read the poem of the mantle?],” accessed February 9, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHB3-fKsGJc&app=desktop>

⁵⁷ I came to know that the inquirers on whose behalf the inquiry was issued were the group of Salafīs Wahhābīs in Leiden discussed in the introduction.

⁵⁸ “*Ḥukm al-ṣalāh warā' a'immaḥ yaqra'ūn qaṣīdat al-burdah* [tr.: The legal ruling of praying behind Imams who read the poem of the mantle],” accessed February 5, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_9uWx_slqA&app=desktop

⁵⁹ *Lā ṭā'ah li makhluq fī ma'ṣiyat al-khāliq* [tr.: There is no obedience towards a creature at the expense of disobedience towards the Creator] is a well-known statement whose origin is to be found in a *ḥadīth*. Many *ḥadīth*-compilations include this part of the *ḥadīth* as a sub-title of the chapter on rulership. More about this statement and the *aḥādīth* from which it originates follows in IV.II.

⁶⁰ The enervation of Salafī Wahhābī scholars by scholars advocating demonstrations against the unjust ruler is as a rule proposed as alternative interpretation on the one hand, and as restricting or/and clarifying sources of the selectively chosen sources of their Salafī Wahhābī opponents, on the other. More about this follows in IV.II.

unbelief, a question of pivotal importance when legitimization of an unjust ruler's office is concerned.⁶¹

III.III Salafī Wahhābīs' obedience versus Qutbīs' disobedience

On the 29th of August 1966 Sayyid Qutb was executed by Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir. His crime according to the Executive High Court (*al-mahkamah al-'ulyā al-tanfīdiyyah*) -which then was a watchdog of 'Abd al-Nāṣir's political monopoly- was that Sayyid Qutb propagated extremism and recruited people for extremist attacks. The famous Egyptian preacher 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Kishk (d. 1996) screamingly asked during one of his sermons: "Do you kill a man who declares that there is no God than Allah?" (*ataqtulūn rajul yaqūl lā ilāha illā Allāh*).⁶²

The case of Sayyid Qutb is all but easy to study. In the first place his thoughts ought to be understood in the politico-religious environment from which he sprouted. This probably results in more questions than answers, due to Sayyid Qutb's inter-opposing stages of political and religious consciousness and his eventual conversion to Islamic radicalism. Being well-informed in Western social and political movements,⁶³ Qutb cannot whatsoever be discredited for prejudiced roaring.

Although it is generally claimed that Sayyid Qutb entered America as a *tabula rasa*, he retrospectively stated that he has always been fighting against injustice, albeit initially merely in his mind and heart.⁶⁴ It is in America where Sayyid Qutb learned that the seemingly equilibrium of different social *strata*, the water-proof organization of court-justice,⁶⁵ the infinity of possibilities, the well-structured social aid, and wealth were nothing but a facade behind which an entire world of destruction, oppression, exploitation, immorality,⁶⁶ and hegemony against the weak was hidden. Sayyid Qutb did not observe a relationship between America's greatness and its people, relating in his own words: "There is no correlation between the greatness of American material civilization and the men who created it. ... in both feeling and conduct the American is primitive."⁶⁷ When he returned to Egypt and 'organized' his impressions of America, he described American morality in the revealing words:

During my stay in the United States of America, I saw with my own eyes the confirmation of God's statement: "When they forgot the warning they had received, we opened to them the gates of everything [Q.6:44]. The sense depicted by

⁶¹ This question is discussed in more detail in chapter IV. I suffice here with the remark that because *bid'ah* and *shirk* are used by many Salafī Wahhābī scholars interchangeably and in the same breath, the barriers between *bid'ah* and *shirk* can often be unclear and tarnished.

⁶² "*Qiṣṣat i 'dām Sayyid Qutb yarwīhā al-shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Kishk* [tr.: The story of the execution of Sayyid Qutb narrated by *shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Kishk*]," accessed January 27, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVQLy-QaXEw4>; "*Al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Kishk, al-mu'taqal wa i 'dām Sayyid Qutb* [tr.: Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Kishk, the arrested and execution of Sayyid Qutb]," accessed January 27, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NZz5U-boK2E>

⁶³ It would go too far to discuss the different movements. However, it is important to keep in mind that the chief targets of Sayyid Qutb's radical polemics were materialist and anti-religious ideologies of Marxism, Modern Materialism, and Capitalism.

⁶⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'ālim fī al-Ṭarīq* (Beirut: Dār al-shurūq, 1977), 36

⁶⁵ John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (London: Hurst and Company, 2010), 150.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 149, 151.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

this verse is one in which all necessities and luxuries pour forth without limit! This hardly happens anywhere as it does in the United States. I also saw the conceit and luxury produced in the people, the feeling that this was the White Man's endowment. I saw the way they treated the colored people with despicable arrogance and disgusting barbarity. Their swaggering in the face of the rest of the world is worse than that of the Nazis, who the Jews have denounced to the point where they have become the by-word of racial arrogance, while the white Americans practice racism in an even harsher form, especially if these colored people are Muslims. When I saw all of this I remembered this verse, as I trembled thinking of the law of God and could almost see it advancing step by step toward the unwary.⁶⁸

Sayyid Quṭb's description of the moral, social, political, and economic structure of America in particular and the West in general is not the primary target of Wahhābī Salafī dogmatic attacks. It is the way in which Sayyid Quṭb describes the global Muslim community (*ummah*) that is responsible for his title *al-takfīrī* (someone declaring Muslims as unbelievers), assigned to him by many Wahhābī Salafīs. His world-wide well-studied concept of *jāhiliyyah* (religious ignorance, based on the pre-Islamic definition of ignorance) forms therefor the feeding-ground for this title.

Sayyid Quṭb sees imperatively the all-encompassing content of the *shahādah* the backbone for everything in a community, as the anti-pole of *jāhiliyyah* in which Islam has no practical (organizational/executive) and theoretical (intellectual) existence. In fact, the contemporary *jāhiliyyah* lacks any real Islamic essence according to Quṭb.⁶⁹ He states that the Western standards will soon seize to dominate. Not because of the loss of power or wealth, but because of the ephemerality of the Western standards. Only Islam contains the ingredients for a lasting system.⁷⁰ To guarantee this stable and ethic system, the *ummah* must first release itself from the throttling hands of *jāhiliyyah*, through which Muslims imagine the Western standards as exemplary.⁷¹

The way in which Muslims perceive the world has a central place in Sayyid Quṭb's definition of the *ummah*. He emphasizes that the *ummah* is not a ground of a specific people. It is rather a people whose life, expectations, situations, organizations, measures/standards, and structural balance is instituted by the Islamic system (*al-manhaj al-islāmī*).⁷² It is a fatal error, he adds, to regard the Western system as an example for how the *ummah* should organize itself.⁷³ He stressfully warns that this does not mean that economic and industrial progression do not bear any relevance in Islam. Quṭb sees alternatively that the principles of any kind of positive progression should distillate from the ground-principle of Islam, namely the all-encompassing content of the *shahādah*.

If there should be referred to one phrase responsible for the Wahhābī Salafī rejection and abhorrence of Sayyid Quṭb's teachings, then probably it would be his generalizing statement regards to the moral state of the world and the place of Muslims therein. He pessimistically argues that...:

The world nowadays lives in its entirety in [religious] ignorance [*jāhiliyyah*] from the perspective of origin, from which the basic components of life and its systems originate. An ignorance which these materialistic easements do not alleviate. ... This ignorance is based on aggression against Allah's sovereignty on earth, in specific against His divinity, that is [His] authority.

⁶⁸ Quoted in John Calvert, 154.

⁶⁹ Sayyid Quṭb, *Al-Ma'ālim fī al-ṭarīq*, 50.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7.

...And by this token, people are living in accordance with all forms of systems, except in accordance with the Islamic system; they worship each other, in one way or another. Only in the Islamic system people can be freed from worshipping each other, by the worship of one God... This is the strand which mankind does tread upon, because it is not the result of Western civilizations, and not that of Western Intellectualism, regardless them being oriental or occidental.⁷⁴

Sayyid Quṭb does not restrict his radical reform to merely theoretical ideas as an impetus for other thinkers to build on. Indeed, he does focus for a dominant part on the intellectual principles through which Islam has to be reformed, but he proposes also an active guideline through which this reform ought to be realized. The transition of Sayyid Quṭb's teachings from ideas to practice is the part which is probably the hardest to grasp, chiefly due to his seemingly inter-contradictory theses based on the Prophetic example. He teaches that the message of the Prophet was a gradual fruition of Allah's Law (*tadarruj al-aḥkām*). The Prophet was ordered to read, then to warn his family, then to warn the people close to him, then all Arabs, and finally all people.⁷⁵ This resulted in three groups. One group consisted out of Muslims. A second group consisted out of peaceful unbelievers. And a third group consisted out of scared enemies, not forming a serious threat to Islam.⁷⁶ The confusing element in Sayyid Quṭb's proposition is that it seems as if he advocates a bottom-up reform, resulting in either one of the three, two out of the three, or all three groups, but in all cases resulting in a situation in which Islam has the upper-hand. In fact, he sees a top-down reform the only way to realize a world in which justice prevails.⁷⁷ It should be noted that in this respect Sayyid Quṭb leaves the reader the impression that Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet could be understood both as a revolutionary reform of Allah's Law when the transition from *jāhilliyah* to Islam is concerned on the one hand, and as an evolutionary reform when the foundation of Allah's Law is concerned, on the other. It is probably in this light how his seemingly fragmented and contradictory presupposition for Islamic reform should be understood, since he proposes an initial radical revolutionary reform regarding the annihilation of the *jāhilī* state in which Muslims live as a preparatory 'cleansing' for the second, evolutionary stage in which the foundations of Allah's Law are to be established.

The justification of Wahhābī Salafī attacks on the ideas of Sayyid Quṭb is generally rooted in two notions: 1) *Takfīr*, i.e. that Sayyid Quṭb is claimed to declare the *ummah* as unbelievers, and 2) deviation from the Quran and *sunnah*.⁷⁸ However, though, these two self-appropriated justifying notions are eligible to enfeeblement. In the first place there is no single phrase -as far as I have been able to locate-⁷⁹ in which Sayyid Quṭb unambiguously declares Muslims as unbelievers, neither in

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8, 9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 58, 59, 64, 66, 163, 164. See especially p. 66.

⁷⁸ Ibn Hādī al-Madkhalī, *Aḍwā' islāmiyyah 'alā 'aqīdat Sayyid Quṭb wa fikrih* (Aghmān: Maktabat al-furqān, 2000), 27-31, 49-55.

⁷⁹ I have studied also other works of Ibn Quṭb in addition to *al-Ma'ālīm* and his *Fī zilāl al-qur'ān* in which he discusses his *jāhilī*-concept, among others *al-taswīr al-fannī fī al-qur'ān al-karīm* and *al-Mustaqbal li hādihā al-dīn*.

his *Ma'ālim* nor in his *Fī zilāl al-qur'ān*.⁸⁰ His derogatory title *takfīrī* should, I think, be understood rather as an interpretation of Wahhābī Salafīs of Sayyid Quṭb's notion of *jāhiliyyah*, in which -as already discussed- all people -Muslims comprised- nowadays live. This thesis finds support by the great number of statements of Salafī Wahhābīs that refer to Sayyid Quṭb as a *takfīrī* merely due to his notion of *jāhiliyyah*. None of the Salafī Wahhābī scholars who characterize Sayyid Quṭb as a *takfīrī* are able to quote or cite even one single phrase of Quṭb by which he refers to Muslims or the *ummah* as unbelievers or disbelieving community, respectively.⁸¹ Secondly, it might possibly attract quite a hesitating reaction when declaring a thinker a *takfīrī* deviating from the Quran and *sunnah*, while Sayyid Quṭb claims to struggle for an *ummah* who returns to the Islamic foundational principles from-out which the *ummah* reforms their *jāhilī* state to a state based on Allah's Law. Logically, it would be a catastrophic naivety and an deceptive utopia to believe that Sayyid Quṭb possessed the Holy Grail with which all problems in the Muslim world could be solved; Sayyid Quṭb's picture of the Islamic Law is but an interpretation of the many jurisprudential interpretations of how Allah's Law should be established and executed. It is therefore of great importance to keep in mind the fact that Islamic law has never been -at least not from the formative era onwards- an object of consensual perception. Concomitantly, the same breeding-ground from which the lack of consensus among Muslim scholars about how Islamic law should be structured and executed originates, is the very breeding-ground from which the dogmatic polemical and apologetic battles concerning obedience or disobedience towards the unjust ruler originate: the difficult synthesizability between the Quran, the *sunnah*, and the *ijmā' al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*.

⁸⁰ Sayyid Quṭb's resemblance of the contemporary state in which the world lives with the pre-Islamic state plays an important role in the justification of the condemnation of Sayyid Quṭb as *takfīrī* by Salafī Wahhābīs. The general conclusion of these attacks derives from the fact that people in the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* were unbelievers. Now, if one states that Muslims of contemporary times relapsed to pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah*, it could be understood that they are also unbelievers like those of pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah*. However, cautiously complemented, it should be borne in mind that Sayyid Quṭb sheds a converged light on the universal state of *jāhiliyyah* rather than on its people as being collectively unbelievers.

⁸¹ Hereby a list of electronic references to Salafī Wahhābī scholars who try to prove why Sayyid Quṭb is a *takfīrī*. "*Shaykh al-Jāmiyyah 'Ubayd al-Jābirī yanqalib takfīrī wa yukaffir Sayyid Quṭb* [tr.: The Jāminite *shaykh* 'Ubayd al-Jābirī becomes a *takfīrī* and declares Sayyid Quṭb a *takfīrī*]," accessed February 5, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKW1xypUFO4>; "*Da'wat al-shaykh Sayyid Quṭb minhaj fikr al-takfīrī* [tr.: Sayyid Quṭb's claim is a *takfīrī* concept]," last modified August, 2012 <http://www.muslim.org/vb/showthread.php?473377--دعوة-سيد-قطب-هي-منبع>; "*Sayyid Quṭb akhtar takfīrī fī al-'aṣr al-hadīth* [tr.: Sayyid Quṭb is the most dangerous *takfīrī* of modern age]," accessed April 25, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_DDZ8A-BEoU; "*Ta'liq al-shaykh Raslān 'alā qawl al-dāll Sayyid Quṭb* [tr.: Commentary of *shaykh* Raslān on the statement of the aberrant Sayyid Quṭb]," accessed April 25, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kKb2HMYr50>; "*Jam' kalām al-'ulamā' wa mashāyikh al-da'wah al-salafīyyah fī Sayyid Quṭb* [tr.: Selection of statements of scholars and *mashāyikh* of al-Da'wah Salafīyyah about Sayyid Quṭb]," accessed April 25, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCaP-f80m4Gc>; "*Jadīd: al-shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Liḥdān yaḥdhir min Sayyid Quṭb wa Ḥasan al-Nabbā* [tr.: New: *Shaykh* Ṣāliḥ al-Liḥdān warns against Sayyid Quṭb and Ḥasan al-Bannā]," accessed April 25, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-we_EyY3s5g

III.IV. Legal methodology of Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah in relation to *tabdī'* of activists against the unjust ruler

As underlined before, *Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah* thanks its identity more to the teachings of contemporary scholars than to its eponym. Followers of the Saudi *Salafiyyah* do not regard the denominational adjective '*Wahhābiyyah*' a derogatory without reason. As holders of the opinion of unbounded legal reasoning (*ijtihād al-muṭlaq*) and rigid opponents of *taqlīd* (legal imitation), they do not wish to be resembled with a particular scholar in whose 'restricting shadow' they ought to operate. Inter-contradictory, however, the selectiveness of adherence to a particular number of scholars with a particular religious educational background and dogmatic principles is one of the main characteristics of *Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah*, a condition which shows more similarities with unlimited obedience towards the ruler, than differences.

Extensionally, if we stay within the discussion of legal reasoning, we find another significant methodological inter-contradiction. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) form together the two scholarly pillars on which *Salafiyyah Wahhābiyyah* rests. These two scholars form preeminently the scholars who advocate unbounded *ijtihād* and restrict or even neglect *taqlīd*.⁸² The Saudi Senior Board of 'Ulamā' (*hay'at kibār al-'ulamā'*) constituted the consensus that the doors of *ijtihād* never close, reflecting there-through upon the methodological freedom to perform unbounded *ijtihād* as proposed by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Ibn Taymiyyah. But if we read the conditions which Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān, as a prominent member of the Saudi Senior Board of 'Ulamā', postulates for unbounded *ijtihād*, we are probably to conclude that the doors of *ijtihād* may indeed not be closed entirely, but that it is at least such narrowed, that entrance through it seems impossible. The *mujtahid* must master Quranic sciences, including its terminology and vocabulary, the circumstances of the revelations of its verses (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), a thoroughgoing knowledge of its abrogating and abrogated verses (*al-nāsikh* and *al-mansūkh*, respectively), its general (*'āmm*) and specific (*khāṣṣ*) verses, comprehensive and explicit verses, clear (*muḥkamāt*, mono-interpretable) and ambiguous (*mutashābihāt*, poly-interpretable) verses, and more. As for the *sunnah* the *mujtahid* must master the science of transmissions (*'ilm al-asānīd*) and of its textual content (*matn*), and must be able to reconcile seemingly conflicting *aḥādīth*.⁸³ These are but a small number of primary conditions for only two sources, let alone for other sources such as the *ijmā'* and *qiyās* (analogical deduction).

The methodological opinion of Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān concerning *taqlīd* and knowledge of the *isnād* in the *sunnah* deserves further elaboration. In *ḥadīth*-sciences one sub-discipline has been responsible for the overall consensual classification of the currently known *ḥadīth*-compilations, having resulted in, among others, the six canonical *ḥadīth*-compilations mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis. This discipline is called *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* (disparaging and declaring trustworthy). Insofar as the *sunnah*, like the Quran, is a divine revelation verbalized through the mouth of the Prophet, but substantively (that is regarding its content, objective, and meaning) dictated by Allah, the soundness of a *ḥadīth* depends not on the text's synthesizability of reason with the content of the text (*tanāghum al-'aql bi al-matn*), but on the soundness of the chain of transmitters through which the *ḥadīth* has been ramified among the *ḥadīth*-compilers. That means that the primary question in *ḥadīth*-sciences is not whether a content of a *ḥadīth* is sound or unsound as to its meaning and objective, but whether the transmitters and the eventual compiler of the *ḥadīth* have been proved to be reliable transmitters through quadri-doctrinal consensus (*ijmā' madhāhibī*, i.e. a

⁸² M. al-Atawneh, "Wahhābī Legal Theory as reflected in Modern Official Saudi *fatwās*: *ijtihād*, *taqlīd*, Sources, and Methodology," in *Islamic Law and Society 18* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 330.

⁸³ M. al-Atawneh, "Wahhābī Legal Theory", 331.

consensus reached by all four *madhāhib*). Exemplary, in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* we find a *ḥadīth* which compels a Muslim to obey his ruler although the latter lashes one's back and deprives his belongings. The entire *ḥadīth* including the *isnād* runs as follows:

Muḥammad Ibn Sahl narrated to me, that Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥassan and ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī narrated to us, that Mu‘āwiyah Ibn Sallām reported to us, that Zayd Ibn Sallām narrated to us, on the authority of Abū Sallām, that Ḥudhayfah Ibn al-Yamān told us: “I said to the Messenger of Allah that we lived in evil and then Allah came with goodness, and we live in it. Will there be evil after this goodness?” He [the Prophet] said: Yes. “I said: will there be goodness after that evil?” He [the Prophet] said: “Yes.” “I said: will there be evil after that goodness?” He [the Prophet] said: Yes.” “I said: how will it be?” He [the Prophet] said: “There will be after me rulers [*a’immah* pl. of *imām*⁸⁴] who do not follow my leadership and who do not follow my *sunnah*. Among them there will be men whose hearts are like that of the *shayṭān* [pl. of *shayṭān*] in the body of a human.” He [Ḥudhayfah Ibn al-Yamān] said: “I said: what should I do then, if I witness such.” He [the Prophet] said: “[you must] listen and obey, even if he lashes your back and takes your belongings from you. You must listen and obey.”⁸⁵

Postponing the discussion of the *matn* to the following sub-chapter, the matter of our concern here is the *isnād*. Two elucidations concerning the *jarḥ wa al-ta’dīl* in reference to this *ḥadīth* are of dominant importance for our wider discussion regarding the contemporary heated debates among scholars around the justification of *tabdī’*. For one, the ostensibly injustice and irrationality of the *matn* of the *ḥadīth* are of no value in the determination of the soundness of the *ḥadīth*, and it has never been. This last complement after the punctuation-mark is not in vain. One might possibly state that in the period of the compilation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* in which the *ḥadīth*, among others, is founded, being lashed and deprived by an unjust ruler could possibly have been relatively normal. Many scholars from the Classical period of Islam discussed this *ḥadīth*, and it is because of its rather sensitive content that many of them have proposed an interpretation which shows more a sense of freedom and justice, than a sense of dictatorship and injustice. Consequently, instead of neglecting the *ḥadīth* itself due to its ostensible dictatorial *matn*, scholars alternatively obviate a literal context-less interpretation.⁸⁶

For another, the discussions around the (con)textual interpretation of the *matn* proves itself only useful if the *ḥadīth* has been proved authentic (due to its *isnād*, as already clarified). In this case the *ḥadīth* enjoys general authority among scholars because of its compiler, namely Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj, whose *ḥadīth*-compilation is quadri-doctrinally recognized. All the transmitters appearing in the *isnād* of the *ḥadīth* have been proved reliable and hence recordable in one or more of the authentic *ḥadīth*-compilations. Consequently, the meaning of the *matn* does indeed demand an important place within *ḥadīth*-sciences, but only as an impetus for textual and contextual interpretation, and not as a subordinate subject to reason. Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān acknowledges, of course (being a clear Salafī Wahhābī), the indispensable importance of the *jarḥ wa al-ta’dīl*, but states in contrast to most of his Salafī Wahhābī colleagues that this discipline has seized to exist. He accounts this statement through two reasons: the contemporary impossibility to perform *al-jarḥ wa al-ta’dīl*, and the consensual agreement among scholars about the soundness of the known *ḥadīth*-compilations. He stresses that the qualifications of the *aḥādīth* have already been studied and proved by Classical *ḥadīth*-scholars from the highest shelf, those with whom contemporary scholars

⁸⁴ One of the functions of a Muslim ruler is *imāmah* (performing the function of *imām*). In context of the *aḥādīth* dealing with rulership the term *imām* refers to one of the ruler's functions, like *amīr* [emir], *ḥākīm* [ruler], and *khalīfah* [Caliph].

⁸⁵ Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-imārah* [tr.: Book on rulership], no. 52; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan Abī Dāwud*, “*Kitāb al-fitan* [tr.: Book on adversity], no. 1.

⁸⁶ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1994), vol. 2, p. 288.

can never measure; these Classical scholars formed themselves a part of the *isnād* leading to the Prophet, and they possessed a profound expertise in addition to extraordinary quantitative knowledge.⁸⁷

The opinion of Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān has given rise to a wave of critics from his Salafī Wahhābī colleagues and the latter's followers, among them Rabī' Ibn Hādī al-Madkhalī, who is regarded the contemporary pioneer of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*.⁸⁸ The central question discussed is whether *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* is the same as or a form of *ghībah* (backbiting, that is deconstructive or bad talk about someone in his or her absence). If confirmative, then this would mean that one violates the *ḥadīth* which forbids backbiting,⁸⁹ which results in aberrance -a sin which *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyah* so emphatically warns for- on the one hand, and that the qualification of the *aḥādīth* would not have been performed, since it is based on the disparaging and declaring trustworthy, on the other. *Aḥādīth* which have been determined weak or even fabricated have been disqualified in most cases given the untrustworthiness of one or more of the transmitters appearing in the *isnād* of a particular *ḥadīth*, and not by the possible irrationality of the *math*. Rabī' al-Madkhalī argues steadfastly that the only way to distinguish between a sound and weak or fabricated *ḥadīth* in specific, and between the truth and falsehood in general is by means of publicly demonstrating the trustworthiness or disparagement of the transmitters appearing in the *asānīd*.⁹⁰ When authenticity in religious realm is concerned, one cannot speak of *ghībah* because of two reason, al-Madkhalī adds. Firstly, *al-ghībah* is to speak badly about another person while absent for the aim of disavowing him or her, while *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* is a neutral verification of someone's reliability or the adverse for the aim of accurately following the religious truth. Secondly, and concluded from the first, following the right path is more important than accurately stating that someone fabricates in name of the religion.⁹¹

Reflecting on the Wahhābī Salafī methodology of adherence, the accounting of the seemingly paradox between loyal adherence to Salafī Wahhābī scholars on the one hand, and its claimed disapprobation of blind imitation deserves further elucidation. We read in the celebrated *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā* of Ibn Taymiyyah that people ought not to blindly follow the manners of their forefathers merely for the reason to regress to their religious inheritance. In his words:

⁸⁷ “*Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān yarudd ‘alā ahl al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* [tr.: *Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān refutes the scholars of al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*],” accessed March 19, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLHUdyln3Y8>; “*Kalām shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān fī wujūd al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* [tr.: Statement of *shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān* regarding the existence of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*],” last modified June, 2015 <http://www.el-houda.org/showthread.php?t=6039>

⁸⁸ “*Al-jawānib al-khilāfiyyah bayn Rabī' al-Madkhalī wa Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān* [tr.: Points of disagreements between Rabī' al-Madkhalī and Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān],” accessed March 25, 2015 <http://www.kulalsalafiyeen.com/vb/showthread.php?t=50885>

⁸⁹ The *ḥadīth* which forbids backbiting goes as follows: Yaḥyā Ibn Ayyūb, and Qutaybah, and Ibn Ḥajar narrated to us, saying that Ismā'īl told us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, that the Messenger of Allah -Allah's blessings and piece be upon him- said: “Do you know what *ghībah* is?” They [the addressed Companions] said: “Allah and His Messenger know.” He [the Prophet] said: “Your mentioning of your brother [in faith] in that which he dislikes.” It was [then] said [by one Companion or more]: “But what if my brother [in faith] indeed has that which I say?” He [the Prophet] said: “If he indeed has that which you say then you have backbitten him, and if he does not have that which you say then you have aspersed him [source-text: *in kān fīh mā qult faqad ightabtah, fa'in lam yakun fīh faqad bahattah*].” **Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Bāb al-birr* [tr.: Chapter on righteousness]”, no. 80.**

⁹⁰ Ibn Hādī al-Madkhalī, *Al-Ḥadd al-faṣīl bayn al-ḥaqq wa al-bāṭil* (Aghmān: Maktabat al-furqān, 2000), 11,12.

⁹¹ “*Al-farq bayn al-ghībah wa al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl; al-shaykh Muḥammad Ibn Hādī al-Madkhalī* [tr.: The difference between *al-ghībah* and *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*; Muḥammad Ibn Hādī al-Madkhalī],” accessed March 23, 2015 <http://www.al-amen.com/vb/showthread.php?t=14187>

Man follows naturally the religion of his father, or that of his teacher, or that of his origin, in the way a child is following the religion of his father. Anyone who deviates from following the Quran and *sunnah*, however, has placed himself in aberrance, although he is ordered by his father to obey.⁹²

Shedding light on the seemingly rebellious attitude of children towards their ‘aberrant’ parents in Ibn Taymiyyah’s *fatwā*, the possible appropriate question would run as follows: How should disobedience towards the unjust ruler as commissioned by the *sunnah* be reconciled with absolute obedience towards parents as imposed by the Quran?⁹³ The only possible harmonization between these two obligations can be found in the fact that coercion to sin is exempted from this rule.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, however, Salafī Wahhābīs do not discuss the matter in terms of priority. Obedience towards one’s parents, the Muslim ruler, and that of a woman towards her husband are considered equally compulsory, but it is only the Muslim ruler among these three who enjoys the ‘privilege’ of lashing one’s back and depriving him from his money without a grounded reason. Oxymoronically, Salafī Wahhābīs seem to cut their own fingers by the very texts used as justifying source for their arguments. It is, I argue, the context-less selectiveness of the sources which is chiefly responsible for their opponents view of them as being superficial and reason-less eclectics. It is time now to pierce in more details through the heavy sources.

⁹² Ibn Taymiyyah, *Fatāwā al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1987), vol. 4, p. 87.

⁹³ Q. 4:36: “Worship God and do not ascribe partners to Him, and be good to the parents...”; Q. 17:23: “Your Lord has commended that you worship none but Him, and that you be good to your parent. If either or both of them have reached the old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, nor scold them, and say to them kind words.”; Q. 46:15: “We have enjoined upon mankind kindness to his parents...”

⁹⁴ In the Quran: Q.31:15: “But if they [your parents] strive to have you associate with Me something of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them.” In the *ḥadīth*: “It is obliged for a Muslim person to listen and to obey [the ruler] in that which he likes and dislikes, except if he is ordered to sin. If he is ordered to sin, then [there is] no listening and no obedience.” Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, “*Kitāb al-jihād* [tr.: Book on the *jihād*],” no. 108, “*Kitāb al-aḥkām* [tr.: Book on the legal rulings],” no. 4; Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, “*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Bāb al-imārah* [tr.: Chapter on rulership],” nos. 34, 38; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, “*Kitāb al-jihād* [tr.: Book on the *jihād*],” no. 87; Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, “*Kitāb al-jihād* [tr.: Book on the *jihād*],” no. 29; Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, “*Bāb al-bay’ah* [tr.: Chapter on allegiance],” no. 34; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, “*Kitāb al-jihād* [tr.: Book on the *jihād*],” no. 40.

IV. Salafī Wahhābī *Selectiveness of the Sources*

IV.I. Introductory remarks on the sources

On international level the way in which different countries house Muslim scholars who have been deported or who fled from the countries of their origin reveals for an important deal the political preference of the given country. Of distinguished interest are the cases of Qatar and Saudi Arabia. In September 2014 Qatar deported seven scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹⁵ In March 2014, a half year before the deportation, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the Arabic Emirates withdrew their embassies from Qatar, because it was held to support intellectuals from outside the country who have a political agenda forming a threat for these three and other countries.⁹⁶ The deportation of these men was one of the conditions for Qatar to regain its political and economic relationship with the three countries, a condition which Qatar coercively met.⁹⁷

It may be clear by now that the conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Qatar has been stirred up by the wider discussion around demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler. The seven scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood who Qatar welcomed are regarded by their Salafī Wahhābī opponents Qutbīs, a derogatory title synonymously used to extremism, terror, and -perhaps not unexpectedly- *bid'ah* by Salafī Wahhābīs. Nevertheless, due to the subservient significance of reason to revelation, Salafī Wahhābīs refer in the first place to the revealed sources, and only in the second and hence subordinate place to reason as additional means (only). Thus instead of optionally stating that demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler may cause social disruption, economic crisis, disunity, and blood-shed, they emphatically focus on the Quran, *sunnah*, and the *ijmā' al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* as proofs, and use reason (only) as a way to rationalize the prohibition.

Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah characterizes itself on dogmatic level by the strict determination of the parameters of one's entire religious as defined by these sources. All religious acts -both conduct and ritual- ought to fit within these parameters. Everything falling outside this radius is considered *bid'ah*, one of the gravest violations a Muslim can commit. According to Salafī Wahhābīs these three sources encompass everything one should know to live in accordance with Allah's Nature. Issues not touched upon directly by these three sources should alternatively fit within the Salafī spirit of life.⁹⁸ This is in fact the ambiguous discrepancy between written formality and daily reality which forms the breeding-ground for the heated debates between advocates and proponents of demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler. Indeed, although the sources seem to be in co-agreement that Muslims should obey their Muslim ruler, Salafī Wahhābīs refer (almost) blindly to the sources without taking the social and political context into consideration, while their opponents hoist the flag of two fundamental principles: 1) the observation of human justice as a re-

⁹⁵ They are the following: Maḥmūd Ḥusayn, 'Amr Darrāj, Ḥamzah Zawna', Wajdī Ghanīm, Jamal 'Abd al-Sattār, 'Iṣām Talīmah, and Ashraf Badr al-Dīn. See: "*Qaṭar taṭrud sab'ah min qiyādat al-ikhwān al-muslimīn al-miṣriyyah min arāḍihā* [tr.: Qatar deports seven scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood from its territory]," accessed February 11, 2015 <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2014/09/13/590268.html>

⁹⁶ "*Qaṭar taṭrud qādah min jamā'at al-ikhwān al-muslimīn* [tr.: Qatar deports Muslim leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood]," accessed February 11, 2015 <http://www.alsharq.net.sa/2014/09/14/1218552>

⁹⁷ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī was exempted from this decision, among others due to his Qatari identity. See: "*Qaṭar taṭrud qiyādat ikhwāniyyah wa tastathnī al-Qaraḍāwī* [tr.: Qatar deports leading scholars and exempts al-Qaraḍāwī]," accessed February 11, 2015 <http://www.elaph.com/Web/News/2014/9/940339.html>

⁹⁸ Mohamed al-Atawneh, "Bid'a vis-à-vis Sunna: the Limits of Change" in *Wahhābī Islam facing the Challenges of Modernity* (Boston & Leiden: Brill, 2011), 88-91.

flection of Allah's justice, and 2) no obedience towards a creature at the expense of obedience towards the Creator (*lā ṭā'ah li makhlūq fī ma'ṣiyat al-khāliq*). Irrespective of the way in which the two sides seem to collide with each-other -the Salafī Wahhābīs by observing the literal spirit of the characters of the text, and their opponents searching for the meaning *behind* the physical characters of the text-, they both try to seek for confirmation of their stances through reference to the written sources.

As for the relationship between the Quran, *sunnah*, and the *ijmā' al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, the Salafī Wahhābīs regard them as indissoluble chains by way of inter-complementation. Had the Quran been enough, then the *sunnah* would have been superfluous. Had the *sunnah* been enough, then the Quran would have been superfluous. And the *ijmā' al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* serves herewith as the living example of how these two sources should be understood and lived by. The overall conviction shared by Salafī Wahhābīs, as rightly observed by Mohamed al-Atawneh, is that the *sunnah* serves three objectives in relation to the Quran: 1) confirmation (*tawkīd*); the *sunnah* confirms as a second revelation the content of the Quran, 2) clarification (*ibānah* or *tibyān*); the *sunnah* explains in more details and in more understandable designations the message of the Quran, and 3) establishment (*in-shā'*); the *sunnah* establishes new, or rather additional, rulings not mentioned in the Quran.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, Al-Atawneh does not elaborate on this affecting notice. It is chiefly the last-mentioned function of the *sunnah* according to which Salafī Wahhābīs share the conviction that the *sunnah* enjoys the same textual divinity and legal authority as the Quran, resulting in an equilibrate textual methodology.¹⁰⁰ Whereas most non-Salafī Wahhābī denominations rank the *sunnah* second after the Quran, Salafī Wahhābīs place them on an equal footing.¹⁰¹ Exemplary, most denominations regard the wearing of the head-veil by women more substantive than the wearing of a beard by men. The reason for this distinction is because the obligation of wearing a veil by women is mentioned in the Quran, while the wearing of a beard by men is not mentioned in the Quran, but only in the *sunnah*. Salafī Wahhābīs consider the shaving of the beard by men a violation as severe as the violation of not wearing a head-veil by women, exactly by the fact that they consider the sunnatic obligations as substantive as the obligations in the Quran; in retrospect, the *sunnah* is revelation likewise and hence as imperative as the Quran, Salafī Wahhābīs conclude.¹⁰²

It is importance to keep in mind the fact that the sunnatic equilibrate textual methodology vis-à-vis the Quran attached to by Salafī Wahhābīs forms the dominant license for their relentless *tabdī'* of advocates of disobedience towards the unjust ruler. Consequently, they stress that the lack

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰⁰ It should be mentioned that the Quran itself confirm the divinity of the *sunnah* by stating that it is also revelation, a conviction shared by roughly all Sunnīs. However, most of the Sunnī denominations rank the *sunnah* second only after the Quran, while Salafī Wahhābīs place the *sunnah* on an equal footing with the Quran.

¹⁰¹ That does not mean that Salafī Wahhābīs regard the *corpora* of *aḥādīth* as authentic as the Quran, since the Quran is regarded by all Sunnī scholars *mutawātir* as both *verbatim ac literatim* and meaning, while the *ḥadīth*-compilations count only a small number of *aḥādīth* of this highest classification of authenticity. Therefore, Salafī Wahhābī scholars do not say that the Quran and the *aḥādīth*-compilations are equally divine and hence authoritative, but say that the Quran and *sunnah* are equally divine and hence authoritative. At the contrary, it is especially within the Salafī Wahhābī strand that critiques on the absolute authenticity of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* -as claimed by the dominant majority of Muslim scholars- are posted. See: Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011), 304-331.

¹⁰² “*Shubḥah wa jawābuhā ḥawl farḍiyat al-lihyah wa al-ḥijāb* [tr.: Doubts concerning the obligation of the beard and the veil and the answers to it],” last modified June, 2006 <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id=49847>

of direct mentioning of obedience towards the unjust ruler in the Quran does not provide any excuse or reason to advocate the converse. Again, the *sunnah* is revelation likewise and therefore as substantive and imperative as the Quran, Salafī Wahhābīs conclude.

The effects of the quarrels between Salafī Wahhābīs and their activist opponents reach further than merely politico-religious preference. Since the topic is touched upon by legal *aḥādīth* (that is with a ruling) in the *sunnah* (consequently one of the two revelations), any other interpretation than a literal interpretation should result in one way or another in an alternative ruling; advocating demonstrations and revolts against rulers can in no way whatsoever be approached with indifference, since it contains a legal ruling within *āḥādīth* that have been proved absolutely authentic.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, Salafī Wahhābī scholars understand very well that the establishment of *fatāwā* exclusively on grounds of the *sunnah* weakens their authority, due to the fact that the dominant majority of Muslims wish to see evidence from at least the Quran, and preferably from both the Quran and the *sunnah*. That brings us to the Quranic justifications of *tabdī'* of political activists against the unjust ruler as deposited by Salafī Wahhābī scholars.

IV.II. Quran

The possibility for Salafī Wahhābīs to backbone their condemnations of their opponents is being provided by both the silence of the Quran about disobedience towards the unjust ruler on the one hand, and by the numerous *aḥādīth* which seem to speak in favor of obedience towards (even) the unjust ruler. Nonetheless, there are Quranic verses that are used by the latter's opponents as justifying texts on the one hand, and as enervating proof of Salafī Wahhābīs' text-selectiveness on the other. We discuss the four most important verses, representing the discussions about 1) the grave sinner, 2) the alleged absolute forgiveness of Allah, 3) non-Islamic or anti-Islamic rulership, and 4) the obligation to perform the *jihād*. The topics might possibly seem segregated from each other at first sight, but they are in fact coherently linked to each other, given the conditions for a Muslim ruler, the possible dethronement of the unjust Muslim ruler, and the boundaries of the Muslim ruler's power. For that reason the verses are discussed intricately, and not separately.

Perhaps the most significant and thence decisive verse speaking in favor of Salafī Wahhābīs is Q. 4:59: "O, you [pl.] who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger [the Prophet] and those in authority among you. If you disagree over something, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and the best understanding." According to Salafī Wahhābīs this verse is *muḥkam* (clear, mono-interpretable) and hence imperative in only one way, namely the literal. Those in authority are the rulers, they stress. The late state-*mufī* of Saudi Arabia, 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Bāz, states that rulers ought to be obeyed as long as they do not compel their subjects to sin. However, he adds, that does not mean that such rulers should be dethroned, since demonstrations against and dethronement of the Muslim ruler are absolutely forbidden. The only thing Muslims should do in the latter's case is not giving over to his coercion to sin.¹⁰⁴ The opponents perceive a rather different interpretation, namely that this verse applies to rulers who rule according to Allah's Law. They explain the three authorities listed in the verse (Allah, the Prophet, and those in authority among Muslims) as congenial as to demanding good and forbidding bad. Exactly in the way the Prophet ruled with justice commended by Allah, in the same manner those in

¹⁰³ Quranic verses which contain a legal ruling are called *āyāt dhawāt al-aḥkām*. *Aḥādīth* containing a legal ruling are called *aḥādīth dhawāt al-aḥkām*. See for example: Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ "Adillat ḥurmat al-khurūj 'alā al-ḥākīm al-zālim wa al-fāsiq [tr.: The proves of the prohibition of revolting against the unjust and unrighteous ruler]," accessed February 15, 2015 <http://bayenahsalaf.com/vb/showthread.php?t=11090>; "Wujūb tā'at walī al-amr [tr.: The obligation of obeying the holder of authority]," accessed February 15, 2015 <http://www.sahab.net/forums/?showtopic=117523>

authority should rule with justice commended by Allah and executed and elucidated by the Prophet. Concomitantly, they argue that it would be irrational to assume that Allah lists three authorities to be obeyed, of whom the latter is in clear contrast with the two first-mentioned authorities, i.e. the unrighteous men of authority in contrast to the righteous authority of Allah and the Prophet.¹⁰⁵

Regards to Allah's all-compassing mercy the Salafī Wahhābī scholars refer to Q.39:53 to stress that it is promised to the grave sinner alike. The verse promises: "Say to My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Verily, Allah forgives all sins. Verily, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful." The opposing interpretations of this verse between Salafī Wahhābīs and activists against the unjust ruler bear major implications for the question which sins are of such a grave caliber, that he is to be regarded a non-Muslim and should consequently be dethroned in case he is the ruler.¹⁰⁶ The activists against the unjust ruler consider bloodshed of innocent Muslim civilians a sin grave enough to dethrone the ruler guilty of it, either by (only) stating that such a ruler spreads death and destruction, or by even stating that such a ruler has fallen in unbelief and thence ought to be decertified.

The latter argument is rather firmly grounded in the alleged literal interpretation of Q.4:93, which runs as follows: "And whoever kills a believer deliberately, for his recompense is hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment." Exegetes are in consensus that this verse is revealed in occasion of Maqīs Ibn Šubābah al-Kinānī (d. 630-32?). Maqīs Ibn Šubābah and his brother Hishām (d. 629) converted relatively late to Islam, but have been known as very active servants in a short period of Companionship. When Maqīs came to know about his brother's visit to the tribe Banū al-Najjār, he feared the worse. Once he entered the Banū al-Najjār, he found his brother Hishām dead. After having informed the Prophet of Hishām's death, the Prophet sent a Companion of the Banū Fihr tribe along with Maqīs to interrogate the Banū al-Najjār about the identity of Hishām's murderer. If they happen to know who killed Hishām, they then could choose either to hand him over to Maqīs to decide his fate, or they would pay him blood-money at a rate acceptable to Maqīs. The Banū al-Najjār swore their ignorance about the murderer's identity and paid him 100 camels as compensation. However, while walking back to Medina he was seduced by the Satan to kill his companion as adjustment, instead of accepting a humiliating blood-selling. Maqīs left Medina as Muslim and returned to it as unbeliever. Remorse was never to be accepted, since Allah predetermined his torturing abode while still alive.¹⁰⁷

The scholars who regard the killing of Muslims a clear proof of unbelief strengthen their thesis by the interpretation of 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbās of this verse, who states that whoever kills a Muslim has apostatized, reflecting on the literal -and seemingly context-less- interpretation of Q. 4:93. When Ibn 'Abbās was asked how one could harmonize between Q.4:93 and Q.39:53 he answered that the latter applies to those Companions who made themselves guilty of grave sins while living in state of *jāhiliyyah* before the revelation of Q.4:93, such as those who killed Companions

¹⁰⁵ "Waliyy al-amr. Matā yusammā bi dhālik? Wa matā tajib tā'atuh? [tr.: The holder of authority. When should he be called as such? And when is obedience towards him obligatory?]," accessed February 15, 2015 <http://www.muslim.org/vb/archive/index.php/t-382320.html>

¹⁰⁶ There is consensus between practically all scholars that the ruler of Muslims in a Muslim country must be a Muslim, and that he ought to be dethroned when he apostatizes. This consensus is primarily reached on grounds of the *ḥadīth* transmitted by 'Ibādah Ibn al-Šāmit. See the following sub-chapter for a more elaborated discussion.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āyāt al-qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1955-66), vol. 9, p. 61, 62.

during battles before themselves converting to Islam.¹⁰⁸ Contemporary scholars who regard the killing of innocent Muslims an act of unbelief refer to this interpretation of Ibn ‘Abbās, while their Salafī Wāḥḥābī opponents argue that Q.39:53 has been abrogated by Q.4:93, and that only those who kill Muslims deliberately without eventually repenting are destined for the promised abode described in Q.4:93.

The objection against the Salafī Wāḥḥābī interpretation of the ‘Merciful’ verse is that it does not form a firm plea against their opponents’ vision that the ruler guilty of murder should never have been entitled as ruler in the first place, because he is assumed to have been an unbeliever during his killings. Alternatively, if one is to assume that even the blood-shedding ruler accounts for Allah’s forgiveness after showing remorse, it would mean that he converted from unbelief (during and due to his killings) to Islam (after his remorse); he had to be dethroned as soon as his unbelief was proven by his killings before his conversion to Islam.¹⁰⁹

In sum, the activists against the unjust ruler state that although they would yield their vision in favor of the Salafī Wāḥḥābī vision (namely that the ‘Merciful’ verse applies also to the ruler who have killed Muslim), he is to be regarded a convert who have had been eligible for rulership only after his repentance, and not during his killings before his repentance, because he is held to have been a disbeliever in that period.

It should be stressed that the activists against the unjust ruler are generally in harmonious agreement with their Salafī Wāḥḥābī opponents on one fact as regards to obedience towards the Muslim ruler, namely that the righteous Muslim ruler ought indeed to be obeyed. The point of severe disagreement circumambulates around the position of the unjust ruler. This means also that the activists against the unjust ruler deny the right to demonstrate or to revolt against the just ruler likewise, although he fails to achieve the economic and organizational objectives of his subjects.¹¹⁰ But carefully, as soon as one may possibly suppose there-through that the kernel of the heated battles between the two denominations is exclusively formed by the difference in vision regards to the righteousness of the ruler, one encounters another obstacle thwarting every kind of an agreement between the two fronts: demonstrations. According to Salafī Wāḥḥābīs political elections are forbidden, due to its lack of foundation in the Quran and *sunnah*. The more does this apply to demonstrations, which actually is regarded a distorting and generally speaking a violent form of ‘elections’. According to Ibn ‘Uthaymīn demonstrations against a Muslim ruler is evil in itself, because it goes hand in hand with disorder and blood-shed, resulting eventually in discord of the *um-mah*.¹¹¹ Notwithstanding the fact that, naturally, Salafī Wāḥḥābī scholars also expect the Muslim ruler to rule with justice, they emphasize the obligation of obeying the Muslim ruler also in case this justice fails to occur. This principle is firmly attached to by practically all Salafī Wāḥḥābī scholars, among them the ‘global icons’ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, Muḥammad Ibn

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 62, 63.

¹⁰⁹ “*Mawqif al-islām min al-dīmuqrāṭiyyah* [tr.: Islam’s opinion concerning democracy],” accessed April 3, 2015 <http://qaradawi.net/new/all-fatawa/7234-2014-04-20-10-43-27>

¹¹⁰ “*Inkār aḥādīth ṭā‘at walī al-amr* [tr.: Denial of the *aḥādīth* concerning obedience towards the ruler],” accessed February 19, 2015 <http://bayanelislam.net/Suspicion.aspx?id=03-03-0080>

¹¹¹ “*Ḥukm al-muḥāharāt li al-shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Uthaymīn raḥimahu Allāh* [tr.: The legal ruling concerning demonstrations according to *shaykh* Muḥammad Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, may Allah have mercy on him],” accessed February 19, 2015 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BvoQ2KvbB8&app=desktop>

Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn, Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān, and Muḥammad Ibn Sa‘īd Raslān.¹¹² According to Ibn ‘Uthaymīn in reference to Q.4:59 (concerning obedience towards Allah, the Prophet, and those in authority) obedience towards the Muslim ruler is inextricably linked to obedience towards Allah and the Prophet.¹¹³ One might possibly expect therewith that the decisive condition of obedience depends on the righteousness of the ruler. Nevertheless, though stressing the pivotal importance of righteousness of the Muslim ruler as one of the primary conditions of entitlement to his office, Salafī Wahhābīs renounce to give green light to elections and demonstrations against even the most evil Muslim ruler. It is in this latter’s context in which the third verse should be understood: (Q. 5:44) “...And whoever does not rule [judge] by what Allah has revealed, those are the unbelievers.”

Before discussing the opposing interpretations of the verse, I shed light on two important problems. For one, the question what exactly has to be executed -of which has been sent down by Allah- has always been a point of disputation,¹¹⁴ among others due to ambiguous verses which include rulings.¹¹⁵ As stated earlier, Muslim scholars regard unanimously the *sunnah* revelation alike. Thus although Muslims speak of the *sunnah* as the exemplary way of the religious life of the Prophet, it is demanded by Allah through His revelation. The question in this regard is whether the verse refers to both the Quran and the *sunnah* as revealed dual source according to which the Muslim ruler ought to rule, or whether the legal verses in only the Quran are absolutely binding. In case of the former, the deduced question would be which of the *aḥādīth* bear an absolute binding content, keeping in mind the fact that many of the legal *aḥādīth* are susceptible to discordant qualifications of authenticity, because the authenticity of *aḥādīth* is being decided by the *jarḥ wa al-ta’dīl*. In case of the latter, the *sunnah* would bear a subordinate force to the Quran, a possible supposition unacceptable to Salafī Wahhābīs and to a certain extend also to Ash‘arīs to which the majority of activists against the unjust ruler adhere.¹¹⁶ For another, assuming that the verse indeed refers to both the Quran and the *sunnah* as Allah's Law according to which the Muslim ruler has to rule, how should problems not touched upon by the Quran and *sunnah*, but which are definitively necessary for legislative inclusion, be considered in relation to the Quran and *sunnah*? The dominant vision is that every aspect of life is encapsulated in one way or another by either the Quran or the *sunnah*. Therein lays the indispensable value and function of the *ijtihād* (legal reasoning).

But another complicating element shelters within this question. Salafī Wahhābīs regard every religious act or statement which lacks a foundation in the Quran, *sunnah*, or *ijmā‘ al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* an innovation destined for hellfire. Retrospectively, they do not distinguish between blamewort-

¹¹² “*Hāmm jiddan: tajmī‘ fatāwā ‘ulamā’ al-a‘immah fī ḥukm al-muzāharāt wa al-khurūj ‘alā al-ḥākim* [Tr.: Very important: compilation of *fatāwā* of scholarly imams concerning the legal ruling of demonstrations and revolts against the ruler],” accessed February 19, 2015 <http://www.4salaf.com/vb/showthread.php?t=21614> This webpage is a compilation consisting out of *fatāwā* of the aforementioned scholars.

¹¹³ “*Ḥukm al-khurūj ‘alā al-ḥākim al-zālim... Ibn ‘Uthaymīn raḥimah Allāh* [tr.: The legal ruling concerning revolts against the unrighteous ruler... Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, may Allah have mercy on him],” accessed February 20, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1MAkcl1rWs&app=desktop>

¹¹⁴ S. Vikor, *Between God and the Sultan: a History of Islamic Law* (London: Hurst and Company, 2005), 1.

¹¹⁵ See for clear and unclear verses and the problem of obtaining legal rulings from the latter: M. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic text Society, 2011), 117-121.

¹¹⁶ When it comes to *aḥādīth* which explain how to fulfill certain religious obligations, the Ash‘arīs regard these as substantive as the verses explained by the *aḥādīth*, as long as these *aḥādīth* have been proven absolutely sound through quadri-doctrinal consensus. Examples are the way in which the prayer has to be performed, the fasting of the Ramaḍān, the percentages of the *zakāh*, and many more.

hy and praiseworthy innovations. In this one might possibly understand the reason why Salafī Wahhābīs argue that literally all aspects of life are touched upon by one or more of these three sources. As an example, Q.5:44 condemns those who do not rule with which has been sent down by Allah as unbelievers. The constitutional prohibition for women to drive a car in Saudi Arabia is a rule absent in both the Quran and the *sunnah*. However, Wahhābī Salafī scholars -Al-Albānī excepted- argue that the prohibition is enforced by *aḥādīth* which forbid women to travel without a *maḥram* (a person of the opposite gender with whom marriage is unchangeably forbidden). As a result, driving a car is interpreted as travel.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, this does not convince their opponents, since they refer to Q. 5:44 as being clearly general when touching upon the subject to which it is addressed (all people), and as being strictly barrier-defined when touching upon the sources by which all people ought to rule (the Quran and *sunnah*).

Sayyid Quṭb understands this verse in his *Fī zilāl al-qur'ān* as a warning not to deviate from Allah's Nature, which includes pure justice for all creatures. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, established by Allah's Will to guarantee man's justice towards others and the converse. This cannot mean, Quṭb stressfully warns, that this divine principle of justice is confined to subjects only. At the contrary, he believes, it should be observed with/by the ruler in the first place, since he should be an example for his subjects.¹¹⁸ Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1979) states in his words that ruling with another ruling than that which has been sent down by Allah is not only forbidden and wrong, but a clear proof of disbelief.¹¹⁹ Al-Sha'rāwī (d.1997) teaches in his interpretation of the verse less radically, by arguing that only the one who does not recognize Allah's Law in the Quran and *sunnah* is to be considered an unbeliever. As for him who recognizes Allah's Law, but who does not rule with it, for he is indeed a wicked person, but not an unbeliever.¹²⁰

It probably does not come as a surprise to notice the little attention paid to this verse by Salafī Wahhābīs, as being possibly the result of two notions. On the one hand they claim to be on the right path as the purist executors of the Quran, the *sunnah*, and the *ijmā' al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*. On the other hand they refer to Q.4:59 (about obeying Allah, the Prophet, and the men of authority), meaning that this is an overshadowing Quranic demand to rule with what has been revealed by Allah; obeying the Muslim ruler is therein a core-principle.

The *via negativa* method by which Salafī Wahhābīs condemn demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler lacks an answer to the question of pivotal importance what to do with the *jihād*. Salafī Wahhābīs can neither deny the timeless existence of the *jihād*, nor its divine obligation in the Quran and *sunnah*. In their interpretation of Q.9.38-39 Salafī Wahhābīs cannot but try to luridly confirm this obligation in such a way that the authority of the Muslim ruler is not being jeopardized. "O, you [pl.] who believe. Why when it is said to you to march on in the Cause

¹¹⁷ It should be noted that there is an additional reason for the prohibition for women to drive a car, namely *al-khalwah* and/or *al-ikhtilāṭ bayn al-jinsayn*. *Al-khalwah* means privacy with a woman whose husband is absent, a violation regarded as severe. *Al-ikhtilāṭ bayn al-jinsayn* means promiscuity of mutually marriageable people, a violation less severe, but seriously enough according to Salafī Wahhābīs to warn for the possible seductions which might arise from it. Driving a car is only allowed with a driving-license, which cannot be provided except after driving-lessons with a masculine instructor. To prevent every possibility of giving over to the Satan's tricks of adultery, they forbid it under the guise of 'prevention is better than cure'. This legal principle is called *sadd al-dharā'i'* (tr.: prohibition of what may lead to committing sins).

¹¹⁸ Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-'arabiyyah, 1979), vol. 6, pp. 62-65.

¹¹⁹ Abū al-'Alā' al-Mawdūdī, *Al-Qānūn al-islāmī wa ṭuruq tanfīdhih* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1975), 17.

¹²⁰ "Tafsīr wa man lam yaḥkum bi mā anzala Allāh fa'ulā'ik hum al-kāfirūn [tr.: Exegesis of "And whoever does not rule [judge] by what Allah has revealed, those are the unbelievers"]," accessed April 20, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwasM9mBxek>

of Allah you cling hazily to the earth? Are you pleased with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But little is the joy of this world as compared with the Hereafter. [38] If you [pl.] march not forth, He will punish you with a painful torment and will replace you by another people, and you cannot harm Him at all. And Allah is over all things competent. [39]” During a conference about Syrian Jihadists Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān was asked whether this verse applies also to the Syrian case. He asked: “Does it [the verse] not state ...”when it is *said* to you”? Who is the one who *says* to march forth?”¹²¹ He continues: “That is the Muslim ruler. Where is the Muslim ruler of the *ummah* nowadays? There is none.” Thus al-Fawzān sees the passive form of *qāla* (say) as a clear demand of the Quran that the *jihād* may only be performed after mobilization of groups by the Muslim ruler.

In respect of the *jihād* Salafī Wahhābīs assign an almost invulnerable authority to the Muslim ruler, to such an extent that he is the one who decides what exactly is to be considered *jihād* and what not, instead of leaving its determination up to Muslim scholars. But exactly in this illusory separation of functions between the ruler and the scholars anchors another illusion, namely that the scholars determine the politico-religious power of their rulers. The consequences of the engineering of Salafī Wahhābī scholars by their rulers may prove itself even on the level of television-channels, whereby the Saudi channel *Al-Arabia* rejects to speak of Palestinians who are being killed by Jews as martyrs, contrary to what is the common designation of Qatar’s news-channel *Al-jazeera*.¹²²

¹²¹ “*Shurūṭ al-jihād li al-shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān* [tr.: Conditions for the *jihād* by *al-shaykh* Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān],” accessed February 22, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ym9-d0qNX0&app=desktop>

¹²² See for example: “*Istishhādāt ‘ind iṭlāq al-nār Isrā’īliyy* [tr.: Martyrdom through attacks of Israeli fires],” accessed April 20, 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2015/10/13/استشهاد-فلسطيني-ومسيرات-بالضفة-وغزة-والداخل>; *Ṣuwar tukadhhib rāyat Isrā’īl ‘an istishhād Filistīniyyīn* [tr.: Pictures disavow the Israeli flag concerning the martyrdom of Palestinians],” accessed April 20, 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2015/10/9/-صور-تكذب-رواية->; *Maqṭal 3 Filistīniyyīn wa ‘amaliyyat ta’n jadīdah* [tr.: 3 Palestinians killed and a new operation of contest],” accessed April 20, 2015 <http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/arab-and-world/2015/10/12/-مقتل-3>; *Al-shshurṭah al-Isrā’īliyyah taghluq aḥyā’ ‘arabiyyah bi al-Quds al-sharqiyyah* [tr.: Israeli police closes Arab districts in Eastern Jerusalem],” accessed April 20, 2015 <http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/arab-and-world/2015/10/14/الشرطة-الإسرائيلية-تغلق-أحياء-عربية-بالقدس-الشرقية/>

IV.III. *Sunnah*

As noted before, Salafī Wahhābīs arm themselves mainly by the *sunnah* against disobedience towards the unjust ruler. Beneath I list the most authentic and hence important ones.¹²³

On the authority of ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbās that the Messenger of Allah -Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him- said: “Who sees from his ruler [*amīr*] something he apprehends must be patient with it. For he who abandons the community [*al-jamā‘ah*, i.e. the *ummah*] a hand-length and dies, he dies a death of ignorance [*maytat al-jāhiliyyah*].”¹²⁴

On the authority of Abū Dharr [al-Ghifarī] who said: “The Messenger of Allah -Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him- said to me: “What will you do if rulers postpone their prayers or seize completely to perform it on time?” He [Abū Dharr] said: “I said: what do you order me to do [then].” He [the Prophet] said: “Perform the prayer in time. If you attain it [the prayer] with them [in delayed time after that you have already performed your prayer individually in time], pray with them, because it is for you supererogatory.”¹²⁵

On the authority of ‘Ibādah Ibn al-Ṣāmit that the Messenger of Allah -Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him- said: “There will be rulers who are busy with their [worldly] matters and postpone the prayers. Make your prayers with them supererogatory.”¹²⁶

On the authority of ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah -Allah’s blessings and peace be upon him- said: “Who renounces his hands from obedience towards his ruler, dies a death of ignorance [*maytat al-jāhiliyyah*].”¹²⁷

It is interesting to see that some *aḥādīth* concerning obedience towards the ruler are linked with disobedience towards Allah, namely by them including the way in which a Muslim ought to act when prayers are postponed or when their time-bounded performance is dilapidated by the ruler. According to many authentic narrations -both *aḥādīth* and *akhbār* (reports from Companions and their followers, sing. *khbar*)- a person renouncing the prayer is a disbeliever (*kāfir*). For example, it is stated in a *ḥadīth* that...”the pledge differentiating us from them [unbelievers] is the prayer. So whoever neglects it, for he has disbelieved.”¹²⁸ In another *ḥadīth* we read: “Between a man and un-

¹²³ The number of *aḥādīth* about (dis)obedience towards the Muslim ruler generally which are identified as authentic is at least 50. Among this number, the majority are founded in one or more of the six canonical *ḥadīth*-compilations. However, at least 12 of these *aḥādīth* are iterations with the same *isnād*, but with slightly differences in the *matn*.

¹²⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, “*Kitāb al-ḥikm* [tr.: Book on adversaries],” no. 3, “*Kitāb al-aḥkām* [tr.: Book on judgements],” no. 4; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, nos. 1,275, 297, 310: 4, 130, 202:5, 180, 344; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-imārah* [tr.: Book on rulership],” no. 53; Abū Dāwud, “*Kitāb al-sunnah* [tr.: Book on the *sunnah*],” no. 27; Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, “*Kitāb al-adab* [tr.: Book on discipline],” no. 78; Al-Dārimī, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, “*Kitāb al-sayr* [tr.: Book on journeys],” no. 75.

¹²⁵ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” “*Bāb al-masājid* [tr.: Chapter on mosques],” no. 238; Abū Dāwud, *Sunan Abī Dāwud*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” nos. 10, 56; Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” no. 49; Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, “*Kitāb al-imāmah* [tr.: Book on leadership],” no. 54; Al-Dārimī, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” no. 97; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, nos. 4, 161.

¹²⁶ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” “*Bāb al-iqāmah* [tr.: Chapter on the announcement of the payer],” no. 150; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, nos. 1:405, 5:214, 6:7.

¹²⁷ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-imārah* [tr.: book on rulership],” no. 58.

¹²⁸ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-tirmidhī*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on prayer],” “*Bāb tark al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Chapter on renouncing the prayer],” no 31.

belief stands the prayer.”¹²⁹ The common link of the last-cited *ḥadīth* -Jābir Ibn ‘Abd Allāh- judges in his own words the same.¹³⁰ In another report of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb we read that a person who renounces the prayer has disbelieved.¹³¹

Although seemingly similar, the two slightly differences between the report of Jābir Ibn ‘Abd Allāh and that of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb may give rise to a very important discussion, namely the difference between disbelieve (*kafara*, present tense; *yakfur*) in verbal modus and unbeliever (*kāfir*) in substantive modus. The importance of an accurate and punctual definition lays in the fact that the legitimacy and sustainability of a ruler’s throne depends entirely on the religiosity of the ruler according to Salafī Wahhābīs, and not on his possible sins, irrespective of the graveness of his sins. The famous late Saudi *muftī* Ibn ‘Uthaymīn (d. 2001) stresses that a ruler who drinks alcohol, fornicates, and even enslaves women to be his extra-marital concubines is still a Muslim. Ibn ‘Uthaymīn discusses this issue in light of the Salafī Wahhābī interpretation of the two most significant *aḥādīth* dealing with unconditional obedience towards the ruler, namely that which has been transmitted by Ḥudhayfah Ibn al-Yamān about obedience towards the ruler although he lashes one’s back and takes his belongings, cited in II.III, and that of ‘Ubaydah Ibn al-Ṣāmit about obedience towards the ruler except if it has been proved by Allah that he made himself guilty of disbelief in clear terms. Ibn ‘Uthaymīn states that the ruler making himself guilty of these grave sins is of course a transgressor, but cannot whatsoever be regarded an unbeliever, because the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Ibn al-Yamān demands that the ruler should apostatize in a clear manner determined by the proof of Allah. Moreover, the *ḥadīth* states that unbelief should be observable by the eye (*illā an taraw kufr bawāh lakum fih min Allāh burhān* (tr.: “Except if you [pl.] witness [lit. tr.: see, i.e. with the eye] clear unbelief of which you have a proof by Allah”). Ibn ‘Uthaymīn elucidates further that concluding someone’s unbelief on grounds of verbal communication or suppositions is invalid. Additionally, even when the condition of observing clear unbelief proved by Allah (that is in accordance with the Quran) has been met, another condition not mentioned in the *ḥadīth* should likewise be met, namely attainability. Ibn ‘Uthaymīn explains this almost ironically by illustrating that the mobilization of ten men with knives, swords, canes, and lances is doomed to fail, and thus not allowed.¹³²

Deductively, the additional condition postulated by Ibn ‘Uthaymīn is an example of the inevitable reliance on reason on the one hand, and of *istiṣlāḥ* (seeking for the common good) on the other, two legal methodological principles more typical of Ash‘arīs than of Salafī Wahhābīs. Moreover, the difference between disbelief (*kufr*) and disbelieve (*kafara*) may have its influence on the sustainability of a ruler’s office given the fact that an act of unbelief may be different from being an unbeliever, like has been the case according to some scholars with the statement of Mu‘ammar al-Qadhdhāfi that the word ‘*qul*’ (‘say’, imperative) in *sūrat al-falaq*, *sūrat al-nās*, and *sūrat al-ikhhlāṣ* in the Quran should not be pronounced, because it is a demand to the Prophet to read what has been

¹²⁹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Book on the prayer],” “*Bāb tark al-ṣalāh* [tr.: Chapter on renouncing the prayer],” no. 120. The *ḥadīth* before this one (no. 119) shows a small difference in the *matn*, namely: “Between a man and polytheism stands the prayer.” Both *aḥādīth* have the same *isnād* with Jābir Ibn ‘Abd-Allah as the common link.

¹³⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Al-tamhīd limā fi al-Muwaṭṭa’ min al-ma’ānī wa al-asānīd* (Rabat: Wizārat al-awqāf wa al-shu’ūn al-dīniyyah, 1979), vol. iv, p. 226.

¹³¹ Ibn Ḥazm al-Zāhirī, *Kitāb al-fiṣal fi al-mīlāl wa al-ahwā’ wa al-niḥāl* (Cairo, 1903), vol. 1, p. 142.

¹³² “*Ḥukm al-khurūj ‘alā al-ḥākim wa matā yakūn li al-shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn* [tr.: The ruling concerning revolting against the ruler and when it should be realized: by *shaykh* Ibn ‘Uthaymīn],” accessed April 11, 2015 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/14cad0945ba996a2?projector=1>

revealed after that imperative.¹³³ Another striking example is al-Qadhdhāfi's opinion regards to the Quranic prohibition on Jews and Christians to enter the Holy Mosque of Mecca,¹³⁴ which he regards to be understood by Muslim scholars wrongly.¹³⁵ Although the majority of Muslim scholars, including the Board of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia, declare al-Qadhdhāfi an unbeliever,¹³⁶ there are still some scholars who do not regard him as such given the fact that he has *committed* unbelief, but *is* not a clear unbeliever.¹³⁷ That is the possible consequence of the different interpretations between *kafara* (disbelieve) and *kufir* (disbelief). Notwithstanding the fact that Salafī Wahhābīs wish to characterize themselves as adherents of the clear and compromise-less Islam, they seem to prove themselves to be the converse when it comes to defining the religious state of the ruler and thence the legitimacy of his position.

In his book of irreplaceable value al-Māwardī (d. 1058) lists no less than seven core-conditions which the Muslim ruler must strictly meet. He must be righteous as regards to serving the interests of his subjects. He must possess thorough knowledge of the Law. Thirdly, he must have sound sense-organs. Fourthly, he must have a healthy body. He must understand the objectives of the Law. Penultimately, he must be bravely, as to be able to defend his subjects and to take part in the *jihād*. And finally, he must be a descendant of the Qurayshī tribe.¹³⁸ Accordingly, a Muslim ruler who does not show all of these conditions denies himself the right to rule by his very own shortcomings. In addition, Ibn Ḥazm is even more specific by stressing that it is an obligation to dethrone the Muslim ruler if he has proven to be unjust or debauched. In reference to the *ḥadīth* of Ibn al-Yamān on obeying the Muslim ruler, although he lashes ones back and expropriates his belongings, Ibn Ḥazm discusses another *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet commands to re-appropriate your belongings if someone deprives you from it. If this results in a fight whereby the offender dies, the defender is exculpated and the offender's fate lays in Allah's hands. Contrariwise the offender will abide hellfire.¹³⁹ The Egyptian 'walking encyclopedia' (as he is called) Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ma-qṣūd was issued an *istiftā'* concerning the Salafī Wahhābī vision of unconditional obedience to-

¹³³ "Al-Kufr wa al-falsafah [tr.: Unbelief and philosophy]," accessed April 12, 2015 <http://aljsad.com/forum85/thread54550/>

¹³⁴ The verse reads as follows: "O, you [pl.] who believe. Verily, the polytheist are unclean, so let them not approach the *masjid al-ḥarām* after this, their [final] year. And if you [pl.] fear privation, Allah will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Verily, Allah is Knowing and Wise. (Q. 9:28) It should be noted that Jews and Christians are not mentioned explicitly as those who are not allowed to enter the Holy Mosque in Mecca. However, there is general consensus among Saudi scholars that Jews and Christians are included among those being spiritually unclean and thus forbidden to approach the Holy Mosque.

¹³⁵ "Tahrīf al-Qadhdhāfi li al-qur'ān al-karīm wa al-sharī'ah al-islāmiyyah [tr.: Alteration of the noble Quran and the Islamic Law by Gaddafi]," accessed April 12, 2015 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#inbox/14ceac90b91c7054?projector=1>

¹³⁶ "Fatwā hay'at kibār al'ulamā' fī takfīr al-Qadhdhāfi ḥākim Lībiyā [tr.: Fatwā of the Board of Senior Scholars concerning the declaration of al-Qadhdhāfi's unbelief, the ruler of Libya]," accessed March 12, 2015 <http://majles.alukah.net/t77102/>

¹³⁷ "Mu'ammār al-Qadhdhāfi muslim wa lays kāfir [tr.: Al-Qadhdhāfi is Muslim and not an unbeliever]," accessed April 12, 2015; "Mu'ammār al-Qadhdhāfi muslim wa lays kāfir wa takfīruh ḥarām [tr.: Mu'ammār al-Qadhdhāfi is Muslim and not an unbeliever and declaring him an unbeliever is ḥarām]," accessed April 12, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW-mfBNQVc4&app=desktop>

¹³⁸ Ibn Ḥabīb al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyyah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-sa'ādah, 1909), 4.

¹³⁹ Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Fiṣal*, vol. 5, pp. 114-117.

wards the unjust ruler. He states in his *fatwā* that they (the Madkhalī sub-sect of *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah*, named after Ibn al-Hādī Madkhalī, the iconic scholar of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* among *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah*) think that all the *aḥādīth* that discuss (dis)obedience towards the Muslim ruler have been transmitted on their occasion. Moreover, he warns, it is inaccurate and unjust to assume that the *ḥadīth* of Ibn al-Yamān can be stripped from the context in which it has been founded.¹⁴⁰

Inasmuch as one may possibly be able to conceive the Salafī Wahhābī rational arguments for the prohibition of demonstrations and revolts against the unjust ruler -given the eventual disorder and bloodshed-, the primary reason for this prohibition is always being presented as a strict attachment to the literal interpretation of the Quran and *sunnah*, as hopefully been clarified. Nonetheless, one might possibly observe an inconsistency when laying the alleged literal interpretation of the Quran and *sunnah* concerning disobedience towards the ruler next to another pivotal principle of *Salafīyyah Wahhābiyyah*, namely enjoining good and forbidding bad (*al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*), a socio-dogmatic principle emphatically stressed by both the Quran and *sunnah*. In both the Quran and *sunnah* the obligation to enjoin good and to forbid bad is stressed without any reservations or exceptions. In a literal sense this would mean that all people should be corrected and disciplined when they respectively err or sin, regardless the status or position of the wrongdoer. In a famous *ḥadīth* it is stated that ... "Whoever of you sees bad, should change that [bad into good or correct it] with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue. If he cannot, then with his hart. And that is the least of belief."¹⁴¹ The only way according to Ibn Ḥazm to realize a society in which justice prevails, is when Allah's Law is being applied to all people, the ruler included. However, Salafī Wahhābī scholars choose rather to withdraw their attention from this principle when the Muslim ruler's authority is concerned.

Within the heated debates between Salafī Wahhābīs and activists against the unjust ruler the pivotal importance of the *jihād* is being proposed almost solely by the last-mentioned. It is preeminently in context of the *jihād* where we are able to observe the apologetic character of the Salafī Wahhābī discourse, in contrast to their polemical attacks when disobedience towards the unjust Muslim ruler is concerned. But cautiously, though *jihād* and dethronement of the unjust ruler may be defined as totally different phenomenons by Salafī Wahhābīs, they are not according to their opponents. At the contrary, advocates of dethronement of the unjust ruler regard those who physically or materially take part in the battle against the unjust ruler *jihādiyyūn* (pl. of *mujtahid*, he or she who performs the *jihād*). Al-Sha'rāwī states in his *Al-Jihād fī al-islām* that the realization of a successful and just society in which the Law of Allah is been established starts with the dethronement of the unjust ruler.¹⁴² Furthermore, al-Sha'rāwī pays emphatic attention to the liberal objectives of the *jihād* instead of the defensive objectives. In his words: "Allah has commanded the battle for the *ummah* of Muḥammad -Allah's blessings and peace be upon him- not to coerce therethrough His religion, but in order to guarantee for mankind the freedom to choose his own religion. And He annihilates the restriction of absolutism through which man cannot be free in choosing to believe or not to believe."¹⁴³ Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (d. 2013) stresses that the *jihād* has not been compelled by Allah in order to defend a person's interests, regardless him being a ruler. It has initially been compel-

¹⁴⁰ "Radd Muḥammad 'Abd al-Maqṣūd 'alā al-Madākhilah bi sha'n al-khurūj 'alā al-ḥākim [tr.: "Refutation of Muḥammad 'Abd al-Maqṣūd of the *Madākhilah* concerning dethronement of the ruler]," accessed April 20, 2015 <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=gxZ8WR8aLHM>

¹⁴¹ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Kitāb al-ḥudūd* [tr.: Book on adversaries]," no. 11.

¹⁴² Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī, *Al-Jihād fī al-islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-turāth al-islāmī, 1998), 49.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 157.

led to found the Muslim territory, from there-out the Muslim society, and finally from there-out Muslim rulership in accordance with which has been revealed by Allah.¹⁴⁴ Concomitantly, it is important to understand, al-Būṭī explains, that in the Muslim society there is no such thing as rulership in the modern definition of the term, whereby the state or constitution decides how and with what to rule. In the ideal Muslim society there is only an executer of Allah's Law.¹⁴⁵

V. Epilogue

Irrespective of the hidden chambers in which Salafī Wahhābī scholars try to conceal the political interests of their *tabdī'* of their combatants, they improbably protect them against the forces they fear. The almost irrational emphatic focus on and attention paid by Salafī Wahhābīs to demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler provokes a sense of curiosity as to what exactly might be their motive. Why were their heavy voices not being heard when Mursī was elected and the first screaming of dissatisfactions with him was heard? Which of the Muslim Brotherhood's political agenda-points are an eyesore for Salafī Wahhābīs? And above all, how can such a seemingly orthodox Muslim country as Saudi Arabia have such an exceptional relationship with America? Bearing thereby in mind the fact that Saudi Arabia feels threatened by Iran, the country which is seen by many as America's greatest enemy, but which maintains its political agenda against Saudi Arabia undisturbed? I argue that Saudi Arabia holds the illusion that as long as they obey America they have an ally that will protect them against the Iranian threats. But the reality may prove the opposite. America states with crackly voice that Iran is a rogue-state (currently with selected political vocabulary), while at the same time it leaves it unhindered. How can one reconcile between the seemingly fragmented and incoherent political agendas and *tabdī'*?

Referring to the Salafī Wahhābī *fatāwā* which forbid demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler, one might possibly seek for an answer to one very important question: Is this great focus by Salafī Wahhābī scholars on the prohibition on demonstrations against and dethronement of the Muslim ruler a logical reaction to the political turbulence of the Arab Spring - aiming at political stability-, or are they engineered by pro-American Muslim rulers who wish to see their Muslim co-rulers in the Middle East dancing on the music of America?

The questions addressed are hardly answerable by empiric verifiable evidence. Nevertheless, if we take the many *aḥādīth* which are used by Salafī Wahhābīs, we see that they see unbelief as the key-note figure for disobedience towards the ruler. But mentioning particular rulers in Muslim countries by name who have proven to be unbelievers according others is less easy. For example, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ṭurayfī, a member of the Council of Muslim Scholars in Riyadh, was posted an *istiftā* whether Bashshār al-Asad is Muslim. He states that the answer is up to God, but states clearly that Nuṣayrīs are unbelievers.¹⁴⁶ The same opinion, but proposed ironically and sentimentally at the same time, can be found with Ṣāliḥ Abū 'Irfah, relating in his words: "I am afraid to answer this question, because I am afraid that people who do not perform the prayer correctly, and

¹⁴⁴ Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *Al-Jihād fī al-islām: kayf nafhamuh, wa kayf numārisuh?* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-mu'āṣir, 1997), 92.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁴⁶ "Bashshār al-Asad...muslim aw kāfir...al-shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ṭurayfī [tr.: Bashshār al-Asad... a Muslim or an unbeliever...al-shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ṭurayfī]," accessed April 17, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uhe-owW02UvM&app=desktop>

scholars who work for money instead of the Cause of Allah will be disappointed.” However, not very much later he warns people not to declare him an unbeliever.¹⁴⁷ Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān cannot but try to avoid giving a clear answer to the question by advising the enquirers not to engage too much with the question who possibly might, and who might not be an unbeliever.¹⁴⁸ The difficulty or even impossibility for these scholars to unanimously regard Bashshār al-Asad a Muslim is because *Nuṣayriyyah* is consensually defined by them as a non-Muslim sect, of which Bashshār al-Asad is an adherent. The difficulty or impossibility for these scholars to unanimously declare Bashshār al-Asad an unbeliever is, I argue, because shared political interests are involved. Comparatively, al-Qadhdhāfi and Ṣaddām al-Ḥusayn who decided not to bow for the West in general, and for America in particular have been declared unbelievers by Salafi Wahhābī scholars without so much stuttering.¹⁴⁹ Of course, Europe and America clearly address their unhappiness against Bashshār al-Asad, but a final and muscularly warning can be waited on perhaps forever.

I stress that it is more plausible that the Salafi Wahhābī eclecticism of the sources which forbid demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler is an extension of their ruler’s long-term politics, according to which they try to discourage disobedience towards rulers who may indeed kill many of their subjects, but who are apparent opponents of Pan-Islamic independence and -revival. That force us to retrospect to Quṭb’s ideas.

Quṭb struggled for an *ummah* which breaks with *jāhiliyyah* and adopts ‘the’ Islamic Law as one people, independently from the West and free from disbelief. Although his main-motive was possibly to see the *ummah* deciding its own fate in accordance with Allah’s Law through which justice exclusively prevails effectively, Salafi Wahhābīs pay (almost) no attention to this intention and focus rather selectively and opportunistically on his idea of the *jāhili ummah* which they explain as *takfir*. Is there on earth place for a ruling ideology that reconquers Palestine?¹⁵⁰ Is there on earth place for a ruling ideology that decides how to implement and to execute Allah’s Law? Is there on earth place for a ruling ideology that tries to unite the *ummah* as one shield against the globalizing secularization? And finally, is there on earth place for an ideology that defines the *jihād* as divine? Perhaps Salafi Wahhābīs are as regards these points not that reason-less (read irrational, when it comes to these questions) as they themselves seem to claim. In conclusion, the texts selected by Salafi Wahhābīs are indeed obviously enough activated in order to convince people through religious evidence, but the addressees might possibly believe it to be pure Islamic dogma clean(sed) from politics. Salafi Wahhābī eclecticism for *tabdī‘* of advocates of demonstrations against and dethronement of the unjust ruler may possibly, I finally propose, be the result of fear of their opponents.

¹⁴⁷ “*Hal Bashshār al-Asad kāfir? Lā, wa Allāh huwa Muslim* [tr.: Is Bashshār al-Asad an unbeliever. No, by God no, he is a Muslim],” accessed April 17, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xC5SGA1uHUE&app=desktop>

¹⁴⁸ “*Hal yukaffir al-shaykh al-Fawzān Bashshār al-Asad?* [tr. Does *al-shaykh* al-Fawzān declares Bashshār al-Asad an unbeliever?],” accessed April 18, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsR6RK7SJ8I&app=desktop>

¹⁴⁹ Indeed, many Salafi Wahhābī scholars abrogated their *fatāwā* either after his arrest, or after his death. See for example: “*Ra’y Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān fī Ṣaddām al-Ḥusayn* [tr. The opinion of Ṣāliḥ Fawzān al-Fawzān concerning Ṣaddām al-Ḥusayn],” accessed April 19, 2015 <http://www.muslimh.com/vb/t34943.html>

¹⁵⁰ The reconquering of Palestine demands a dominant place in the Muslim Brotherhood’s political agenda.

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