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Modern conceptualisations of *bid'ā*:

**Wahhābīs, Salafis and
the Muslim Brotherhood**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2015

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Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

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Abstract

One of the most interesting ways to follow the development of a religion over time is to look at the way that basic religious terms have been perceived in various times, places and circumstances. The term *bid'a* in this respect is unique, since it touches the very essence of the development of Islam itself: in particular, what is permitted to be innovated, and who should have the authority to decide what is or is not permitted.

This work opens with a short historical survey of the origins of this term, and the ways it was understood in the first centuries of Islam. The research spans the 'modern' period from the end of the eighteenth century up until the late 20th century – an era of great social, geographic and political changes, which in the Middle East also saw the decline and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that had ruled the region for centuries under the authority of Islam.

We will look into modern conceptualisations of *bid'a* of two main groups – conservatives and revivalists. More specifically we will delve into the writings of two groups:

1. The early 'salafi' revivalists and the Muslim Brotherhood, the latter being in many respects the main group which continued the course of the former.
2. Prominent '*ulamā*' from the Wahhābī trend, to which we dedicate two chapters, examining both classic and more recent views, and the ways they adopted to return to their notion of 'pure' Islam;

We will look at the causes which brought about the decline of Islam according to their thinking, and their thoughts on the relationship between the necessity for renewal in Islam and deeply rooted religious guidelines – in this case, on the question of innovation.

In each chapter we will also try to determine the overall scope of the discussion on *bid'a*, and its place in light of the discussions on related religious terms, such as *tajdīd*, *ijtihād*, *shirk* and *ḍalāla*.

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration throughout the text is based on the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*, and efforts have been made to adhere to the Arabic format, both in the singular and the plural. Letters accentuated with a *shadda* (ّ) were doubled. Some common words were anglicised and capitalised, for example: Qur'an; Sura; Hadith; Sunna; Shari'a; Shi'a; Sufi; Jihad; Hajj; Mufti.

In referencing and bibliography, names of personalities and various institutions, titles of books, journals and articles have been rendered as locally spelled and transliterated; this is particularly significant if they are non-Arabic or appear in a non-Arabic text, thus in some cases the spelling is different from the one in the body of the text. In the text itself, non-Arabic names of organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami or Tablighi Jamaat appear in their common English spelling.

Following is the table of transliterations:

ء	' , ā	ز	z	ق	q
ب	b	س	s	ك	k
ت	t	ش	sh	ل	l
ث	th	ص	ṣ	م	m
ج	j	ض	ḍ	ن	n
ح	ḥ	ط	ṭ	ه	h
خ	kh	ظ	ẓ	و	w, ū
د	d	ع	‘	ي	y, ī
ذ	dh	غ	gh		
ر	r	ف	f		

Glossary of frequently used Arabic terms

‘almāniyya – secularism

bid‘a – innovation (plural = *bida‘*)

bid‘a ‘amaliyya – innovation related to acts

‘ādāt – innovations related to customs

‘aqīdāt – credal innovations

‘ibādāt – innovations related to ritual devotion

bid‘a ḥaqīqiyya – truthful innovation

bid‘a idāfiyya – relative innovation / innovation which has to do with adding words

bid‘a i‘tiqādiyya – innovation related to creed and belief

bid‘a mukfīra – innovation which leads to unbelief

bid‘a muḥṣaqa – innovation which leads to a sin

bid‘a qabīḥa – repugnant innovation

ḍalāla – deviation /going astray

da‘wa – proselytising

farīḍa – religious duty

farḍ ‘ayn – individual duty

farḍ kifāya – collective duty

fasād – corruption

fiqh – jurisprudence

fitna – sedition

ghulūw – excessiveness

ḥākimiyya – governance

ijmā‘ – consensus

ijtihād – independent reasoning

‘ilm – knowledge

irjā‘ – a separation between the claims of faith and deeds of worship

iṣlāḥ – reform

ittibā‘ – tradition

kufr – unbelief

madhhab – religious school

makrūh – a disliked practice

mawlid – annual commemoration of the birthday of a saint / prophet

milla – religious creed
mu‘āmalāt – social transactions
munkar – denounced issues
murtadd – apostate
qaṣad – intent
qiyās – analogy
ṣaḥāba – companions of the Prophet
ṣalāt – the five obligatory prayers
shirk – polytheism
shubbuhāt – doubts
tābi‘ūn – followers of the companions
tajdīd – renewal
taqlīd – imitation
tawḥīd – divine unity
ta’wīl – interpretation
‘ubūdiyya – servitude
‘ulamā’ – religious scholars
umarā’ – rulers
umma – nation
wasat – middle path

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Introduction

One of the most interesting ways to follow the development of a religion over time is to look at how basic religious terms have been perceived in various times, places and circumstances. While it may seem that any religion is based on permanent fundamentals that would not change with the passing of the years, such an overview usually demonstrates how this elementary terminology is differently conceptualised in Islam by the *'ulamā'* – a clerical hierarchy in charge of religious law, theology and the community of believers -- in the light of changing historical, geographical and political environments. Therefore, in order to understand what sometimes lies behind the simple word 'religion', we must try to reflect the essential conditions under which these *'ulamā'* operate, conditions which, in their turn, influence the interpretations provided by religious figures.

Most attempts that have been made in this field to follow the origins and development of basic religious terms across time have been made by scholars of the last generation; the most recent comprehensive effort has been made by Michael Cook in his outstanding study *Commanding right and forbidding wrong in Islamic thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), which opens a window on the development and emergence of the notion of *al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*, one of the main foundations of Islamic social and political ethics from the Qur'an to modern times. As part of our discussion of the different conceptualisations of *bid'a*, we will also deal with *al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*, and the way we translate it into English has been adopted from Cook's work.

The term *bid'a* in this respect is unique, since it touches the very essence of the development of Islam itself: in particular, what is permitted as an innovation, and who should have the authority to decide what is or is not permitted. It should be noted, however, that throughout history this term has been employed strictly in the context of inter-Islamic discourse.

At the core of this research lies the 'modern' period towards the end of the nineteenth century -- an era of great social, geographic and political change, which in the Middle East also saw the decline and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that had ruled the

region for centuries under the authority of Islam as mediated by the Caliphate. Although we will in some cases examine non-Arab, non-Middle Eastern *'ulamā*, the general scope of this work is the Sunni Arab world across the Middle East; other *'ulamā*' (mostly from the Indian subcontinent) were deeply connected to the groups which are at the core of the research, and sometimes had an even greater influence on Middle Eastern scholars than on their native audience.

This work proposes to look at modern conceptualizations of *bid'a* by two main groups – 'conservatives' and 'revivalists'. Since in many cases, the penetration of problematic innovations [*bida*] into religion is attributed to sources from outside Islam, or fringe sects which existed throughout history, it should be interesting to see how they deal with it in the light of changing environments in the Middle East. More specifically, we will delve into the writings of

1. The early Salafi revivalists and the Muslim Brotherhood, which in many respects are the main groups which have held fast to their original intention of reviving Islam by emphasising its roots.
2. Prominent *'ulamā*' from the Wahhābī trend, to which we dedicate two chapters, examining both classical and modern scholars, and the ways they reacted to change in order to return to their notion of 'pure' Islam;

Those factors will be looked at which, in the ideology of these *'ulamā*', brought about the decline of Islam, and their thinking will be examined about how to build a bridge between the need for a vigorous renewal of Islam and their own deeply-rooted religious views on the question of innovation, for example. Covering the views and foci of each scholar within these groups will also help understand more about their inner dynamics and the subgroups that have emerged from the main body of their allegiance.

It should be noted that although these are theoretically two distinct groups, there exist between them many cross-links and common denominators; these derive, among other things, from the early Salafis will to expand the geographical and demographic basis of the discourse on Islamic renewal to as many regions and countries as possible, and the personal admiration of some of them for the Wahhābiyya in its fight against the many innovations they considered to be the main cause of the decline of

Islam. Another important aspect is the long-term historical connection between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudi state. This began as a consequence of the ‘ordeal’ [*miḥna*] the Muslim Brotherhood suffered under Egyptian President Gamal ‘Abd Al-Nasser, which led many of its leaders to flee to Saudi Arabia, where they received a warm welcome and assisted in spreading radical Islamic ideology on a global scale.

This cooperation entered a gradual decline due to religio-political developments, starting with the support of Muslim Brotherhood figures in the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979), moving to the loud objections of the Salafis and hardline Wahhābīs to Saudi-American cooperation during the first Gulf War (1990-1991), and ending with the emergence of global terrorism, especially the September 11 attacks in the United States (2011), in which the attackers included a majority of Saudi nationals. In 2002, the Saudi Minister of the Interior, Nāyif bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz famously accused the Muslim Brotherhood of ‘ruining the Arab world’, adding that over the years the Saudis had granted them too much support. It should therefore be interesting to observe the different ways in which conservatives and revivalists see things, and, above all, to detect their ideological similarities. It will be argued that they are in agreement when it comes to the way Islam should be implemented and re-established as the central element in communal and political life in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Thus, when coming to the methodology employed in this study, several elements must be considered:

1. In each relevant group, the writings of individual ‘*ulamā*’ rather than organisations of any kind will be carefully examined.
2. In general, and in addition to examining the writings of individual scholars, each of them will be seen as a prominent figure in his time, or at best representing a specific subgroup within his community.
3. In each group, at least one of the scholars has bought himself the reputation of being a devoted fighter against *bida*’. Naturally, in each chapter there are some who deal with the subject more extensively than the others. In several cases, at least, this clearly has a social or geopolitical connotation.
4. While the focus of the research is on purely religious, scholarly writing, in the case of the ‘revivalists’ their more popular publications are also looked at, since they use them as a vehicle for spreading their ideas. The most outstanding example in

this case is the periodical *Al-Manār*, which was published between 1898 and 1935, and gradually developed into an international platform of discourse regarding Islamic revivalism.

5. Wherever possible, the personal or ideological relationship of each scholar to '*ulamā*' discussed in other chapters will be examined.

It is worth noting that using this methodology and choosing relevant figures is often challenging. For example, in the chapter which looks into the writings of early Wahhābī '*ulamā*', a historic range is explored which suffers in part from a lack of sufficient academic research; therefore, it has, to start with, been an interesting experiment to decide which '*ulamā*' to focus on, and secondly to try to locate their main writings, which are often hard to find. On the other hand, since the Muslim Brotherhood in its wider, international context is examined, here the first question was how to pick the most relevant individual among the large number of well-known writers, who would best represent the several subgroups within the Brotherhood that we point to, and who might also be considered '*ulamā*', given the structure of the Brotherhood, which includes many leaders from other backgrounds.

Another challenge comes from the changing pattern identifying how previous generations dealt with *bid'a*. While for many centuries, a large part of the discourse was carried on through a genre of books dedicated to the subject (what may be termed *bid'a* literature), this does not prove to have been the case for a wide majority of '*ulamā*'. This means that the only way to cover their views on the subject sufficiently has been to engage in a systematic overview of their literary heritage while familiarizing ourselves with their overall views on related issues, which allows a better understanding of their backgrounds and the circumstances in which they are or were living, and how this may have affected their world view and religious foci.

Each chapter will, therefore, open with a general background and introduction to the relevant group and the scope of the research it encompasses. This will be followed by a discussion of the viewpoints of the relevant '*ulamā*' on the sources of religious authority like the Qur'an, Sunna, *ijtihād* and *ijmā'* on the one hand, and affiliated religious terms like *shirk*, *ḍalāla*, commanding right and forbidding wrong on the other. While dealing with terms like *bid'a*, such an emphasis is part of the dynamic of

an inclusive understanding. For several of the '*ulamā*' featured here, *bid'a* constitutes the direct opposite to Sunna, even though they do not always say so specifically.

In addition, looking at their views regarding issues such as *ijtihād* and *ijmā'* is, firstly, of considerable interest in itself, and secondly, at least in some cases, deals directly with the concept of *bid'a*, in accordance with various perceptions of the scope and legitimacy of clerical opinions.

Many sources which cover the evolution of the term *bid'a* also refer to its frequent appearance next to other terms. In some cases it helps the '*ulamā*' who discuss the subject to refine their definition of *bid'a*; in other instances there is either no separation between two related terms, or they are presented as part of a series of actions, each unavoidably leading to the other. A similar pattern continues in the conversations of the '*ulamā*' we explore. Thus, broadening the research will help to enhance understanding of the different conceptualisations of *bid'a*, and also determine the overall scope of the discussion on *bid'a*, and its place in light of the debates over opposing and affiliated religious terms. In presenting the discourse on *bid'a* in each chapter, we will ask ourselves several questions – what is the definition of *bid'a*? Are there any possible ways to try to avoid it? What are the main examples provided and dealt with by the relevant '*ulamā*'. And under which category do they usually fall and why?

Several scholars have looked into the subject of *bid'a*, usually focusing on its emergence in the first generations of Islam. Classical scholars like Goldziher or Bernard Lewis, both of whom tried to define basic religious terms, referred to the subject, mainly looking at *bid'a* as the opposite of Sunna and raising initial questions such as who decides what falls under Sunna and what under *bid'a*, and the fluidity of such matters in a manner that might lead to the '*bid'a* of today being the Sunna of tomorrow', as explained by several classic scholars.

In 1960, Mohamed Talbi wrote an article on the subject, looking at the development of the term during the first three centuries of Islam. Talbi looks at the emergence of Islamic jurisprudence, based on the approach of Joseph Schacht. He ascribes the emergence of the negative connotation of *bid'a* to the emergence of Sunna as a concept within *fiqh*, as well as to historic developments in early Islam, like the rise of

the Umayyad dynasty. Talbi continues to survey religious literature up to the days of the early Salafis and the Wahhābiyya (as we do here), connecting the use of the term to Islamic conservatism, and putting it on the same level of importance as terms like unbelief [*kufr*] and impiety [*fīsq*].

Vardit Rispler's 1991 article, 'Toward a new understanding of the term *bid'a*' looks at the issue from a viewpoint opposite to that of Talbi. Rispler looks into the *bid'a* literature and concludes that there is actually a difference between the etymological meaning of the word *bid'a* and the negative connotation it eventually acquired.

Rispler looks at the relevant material (whose main sources will be further discussed in the background chapter) which treated or named certain actions as 'good' *bida'*. Her conclusion is that since the second century of Islam, especially following the closure of the gates of *ijtihād*, *bid'a*, instead of having a negative, restraining influence on the advance of the Muslim society and law, sometimes served as a 'back channel' for '*ulamā'* to allow innovations to enter religion; this was achieved by defining such innovations as *bida'* rather than placing them in a more rigid framework. In addition, she points to modern influences on this discourse, which inserted new classifications like 'irreligious'.

Maribel Fierro has looked at the subject rather systematically. Her 1992 mapping of the *bid'a* literature and the other sources in which such discussions may be found (such as *al-milal wa'l-niḥal*) serves as a main point of reference to the whole subject and its evolution in previous centuries. Her work has served as the starting point for this research. Another article which explores a different region is nevertheless relevant to this work: Muhammad Khalid Mas'ud's 1993 examination of South Asian *fatāwā* literature, which focuses mainly on the views of Ḥanafī '*ulamā'*, including those affiliated with Deobandi thinking, a species of Islamic doctrinal ideology which is, in some aspects, considered to be close to Wahhābiyya. It should also be said that although several articles which look at perceptions of *bid'a* in specific Asian countries or other areas have contributed to the background of the present research, they fall outside the scope of the current discussion.

Several dissertations are relevant to our discussion, some dealing with specific issues and others looking at developments over a wider period of time. Asep Saepudin Jahar

dedicated his MPhil thesis to an examination of the concept of *bid'a* by the fourteenth century scholar Abu Ishaq al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388), based on the latter's main relevant work on the subject, *Al-I'tisām*. Al-Shāṭibī is one of the central figures who have shaped debate over the issue in the past few centuries. He himself was widely accused of introducing *bida'* into religion, and wrote this book in response, reformulating the concept on the basis of a strict legal methodology. As will be seen later, his works served as an inspiration to some of the '*ulamā*' in discussion. We therefore dedicate some space to a more profound look at his works and ideas regarding *bida'*.

Zakaria bin Mat's 1987 MPhil dissertation compares the perception of *bid'a* by two '*ulamā*' whose writings will be surveyed in this study – the classic Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya, and the founder of the Wahhābiyya, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb. Ibn Taymiyya served as a great inspiration to several '*ulamā*', and a close examination of his thinking on the subject will be embarked on as part of our background chapter. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his descendants are the focus of chapter four.

Nasser Tuwaim's 1992 PhD, 'The discussion of the concept of *bid'a* from early Islam up to the twelfth century A.H.', provides the widest historical picture so far, dealing as it does with the evolution of the concept of *bid'a* from the days of early Islam to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Tuwaim covers the writings of the major contributors to the discussion, whom he divides into three periods, maintaining that the first period is principally occupied with the discussion of credal innovations [*'aqīdāt*]; the middle period emphasises ritual and customary innovations [*'ibādāt* and *'ādāt*], and also presents a theoretical discussion on the concept of *bid'a*; and the third period accommodates a discussion of all varieties. Our discussion will follow Tuwaim's tripartite division. While Tuwaim's discussion covers a rather long period in Islamic history, the present work aims to look closer at a shorter, modern period which is very challenging when dealing with the whole subject.

Having gone through studies relevant to the subject of *bid'a*, the overall impression is that, due to the complexity of the subject, the difference between the lexical meaning of the word and the connotations it has acquired over time, a necessity could be identified of clarifying and synchronising them. Relying on definitions set out in these works and adding material from primary sources which have not been

discussed, our work opens with a historical survey of the origins of the term *bid‘a* and its evolution during the first centuries of Islam.

The first and second chapters look at the ‘revivalist’ trend, which aspired to bring about a renewal [*tajdīd*] of various aspects of religion through educational and social reforms, largely as an answer to the final decline of the Ottoman Empire during World War One and the disintegration of the Caliphate in 1924.

The first chapter will introduce the writings of the three principal ‘*ulamā*’ together known as the ‘early Salafis’ – Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā. Although the differences between their basic worldviews and focuses will be looked at, in general it can be said that they sought to combine Islam and modern science, pointing their arrows of criticism at the religious establishment, who, they claimed, had failed to make an adjustment between Islam and modernity. ‘Abduh, and Riḍā even more, gained the reputation of being staunch fighters against *bid‘a* and the various issues of malfunction and corruption which had penetrated Islam and brought about its rigidity. They positioned themselves at the forefront of the fight to reform the state of Islam and to allow it to flourish again in contemporary life.

Among the primary sources examined in chapter one, the most important is the *al-Manār* periodical, which during most of its years of publication was edited by Riḍā, though it started as a joint initiative between him and his teacher ‘Abduh (who died after several years). For many years, *al-Manār* managed to create an international platform for dialogue between scholars from around the world who shared similar world views, and to arouse a renewed interest in Islam as a basis for unity through its reports on Muslim communities in various countries. Of course, earlier publications like *al-Urwa al-wuthqā*, published by Afghānī and ‘Abduh will also be thoroughly examined, in addition to the relevant personal writings of the three men.

As a point of comparison, three other scholars who were active in the same period were chosen to be considered, each one having some connection to this group while keeping his personal focus -- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, who is perceived as a herald of Pan-Arab nationalism, drew on an Islamic perspective to create an image of the society he hoped to bring into being; Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt, an open-minded

disciple of ‘Abduh who served as Grand Imām of Al-Azhar during the Nasser years from 1958 until his death in 1963; and Abu ‘Alī Ḥasan Nadvi, an Indian scholar educated according to the principles of the Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, was very close to the circles of *al-Manār* and admired the Muslim Brotherhood, the next group we discuss.

In the second chapter, we look at the Muslim Brotherhood from the point of view of a current, global ideology. The Brotherhood is usually viewed as the most outstanding ‘new effendi’ movement to have followed the path of the ‘early Salafis’. It also further developed the notion of renewal [*tajdīd*] that will have a special place in the discussion. In this chapter several trends within the Brotherhood are looked at. The first, ‘mainstream’ trend is represented by the Brotherhood’s founder, the young school teacher Ḥasan al-Bannā, who formulated and implemented a ‘practical’ approach on his way to position Islam as the basis for national education, and later as a platform on which to reunite the Islamic ‘nation’ [*umma*]. At a very early stage of his career, al-Bannā issued calls to the Egyptian government to focus most of its effort on Islam. At the same time, he started to provide activist proselytising [*da‘wa*] to the younger generation, using simple — even simplistic — religious content, combined with political substance.

Throughout its history, the Muslim Brotherhood has had to re-emerge and re-engage, undergoing several metamorphoses, yet al-Bannā still remains the seminal theorist of the movement. In general, this trend looks for a gradual revival of the faith, focusing on *da‘wa* and long term strategies, and makes use of both Western and Islamic concepts.

Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī, a keen follower of al-Bannā and himself once favoured for leadership of the Brotherhood, represents a second trend of the current, globalised form of the Brotherhood’s ideology, and like al-Bannā also combines his religious work with political activism. Qaraḏāwī, who joined the Brotherhood still in Egypt at an early age, was able to raise himself to the level of an international leader under the patronage of the ruling family in Qatar, where he has been living since the 1960s. His ‘Shari‘a and Life’ show on al-Jazeera Television which has millions of followers, as well as his religious rulings, touch the everyday lives of Muslims, including those in Western countries where Muslims live as a minority. Qaraḏāwī was one of the first

'*ulamā*' to develop a new field of jurisprudential endeavour: 'Minorities Jurisprudence' [*fiqh al-aqaliyyāt*], in which he deals with the day-to-day life of Muslims living in non-Muslim (mostly Western) countries and reflects on the cultural tensions between the Western and Islamic points of view.

A third subgroup is the more conservative Qutbist trend, which has been known to focus more on offensive Jihad and separatism. During the 1950s and 60s, Sayyid Quṭb, perhaps the most important thinker of the Brotherhood, developed a gradual revulsion, first towards Western, and then to Islamic societies, stating that they were now all under a permanent state of *jāhiliyya*, from which the true believer is required to distance himself. Here we may also examine the views of Abu al-A'ḷā Mawdūdī, the founder of the sub-continental Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) whose thinking has been very influential within the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, especially among Quṭb and his followers after many of Mawdūdī's works had been translated into Arabic.

Lastly comes the 'democratic-Islamist' trend, which believes that the global revolution should be brought about using democracy and making alliances with other forces on the way to promote Islamic interests. The two main representatives of this trend are Ḥasan al-Turābī from Sudan and Rāchid al-Ghannouchī, head of the Tunisian Al-Nahḍa Party. However, it must be said that these individuals contribute less than others to the discussion, as regards dealing with the most relevant issues. In terms of quantity, Qaraḍāwī is probably the most outstanding.

In the third and fourth chapters, a thorough examination of 'conservative', Wahhābī thinking is made, from its very early days through to the twentieth century. *Bid'a* and the uncompromising fight against it is one of the major themes whenever the Wahhābiyya is referred to. But while the revivalists hold that cleansing Islam of *bida'* would clear the way for it once again to play a significant role in society and politics, and would provide a means to unite Muslim communities around a modernized religion, the conservative camp believes this fight means a return to a 'pure' Islam, clear of outer influences which have corrupted religion and brought about its decline.

Chapter three covers the period of the first and second Saudi states, up to the early days of the third and current state. It begins with a careful examination of the

writings of Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhāb, who brought his religious doctrine into being on the basis of a strict observance of belief in the unity of God [*tawhīd*]; the immediate consequence of this was a hard-fought battle against everything which goes against this unity – polytheism [*shirk*], deviation [*ḍalāla*] and *bid‘a*. Having the power of a ruler, and initiating a social attempt to bring the tribesmen under one rule, Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhāb could implement his doctrine by demolishing the tombstones of saints and stopping various annual events like the Hajj which did not fit the standards of *tawhīd* as he understood them. Following the discussion of Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhāb are four other ‘*ulamā*’ who represent a consecutive chain of his descendants and who have played crucial religious roles in the Saudi states in each respective period.

This chapter specifically, will hopefully assist in filling a gap which exists in current research regarding the history of the first and Saudi states, and here will be examined the ruling structure of ‘The rulers and the learned’ [*al-umarā’ wa’l-‘ulamā’*] which may have influenced each scholar’s approach. An interesting question also raised in this chapter is the attitude of Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ towards drinking coffee and smoking tobacco, which were both associated with *bida’* by Western travelers and scholars.

Chapter four looks into a division which emerged out of several geopolitical, economic, demographic and social developments in the current Saudi state and which changed the traditional balance between *umarā’* and ‘*ulamā*’. This breach brought upon the stage non-establishment ‘*ulamā*’ alongside official ones. At the heart of this chapter stand the writings of three of the most prominent ‘*ulamā*’ in Saudi Arabia since the formation of the present Kingdom – Shaykhs ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz and ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn -- who represent the clerics of the Saudi establishment; and Shaykh Safar al-Ḥawālī, one of the leaders of the ‘Awakening Movement’ [*shuyūkh al-ṣaḥwā*], who are also known to have been affected by Qutbist ideology. In several places the writings of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān, another ‘official’ scholar considered very strict and conservative, will also be looked at.

Many of the issues we discuss in this work are not merely academic. They now have a daily presence in the world news, especially various reports we hear about radical actions such as demolishing graves of saints or even more extreme acts committed by those commonly referred to as Salafi-Jihadis. It is best here to avoid getting into a discussion of what the present-day meaning of ‘Salafīyya’ amounts to, and only point

to the very long historical cooperation between the Saudi state and the Muslim Brotherhood, which has given birth to at least some of these groups.

Before turning to the work itself, the ongoing debate regarding the use of electronic databases and the internet as academic sources should be noted. As part of the information revolution the world has witnessed in the past few decades, the amount of material available online on websites and social networks is growing rapidly. By the way, sometimes even common references to Facebook as *bid'a* can be found...

While the majority of primary sources used in this work have been located in their printed versions, electronic and online resources considered as databases have been used in several cases – personal official websites, especially of the current Wahhābī '*ulamā*'; comprehensive online databases such as *shamela.ws* or *daawa-info.net*. In the background chapter, a selection of Saudi originated CD-ROMS has been consulted, especially in the section dealing with *fiqh* literature. Several books here could not be located elsewhere, which also creates a problem in listing them properly in the bibliography. The choice was between ignoring these sources or using them as they are and saving the full record, something that was also done with the online resources (in which the last date entered has also been indicated).

Many people should be thanked for helping to bring this work to its conclusion. First and foremost is my supervisor Dr. Kate Zebiri for her dedicated support as well as her professional guidance; my dear parents, wife and children as well as many friends, each providing his unique input and contribution to this work and its completion. Special thanks to Lily Amior for the very professional and wise editing; to the ISEF Foundation and the GCT for their long-term financial and moral support and the Spalding Trust for the grant it awarded me. My heartfelt thanks to every one of them.

Background Chapter: *Bid‘a* – the crystallisation and development

I. The early days

The term *bid‘a* itself does not appear in the Qur’an. Its root, however, appears a number of times; some of these passages or single occurrences have positive connotations relating to Allah, the creator [*badī*] of the world;¹ and others are more neutral. In the first of these, the Prophet, aspiring to point out the continuity of his newly presented religion as well as his place in the chain of messengers, when he is told to say:

I am not an innovation [bid‘an] among the messengers, and I know not what shall be done with me or with you. I only follow what is revealed to me; I am only a clear warner. [Qur’an 46:9]

The second, which might be interpreted as subtly veiled criticism, says:

Then We sent, following their footsteps, others of Our apostles; and afterwards We sent Jesus son of Mary, and gave unto him the Gospel; and We set in the hearts of those who followed him tenderness and mercy. And [as for] monasticism, they innovated it [ibtada‘uha] – We did not prescribe it for them; only the seeking for the good pleasure of Allah... [Qur’an 57: 27]

An even earlier use of the term, dating back to the period of transition between the *jāhiliyya* and the early days of Islam, bears the meaning of ‘invention’ as well, and is reported in the *sīra* by Ibn Hishām in the name of Ibn Ishāq. The story relates to the escape of the Prophet’s followers to the land of al-Habash (Ethiopia, a Christian state), and the delegation sent by Quraysh to persuade the king/Negus to hand them back. The argument that the two delegates tried to put before the king was:

¹ Qur’an 6:101; Qur’an 2:117

Some ignorant persons escaped from us to the king's land. They have abandoned their tribe's religion, do not fit into yours, and have brought an invented [mubtada'] religion which is known neither to you nor to us.¹

II. Bid'a in the Hadith

Various *aḥādīth* leading to different conclusions have been quoted in relation to *bid'a*. These *aḥādīth* make frequent appearances in this study, with each scholar picking the most suitable to justify his views.

The first recorded use of the term *bid'a* in early Islam relates to the extra prayers and prostrations [*rak'as*] prescribed for the fasting month of *Ramaḍān* [*tarāwīḥ*]. The Hadith is narrated by 'Abd al-Qārī, one of the younger companions of the Prophet [*ṣaḥāba*], who tells the following story:

One night in Ramaḍān I went out with 'Umar bin al-Khattāb to the mosque, and the people were separated in different groups. One man was praying on his own, and another with a group behind him following his prayer. 'Umar said, "I think it would be better for all these people to join together behind one reciter". So he decided to gather them behind 'Ubay bin Ka'b. Then another night I went out with him again, and all the people were praying behind one reciter. 'Umar said, 'This is an excellent bid'a [ni'mat al-bid'a], however the one they sleep through is better than the one they are praying,' — meaning the prayer in the last part of the night. People used to stand in prayer during the first part of the night.

This means that 'Izzat 'Alī 'Aṭīyya is mistaken in dating the first *bid'a* together with the first *fitna* (sedition) -- which, of course, appeared later, following the assassination of 'Uthmān.²

The background of this Hadith is the Prophet's encouragement to his followers to add prayers in the nights of *Ramaḍān*. As can be seen, 'Umar is said to have initiated the custom for such gatherings to be made in congregation, rather than simply praise it.

¹ 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīra al-nabawīyya*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr li'l-Tabā'a wa'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzī', 1992, vol. 1, p. 357

² 'Izzat 'Alī 'Id 'Aṭīyya, *Al-Bid'a: taḥdīduha wa mawqif al-Islām minha*, Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1973, p. 44

So the perception of *bid'a* as an 'innovation in religion' was already known shortly after the days of the Prophet.

It is, however, unclear when *bid'a* also started to acquire the negative connotations that are prevalent today. 'Aṭīyya claims it began after the assassination of 'Uthmān,¹ and Zakaria Bin Mat even concludes that the Prophet made a *shar'ī* distinction between good [*ḥasana*] and bad [*sayyi'a*] *bida'*.² Such a conclusion can, perhaps, be based on a few *aḥādīth* that al-Tirmidhī relates,³ as well as a Hadith reported by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim and reported in the name of 'A'isha, who said:

*Whoever brings a novelty [aḥdatha] into our religion which has no roots in our tradition is rejected.*⁴

Bin Mat may also be referring to another Hadith, attributed to Abu Juḥayfa al-Kūfī from among the *ṣaḥāba*, who quotes the Prophet making such a distinction while not using the term *bid'a* -- but rather by juxtaposition with the term 'Sunna':

*Whoever introduces a good Sunna [sunna ḥasana] that is followed after him, will be rewarded for it and in addition the equivalent of their reward, without that detracting from their reward in the slightest. But whoever introduces a bad Sunna [sunna sayyi'a] that is followed after him, will bear the burden of sin for it and in addition the equivalent of their burden of sin, without that detracting from their burden in the slightest.*⁵

¹ 'Aṭīyya, p. 34

² Zakaria Bin Mat, *The criteria of Islamic civilisation: a study of the concept of innovation (bid'a) – a case study of Ibn Taimiyya (1263M-1328M) and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703M-1791M)*, MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham, Department of Theology, Faculty of Arts, 1987, p. 39

³ Muḥammad ibn 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ: wa-huwa sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Cairo, Mustafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1937, vol. 4, pp. 150-151 Also, full Arabic/English text on http://www.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/4/8/10482374/jami-a-tirmidhi-sunan-altirmidhi-english_1.pdf

⁴ Muḥammad ibn Isma'īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1984, *Kitāb al-ṣulḥ*, no. 5; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Beirut, Muassasat 'Izz al-Dīn, 1987, *Kitāb al-'Aqdiyya*, no. 17

⁵ Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Māja, Cairo, 1952, *Muqaddama*, no. 207; Muslim, vol. 13, p. 61

In any case, the main Hadith utilised in the negative sense is attributed to the Prophet and narrated in the name of ‘Utba bin ‘Abd Allah;¹ according to him, the Prophet used to say in his *khutba*:

Whomever Allah guides, none can lead him astray, and whomever Allah sends astray, none can guide. The truest of word is the Book of Allah and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad. The worst of things are those that are newly invented [muḥaddatha]; every newly-invented thing is an innovation [bid‘a] and every innovation is a deviation [ḍalāla], and every deviation belongs in hellfire.

Another Hadith, which perhaps takes the harshest approach with regard to the treatment of a *mubtadi‘* still in this world, is narrated by Abū Ḥudhayfa, who quotes the Prophet as saying that Allah would not accept a person who brings a *bid‘a* into religion [*ṣāḥib bid‘a*], in matters such as fasts, prayers, *zakāt*, Hajj, ‘*umra* or Jihad. Such a person, according to this Hadith, will be expelled from Islam in a way similar to that by which ‘leaven is taken out of dough’.²

Many of the *aḥādīth* which condemn *bid‘a* are presented in the name of the *ṣaḥāba*, while the Prophet himself, in a way similar to ‘A’isha’s Hadith, usually speaks about novelties [*muḥadathāt*].³ In addition, it is clear that neither the concept nor the term had been either crystallized or thoroughly discussed in the early days. Most of the negative citations of the term simply emphasise the need to avoid *bid‘a*.

Such *aḥādīth* state the necessity for Muslims to ‘embrace the Sunna and avoid the *bid‘a*’,⁴ or say that ‘adhering to the Sunna is better than producing a *bid‘a*’.⁵ Other *aḥādīth* from this era seem to be more flexible: Abū Dā’ūd relates a Hadith which can be regarded as apologetic, saying that people do not follow *bid‘a* unless they obtain

¹ This Hadith is quoted in most canonical sources; see: Muslim, *Kitāb al-Jum‘a*, p. 43; Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan Abī Dā’ūd*, Hims, Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Sayyid, 1969, p. 5; Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’i, *Kitāb al-sunan al-kubrā*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1991, *Kitāb al-‘Abadayn*, p. 22; Ibn Māja, *Muqaddama*, p. 7; ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Darīmī, *Sunan al-Darīmī*, Cairo, Dār al-Fikr, 1978, *Muqaddama*, pp. 16, 32; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, pp. 3, 310, 371, 4, 126-7

² Ibn Māja, vol. 1, p.

³ Nasser I. A. Tuwaim, *The discussion of the concept of Bid‘a from early Islam up to the twelfth century A.H.*, PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1992, pp. 72, 74

⁴ Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-‘ilm*, p. 16

⁵ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1993, vol. 4, p. 150

proof that there is Sunna in at least a part of it.¹ Another group of *aḥādīth* is relevant to this study's later reflections on *bid'a* and its place, in the light of discussions on related religious terms such as exaggeration [*ghulūw*],² and doubts [*shubbuhāt*].³

From the discussion thus far, it is apparent that the division of *bid'a* into different categories had already been made in the early days, even if not intentionally. Some of the *aḥādīth* are concerned with religious devotions and rituals [*ibādāt*], and the right conduct for a believer while performing them; others touch on customs [*ādāt*], which possess a more individual nature and concern the daily lives of believers; and a third group, which may be characterized as credal innovations [*aqīdāt*], focuses on the condemnation of certain factions in Islam which arose during the early period.

In the *aḥādīth* which concern *ibādāt*, the most common is the one stating that the way some people were performing the *ḍuḥā* prayer is considered *bid'a*.⁴ In less customary Hadith collections, many refer to certain prayers and specific rituals during the month of *Ramaḍān*. For example, breaking stones to throw at Muzdalifa is considered *bid'a*,⁵ and the same applies to the matter of circling the *ka'ba* [*tawwāf*].⁶ Other *aḥādīth* focus primarily on certain ways of conduct during the prayer. For instance, raising hands during formal prayer is considered a *bid'a*.⁷

A number of *aḥādīth* that fall within the category of *aqīdāt* deal with the condemnation of certain sectarian groups or factions. Many of these tried to develop different ways of thinking from the Islamic mainstream, and can thus be found under the definition of *bid'a*. These include the *qādiriyya*, the *murji'a*, the *rāfiḍa*, the

¹ Abū Dā'ūd, vol. 4, p. 203

² Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-i'tiṣām*, p. 5

³ Al-Darīmī, *Muqaddama*, p. 23

⁴ See Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-'umra*, no. 3; Muslim, *Kitāb al-ḥujaj*, no. 220; Abū Dā'ūd, *Kitāb al-ṣalāt*, no. 44; Mālik ibn Anas, *Muwattā' al-Imām Mālik*, Jeddah, Dār al-Shurūk, 1985, *Kitāb al-ḥujaj*, no. 54; Ibn Ḥanbal, vol. 6, p. 155

⁵ Abu Bakr Muḥammad bin Ishāq bin Ḥazīma, *Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Ḥazīma*, Al-Maktab Al-Islāmi, 2003, vol. 4 p. 274

⁶ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka: wa-mā jā'a fihā min al-āthār*, Dār al-Andalus, 1965, vol. 1, p. 231

⁷ 'Ali Jundī, *Qurraṭ al-'ayn fī Ramaḍān wa'l-'iḍayn*, Cairo, Matba'at al-Ahrām al-Tijāriyya, 1969, vol. 1, p. 54 (Jundī is leaning on a book by Al-Bukhārī titled *Kitāb fī raf' al-yadān fī'l ṣalāt*)

nāsibiyya, the *mu'tazila* and the *jahmiyya*.¹ These names will be found throughout this study, as part of the various '*ulamā*' under discussion.

Turning to personal matters [*ādāt*], it is worth noting that almost all of the early Hadith collections, whether canonical or not, discuss the subject of divorce (and Muslim even dedicates a whole book to the subject). The most common statement is that pronouncing the word *ṭalaq* three times on a single occasion during the process of divorce is a *bid'a*.² In addition, a weak Hadith adds that for a divorce to be lawful and not a *bid'a*, the woman has to be ritually pure.³ Judging from this varied range of *aḥādīth*, it is therefore more likely that the claim that the term *bid'a* began to be used in a negative connotation only in the time of the *ṣaḥāba*⁴ is more accurate.

In the *Tafsīr* literature, it is worth mentioning al-Ṭabarī, who treats all innovation in religion harshly and regards *bid'a* as its major cause. Allah sent the *ḥanīfī* Islam and its Prophet, after Jews and the Christians performed *bid'a* in their respective faiths, thus excluding themselves from the 'Abrahamic religion'.⁵ A main concern of Ṭabarī is his refusal to accept any form of speculative Qur'an interpretation [*ta'wīl*]. He states that *ta'wīl* is forbidden and is an 'innovation in religion', 'whether it had been made possible by Allah or by the words of His Prophet'.⁶

III. Further developments since the third century of Islam

Moving on to the third Islamic century, and focusing on the *fiqh* literature, the term *bid'a* is used more frequently, and it is used by '*ulamā*' from all Sunni schools of jurisprudence (mostly Mālikīs and Shāfi'īs). More discussions on the essence of *bid'a* can be found, including early attempts to define it. Progress in these attempts is

¹ See for example: Abu 'Alī bin al-Ḥasan bin Naṣr al-Ṭawsī, *Mukhtaṣar al-aḥkām*, Dār ibn Ḥazm, 2011, p. 321; Abu 'Abd Allah 'Ubaydullah bin Muḥammad bin Batta al-'Akbarī al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Ibāna 'an Sharī'at al-firqa al-nājiyya wa mujānabat al-firqa al-madhmūma*, 'Ammān, Dār al-Rāya, 1994, vol. 2, p. 250

² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, vol. 9 (*Kitāb al-ṭalaq*), pp. 4-5

³ Abu'l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*, Beirut, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2001, vol. 8, p. 228

⁴ 'Abd al-Malik bin 'Abd Allah al-Juwaynī, *Al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Ilmiyya, 1997, vol. 2, p. 861

⁵ Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl al-Qur'an*, Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2007, vol. 1, p. 558

⁶ *ibid*, vol. 3, p. 177

visible in a new genre of writing dedicated to the subject -- *bid'a* literature. This started to emerge during the same period, the first book being introduced by Muḥammad ibn Waddaḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. 899) in al-Andalus,¹ and was later used in different compilations of *fatāwā*. Maribel Fierro connects this to what she says was an inevitable process of religious degradation that Islam, like previous religions, had undergone following the death of the Prophet.²

Tuwaim says that the three main areas of discussion on *bid'a* remained *'ibādāt*, *'ādāt* and *'aqīdāt*.³ Based on the writings of this period, Bin Mat concludes that there emerged two groups which differed in their approach and emphasis.⁴ The first group, which, according to al-Atawneh, consisted mainly of Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī *'ulamā*,⁵ defined the concept of *bid'a* in a narrow way. The second group, Bin Mat says, expanded the concept of *bid'a* and saw it in the wider context of the Sharī'a. It seems that most of the *'ulamā* belonging to this group came from the Shāfi'ī and Mālikī schools.

Notable *'ulamā* from the first group are Imām al-Ash'arī (d. 935?), al-Malātī (d. 988), 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir (d. 1037), al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066), Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201?), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Ibn Rajab (d. 1393), Idrīs ibn Baydakīn al-Turkumānī (d. 13/14th century) and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1449).

To the *'ulamā* within this group, every *bid'a* automatically constitutes a *ḍalāla*, and they find the proof for this in the Hadith. Such judgments, Bin Mat adds, lead to an extreme interpretation of the concept of *bid'a*, according to which any new ideas or thoughts are to be rejected, and religion remains rigid. Tuwaim believes that the reason for taking this stand was the difficulty Islam faced as a result of its triumphs and expansion, which exposed it to new cultures, ideas and problems.⁶

¹ Vardit Rispler, 'Toward a new understanding of the term *bid'a*', *Der Islam* 68:2 (1991), p. 321

² Maribel Fierro, "Spiritual alienation and political activism: the *ghurabā*' in al-andalus during the sixth/twelfth century", *Arabica*, T. 47, Fasc. 2 (2000), p. 234

³ Tuwaim, p. 231

⁴ Bin Mat, p. 193

⁵ Al-Atawneh, p. 83

⁶ Tuwaim, p. 7

Here is a good place to note that several major books on the subject were written in the area of Islamic Spain [*Al-Andalus*], where the encounter between Islam and Christianity had historically been the most apparent. Tuwaim also believes that this encounter between religions and cultures could be a possible explanation of the major attention focused on *bida'* of *'ibādāt* and *'ādāt* from the middle of the fifth and the seventh centuries of Islam.,¹

Al-Qurṭubī, a Mālikī scholar who titled his book *al-Bid'a wa'l-nahy 'anha* (*Bid'a* and its rejection), was the first of the classical *'ulamā'* to condemn *bid'a* as a clear violation of religious codes. He contested novelties of any kind and did not grant the permissibility of *bid'a ḥasana*, saying innovation is always evil and unlawful.² He was particularly concerned with *bida'* in *'ibādāt*, mostly the ones that were related to prayer.³ From the date and structure of al-Qurṭubī's book, Rispler suggests that at the time of crystallisation of Islamic law, a whole body of material which was not included in the *fiqh* books found its way there.⁴

Imām al-Ash'arī, as the eponymous founder of the Ash'arī School, wrote three relevant books on the subject – *Kitāb al-luma' fi'l-radd 'ala ahl al-zaygh wa'l-bid'a*; *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*; and *al-Ibāna 'an uṣūl al-diyāna*. Most of the *bida'* discussed in his books are from the type of *'aqīdāt*, and fit his image as a reviver of the Sunna and one of the symbols of the fight against unbelief [*kufr*].

The next Shāfi'ī scholar in this group is al-Malātī, who wrote his book *Al-Tanbīh wa'l-radd 'ala ahl al-ahwā' wa'l-bid'a* -- which is also completely devoted to *bida'* of *'aqīdāt* -- out of fear of the previously mentioned groups which emerged during the first century of Islam. In this book, al-Malātī lists as fundamental beliefs of the Sunnis those items which were matters of controversy to those groups.⁵

The next *'ulamā'* in the list wrote books of the *al-milal wa'l-niḥal* variety, all concentrating on credal *bida'* of *'aqīdāt*. The first, 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-

¹ *ibid*

² 'Atiyya, p. 42

³ Tuwaim, p. 114

⁴ Rispler, p. 322

⁵ Tuwaim, p. 129

Baghdādī, was a Shāfi‘ī scholar who followed al-Ash‘arī. Apart from his *al-milal wa’l-nihal* literature, he wrote another relevant book on the subject, *al-Farq bayna’l-firaq*. He was followed by his student al-Bayhaqī, who is only concerned with *bida‘* of ‘*aqīdāt*, especially the grave danger that he sees presented by the views of such groups as the *khawārij*, the *murji‘a* and the *mu‘tazila*.

Tuwaim thinks that the next notable Shāfi‘ī scholar, al-Shahrastānī, chose to write on this subject in order to provide some guidance concerning basic matters relating to ‘*aqīdāt*, at a time when the vast majority of other relevant writers emphasized the *bida‘* of ‘*ibādāt*.¹ Tuwaim adds that the books authored by these four scholars are the most important sources for information on sectarianism in Islam, and indeed, they are still widely consulted by modern writers studying sectarian movements.²

Ibn al-Jawzī, a Ḥanbalī scholar, also rejected every novelty touching on ‘*ibādāt* and ‘*ādāt*. He contended that the restrictions of the Sunna were to be preferred to reliance on *ijtihād* in ambiguous matters.³

In the beginning of his survey of the subject, Ibn Rajab cites the Hadīth narrated by ‘A’isha referred to earlier, and adds another in the name of the Prophet which insists that believers follow the Sunna. From these he concludes that whatever contradicts the Sharī‘a may be branded as apostasy [*ridda*], and that *bida‘* fall under the categories of either rituals or social behaviour (which he calls *mu‘amalāt*). Ibn Rajab continues this theme, stating that contradiction of the Shari‘a encompasses everything which is not covered by either Allah’s word or the Prophet’s conduct.⁴

It is interesting to note that the first Ḥanafī book on the subject, *Kitāb al-luma‘ fi’l-ḥawādith wa’l-bida‘* was published as late as the thirteenth/fourteenth century by Idrīs bin Baydakīn al-Turkumānī. Al-Turkumānī discusses the subject of *bid‘a* from the standpoint of both a jurist and a preacher. According to Subḥī Labīb, who wrote the preface to the book’s reprint in 1987, al-Turkumānī’s uniqueness and importance lay

¹ Tuwaim, p. 170

² *ibid*, p. 171

³ ‘Atiyya, p. 42

⁴ Zayn al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Aḥmad bin Rajab al-Salāmī, *Jāmi‘ al-‘ulūm wa’l-ḥukm*, Beirut, Muassasat al-Risāla, 2001, pp. 68-69

in writing a book which went in the opposite direction to most treatises of his day, as al-Turkumānī himself states.¹

Most of al-Turkumānī's definitions of *bid'a* contain additional words [*iḍāfiyya*], which occur several times in the course of this work, and in the focus of his discussion of the *bida'* of *'ibādāt*. Al-Turkumānī also divides *bid'a* into four categories, possibly corresponding with the five categories of permissible and impermissible actions in Islam: permissible [*mubāḥ*], recommendable [*thawāb*], undesirable [*makrūh*] and forbidden [*ḥarām*], but he insisted that *bid'a* is forbidden in any case, and therefore the last two categories are the only functional ones.²

Al-Turkumānī strongly attacks women for their behaviour during the Hajj period – whether singing, dancing or lack of modesty. His book also contains issues which, on the whole, had not been dealt with before, such as playing chess. In matters of *'aqīdāt* he speaks a lot about the imitation of Christians – especially the Copts in Egypt - and about Sufism as well.³ Ibn al-Ḥajj (d. 1347), a Mālikī scholar, treated *bid'a* in his large work *al-Madkhal* in an incidental way only, and did not discuss the issue of *bid'a* as a whole. In general he regards all *bida'* as evil, but at the same time, Tuwaim notes, he agrees with the *'ulamā* who divided the subject into five categories.⁴ Most of the *bida'* discussed in the book are of *'ibādāt*, such as the conversion of graves and other holy sites into places of worship. Al-ʿAsqalānī provides the first definition in the *fatāwā* literature which Muhammad Masud could locate. His definition of *bid'a* is: 'Any belief contrary to the common knowledge of the Prophet [i.e. his practice], held abominably, not inimically'.⁵

The *'ulamā* in the second group looked at *bid'a* from a comprehensive point of view that included all changes occurring after the time of the Prophet, whether in line with Shari'a or not. They rejected *bida'* which were not in line with the prophetic practice.

¹ Idrīs bin Baydakīn bin ʿAbdu'llah al-Turkumānī, *Kitāb al-luma'fi'l-ḥawādīth wa'l-bida'*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1986, p. 35

² Tuwaim, p. 194

³ *ibid.*, p. 200

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 209

⁵ Muhammad Khalid Mas'ud, "The definition of *bid'a* in the South Asian *fatāwā* literature", *Annales Islamologiques* 27 (1993), p. 61

In case a *bid'a* was introduced that was not evil in itself and did not contradict the Qur'an or authorities of religious life, they accepted it as an unobjectionable *bid'a*.

This group, in addition to relying on the precedent of a *bid'a ḥasana* set by 'Umar, also relied on the Hadith that speaks about the reward given to anyone who creates a *sunna ḥasana*. The outlook of this group allows the Muslim to accommodate the requirements of time and to embrace and encourage progress.¹ According to al-Atawneh, the '*ulamā*' who belonged to this group actually established a broad base for accepting *bida'* of '*ibādāt* and '*ādāt*. Their acceptance of '*ibādāt* also prepared the ground for the perception of a required *bid'a* [*bid'a wājiba*]. As for the *bida'* in '*ādāt*, he says their approach is based on the judicial principle which permits the foundation of customs [*al-aṣl fi'l- 'ādāt al-ibāḥa*].²

The chief '*ulamā*' in this group are al-Shafī'ī (d. 820), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 1126/1131), Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1232), 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 1262), Abu Shāma (d. 1266), al-Nawawī (d. 1277), Ibn al-Ḥajj al-Abyārī (d. 1336), al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388), al-Suyūtī (d. 1505) and al-Wansharīsī (d. 1508).³

Al-Shafī'ī, after whom the Shafī'ī school of jurisprudence is called, divided the lawful meaning of *bid'a* into two sections, 'good' [*maḥmūda*] and 'denounced' [*madhmūma*].⁴ Bin Mat says it is most likely that al-Shāfī'ī would have designated as 'denounced' those *bida'* which belong to the category of '*ibādāt*.⁵

Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, also a Shāfī'ī scholar, was the first to divide *bid'a* into the same five categories of human acts: obligatory [*wājib*], unlawful [*ḥarām*], recommended [*mandūb*], offensive [*makrūh*] and permissible [*mubāḥ*]. This division is made in his book *Qawā'id al-aḥkām fi maṣāliḥ al-an'ām*. His approach, says Tuwaim, was opposed to the approach of most of the Mālikī and Ḥanbalī '*ulamā*'.⁶

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 193-194

² Al-Atawneh, p. 82

³ *ibid*, p. 81

⁴ Mubārak ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Athīr, *Al-niḥāya fi gharīb al-ḥadīth wa'l-āthār*, Cairo, al-Matḥa'a al-Khayriyya 1905, vol. 1, p. 106

⁵ Bin Mat, p. 43

⁶ Tuwaim, p. 173

In a small section of the book which discusses the issue of *bid'a*, Ibn 'Abd al-Salām defines it as an action or performance which had not been observed during the time of the Prophet. He too divides *bid'a* into five categories: obligatory (*wājiba*), prohibited (*muḥarrama*), recommended (*mandūba*), undesirable (*makrūha*) or permissible (*mubāḥa*), but does not explain how it is possible to decide which category each *bid'a* belongs to. He explains that the only way to do so is by checking it against the rules of the Shari'a.¹

Al-Ṭurṭūshī, a Mālikī scholar, says he wrote his book in order to make people aware of the novelties and innovations that had crept into Islam, dividing them into 'known' and 'unknown'. Ṭurṭūshī's first category is not thoroughly discussed in the book, since it contains *bida'* and *muḥadathāt* already known to the elite and to the masses as forbidden and wrong. He makes no distinction between *bid'a* and *muḥadatha*: his main concern is to present those innovations and novelties which were not yet known to the general public, especially the ones concerning '*ibādāt*'.² His analysis is very general and relies only on textual evidence from either the Qur'an or the Sunna. However, Tuwaim says, there are some similarities between him and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, such as the division of *bida'* into clear cases as against ambiguous ones.³

In a similar vein to al-Ṭurṭūshī stands Abū'l-Qāsim al-Maqdisī (Abu Shāma 1203-1267), who defines both *bid'a* and *muḥadatha* as matters which have no precedent in the Qur'an, Sunna and *ijmā'*. Abu Shāma was the first Shāfi'ī scholar to write a whole book dedicated to the subject of *bid'a*, and it is very close in its approach to that of al-Ṭurṭūshī. They differ in their general attitude, however, with Abu Shāma supporting the division of *bid'a* into 'good' and 'evil'.⁴

This group is best represented by the Mālikī scholar Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388) who, Asep Saepudin Jahar says, discussed the concept of *bid'a* at length, attempting to clarify the concept by fitting his terminology into a framework of legal philosophy. This attempt led al-Shāṭibī to put the *bid'a* into legal terms, thus actually moving the

¹ *ibid*, p. 172

² Tuwaim, p. 165

³ *ibid*, p. 44

⁴ *ibid*, p. 174

debate a step forward into becoming pure *shar‘ī*.¹ Al-Shāṭibī’s works served as an inspiration to some of the ‘*ulamā*’ dealt with here, and he, therefore, deserves a more detailed discussion. His most important book, *Al-I’tisām*, was written as an answer to many charges directed at him of having actually introduced *bid‘a* into religion. This accusation arose as a result of Al-Shāṭibī’s opposition to various practices of some *fuqahā’*, in particular mentioning the name of the Sultān in the *khutba* and praying for him towards the end of the ritual prayers. Al-Shāṭibī called this practice a *bid‘a*.² Ella Landau-Tasseran further discusses these accusations and the way al-Shāṭibī introduced his innovative work, pointing out the discrepancy between the ideal and practice when defining what constitutes a *bid‘a* in a negative connotation and what does not.³

Al-Shāṭibī’s main concern with *bid‘a* is that performing it makes people stray from the straight path [*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*], which is the Sunna.⁴ *Bid‘a*, he says, eliminates the Sunna, and leads to the destruction of the essence of Islam. In this respect he refers to the *salaf*, who, he continues, maintained that abandoning the Sunna leads straight to *bid‘a*,⁵ which means that he sees the two as polar opposites. Furthermore, performing a *bid‘a* leads to unbelief [*kufr*], which strips off the religious creed [*milla*].⁶ The book opens by separating the *bida‘* that belong solely to ‘*ibādāt*’ from those which are exclusively related to ‘*ādāt*’.⁷ The former are taken for granted as submission [*ta‘abbud*] to Allah, while the latter can be modified according to human need and *ijmā‘*.⁸

In this way, *bid‘a* can be subdivided into two types: ‘real’ [*bid‘a ḥaqīqiyya*], which relates to the category of ‘*ibādāt*’, and ‘relative’ [*bid‘a idāfiyya*], which relates to ‘*ādāt*’. The first category is contradictory to Islam and presents a clear violation of the

¹ Asep Saepudin Jahar, *Abu Ishāq al-Shāṭibī’s reformulation of the concept of Bid‘a : a study of his al-I’tisām*, MA thesis, Canada, McGill University, 1999, p. 52

² M. Khalid Mas‘ud, "Abu Ishaq Shatibi: his life and works", *Islamic Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (summer 1975), p. 154

³ Ella Landau-Tasseran, "The "Cyclical Reform": A Study of the mujaddid Tradition", *Studia Islamica*, no. 70 (1989), pp. 109-111

⁴ Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, *Al-I’tisām*, Cairo, Dār al-Bayān al-‘Arabī, 2006, vol. 1, p. 46

⁵ *ibid*, p. 114

⁶ *ibid*, p. 106

⁷ *ibid*, pp. 36-37

⁸ Tuwaim, p. 100

Qur'an, Sunna and *ijmā'*.¹ With regard to the second, however, the lack of an authentic source for a specific custom is a *bid'a*.² A second subdivision is based on ambiguous proofs [*dalīl*] or no proofs at all, and may, therefore, be considered as either negative or positive [*bid'a wājiba*]. In addition, positive *bida'* which occurred shortly after the days of the Prophet are actually regarded by al-Shāṭibī as Sunna.³

Al-Shāṭibī does not accept the division of *bida'* into five categories, and denounces those '*ulamā'* who accept it. Sometimes, he says, '*ulamā'* who have to be rational have themselves performed *bida'*. He also refers to the lack of knowledge [*jahl*] which in some cases makes it hard to distinguish between a Sunna and a *bid'a*. In other cases, the *mubtadi'* performs a *bid'a* and makes others follow, thinking that it is the correct guidance. He is working against the set of laws of the Shari'a, and, in a way actually suggesting an alternative set of laws to it. In order to stress the importance of confronting *bid'a*, al-Shāṭibī tries to trace it back to the Qur'an, saying that although the term itself is not mentioned, it is discernible from the following verse, which addresses passages that have more than one meaning:

It is He (Allah) Who has sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are clear verses that constitute the Essence of the Book, and others that are ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is doubt, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation; and none knows its interpretation save only Allah.

[Qur'an 3: 5-6].⁴

In another of his significant works— *al-Muwāfaqāt* — al-Shāṭibī maintains that *bid'a* is a device for 'imposing silence [*sukūt*] on the Shari'a'; here he labels *bid'a* as *qabīḥa* [repugnant].⁵ Al-Shāṭibī refers to both non-Muslims and various Islamic sects as being problematic for believers. He says that Jews did not believe in the Prophet [*kufr*], and Christians do not believe in heaven. The *khawārij* are referred to as *ahl al-bid'a*, who pushed themselves out of the body of the *ahl al-sunna wa'l jamā'a*. Another issue he raises (and which is referred to by other '*ulamā'*') is the ignorance

¹ *ibid*, pp. 96, 115; 'Aṭīyya, p. 76; Bin Mat, p. 195

² Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-I'tisām*, vol. 1, p. 99

³ *ibid*, p. 75

⁴ Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-I'tisām*, vol. 1, pp.50-53, 151, 163

⁵ Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fi uṣūl al-sharī'a*, Cairo, Al-Hay'a al-Maṣriyya al-'Amma li'l Kitāb, 2006, vol. 1, p. 348

[*jahl*] which leads to *bid'a* and mistakes. This is true, for example, of Sufis, who due to their ignorance even went as far as the invention [*ikhṭirā*] of '*ibādāt*'.¹ In addition, he says that to perform *ijtihād* out of ignorance of the source on which it is based may lead to *ḍalāla*.²

Tuwaim tries to explain the logic behind al-Shāṭibī's work. Al-Shāṭibī's period, he says, can be characterised as one in which jurists and Sufis allowed their standards to decline, leading to the adoption of uncharacteristic positions. On the one hand, jurists were too lenient in substantiating and articulating the law, while on the other Sufis were overly rigid and unduly demanding in its application. Therefore, he concludes, their attention to religious practices was sometimes distorted from the authentic injunctions prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunna. It was al-Shāṭibī, he says, who opposed these trends by insisting on the supremacy of the Sharī'a over reason in order to resist *bid'a* permeating religion, and by emphasising respect for the ends and the spirit of the law, despite the fact that he himself was accused of being a *mubtadi'*.³

Another scholar, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505), further divides 'bad' *bida'* into '*ibādāt*' and '*ādāt*'; *bida'* of the first category, according to him, were generally invented by innovatory groups; he calculates a total of 72 newly-presented rituals. The second category of innovatory customs is further divided into additional sub-groups, which are not part of the discussion here.⁴

Ahmad al-Wansharīsī (d. 1508), also a Mālikī scholar, is relevant to this discussion because of his book *Al-Mi'yār al-mu'rib wa'l-jāmi' al-mughrib*. In this book he preserves the *fatāwā* of al-Shāṭibī, and defines the work of the *mufī* as mainly the issuing of *fatāwā*. He sums up the views of the four schools, and it is interesting to note that he regards the creator of a *bid'a* as acting in good faith. He says that the '*ulamā'*' who consider *bid'a* in terms of '*ibādāt*' only think it is an invention inserted into religion because of exaggeration [*ghulūw*] in the will to worship Allah, and that others who speak about '*ādāt*' say that these are inventions which are similar to *shar'ī*

¹ Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-I'tisām*, vol. 1, pp. 52, 55, 61, 89

² Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 111

³ Mas'ud, p. 99

⁴ Tuwaim, p. 233

acts and were meant to be followed as such.¹ Al-Wansharīsī further points out the difficulty of differentiating between good and bad *bida'*.² According to Tuwaim, much of his discussion is devoted to *'aqīdāt*.³

The *fiqh* literature includes many discussions regarding *bida'* of *'ibādāt*, with more significant and primary discussions than before. Once again, acts relating to the Hajj and *'umra* can be found, but also issues such as the question of women performing *adhān* (which is considered a *muḥadatha* and therefore *bid'a*)⁴ and the beginning of significant discussions that will frequently be referred to in this study. These include commemorations of the Prophets' birthdays [*al-mawlid al-nabawī*],⁵ over which disputes have been raging ever since. In the field of *'ādāt*, there are many discussions on the format of divorce,⁶ and others such as the claim that having a banquet is considered Sunna, but playing games during the banquet is *bid'a*.⁷ Another *bid'a*, quoted from the Hadith compilation of Mālik bin Anas, is shaving one's moustache.⁸ There is also a 'good' *bid'a* of washing the concealed parts of the body.⁹

A deeper insight into this literature will once again reveal many references to conduct during prayers, the most common of which states that praying aloud [*juhr*] is a *bid'a*.¹⁰ Parts added to the prayers are named *bid'a*, including common ones -- for example saying the *basmala* during the prayer;¹¹ Psalms [*mazāmīr*];¹² as well as certain additions to the Friday prayers;¹³ and acts like *sajdat al-shukr* that the Prophet is said to have performed whenever he heard good news.¹⁴ Certain requirements of the *imām* in the mosque, such as a discussion of when he should stand and sit during

¹ Aḥmad ibn Yaḥya al-Wansharīsī, *Al-Mi'yār al-mu'rib wa'l-jāmi' al-maghrib 'an fatāwā ahl Ifriqiya wa'l-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib*, Morocco, Wizārat al-Awqāf wa'l-Shuūn al-Islāmiyya, 1981, vol. 1, p. 352

² *ibid*, vol. 2, p. 371

³ Tuwaim, p. 224

⁴ Abū Bakr ibn Mas'ūd Kāshānī, *Badā'i' al-ṣanā'i' fi tarṭīb al-sharā'i'*, Beirut, Manshūrāt Muḥammad 'Alī Bayāḍīn, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997, p. 150

⁵ *Al-Faraq bayna'l-firaq*, p. 101

⁶ See for example: *Mukhtasar al-Kharaqī*, p. 103; *Umdat al-fiqh*, p. 108; *Al-Umm*, vol. 5, pp. 181-183; *Al-Tanbīh*, p. 174; *Al-Nihāya sharḥ al-bidāya*, pp. 226-227; *Tuḥfat al-fuqahā'*, vol. 2, p. 171

⁷ Abu 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, *al-Jāmi' al-saghīr*, Beirut, 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1986, p. 113

⁸ *Sunan al-Bayhaqī al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 151

⁹ *Kitāb al-Ithār*, p. 6

¹⁰ See for example: *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p. 19; *Hilyat al-'Ulamā'*, vol. 2, p. 187

¹¹ *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p. 16

¹² *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. 3, p. 44; *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, vol. 7, p. 129

¹³ *Al-Nihāya sharḥ al-bidāya*, p. 87

¹⁴ *Muṣannaḥ ibn Abī Shayba*, vol. 2, p. 229

the prayer, and the location of his seat opposite the *qibla*, may also be considered *bid'a*.¹

Some *'ādāt* made by believers which are considered *bid'a* include placing shoes behind one's back during a prayer,² and, after making a sacrifice, asking Allah to accept it.³ Another discussion which involves both the *imām* and the believers concerns prayers which are not delivered in public and are named *bid'a*.⁴ There is also a discussion about whether to greet the *imām* during the prayer.

Al-Qarafī, a Mālikī scholar, included in his book *Kitāb al-furūq*, a repetition of the five categories of *bid'a* which had been mentioned by his teacher 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām as the basis of the whole subject. A discussion of this book was written by Ḥusayn al-Makkī, another Mālikī scholar who was also influenced by al-Shāṭibī. Tuwaim notes that al-Makkī's major concern was the theoretical discussion about the correctness of the division of *bida'* into five categories; therefore there is hardly any discussion on the various types of *bid'a*.⁵

It is important to note that there are *'ulamā'* from all schools in both groups under discussion. According to Tuwaim, it seems that the Mālikī school has contributed more than the others to the deliberations. The second great contribution was made by the Shāfi'ī *'ulamā'*, who also developed the concept of 'good' and 'bad' innovations. They are followed by the Ḥanbalīs, and then the Ḥanafīs. In general, says Tuwaim, it can be said that the two groups differed in the way they perceived developments after the lifetime of the Prophet, seeing them as noble [*maḥmūd*] or contemptible [*madhmūn*].⁶

A special place in this chapter should be dedicated to Ibn Taymiyya, the prominent thirteenth century Ḥanbalī scholar (d. 1328), mistakenly believed by many to belong to the first group of *'ulamā'* defined above, whose name is frequently brought up as a

¹ Kāshānī, p. 159

² *Muṣannaḥ ibn Abī Shayba*, vol. 2, p. 182

³ *Mukhtaṣar Ikhtilāf al-'Ulamā'*, vol. 2, p. 177

⁴ Kāshānī, p. 141; 148

⁵ Tuwaim, p. 164

⁶ *ibid*, pp. 30, 295-296

staunch fighter against *bida'* in his time and who has served as inspiration to many of those under discussion.

Abū 'Alī Ḥasan Nadvi has written in some detail about Ibn Taymiyya's works, and he will figure prominently in the chapter concerning the early Salafis. Nadvi says that at the time of Ibn Taymiyya, *shirk* resulted from a mixture of Muslims, non-Muslims and Sufis; *bid'a* and *ḍalālāt* came about alongside corruption, which became widespread, and there was a war between *jāhiliyya* and Islam.¹ Jundi adds that people lost their faith and their sense of *tawḥīd*, and became involved in *bid'a*, and Ibn Taymiyya took upon himself the battle to defend religion.²

Praising Ibn Ḥanbal for his opposition to the *mubtadi'ūn*,³ Muḥammad 'Umar Memon says that Ibn Taymiyya took the fight against *bid'a* a step further and considered it Jihad.⁴ *Bid'a* for Ibn Taymiyya applies to anything without precedent, whilst in the legal sense it stands for any act which cannot be supported by a *shar'ī* argument. According to the Sharī'a, nothing accepted by the Qur'an or Sunna can be considered *bid'a*. *Bid'a* applies to everything *munkar* in religion. It does not appear in the Qur'an or Sunna and does not correspond with the Shari'a; neither Allah nor his Messenger like it, and the *ṣaḥāba* did not allow Satan to seduce them to *ḍalāla* in the way he did to some of the *ahl al-bid'a*.⁵

Ibn Taymiyya often places *bid'a* and *shirk* together, sometimes speaking about *bid'at al-mushrikīn*, especially in the field of *'ibādāt* – which, according to him, *ahl al-bid'a* had learned from the *mushrikūn*. Both *shirk* and *bid'a* are based on lies and inventions, and hence are far from *tawḥīd* and Sunna. *Shirk* is said to be the most *ẓulm* element, and *ā'imat al-mushrikīn* is the opposite of *ā'imat al-ḥunafā'*, relying on

¹ Abū 'Alī Ḥasan Nadwī, *Al-Khāṣ bi-ḥayāt Shaykh al-Islām al-ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taymiyya*, Kuwait, Dār al-Qalam, 1981, p. 172

² Jundi, pp. 7-8

³ Muḥammad 'Umar Memon, *Ibn Taymiyya's struggle against popular religion. With an annotated translation of his Kitāb iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm*, The Hague; Paris, Mouton & Co., 1976, p. 106 (Ibn Taymiyya)

⁴ Memon, p. 85

⁵ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-bāhir fi ziwār al-maqābir*, Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1997, p. 95

the Abrahamic story.¹ However, in his opinion, the Prophet, when declaring that every innovation is an error, clearly did not mean that every new act was forbidden, but only the new acts which do not follow the fundamentals he had laid down.² The problem lies with the knowledge sent by the Prophet and his *ṣaḥāba*, which became adulterated by the whims of those who tampered with the scriptures and the *mubtadi'ūn*. This means that Ibn Taymiyya cannot be placed among the *'ulamā* from the first group, who completely rejected any innovation.

Basing his remarks on a Hadith about 'Umar, who praised the *tarāwīḥ* prayers [*ni'mat al-bid'a*], Ibn Taymiyyah learns that everything which came after the Prophet had been called *bid'a*.³ He speaks of those who divide *bid'a* into good [*ḥasana*] and repugnant [*qabīḥa*] relying on this Hadith, and says that a *bid'a* known and supported by Muslims should be accepted. The problem begins when such a *bid'a* is supported by the views of *jāhilūn*.

Ibn Taymiyya agrees that *ijmā'* will never embrace *ḍalāla*.⁴ Both *ijmā'* and *ijtihād* are accepted as important sources of *sunna*, although he warns that the latter might lead to mistakes. He also draws up a formula, saying that people do not create anything they do not consider beneficial. If they believe it is harmful, they will not create it, because neither reason nor faith calls upon them to do so.⁵

Ibn Taymiyya's suggestion is, therefore, that a *bid'a ḥasana* is in fact not *bid'a* at all, and what 'Umar said was not a matter of Shari'a but a matter of language. As previously mentioned, in linguistic terms, *bid'a* means the invention of new things. Regarding the *tarāwīḥ* prayers themselves, Ibn Taymiyya says they are not *bid'a* in the Shari'a rather than the Sunna -- relying on the following Hadith:

¹ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Al-'Ubūdiyya*, Beirut, Al-Maktab al-Islāmī li'l-Ṭabā'a wa'l-Nashr 1969, pp. 119, 142

² Ibn Taymiyya (Memon), p. 235

³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-bāhir*, p. 15

⁴ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Fatāwā al-Kubra*, Dār al-Ma'rifa, vol. 1, p. 484

⁵ Ibn Taymiyya (Memon), pp. 233, 236

*Allah has prescribed for you the fasting of Ramaḍan, and this was given to you as Sunna for resurrection...*¹

Ibn Taymiyya refers to the middle path [*wasāṭiyya*] of the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*, as opposed to that of the *ahl al-ḍalāla* in the community.

This term will appear several times in this study, especially in the chapter on Qaraḍāwi and the Muslim Brotherhood. This community, Ibn Taymiyya continues, is also *wasāṭī* in comparison with previous peoples, some of whom are guilty of exaggeration [*ghulūw*] in religion -- like the Christians who are guilty of it regarding Jesus, or the Jews who killed Zecharia and John and tried to kill Jesus as well. As far as Muslims are concerned, he said the Qur'an promised righteousness:

And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. [Qur'an 2: 143]

Furthermore, they are also *wasāṭ* between the groups which are *mubtadi'a* and which distorted the straight path [*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*]. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the correct way to membership of the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a* is to follow exactly what the Prophet said in both the internal and the external aspects of the faith, following the path of the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*, and adhering to all the commandments of the Prophet.²

Nadvi discusses Ibn Taymiyya's role in promoting *iṣlāḥ* and *tajdīd*, saying that he raised the flags of Jihad and *tajdīd* with regard to *shirk* traditions recommending grave worship, an issue which will be examined closely. Nadvi refers to the four main points to which, he says, these traditions have contributed:

1) Renewal (*tajdīd*) of belief in *tawḥīd* and abolition of unIslamic (*mushrika*) beliefs and traditions.

¹ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, Egypt, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1991, p. 254 (quoting Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-ṣawm*, no. 120)

² Aḥmad bin 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ al-'aqīda al-wasāṭiyya*, Cairo, Dār al-Imām Aḥmad, 2008, pp. 86, 124

- 2) Criticism of Greek philosophy, logic (*manṭiq*) and the science of *kalām*, which he considered *bid‘a*, and favouring the ways and methods of the Qur’an and Sunna in every other matter.
- 3) Answering non-Islamic groups and confronting their beliefs, traditions and influences.
- 4) *Tajdīd* of the sciences of Shari‘a.¹

Ibn Taymiyya writes at length about the field of *‘ibāda*. He defines *‘ibāda* as a genre that relates to everything desired by Allah. It may be concealed [*bāṭiniyya*] or visible, and it includes *al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf* and also Jihad against the non-believers [*kuffār*] and hypocrites [*munāfiqūn*]. *‘Ibāda* is first of all connected to the Divinity, and therefore relates to *tawhīd*. As before, he considers the *mushrikūn* as blameworthy; they commit *bid‘a* by allowing what was prohibited – *‘ibāda* in its non-*shar‘ī* form has a meaning derived from revelation:

*And they say, ‘These animals and crops are forbidden; no one may eat from them except whom we will,’ as they claim. And there are those [camels] whose backs are forbidden [by them] and those upon which the name of Allah is not mentioned - [all of this] is an invention of falsehood about Him. He will punish them for what they were inventing.*² [Qur’an 6: 138]

As will be seen in later chapters, tomb-worship [*‘ibādat al-qubūr*] occupies a large place in Ibn Taymiyya’s discussion of the subject. Visiting graves, he says, is not something that the *salaf* would have done. He maintains he does not know how the *ṣaḥāba* and *tābi‘ūn* acted when they visited the graves of the Prophet and others; he has access to various sources, each saying different things, and therefore assumes they are all wrong. There are also many false *aḥādīth* on this matter.³

Nadvi says that Ibn Taymiyya wrote that performing *ziyāra* to graves was unknown in the days of the Prophet, *ṣaḥāba*, *tābi‘ūn* and *tābi‘ū’l-tābi‘īn*, and this only came into Islam after the third century AH. These entered Islam through the *rāfiḍa* and *bāṭiniyya*. This, he continues, is also supported by several *aḥādīth* which state that

¹ Nadwī, pp. 171,180, 210-211

² Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-‘Ubūdiyya*, pp. 38, 51, 66-67

³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-bāhir*, pp. 11-12, 87-89

mosques belong only to Allah, and he argues that there is a possible risk of performing *shirk* in such places.¹ One of these is a Prophetic Hadith:

*Do not make feasts on my grave, pray for me wherever you are, for your prayer will be delivered to me.*²

It should be noted, however, that Ibn Taymiyya differentiates between the visits made to graves by the *ahl al-tawḥīd*, who either come to perform *du‘ā* on them or to pray alongside them during a funeral, and the *ahl al-shirk* who put the Creator and what He has created on the same level and worship both; in doing so, they introduce *ghulūw* to their prayers, which makes it a *bid‘a* of unbelief. The *ṣaḥāba* therefore abandoned forms of *bida‘* connected to graves, such as *ziyārāt* to the grave of the Prophet, and were also careful not to imitate Jews and Christians, who transformed their graves into places of worship.³

Ibn Taymiyya says that erecting mosques over graves [*mashāhid*] is a renewal [*muḥadatha*],⁴ a Satanic *bid‘a* which apparently entered Islam during its third century; the Prophet forbade the building of mosques over graves, and it is also forbidden to bury people inside mosques. The main risk with such mosques, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, is that it may lead to the *shirk* of praying to those buried in them.⁵

Therefore, all ‘*ulamā*’ agree that it is better to pray in a regular mosque rather than in one which has been built over a grave. True believers do not transform the graves and relics of prophets and saints into sanctuaries, where they intend to pray, to implore for divine help, and to revere a personage for whom others have no reverence; they revere Allah alone. In fact, even invoking Allah’s mercy upon the Prophet’s grave while entering the mosque as people in Medina used to do is considered to be *bid‘a*.⁶ In addition, Ibn Taymiyya says, bowing next to graves or surrounding them or putting curtains on them as if they were the *ka‘ba* are all *ḥarāmāt*.

¹ Nadwī, pp. 188-189

² Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-bāhir*, p. 19 (quoting Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-ta’rīkh al-kabīr*, vol. 2 no. 186)

³ *ibid.*, pp. 43-44

⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 127

⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā’ al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, pp. 351-353, 369

⁶ Ibn Taymiyya (Memon), pp. 274, 287

In various places, Ibn Taymiyya discusses the several occasions on which people fast, as well as annual commemorations; in most cases he states that these are *bida'* that have been generated from non-Muslim sources, and have more to do with imitation [*ittibā'*] than with *ibtidā'*. Nevertheless, most *bida'* in the *shar'ī* meaning are said to have entered Islam during its third century as a result of the conquests and subsequent occupation of non-Muslim land. Some fasts are said to have come under the influence of Christians or are connected to the Shi'ī '*Āshūrā*'. On the other hand, the preparation of special meals for the '*Īd al-fīṭr*' and the '*Īd al-adḥā*', a custom said to be observed without any religious significance -- has attached itself to the festivals themselves.

The origins and acceptability of various annual commemorations will be discussed in almost every chapter of this work, especially with regard to the celebration of the Prophet's birthday [*al-mawlid al-nabawī*] which Ibn Taymiyya denounces as *bid'a*. This commemoration was fairly new in his era; it began under Christian and Sufi influences in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Levant, and spread to the Muslim world primarily from Cairo. Aviva Schussman notes that this *mawlid* started to receive a limited legal recognition in the Sunni world towards the end of the fifteenth century.¹

Ibn Taymiyya seeks to speak to the hearts of the believers, and encourages them to think. Jundi explains that according to Ibn Taymiyya, an important cause of *bid'a* is people who study and do not apply their knowledge properly.² Another dispute in which he engages — also relevant to other chapters — is the issue of special prayers on the night of 15 *Sha'bān*. For him, this is a night of special merit, and if anyone chooses to pray by himself, in congregation, or as part of many groups among the *salaf*, this is better.³

Less intense, but still conspicuous, is Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of different '*ādāt*'. These *bida'* consist of general principles and specific cases. Among the cases he

¹ Aviva Schussman, "The legitimacy and nature of Mawlid al-Nabī: analysis of a fatwa", *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1998), pp. 216-217

² Jundi, p. 73

³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, vol. 23, pp. 131-132

discusses, on the subject of prayer, for instance, is the wish of believers to give their prayer a rigid formal shape by observing it habitually in a mosque amid large congregations with a well-defined number of *rak'āt*.¹ The visit of a believer to a local mosque on the day of 'Arafa for *du'ā* and *dhikr* constitutes a local *ta'rīf* (definition) -- about which the 'ulamā' differed, some considering it a *bid'a* and others not. More examples are cited and attributed to al-Ḥasan bin 'Alī who said that:

*Raising the voice in du'ā is truly a bid'a, so is raising hands for du'ā, and so is the congregation of men and women.*²

Ibn Taymiyya's basic assumption was that Allah's words to the Prophet were very precise and that everything must have been included in them. For this reason, as previously mentioned, he believes that all *bida'* necessarily comes from non-Muslim sources, and that the imitation of Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian practices makes it clear that not even the most trifling resemblance must be allowed to exist between Muslims and non-Muslims; in Memon's words, all Muslim life must begin from the point where a perfect dissimilarity to non-Muslims has been achieved.³

Ibn Taymiyya speaks about whoever follows a religion which changes the Shari'a as someone who has left the religion of Islam. He refers to the Jews who changed the Torah and lied to Jesus, then lied to Muhammad, and the Christians who changed the Gospel and lied to Muhammad. Every *mubtadi'* who contradicts the Prophetic Sunna and dissembles when it comes to some of the truth, and commits a *bid'a* in false issues on which the Prophet did not introduce regulations – has similarly abandoned Islam. Interestingly, Ibn Taymiyya speaks about Christians and Mushrikūn separately on several occasions.⁴

Actions that are based on imitation fall into three categories:

(a) Those about which the applicability for Muslims is uncertain, but are nevertheless practised by them.

¹ Memon, p. 13

² Ibn Taymiyya (Memon), p. 252

³ *ibid.*, p. 78

⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-bāhir*, p. 70

(b) Those which were once lawful for Muslims but were later abrogated by Qur'anic law.

(c) Those which had never been lawful but were invented by non-Muslims [*aḥdathuhu*].

Each of these three categories applies with respect to ritual acts [*'ibādāt*] exclusively or to customs [*'ādāt*] only, or else to a conflation of both. In all, therefore, nine different forms of *bid'a* can be created.¹

Ibn Taymiyya says that the Christian belief in Jesus as God is denounced in general, and monasticism is also declared *bid'a*. On the subject of ritual or cultic purity [*tahāra*], he goes on to say that Jews are heavily shackled; whilst Christians, in the course of their *bid'a*, abandoned all these restrictions without divine sanctions -- to the extent that they considered nothing to be unclean.² Ibn Taymiyya sums it up by saying: 'unbelief is like a malady of the heart or even worse. Once the heart is sick none of the limbs can be altogether healthy. You may gain much if you do not imitate the heartsick in any respect... he whose heart is sick may entertain doubts about the very injunction to differentiate oneself from the unbelievers, because he lacks perception of its advantages'.³

Ibn Taymiyya maintains that all the things that Christians do are *'ibādāt muḥadatha* with an element of *bid'a*. The source for *ḍalāla* is anything which was not rendered *shar'ī* by Allah, or acceptance of anything prohibited which should not be forbidden. In many places he refers to Jews and Christians as *mushrikūn*, and refers to the necessity not to adopt anything from other nations so the Muslims do not become like them.⁴

Other famous groups which he includes among *ahl al-bid'a* are the *khawārij*, the *rāfiḍa*, the *qadariyya*, *murji'a* and *jahmiyya*, all of whom introduced innovative practices or concepts of some sort. Ibn Taymiyya refers to the *rāfiḍa* as *ahl al-bid'a wa'l-ḍalāl*. Such groups, he adds, make *ziyāra* to the graves of their shaykhs and

¹ Ibn Taymiyya (Memon), pp. 191-193

² *ibid.*, p. 134

³ *ibid.*, p. 130

⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, pp. 126, 249

imāms, naming such visitations as the Great Hajj, and even manufacture special flags for these occasions -- and thus the real Hajj becomes for them the small Hajj.¹ In this respect, Nadvi reminds his readers of the late influences of the Fatimids and the Ismaili Shi‘a in Syria.²

Interestingly, Ibn Taymiyya’s discourse contains early signs of the doctrine of *al-walā wa’l-barā’*, (Loyalty and Disengagement), whereby Muslims must refuse to imitate the people of other religions or the ways of errant Muslims (who have, in fact, left Islam). It should be noted this doctrine still exerts a profound effect on ‘modern’ Salafists and others, for whom separation from non-Muslims trumps all else -- even when Muslims are living in non-Muslim countries. This doctrinal requirement has also led to widespread discussions of *fiqh al-‘aqaliyyāt*, the jurisprudence regarding Muslim identity as a minority within a broader sphere of allegiance; and it forms a key element of the chapter on the Muslim Brotherhood.

Chapter one: The perception of *bid‘a* by the early *Salafis*

I. General introduction

The last decade of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th saw the awakening of a new intellectual approach, which aspired to formalise a modern attitude towards Islam, in order to establish it as the new basis to unite the nation [*umma*]. The leaders of this approach were all acquainted with the West, its ideas and strengths, and wanted to revive Islam, which they perceived as rigid and irrelevant to the present. The Ottoman Empire continued its final decline, which eventually caused it to disintegrate in 1918. At the same time, Western countries continued to increase their involvement in the Middle East. The new ideas were meant to use the traditional Islamic values as a framework for renewal and growth, rather than what they saw as the source of stagnation. Most of the activities of those who developed this approach were directed towards the exchange of ideas, either orally, or, in a later stage, via books, pamphlets and periodicals. The centre of this activity was Egypt.

¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-bāhir*, pp. 67, 94

² Nadwī, p. 177

During the 19th century, Egypt developed *de-facto* as a separate country, even though it still remained an Ottoman Province [*velayet*]. The rulers from the house of Muḥammad ‘Alī created a ruling dynasty and other institutions such as an army, a local administrative system, and an independent economic system closely bound to the Western empires. Subsequently, the pre-Islamic history of the country was gradually re-discovered, thus raising Egyptians’ self-awareness of their own Pharaonic history. Egypt, therefore, was a major attraction for intellectuals from all over the region, who felt themselves more independent in this country and better able to interact with Western literature and scholarship.

This newly established trend mostly owes its development to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and his student Muḥammad ‘Abduh. Their main focus was the revival of the whole *umma*, a concept best manifested in the joint periodical of ‘Abduh and his student Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār*. *Al-Manār* was published between 1898 and 1935, and gradually became a platform for discussion for intellectuals from throughout the Muslim world, which, from today’s perspective, could be seen as a major contribution to the later development of global ties. This also prepared the ground for what is sometimes referred to today as the ‘Islamic Movement’ -- as will be partly reflected in the chapter on the Muslim Brotherhood. This chapter, however, will reflect the tension caused by the aspirations to revive religion and apply it to modern times, while at the same time avoiding wrongful innovations. It will also look into the tension between the two major aspects of renewal according to Esposito’s definition – the return to the ideal pattern of Islam on the one hand, and the ability to practise *ijtihād* on the other.¹

The heart of the chapter will pore over the thinking of three scholars, whose biographies are sketched below. It is worth noting that while Afghānī travelled across much of the Muslim world, the two scholars who stood behind the operation of *al-Manār* still held very Egypto-centric views, and in many respects they saw Egypt as the heart of the unity they aspired to establish.

¹ John L. Esposito, *Islam: the straight path*, New York; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 117

Biographies of the relevant scholars

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897) was a philosopher and politician of Iranian origin, who promoted the concept of unity of the *umma* in opposition to the British occupation of Egypt in particular and global Western interests in general. Throughout his life he migrated to and operated in many countries, some in the Middle East, mainly Egypt, in addition to India and its neighbouring countries. His most important work, though, was written in Egypt during the 1870s.¹ Afghānī was deeply affected by the Shī‘ī rational philosophy, to which he was exposed during his stay in Iraq and India (in fact, he was probably born a Shī‘ī).

Keddie says that Afghānī was the principal figure among the young oppositionists; they chose a different direction from Egyptian intellectuals like al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, who welcomed nearly every Western innovation without trying to justify this intellectually. Working to find Islamic precedents for the reforms he advocated, Afghānī’s real concern was to find arguments that would mobilize the masses so that they would defend their country’s independence against the now encroaching West.²

Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) was an Egyptian religious scholar and jurist from a Sufi background, who was deeply influenced by his teacher Afghānī. But unlike his teacher, ‘Abduh separated politics from religion and aspired to an Islamic revival that would merge education and reform within the religious institutions. Keddie states that ‘Abduh became the founder of the school of Islamic modernism; returning to a quasi-*Mu‘tazilī* interpretation of Islam, he tried to prove that modern science and other modern principles were encompassed in the Qur’an.³

Both Afghānī and ‘Abduh believed that the modern West’s power lay in part in its science and technology. In their view, unlike many traditionalist scholars, Islam at its very core was in fact eminently modern and certainly compatible with modern science and technology. At the end of the 19th century, ‘Abduh’s *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*

¹ Nikki R. Keddie, “Intellectuals in the modern Middle East: a brief historical consideration”, *Deadalus*, vol. 101 no. 3, Intellectuals and change (Summer, 1972), p. 45

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*, pp. 47-48

was adopted by al-Azhar as a textbook in theology.¹ However, ‘Abduh’s carefully mediated attempt to bring about change and revitalisation through reason and education was to undergo extensive changes in the teaching of his leading disciple and biographer, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), a descendant of a prominent Syrian family, went to Egypt in 1897 to study under ‘Abduh, inspired by his admiration of *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqā*, a Muslim anti-British paper which Afghānī and ‘Abduh published in Paris between March and October 1884. Like ‘Abduh, Riḍā initially emphasized education and the adoption of Western scientific and technical skills as the prerequisites for revival.

By the 1920s, however, faced with growing Westernization, secularization, and nationalism (notably in Turkey, Iran, and Egypt), Riḍā grew more reactionary and laid increasing stress on the Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence, which is considered very strict and conservative, especially regarding questions of creed. He was much less open towards the West than his teacher, did not condemn slavery, and accepted the traditional view that the gate of *ijtihād* was closed after the first three Islamic centuries.²

The scholars under discussion rejected the continued dominance of imitation [*taqlīd*] over *ijtihād* by ‘*ulamā*’, whom, they thought, occupied themselves mainly with commentaries. Rather than adding to the knowledge of their ancestors, they served the negative purpose of giving an aura of sanctity to the earlier works, and their disciples also became intellectually static.³ These scholars are considered the forefathers of the Salafi approach, which attempted to draw a sharp distinction between historical and cultural variables and the unchanging principles of Islam as practised by the earliest generations of Muslims.

¹ Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The intellectual origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, Middle Eastern Monographs, vol. 3, Issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs by Oxford U.P., 1960, p. 37

² Albert Hourani, *Arabic thought in the liberal age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 223

³ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and *ijtihād*", *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter 2002), p. 625

The objectives were to reform Islam and return it to its believed original condition at the time of the early Muslim community; to revivify the Arabic language; to promote the interests of the Islamic community by reconciling reason and science with revelation;¹ and to dissociate contemporary Islam from its latter-day tradition, both scholarly and mystic, presenting it as the cause of the decline of Muslim civilisation and as an impediment to the adoption of useful Western innovations.²

The Salafiyya introduced a new approach in which abstaining from sin and the company of the deviant was no longer enough; society and religion as a whole had to be purified, reformed and modernised.³

Al-Manār, the aforementioned periodical which serves as a main source in this chapter, deals very widely with the relevant subjects. Naturally, since ‘Abduh died a few years after it was founded, the work was carried on by Riḍā and reflects his views better. It has to be noted though, that the authors of many articles are not identified; thus there can be no certainty that all the relevant articles were written by Riḍā himself. Whenever possible, the name of the writer will be highlighted.

From time to time, in order to establish a point of reference, the work of three other ‘*ulamā*’ will be explored. All three were active at around the same time and had common theological inspirations, yet offered slightly different directions, each in his way:

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1855–1902) was a Syrian scholar who was perceived as a herald of Pan-Arab nationalism; yet he drew his image of the society he wished to see directly from the Islamic perspective, with a Caliph from Quraysh elected by a *shūrā* based in Mecca, which will be a spiritual inspiration for a just society.

¹ Shahrough Akhavi, "Sunni Modernist Theories of Social Contract in Contemporary Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), p. 28

² Itzhak Weismann, "Between Ṣūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle", *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 41, Issue 2 (Jul., 2001), p. 206

³ Samuli Schielke, "Hegemonic Encounters: Criticism of Saints-Day Festivals and the Formation of Modern Islam in Late 19th and Early 20th-Century Egypt", *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 47, Issue 3/4, Islam and Societal Norms: Approaches to Modern Muslim Intellectual History (2007), pp. 330-331

- Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963) was a rather open-minded disciple of ‘Abduh, who took a different route from the one advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood.¹
- Abu ‘Alī Ḥasan Nadvi (1914-1999), an Indian scholar, was one of the more important figures; he was educated according to the principles of the Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, which is not examined here, but which is considered close to Wahhābī perceptions. Nadvi is best known for his long years of membership in the Nadwat al-‘ulamā’ Lucknow, on whose behalf he spent a whole year travelling in the Middle East. Nadvi was also among the founding members of the Muslim World League (MWL),² an international *da‘wa* organisation set up by the Saudi government in 1962 with the help of many members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the course of his Middle Eastern travels, Nadvi met with the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood; for many years, he spoke of the movement with admiration. He himself served as an inspiration to scholars who are studied in separate chapters -- men such as Sayyid Quṭb and Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī. Nadvi was in constant communication with various contemporaneous scholars who are also studied here.

II. The sources of authority

The early Salafis were mainly concerned with the consequences of the adoption of thoughts and customs from sources outside what they considered as ‘pure’ Islam. This, as will be evident later, owed much to their initial claim that those who had the authority to re-interpret religion misunderstood it. With regards to adopting practical rituals, it appears that they were mainly concerned about the image they may create of the ‘pure’ Islam they wanted to achieve – namely, of not being sufficiently progressive.

¹ Kate Zebiri, who studied his teachings, notes that while serving as Grand Imām of al-Azhar during the turbulent era of President Nasser (who extended his control over the forces of Islam in Egypt, persecuted the Muslim Brotherhood, and initiated radical reorganisation inside al-Azhar), he was best known for introducing the jurisprudence of the Zaydi Shi‘a into the teaching at al-Azhar alongside the four Sunni schools. See Katherine Patricia Zebiri, *Maḥmūd Shaltūt and Islamic modernism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993

² Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī, *Shaykh Abu’l-Ḥasan al-Nadwī kama ‘araftuhu*, Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 2001, pp. 44-45

(a) Qur'an and Sunna

In general, it can be said that the first three scholars look on the Qur'an as the main source for the modernity they wish to establish in Islam. The Sunna, an adjunct to the Qur'an, directly follows it in importance. The Qur'an, Afghānī says, contains hidden references to modern sciences and their discoveries, which can be understood now for the first time. Since, Afghānī maintains, reasoning can lead to further interpretations, everyone who has sufficient knowledge of Arabic, a solid mind and knowledge of the *salaf* is enabled and entitled to use *ijtihād* in order to apply the rules of the Qur'an anew to problems of the time; refusal to do this causes stagnation [*jumūd*] or *taqlīd*, which, according to Afghānī, are the enemies of true Islam exactly as is materialism.¹

‘Abduh, who according to Hourani, admired European achievements,² highlights in his writings two positive perceptions which, he argues, people learned from the West and were unconnected to religion but central to each human: free will and the freedom of thought. Some European thinkers, ‘Abduh maintains, say that these were the bases on which countries have been built. ‘Abduh says that this is an understanding which Christians only started to be aware of in the sixteenth century (of the Gregorian calendar). In Islam, however, the Qur'an says that the most important task is to understand the divine book. The *‘ulamā* themselves decreed for the masses that they should not learn and understand these books, but merely recite them.³

‘Abduh says that the *salaf* of the *umma* lies in the Sunna of Allah, which also assisted in elevating the spirit of Muslims in sticking to these beliefs, for otherwise they would have filled the world with *bid‘a*.⁴ This would mean that he sees the two terms as opposites. He also points out the Qur'anic teachings of commanding right and forbidding wrong; it seems that Al-Kawākibī believes that not following this command is the source of all problems that the *umma* is facing.⁵

¹ Hourani, p. 127

² *ibid*, p. 137

³ Muḥammad ‘Abduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, Egypt, Matba‘at al-Nahār, 1927, p. 137

⁴ *ibid*, pp. 197-198

⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-qurā*, Beirut, Dār al-Sharq al-‘Arabī, 1996, p. 36

Riḍā sees in the Qur'an an international revolution in human logic that was sent to the Arabs and the rest of the nations, and having a double effect -- both on the believers and by taking people away from *shirk*, the influences of the *mushrikūn* and what he calls trendy *bid'a* (*bid'a kanasiyya*).¹ Nadvi states that it is necessary to learn the Qur'an in a manner that is clear of any external influences and foreign cultures.²

Regarding the question of who has the authority to re-interpret religion for the sake of its revival, as well as the ability to explain religion correctly to the masses, the early Salafis were not united in their views. According to Zebiri, Shaltūt's *fatāwā* show he considered the authority of the Qur'an and Sunna³ to be the same. *Al-Manār* considers the Sunna and the Hadith as the texts which clarify the Qur'an; the two texts serve to draw the lines to distinguish a believer from a non-believer, and a *mushrik* from a unifier.⁴

To *al-Manār*, people who join the world of the non-believers oppose the Qur'an and Sunna, thus straying from the Salafī path and joining the ranks of *ahl al-bid'a wa'l ahwā* (desires); in Salafī thought, a non-believer is one who neglects one of the pillars of Islam.⁵

Among the '*ulamā*' under discussion, it seems that 'Abduh was mostly interested in the subject of *tawḥīd*, which is more broadly dealt with by the other '*ulamā*' discussed elsewhere, and especially the Wahhābīs. As already mentioned, 'Abduh dedicated a whole *risāla* to the subject, also speaking about what he refers to as the science of *tawḥīd* which, he maintains, deals with the presence of Allah and the ways he should be described; according to him, the source of *tawḥīd* is that God is one with no companion (*sharīk*).⁶ In one place, Riḍā speaks about Jews who moved away from *tawḥīd* to worship idols, and Christians who refer to Jesus as God.⁷

¹ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, Beirut, Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 196-, pp. 145-146; 155; 157

² Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī, *Shakhṣiyāt wa-kutub*, Damascus, Dār al-Qalam, 1990, p. 42

³ Zebiri, p. 115

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27, p. 585

⁵ *Al-Manār*, *ibid*, p. 587

⁶ 'Abduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, p. 5

⁷ Riḍā, *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, pp. 168-169

(b) fiqh

According to ‘Abduh, Hourani says, in order for a society to be moral, it must conform to a law of some sort. All things which have been created have their natural laws; if a human being goes beyond those laws, he or she is in danger of destruction. Therefore the laws set the limits. ‘Abduh, he continues, thought that laws should have some connections to the country in which they apply-- or else they will not fulfill the essential function of law, which is to direct human actions and mould human habits. In fact, Hourani adds, Riḍā says that according to ‘Abduh, they will not be laws at all. Riḍā himself was opposed to dividing *fiqh* into *‘ibādāt* and *mu‘amalāt* (ritual devotions and social transactions). He also says the jurists themselves distinguish between religious faith and the execution of justice, saying ‘this is permissible from the legal but not from the religious point of view’. It is interesting to see the use of the term *‘ibādāt* in this context as well, which might point to a practical approach which looks at tangible aspects of religion. In the chapter dedicated to the Muslim Brotherhood we look at the frequent use of this term in-depth.

To Riḍā, the true distinction between religious and non-religious law, then, is not between the *‘ibādāt* and the *mu‘amalāt*, but between *‘ibādāt* and those parts of the *mu‘amalāt* that have a moral significance on the one hand, and on the other those parts of the *mu‘amalāt* that are purely questions of administrative organization and practical convenience, and therefore have no inherent moral importance. The function of religious law in Islam, properly understood, is to regulate all human actions having any connection with religious morality. Yet the distinction between *‘ibādāt* and *mu‘amalāt* is nevertheless valid in another way, and it is here that the basis of the community’s power of legislation can be found.

This distinction has been explained in *al-Manār*’s well-known series of imaginary debates between the reformer and the ‘slavish imitator’ [*muqlid*]. In these debates, the young reformer, who represents Riḍā, takes the view that the fixed *shar‘ī* principles in the *mu‘amalāt* are of a general character only, allowing for considerable adaptation by successive generations of Muslims in light of the demands of their

worldly welfare, while it is only the *'ibādāt*, governing matters of ritual and worship, that do not admit of interpretive change.

Riḍā acknowledges that if the main body of the *mu'amalāt* is to be determined by a broad interpretation of current social needs and not by a purely philological study of the exact texts of Qur'an and Hadīth, then there is no avoiding a partial intrusion of human guesswork and error, which are inherent in any judgement of probability.

According to Malcolm Kerr:

In truth power belongs to the Community, so that if their interpretation can be sought on a matter and they should reach unanimous agreement, their decision is binding on all. Neither the Caliph nor other officers have the right to contradict or oppose their ijma', nor to oppose their representatives and delegates who are the ahl al-hall wa'l-'aqd. The agreement of this latter, if they are limited in number, is called ijma' by the jurists, provided only that they be persons qualified for ijtihād. Should they disagree in their interpretation, the subject of their disagreement must be referred to the two basic sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna. Action must then be taken on the basis of what is indicated by one or both of these two sources, in keeping with the Qur'anic verse [4:58]: that, after commanding obedience to God, the Prophet, and those in authority, says: "And if you dispute in anything, then refer the matter to God and the Prophet, if you are believers in God and the Judgement Day; that is the best interpretation". This means that this is better and sounder than other procedures, such as acting on the opinion of a majority of the delegates of the nation in enacting the statutes of Europe and her imitators, for our Law is opposed to them in this matter. It is one of the advantages of our Law that a dispute within the Community ceases with giving of judgement by the Qur'an and the Sunna, and that all the delegates of the Community are satisfied with what appears to be the most likely indication in them, so that there is no room left for rancour and dispute".¹

The issue of *'ibādāt* and how at least part of them relate to *bid'a* will be discussed later in reference to Muslim Brotherhood scholars.

¹ Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: the political and legal theories of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Rida*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, pp. 200-201

It is worth noting that part of the wider discussion on the question of authority concerns persons who have the power to determine what comes under Sunna and what does not. Such a discussion generally derives from *al-Manār*'s perception of *ijtihad*, *ijmā'* and other similar terms. An analysis of these terms follows.

(c) *ijma'*

For 'Abduh, unlike to many other jurists and theologians, the concept of *ijmā'* represents a much more informal principle, being only the expression or collective rational judgement and conscience, not too different perhaps from the concept introduced by ibn Taymiyya for a later community but which he preferred not to call *ijmā'*. 'Abduh believes that as long as the jurists are in voluntary agreement, and bear the interests of the community in mind, they should be obeyed 'for it can be said that they are free of error in their consensus'; however, this is so not as a matter of dogma but only as a reasonable expectation.

Kerr adds that *ijmā'*, defined in this way, loses its revolutionary infallibility and no longer presents the classic problem of how it can be institutionalized without corrupting its special character. It is no longer necessary to distinguish between reasoning and *ijmā'*, for the latter is now only the collective aspect of the former.

Kerr also refers to Henri Laoust's note that this new approach has been made possible by the fact that 'Abduh first of all raised the value of reasoning to a higher status than was traditionally assigned to it, so that any exercise in judgement, whether in the traditionally recognised form of *ijmā'* or otherwise, is valid and true, so long as it is indeed based on sound reason and not a distortion of it. But since human beings are usually imperfect in their mastery of reason and do not submit exclusively to its dictates, their image of the truth – collectively or individually reached – is often distorted unless guided by revelation. Therefore it was only natural for 'Abduh to ignore certain traditional dogmas, supposedly sanctified by *ijmā'*, in some of his pronouncements, since *ijmā'* as he conceived it was always subject to review.¹

¹ Kerr, pp. 143-145

On the whole, Kerr says, it is the natural law approach that is dominant in ‘Abduh’s attitude. It is thus not surprising that the principle of *ijmā’* should represent a very different thing to him than to the orthodox jurists and theologians. The orthodox idea of *ijmā’* referred to the agreement of the Islamic Community on certain hitherto unresolved questions in certain circumstances, as an infallible source of law and doctrine, in keeping with the Hadith: ‘My community will never agree upon an error’.¹

Since the limitations were severe – only unanimity on points of fact and interpretation, not subject to review by later generations, was recognised – it was possible to regard *ijmā’* as an indirect, inspired kind of revelation, and therefore much more than a mere aggregate of personal opinions; it enjoyed a value equal to the Qur’an and Sunna, or was even superior to them according to some scholars.

In order to demonstrate that Islam can reconcile with modern life, ‘Abduh himself gradually adopted elements of modern thought. In his line of thought, *maṣlaḥa* (benefit) gradually turns into utility, *shūrā* into parliamentary democracy, and *ijmā’* into public opinion. ‘Abduh, who tried to prevent secularism from entering the world of Islam, actually opened the door to innovations of the modern world. Riḍā, in his later writings, reaffirmed that legislative interpretation is to be carried out on a broad scale on the basis of the concept of *maṣlaḥa*. But shortly after, we are told that, in effect, public benefit suspends standing rules in special circumstances but actually creates new ones as dictated by human needs. For Riḍā, *ijmā’* was a process of positive legislation, not a canonical proof. If it is to do its new work, there is clearly no room for a principle of unanimity.²

According to Hourani, especially in matters of social morality, Riḍā thinks that there can be no *ijmā’*, even in the first generation. This means that only the rulers can have legislative power, but not the community. Thus, he also rejects the old conception of *ijmā’* to create a new one – the *ijmā’* of the ‘*ulamā’* of each age, a legislative rather

¹ This Hadith is widely quoted, see for example Ibn Māja, vol. 2, p. 1303

² Kerr, p. 143

than judicial principle, working by a quasi-parliamentary process. They are also the only ones allowed to perform *ijtihād*.¹

Kerr continues with a similar interpretation with regards to Riḍā, saying that he implies a traditional concept of the religious source and justification of the Law and uses it to characterize the Law's positive application. This is the same process he followed in his constitutional theory of the Caliphate, mistaking a doctrine of authority for a programme of action and ending by attributing sovereignty to a circularly defined group of 'those in authority'. Riḍā's progressive doctrine of interpretation, instead of contributing to a revived recognition of the Shari'a as a living foundation on which to build an entire modern legal structure, may have served if anything as an opening wedge toward a frank espousal by others of the principle of secular legislation.²

Riḍā suggested the creation of a new body that will be both legislative and judicial, for its agreement to institute particular ordinances has the force of *ijmā'*, in the sense that it is an authoritative pronouncement of law valid for its particular time and place. With it, there does not seem to be a comprehensive and systematic statement by Riḍā on the various types of *ijmā'* or on their respective values as legal sources.

Laoust, Kerr asserts, claims that Riḍā considered even the *ijmā'* of the *ṣaḥāba* valid only for its own place and time, and their opinions no more than *ijtihād*, but cites no source for his claim; this is while Jomier, on the other hand, finds that Riḍā says the *ijmā'* of the *ṣaḥāba* is a final *ijmā'* binding for all times, unlike the later *ijmā'* of the schools or the present day *ijmā'*.³ Riḍā says that regarding political questions, the decisions of the leading *mujtahids* on matters of public interest are authoritative and binding, and their *ijmā'* is a 'legal source' [*ḥujja shar'iyya*], although this is not true of purely religious matters. These *mujtahids*, says Riḍā, are obliged to take a broad view of all considerations affecting the public interest rather than to:

¹ Hourani, p. 234

² *ibid.*, p. 204

³ Kerr, p. 197

*take literally the example set by the Prophet in all its particulars even when this obliges them to ignore the public interest.*¹

Shaltūt uses the term *ijmā'* in its nominal and verbal forms in several places in his *fatāwā* and in one place even describes it as the 'third source of law' (although it is never cited as an independent source of authority). In most places it is referred to, *ijmā'* is said to be based on the Qur'an and Sunna.²

While the classical scholars, Zebiri continues, attempted to confine the sphere of operation of *ra'y* in Islamic law to analogical reasoning based directly on the sources, modern reformers, Shaltūt included, are generally less reticent about admitting the importance of human value judgements in the process of legal deduction, as embodied for example in the principle of *maṣlaḥa*. In cases where Shaltūt does resort to analogy, the rules of *qiyās* are relaxed so that the analogy can be based on the general principles of the Shari'a rather than a specific effective cause (*'illa*). Shaltūt sees *qiyās* as a sub-category of *ra'y*. Zebiri concludes that, like the majority of Muslim scholars, he believes the practice of the *ṣaḥāba* has a special value, and sometimes cites it as evidence for or against particular practices.³

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 198-199

² Zebiri, p. 116

³ *ibid.*, p. 123

(d) *ijtihād*, *iṣlāḥ* and *tajdīd*

Many times, Afghānī expresses his regrets that for the Sunnis, the doors of *ijtihād* are closed. Afghānī does not understand how and why this happened and says that everyone who is knowledgeable in the *sīra* knows that analogy [*qiyās*] could be made relying on reliable *aḥādīth*.¹

Under the title ‘the freedom of thought... and renewal [*tajdīd*]’ ‘Abduh, perhaps paving the way to the Muslim Brotherhood in this respect, says that Islam has turned away from tradition, and all the pillars of belief of its nations have been destroyed.²

Nevertheless, the fear of adopting thoughts from outside Islam seems not to include current notions which help them promote the cause. Afghānī has no problem adopting views from outside Islam, including European ones, believing that these are based on certain principles understood and accepted there; therefore, if Muslims imitate Europeans, they do not necessarily become like them.³

At the same time, Afghānī is careful as to who should be involved in such processes. The great philosophers, he continues, said that only the select few could be persuaded by scientific, demonstrative argument, while for the masses only emotional rhetoric would be persuasive. Therefore the common people should be told not to pay any attention to abstract intellectual matters. They should not be told the true interpretation (*ta’wīl*) of revelation, for reasons of expediency.⁴

‘Abduh speaks about the ‘disagreement between religions on religious practices’, saying that one of the main issues which brought Islam to its current situation was misunderstanding. He further maintains that one of the roles of *da’wa* should be that

¹ See for example, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, *Al-Athār al-kāmila*, vol. 6, Cairo, Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawliyya, 2002, pp. 150-151

² ‘Abduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, p. 135

³ Hourani, pp. 127-128

⁴ Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic response to imperialism: political and religious writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, p. 49

people understand their duties properly.¹ Riḍā is positive towards *ijtihād*, as long as, in his words, it does not involve *ḍalāla*.² Riḍā, however, is less tolerant of outer conceptions. In this respect he believes that Jihad is legitimate, not only for defending Islam but also against those who refuse its faith.³

Al-Manār's discussion on the issue of renewal [*tajdīd*] is also very similar to the way it discusses the other close terms. Under the title 'On renewal [*tajdīd*], renovation [*tajaddud*] and reformers [*mujaddidūn*]' it says that renewal means a creation which is in itself all new, and demonstrates the power of God. Nevertheless, *al-Manār* continues, the Hadith claiming that there is nothing really new under the sun has to be kept in mind, and renewal or renovation can never replace the Sunna.⁴

As with other terms, *al-Manār* divides renewal into several types: social, political, civil and religious, and says that all these fields are human needs. It separates between the elements of renewal, *bid'a* and *ghulūw*, even when it comes to renewals in religion. Unlike *bid'a*, every renewal [*tajdīd*], *al-Manār* says, has a place in religion and it is out of lack of knowledge that people prefer one to another.⁵

In every generation, *al-Manār* explains, there is no choice but to renew while preserving the old; in the process of renewal there are both good and reprehensible things, some useful and some that do damage. Those who can think independently, *al-Manār* continues, do not judge things according to their being new or old but according to logic, and if anything ancient is better than a new one they prefer to keep the ancient one. In this context, *al-Manār* praises the English for preserving their heritage, which, it says, is better preserved than the Muslim one. Many new things, *al-Manār* adds, were brought into Islam by non-Arab scholars. In Egypt in particular, it continues, the Copts made a great contribution to bringing new elements into religion, which comes out of their *da'wa* to the Muslims to leave their religion. Their *da'wa* is often given a platform in university circles, and at its core lies the

¹ 'Abduh, *Risālat al-tawhīd*, pp. 139; 141

² Riḍā, *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, pp. 278-279

³ Hourani, p. 223

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 32, p. 49

⁵ *ibid*, p. 50

government's acceptance of non-*shar'ī* rules in financial issues and punishment in several civil areas.¹

Al-Manār continues to speak about other concepts like Pharaonism, which, it says, gained popularity and started to create a differentiation between Egypt and other countries. Such an attitude, it continues, allowed a mixture of an international Sufi literary-philosophical approach which has no religion within it; and even the Baha'i religion, over which there has been debate in Egypt regarding its legitimacy. In a different discussion, under a similar title, *al-Manār* speaks again on the necessity for renewal, both in religion and in the practical world.² It cites the words of a scholar from India who says that the views of the '*ulamā*' there are rigid; some speak about the need for a social and political revolution, and others object to any changes in the existing situation. This is why, the scholar claims, the British occupation over India still remains. A very similar situation, *al-Manār* adds, applies to the '*ulamā*' in Turkey.³

One of the meanings of renewal, *al-Manār* continues, is the revival of the Arabic language in speech, writing and preaching. *Al-Manār* claims that the *umma* does not need any renewal in religion itself, and this option has been sealed by Allah because of the danger of creating *bida'*. Atheism, according to *al-Manār*, is also a renewal which has to be fought against.⁴

There are two types of renewal that it discusses: the first relates to the common interest and whatever needs special religious ruling (*tashrī'*); this is covered by the Hadith regarding the award given to whoever brings into religion a 'good' Sunna (*sunna ḥasana*). This Hadith, *al-Manār* says, lays the foundation for useful sciences and the establishment of schools, hospitals and other institutions which societies and governments benefit from. Any religious ruling regarding these subjects, *al-Manār* adds, depends on logical thinking on the part of the relevant persons, and the *ijtihād* in such a subject does not have a specific form. The second type concerns issues of

¹ *Al-Manār, ibid*, pp. 55-57

² *ibid*, pp. 58-59

³ *ibid*, pp. 226-228

⁴ *ibid*, p. 54

daily life such as agriculture, industry and more, and it relies on the Hadith: ‘What belongs to your religion is mine and what belongs to daily life you know best’.¹

An interesting element of this discussion is introduced in *al-Manār* via a series of imaginary discussions, as previously mentioned, between a traditionalist and a reformer. In one of these discussions, Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s role in preserving religious traditions is examined. The two debate the right for *ijtihād* over tradition or *ijtihād* inside one’s school of law (*madhhab*). The reformer says that he does not contradict al-Ghazālī’s tradition. Other names of *mujtahidūn* are mentioned, saying that some of them made mistakes in their logic when performing *ijtihād* as well as in their right to do so, having no religious authority. The reformer emphasizes again and again that the right to practise *ijtihād* is reserved for the proper religious authorities.²

Nadvi speaks about the decline of the ‘*ulamā* over the generations; the gate of *ijtihād* was closed, and the scope of *fiqh* was no longer broadened to cope with new issues and problems. He says that the Muslim world, due to various developments, has been hit with what he calls intellectual apostasy (*ridda fikriyya*). Furthermore, some ‘*ulamā* have been using *fiqh* for their personal interests. He states that *fiqh* has to be re-dressed in Muslim clothes,³ and that there needs to be *iṣlāḥ* and a constant fight against corruption.⁴

Qaraḍāwī, who will be very widely discussed in the chapter on the Muslim Brotherhood, notes that Nadvi focused on *iṣlāḥ* of the individual first in his soul [*nafs*] and heart – which would also direct Islam to concentrate on the purification of the heart and the rejection of *shirk*. According to Qaraḍāwī, Nadvi’s views apparently derived from an overly Westernized outlook, and various issues which led the *umma* to abandon the enforcement of the right and the prohibition of the wrong.⁵

¹ Esposito, p. 230

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 4, pp. 362; 367

³ Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, *Mudhakirāt sāih fi ‘l-sharq al-‘Arabī*, Beirut, Mu’asasat al-Risāla, 1975, pp. 192-193

⁴ Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, *Al-Nubuwwa wa ‘l-anbiyā fi ḍaw al-Qur’an*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1967, p. 28

⁵ Qaraḍāwī, *Shaykh Abu al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī kama ‘araftuhu*, p. 114; 112

Nadvi, referring to the work of Muḥammad Iqbal in India, notes that some say *tajdīd* is merely a cover for inserting foreign traditions into Islam.¹ Yet, he affirms, there is no other solution to the current state of affairs which he sees as *jāhiliyya*,² except for a broader *tajdīd*.³

Like other ‘*ulamā*’ under discussion, Nadvi aspires to a new, righteous (*ṣālih*) generation. He highlights Muḥammad Abduh’s contribution in promoting education and bringing religion to the new generation, and expresses his admiration of the Muslim Brotherhood: the Brotherhood, which uses *tajdīd*, is the only modern movement which has taken upon itself to push the line of *iṣlāḥ* and *da‘wa*;⁴ it is the greatest religious and political Middle Eastern movement in renewing Islamic power and affecting the struggle to face Western culture, using the active *dā‘i*.

III. Terms affiliated with bid‘a

shirk and ḍalāla

Afghānī maintains that there are Muslims with whom Islam is not satisfied – although they are not defined as unbelievers – and in general do the opposite at any time, like laughing when they should cry and so on.⁵ ‘Abduh maintains that if a believer worships Allah, thinking what gains it will bring to him, such approach leads to *shirk*; *shirk* is defined as a belief that anything other than Allah has an effect over what He has granted, or that things beyond the abilities of what had been created [*al-makhlūqāt*] could be controlled.⁶

‘Abduh’s position on free will goes through a pragmatic process. His main concern in this issue is on a psychological level, with the individual’s consciousness of his ability

¹ Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, *Al-Sirā‘ bayna al-fikra al-Islamiyya wa’l-fikra al-gharbiyya*, Cairo, Dār al-Anṣār, 1977, pp. 89-92

² A thorough discussion will be conducted into Sayyid Quṭb’s core theory referred to as neo-jahiliyya, which apparently was inspired by Nadvi’s conception.

³ Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, *Urīdu ‘an atahaddath ilā’l-Ikhwān*, Cairo, Lajnat al-Shabāb al-Muslimīn, 1972, p. 11

⁴ Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwī, *Rabaniyya la rahbāniyya*, Beirut, Mu’asasat al-Risāla, 1983, p. 127

⁵ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, *Al-Kitābāt al-siyāsiyya*, vol. 2, Beirut, Al-Muassasa al-‘Arabiyya li’l-Dirāsa wa’l-Nashr, p. 351

⁶ ‘Abduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, p. 68

or inability to determine his own actions and their consequences, rather than with a complete and systematic philosophy of causality. Such a position, according to Kerr, is taken by ‘Abduh under the influence of the *mu‘tazila*. In his *Risāla*, Kerr continues, ‘Abduh says that to claim free will for men is not to commit the heresy of *shirk*; *shirk* will be implicit only by the attribution to anyone but Allah of freedom of action unrestrained by natural forces.¹

Al-Manār puts *shirk* alongside *dalāla* many times. The term itself is advanced as the direct opposite of the concept of unity [*tawḥīd*].² In practical terms, *al-Manār* speaks about many terms like *shirk*, unbelief, immorality and injustice as falling into two types, each with two degrees of severity – those which derive from religion and those which do not. We see a division made between the ‘big’ and ‘small’ *shirk*. For *al-Manār*, the greater *shirk* is the one derived from religion, whereas the smaller is not, like the hidden *shirk* of pride [*riyā*].³ In one of his books, Riḍā states that Islam has referred to *riyā* in this way, while discussing the issue of politics.⁴ In another place, Riḍā also speaks in this context about the necessity of preventing *ghulūw* in religion,⁵ a term which will be examined more closely in the chapter on the Muslim Brotherhood, and especially Qaraḍāwī.

Those who brought *shirk* into religion, according to *al-Manār*, were close to Jews and Christians, and the Prophet distanced himself from them.⁶ Both Jews and Christians, *al-Manār* says, were considered *mushrikūn* together with the Quraysh, even though it has been said that they agree it was God who created the skies and land. This is because of a Hadith narrated by the Prophet about the Quraysh, which states that ‘Whoever vows not in the name of Allah is a non-believer and commits *shirk*.’ After that, *al-Manār* adds, acts such as sacrifice that are not made for Allah or visiting the houses of idols were considered *shirk* as well.⁷

¹ Kerr, p. 111

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 5, p. 227

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27, p. 590

⁴ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Shubbūhāt al-Naṣārā*, Egypt, Matba‘at al-Manār, 1904, pp. 81-82

⁵ Riḍā, *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, p. 268

⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 34, p. 137

⁷ *Al-Manār*, vol. 5, p. 265

Al-Kawākibī's approach towards *shirk* is very similar, but the language he uses is milder. He says that it is something natural to human beings, who tend to worship what they see rather than what is logical. It is Satan, he continues, who tries to make people deviate from their religion [*ḍalāl*].¹ In order for a Muslim to know what *shirk* is, he continues, he must first understand what belief, Islam, worship and unity mean.² It is also interesting to note that Al-Kawākibī sees the issue of building on graves as an aspect of *shirk*, or at least a path to *shirk*,³ whereas many of the other figures under discussion consider it a major manifestation of *bid'ā*. However, it is possible that his statement here derives from social experiences, since he refers to those who put idols in graves and worship them, or those who make a sacrifice next to graves.

In Shaltūt's discussion, Jews and Christians are also referred to as one of the sources of *shirk*, and the *isrā'īliyyāt* are denounced as misleading [*muḍallila*].⁴ The Quraysh and their *mushrikūn* who worshipped idols are also mentioned.⁵ Qaraḍāwī speaks about Nadvi's ambitions to achieve pure belief [*al-'aqīda al-salīma*], clear of *shirkīyyāt*.⁶ Nadvi himself refers to idolatry and *shirk* next to his arguments regarding the state of *jāhiliyya* in which the Muslim world finds itself.⁷

The *'ulamā* considered in this chapter placed much less focus on creating a differentiation between *ḍalāla* and *shirk* than those in the other chapters. 'Abduh, who, according to Kerr, wholeheartedly believed in the promise of worldly success for the righteous, could only conclude that conditions in society which are evidently good or bad must stem from correct or incorrect religious belief and practices. 'Abduh's basic approach, Kerr says, was that 'if history has not rewarded the Muslims, somehow in their beliefs they must have gone astray'.⁸

Many times, Nadvi places *ḍalāla* and *shirk* next to his discussions of *jāhiliyya*. For example, he states that in periods of *jāhiliyya*, strong belief is lost, and people start to

¹ Al-Kawākibī, p. 72

² *ibid*, p. 82

³ *ibid*, p. 69

⁴ Maḥmud Shaltūt, *al-Fatāwā: dirāsa li-mushkilāt al-mu'āsir fi ḥayātihi al-yawmiya wa'l-'amma*, Cairo, Dār al-Shurūk, [19--], p. 55

⁵ Al-Kawākibī, p. 83

⁶ Qaraḍāwī, *Shaykh Abu al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī kama 'arāfuhū*, p. 78

⁷ Nadwī, *Al-Nubuwwa wa'l-anbiyā*, p. 53

⁸ Kerr, pp. 114-115

question the presence of Allah; philosophy, which – according to Qaraḏāwī – Nadvi sees as a main factor for *ḏalāla*,¹ as well as *shirk*, have helped to weaken this belief further. For Nadvi, the only way for men to gain a proper knowledge of the Divinity (*maʿrifat Allah*) comes via the prophets, who have neither *jahl* nor *iḏlāl*.² Speaking about Ḥasan al-Bannā, Nadvi claims that he fought against the *ḏalāla* beliefs and *jāhilī* customs.³

IV. Bidʿa – definition & types

ʿAbduh started to attack the subject of *bidʿa* in his editorials in the 1880s, as editor of the bi-weekly *Al-Waqāʿi al-Maṣriyya*. However, according to Sedgwick, these attacks were not necessarily against the *bidʿa* in its religious / negative meaning, but rather against superstitions.⁴ In the religious discussion of the term, ʿAbduh speaks about Jews and Christians, who forgot the purity of their book, and inserted into their religion stories about heroes and various *bidaʿ*.⁵ Riḏā asks why many Muslims do not follow Christian *daʿwa*; his answer is that Islam also accepts the true prophecy of Jesus, yet stays away from the superstitions [*khurāfāt*] and *bidaʿ* which Christians have inserted into their religion.⁶ Riḏā further maintains that there have been *mubtadiʿūn* throughout history. At the same time, *bidʿa* did not enter religion independently, but through changes in tradition itself.⁷

According to Masʿud, ʿAbduh used to advise his students and scholars to study al-Shāṭibī’s *Al-Muwāfaqāt fi uṣūl al-sharīʿa*, in order to understand the real nature of ‘Islamic Law making’ [*al-tashrīʿ al-Islāmī*].⁸ One of the ways by which ʿAbduh attempted to readjust Islamic doctrine to accommodate modern thought was to eliminate *bidʿa*.⁹ He thus led the way to focus on the subject. Riḏā, himself a warrior

¹ Qaraḏāwī, *ibid*, p. 95

² Nadwī, *ibid*, p. 24

³ Nadwī, *Shakhṣiyāt wa kutub*, p. 88

⁴ Mark Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2010, p. 30

⁵ ʿAbduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, p. 186

⁶ Riḏā, *Shubbuhāt al-Naṣārā*, p. 50

⁷ Riḏā, *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, p. 255

⁸ M. Khalid Masʿud, “Recent studies of al-Shatibi’s al-Muwafaqat”, *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1975), pp. 65-66

⁹ Caesar E. Farah, *Islam: Belief and observances*, Woodbury, N.Y., Barron’s Educational Series, 1970, p. 243

against *bid'a*, was largely responsible for creating the image of al-Shāṭibī as a crusader against it.¹

Riḍā asserts that al-Shāṭibī is without precedent in his ability to distinguish between *maṣlaḥa mursala* (the traditional category for a ruling based on human welfare on an issue not mentioned in the text) and *bid'a*.² As will also be seen later, *al-Manār* published extracts of al-Shāṭibī's discussions on the subject several times.

Al-Manār addresses several aspects of this issue. A major campaign of *al-Manār* was the struggle against *bid'a* and *khurāfāt* in Sunnism;³ and indeed, *al-Manār* deals rather widely with the issue of *bid'a*. Before this discussion, its stance regarding the *sunna-bid'a* debate should be clarified. This can be seen in *al-Manār*'s response to a question regarding the alleged contradiction between the two famous *aḥādīth*, '...every *bid'a* is a *ḍalāla*...' as opposed to the one which speaks about the reward for a 'good' Sunna. The answer is signed by Riḍā himself. First of all, he says, everything renewed by people which is not based on the Qur'ān or the Prophetic Sunna is a 'bad' *bid'a* [*bid'a sayyia*] and *ḍalāla*, and thus deserves punishment in hell. Religion had been sealed in everything connected to beliefs and practices, permitted and prohibited but not secular and earthly matters. On such issues, the Shari'a changes according to circumstances, time and place.

Whoever invents new ways to make things easier does not follow the Salaf. Nevertheless, anything which has been transmitted from the first generations will not be considered *bid'a*. When it comes to 'good Sunna' [*sunna ḥasana*] or 'bad Sunna' [*sunna sayyia*] as referred to in the second Hadīth, they both include whatever people do in everyday life. It is thus better to speak instead about an erring *bid'a* [*bid'a laḡhwiyya*] or mundane *bid'a* [*bid'a dunyawīyya*].⁴

Al-Manār further claims that in the *bid'a* there are matters of unbelief or things which lead to unbelief, and there are forbidden [*mamnū*] things and hateful [*makrūh*] things

¹ Mas'ud, p. 68

² David Johnston, "A Turn in the Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Twentieth Century Uṣūl al-Fiqh", *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2004), ref no. 98

³ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Al-Khilāfā bayna al-Sunna wa'l-Shī'a*, 1988, p. 27

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 1, pp. 91-93

as well.¹ A separation between the legal *bid'a* [*bid'a shar'iyya*] and the non-legal, or erring *bid'a* [*bid'a laghwiyya*] can be defined, relying on a *fatwā* by Ibn Ḥajar al-Makkī, who set the latter definition. The former is said to be completely forbidden since it is a matter of shameful *ḍalāla*, as Allah completed his religion, thus everything which in the days of the Prophet was not religious, will never become religious after him.

The *bid'a shar'iyya* is defined by the Hadith '...every *bid'a* is a *ḍalāla*...'. In a different place, *al-Manār* defines it as making a legal ruling [*shir'*] that God did not command, which amounts to lying to Allah.²

The second type is drawn from the division of *bid'a* into five categories. *Al-Manār* further suggests that Al-Shāṭibī's explanation is actually better than that of al-Makkī, who, it says, was mistaken in some of the examples he provided. Al-Shāṭibī's interpretation, according to *al-Manār*, justifies 'Umar's sayings about the *tarāwiḥ* prayers during the month of Ramadan which have already been referred to, that they are a 'good *bid'a*'.³ *Al-Manār*'s acceptance of al-Shāṭibī's views on the *bid'a* can also be seen in another place, in which it quotes the latter's division of the subject between the truthful [*haqīqiyya*] and relative [*iḍāfiyya*] *bida'*.⁴

This type of *bid'a*, *al-Manār* says, relies on the Hadith already mentioned regarding the reward that whoever brings a new Sunna to Islam deserves. In talking about Islam, they add, he refers to the era which came after the *jāhiliyya*, meaning the first era.⁵

Al-Manār advances the views of other scholars who distinguish between those who say that *bid'a* is strictly 'bad', relying on the Hadith which states that every *bid'a* is a *ḍalāla*, and those who say that it is divided into five categories. In one case, an Egyptian scholar and guest in the *fatwā* section writes that some of the *bida'* are positive, like studying grammar and understanding the Shari'a as a result; some are negative, such as the views of the *qadariyya*; some are regrettable; some are hateful,

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 20, p. 104

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 32, p. 273

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27, p. 660

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 32, p. 274

⁵ *Al-Manār*, *ibid*, p. 273

like putting ornaments inside the mosque; while the last ones are permissible, like greeting a person while standing behind the post of the call to worship *adhān* or reading the Qur'an at a funeral.¹

Nevertheless, *al-Manār*'s own stance is that by dividing the *bid'a* into 'good' and 'bad', a loophole had been created by those '*ulamā*' who allowed it, and the current situation of widespread *bid'a* is a result of this act, which brought about perplexity and a lack of knowledge.² This stance fits the basic approach taken by *al-Manār*, which has already been referred to, that the deviation from the Qur'an is a gradual procedure which reached its peak in the latest eras, and resulted from the leaders who did not follow the traditions as the first *mujtahidūn* did. It also fits what seems to be both 'Abduh's and Riḍā's aspiration to find some kind of a middle path [*wasatīyya*], titling fanaticism [*ta'assub*] as an act of *bid'a* which had been renewed, and influenced people to follow it even though it is forbidden.³

In another case, *Al-Manār* enters a comprehensive discussion regarding the repugnant *bid'a* [*bid'a qabīḥa*], saying it poses a danger to anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day. *Al-Manār* asserts that whoever introduces a *bid'a* of such a kind likely views religion too lightly, and such a general approach might eventually pervade and affect his family's perception of religion. Such a person, *al-Manār* says, might disrespect the mosque he prays in without even noticing. An act which is considered a *bid'a qabīḥa* by *al-Manār* is, for example, the prevalent phenomenon of showing disrespect to mosques in Egypt, urinating on their fences or performing other shameful acts while standing next to them or passing by. Such acts are considered by *al-Manār* as *ḍalāla*, and are repudiated and shameful.⁴

Regarding the *qadariyya*, *al-Manār* claims that this belief had been acknowledged as a *bid'a* as early as the first century of Islam, and the *salaf* and their followers agreed that it is a deviation. This matter, continues *al-Manār*, should obviously not be mentioned alongside the issue of commanding right and forbidding wrong; this is

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27, p. 659

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 32, p. 272

³ *Al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā*, p. 96

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 4, p. 383

because it is connected with choosing whether to contradict Sunna, which in turn encourages the individual to focus his efforts on the most efficient course of action.¹

According to Hourani, a similar approach to *bid'a* as a whole is taken by al-Kawākibī. His starting point too is that Islam has fallen into desuetude because of the spread of *bida'* throughout history, in particular the introduction of mystical excesses that are alien to its spirit, and because of imitation [*taqlīd*], the denial of reason, and a failure to distinguish what is essential from what is not. Al-Kawākibī lays an even greater emphasis on the false spirit of passive *taqlīd* by leaders than Afghānī and 'Abduh.²

Shaltūt wishes people to observe religion as Allah has asked, and to avoid *bida'* and repudiated things [*munkarāt*];³ however, his discussion is a bit similar to 'Abduh's. In one instance he even quotes 'Abduh, who does not tend to mention the term *bid'a* as often as Riḍā does, for instance. However, 'Abduh does say that many of those who introduced such innovations dishonestly claimed they were part of the tradition.⁴

Shaltūt's starting point on the subject is that the essence of the *bid'a* is straying [*inḥirāf*] from religion.⁵ He, too, says that it includes both rituals and beliefs, and combines permitted and forbidden acts. The phenomenon of creating a *bid'a*, he continues, is also related to the progress of history, thus sometimes things which were correct in other times are irrelevant these days. In his view, innovation, as a whole, is permitted, as long as it does not contradict the message of Allah. However, he asserts, the *bid'a* made people lose their connection to the Creator. Therefore many '*ulamā* forbade a lot of good things, classifying them as *bid'a*. There are fields, Shaltūt says, which have been left for people to decide and think about. There are also general and specific Islamic identities, and the *bid'a*, which has been created by people, can never be accepted within the framework of Islamic identities.

Such an issue comes under the heading of a Hadith which states that 'these are the boundaries set by God, do not trespass them; whoever trespasses the boundaries

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 991

² Hourani, p. 272

³ Shaltūt, *Fatāwā*, p. 218

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 192

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 178

of Allah is a tyrant [*ẓālim*]. Concerning such people, it was said: ‘whoever brings something new into our religion, something that was never in it before, is performing apostasy’ [*rāddun*].

Throughout the years, says Shaltūt, *bid‘a* became the major source of sectarianism. Everyone who created *bida‘* followed his own *bid‘a*, and the unity of religious identity was damaged. When applied to belief it could lead to *shirk* or the worship of other beings than God, and when used for rituals people would add or omit certain parts, or change the way the ritual is practised. As far as permitted and forbidden things are concerned, people might misunderstand it.¹ Zebiri discusses a suggestion that Shaltūt made to an academic board of the *Jamā‘at kibār al-‘ulamā’* (which was established in 1911) to investigate disputes or differences between ‘*ulamā* and to lay down criteria in order to differentiate between ‘bad’ and ‘good’ *bida‘*. He told the leaders and the ‘*ulamā* that it was his aspiration for them to work together in order to achieve a united Islam.²

Of all the ‘*ulamā*’ dealt with in this chapter, Nadvi presents the most decisive approach towards *bid‘a*. To him, *bid‘a* is any dogma or ritual not laid down by Allah and his messenger, which has been accepted as an approved part of religion, or which is treated as something sacrosanct and helps in achieving proximity to Allah. *Bid‘a* is therefore ‘a man-made law forced into the system of law given by Allah’.³

Bid‘a, Nadvi continues, essentially refuses to accept that creed and Shari‘a are complete, and that nothing could be added to the corpus. From time to time, it makes Islam so convoluted, difficult and bewildering that people are forced to leave the religion altogether. Unlike creed and Shari‘a which remain the same, a *bid‘a* could be based on a certain regional or historical development, or may emanate from the preferences of a certain individual; it thus differs from place to place, and runs counter to the Sunna. All *bida‘* are considered vile and wicked, and:

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 181-185

² Zebiri, pp. 20-21

³ Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, vol. 3, India, Lucknow, Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1994, p. 218

*Even if we suppose that certain actions appear as virtuous and good to certain persons owing to a deficiency in their discernment, they would have nothing but sorrow and remorse when they are granted necessary comprehension and discretion.*¹

Nadvi specifically focuses on ‘One of the greatest fallacies that had very often led the people astray, namely *bid‘a ḥasana*, which, he continues, can never be accepted’.²

V. Bid‘a – what needs to be done to avoid it

The very Egypto-centric approach of both ‘Abduh and Riḍā is well reflected in their suggestions for the best ways to counter what they perceived as the *bid‘a* phenomenon.

Al-Manār says that *bid‘a* is now widespread in mosques across the country, as well as the celebration of holy commemorations [*mawālīd*] linked to the Sufi orders, and similar phenomena that will be discussed in detail. The way to counter this in Egypt, according to *al-Manār*, is for the head of the ‘*ulamā*’ to establish a committee in al-Azhar, composed of ‘*ulamā*’ from all four schools of law, and write a booklet to be signed by tens of ‘*ulamā*’; then all ‘*ulamā*’ and heads of religious establishments should dispatch this booklet and speak about it in the mosques. *Al-Manār* further hopes that such a booklet will be distributed by the Ministry of Endowments [*awqāf*] to be preached from the pulpits, and that writers will also be suggested to address the subject of *bid‘a* and warn people against it. This, *al-Manār* says, will make it easier for the government to call off these *bida*’, especially those of commemorations and celebrations which, it says, the government itself has a hand in.³

The ‘*ulamā*’ discussed in other chapters have mentioned another group, which, according to *al-Manār*, had been responsible for introducing the *bid‘a* into religion—namely, ‘those who were supposed to be knowledgeable’. In their writings, the journal continues, scholars of this group in fact made wrongful *ijtihād* and permitted things which are not allowed, thus introducing *ḍalāla* and *bid‘a*. Some of these

¹ Nadwī, p. 224

² *ibid*, p. 221

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 20, p. 104

scholars, *al-Manār* explains, had no knowledge of certain *aḥādīth*, and thus made mistakes which caused al-Nawāwī to condemn the prayers of *Rajab* and *Sha‘bān* as repugnant [*bid‘a qabīḥa*]; other *fuqahā’* condemned additional *rak‘as* during the Hajj. Those writers are called upon by *da‘wa* to return to reliance on the Qur’an and Sunna only, based on the Qur’anic phrase ‘today I completed your religion’.¹

Al-Manār tends to pay tribute to books about the subject, for example a book by an Egyptian writer named Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām Khaḍr al-Shukayrī,² which is praised for exposing the *bid‘a* and *khurāfāt* in the country.³ Al-Kawākibī in this context also refers to Jews and Christians as a source from whom *bid‘a* is carried into Islam, but in general his writings on *bid‘a* derive from the discussion on *shirk* or on matters which involve mistakes in identifying what comes under the injunction to command right and forbid wrong.⁴

VI. Other types of *bid‘a*

In its attempt to fight the ‘phenomenon’ of widespread *bid‘a* in Egypt, *al-Manār* also discusses specific cases; the wide majority of them falls under the category of *‘ibādāt*. Its view on the subject is rather clear: nobody permitted to change ceremonies in Islam by either adding or taking anything from them, and no *mujtahid* has ever permitted such acts – or else it would have created new religions.⁵ While, as already stated, the majority of *bida‘*, according to Riḍā, penetrated Islam in later times, there are such *bida‘* which did so as early as the days of the followers of the Prophet’s companions [*tabi‘ūn*].

Al-Manār concentrates in one case on many rituals that are performed during the month of *Ramaḍān*, defined as the month of ‘spiritual sports’ by Muslims. *Al-Manār* says that none of the rituals performed during the month, such as special prayers or recitation of the Qur’an (*talāwa*) are genuinely Islamic and that more can be done to avoid such acts of *bid‘a* and repudiated elements [*munkarāt*]. These, the journal continues, may derive from a lack of knowledge on the part of the preachers in

¹ Qur’an 6:3

² The book is called *Kitāb al-sunan wa’l-mubtada‘āt al-muta‘Alīqa bi’l-adhkār wa’l-ṣalawāt*.

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 34, p. 479

⁴ Al-Kawākibī, p. 40

⁵ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27, p. 660

mosques, who preach in favour of corruption.¹ *Al-Manār* even calls on both the Shaykh al-Azhar and the Shaykh of the al-Ḥusaynī mosque to prevent such people from preaching, characterising them as ignorant [*jāhilūn*] and impostors [*dajjālūn*]; to the ‘good’ ‘*ulamā*’, *al-Manār* offers to put in their mosques leaflets and guides to argue against these issues.²

Adding *adhāns* to prayers

The custom of adding calls to prayer (*adhān*) on other occasions is said to be a repudiated *bid‘a*, although in *al-Manār* it is said that a *fatwā* had been issued claiming it was *bid‘a ḥasana*.³ The ritual of *adhān*, *al-Manār* continues, has been basic to Islam from the days of the Prophet; in most of the canonical books the nature and way of each *adhān* is described, and no change by analogy [*qiyās*] or religious discretion [*istiḥsān*] had ever been accepted. *Al-Manār* refers again to al-Shāṭibī, reminding its readers that he classified acts which are connected to time and place into the category of *bid‘a idāfiyya*; therefore, *al-Manār* continues, the majority of the jurists referring to the *bida‘* of the night of desires in *Rajab* and the prayers in the middle of *Sha‘bān* say that they are repudiated. *Al-Manār* says that the *adhān* belongs to the first type (which is bound to time and place), and therefore it cannot be permitted, and nothing is allowed to be added to it.

In a manner similar to its approach to other cases, *al-Manār* goes on to explore the sources of this custom, saying that it was first introduced by the Shi‘a – probably referring to the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt in the 10th century (as argued by al-Maqrīzī in his *Khiṭat*) and forbidden a few centuries later, when the Shāfi‘ī school of jurisprudence was implemented in that country. Al-Ash‘arī played a part in this, and in time the same ruling started to be applied in Mecca and Syria [*al-Shām*]. There is emphasis on the fact that the Wahhābīs made sure not to add the extra calls, a point which was made clear to the *al-Manār* representative by Wahhābī officials.⁴

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 711

² *ibid*

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 33, p. 113

⁴ *ibid*, p. 118

The very long historical account of events continues, followed by a furious attack on the *bid'a* of adding *adhāns*, which was adopted in some villages in Egypt and thence to Cairo itself. A similar attitude is also adopted towards adding *ṣalawāt*, a *bid'a* said to be common to *mu'adhins* in modern times.¹ The worst evils of a *bid'a*, says *al-Manār*, is that as time passes it acquires the ruling of a legitimate Sunna which people follow, and whoever repudiates it is considered a *mubtadi'* himself.²

Shaykh Yūsuf al-Dajāwī from al-Azhar, who was said to be involved in the struggle against *bid'a*, is quoted as having referred to a Hadith that says: 'if you hear the *mu'adhin*, say what he says and then pray to me', thus emphasising the importance of the role of the *mu'adhin* and his responsibility not to invent evil *bida'* or insert them into religion. Nevertheless, *al-Manār* criticises al-Dajāwī, who tried to distinguish between adding to sermons and adding to other parts of prayer. Furthermore, *al-Manār* says, even al-Dajāwī's claims that '*ulamā'* from the four religious schools perceived this custom as a 'good *bid'a*' are incorrect; those scholars were late on the scene and therefore cannot be considered legitimate *mujtahids*. Therefore, they can only supply reasoning.

In any case, *al-Manār* adds, this *bid'a* cannot be referenced to the Hadith which refers to the reward of whoever introduces a good Sunna into Islam, for all Salafi scholars agree that no innovative acts of worship can be inserted into Islam as new Sunnas. Those who understand this point reject it completely.³

To conclude, *al-Manār* says that adding more *adhans* is a *bid'a* which was renewed by some people who performed *ḍalāla* and it should be condemned. What is sad about this *bid'a*, it continues, is that there are people who follow it and preach to others to do the same. The best solution is to preach the truth to those who spread such innovations.⁴

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 32, p. 272

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 33, p. 115

³ *Al-Manar*, *ibid*, p. 118-9

⁴ *ibid*, p. 120

Annual commemorations of birthdays of saints [*mawālīd*]

One of the key issues that *al-Manār* struggles against in the field of *bid‘a* is annual commemorations, a topic which is discussed in other chapters. This debate is crucial to *al-Manār* for several reasons that will be considered. Here it is worth referring to Schielke, who claims that unlike pre-modern debates, in which only specific practices related to festivals of *mawālīd*, but not the festivals themselves, have been documented as subjects of discourse -- the reformist and modernist discourses started to define them as a specific issue.

The aim was to exclude these festivals from the realm of orthodox Islam and progressive modernity, and thus from the true substance of the nation, not because there was something inherently un-Islamic or irrational about them, but because their particular form of festive time, their order, and their habitus did not fit the newly constructed habitus of the authentic yet enlightened Muslim, and did not comply with the new rationality of the progressive nation.

Schielke says that this was an innovative approach, which created a new and dramatic split between ‘orthodox’ and ‘popular’ Islam and ‘modern’ and ‘backward’ culture. When European observers claimed Islam to be a backward and irrational religion, Schielke continues, Muslim intellectuals replied with a twofold strategy: reinterpreting part of the religious and cultural traditions as the true, authentic heritage that would match European standards and serve as the moral foundation of the nation’s progress; and excluding other parts from the modernist project by labelling them backward *khurāfāt* at worst, popular religion and folklore at best, but never equal to the true, at once authentic and modern culture.¹

This does not seem to be a ‘clear-cut’ approach: the separation between the festivals and some of the acts which accompany them is maintained, and *al-Manār* -- even though being negative in general towards these festivals -- still tries to be as objective as possible. As in other issues, it develops most of the discussion from the local

¹ Schielke, pp. 344-345

Egyptian experience. In one case, for instance, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī is quoted as issuing *fatāwā* in several cases in order to answer the question of whether these birthdays and commemorations -- which were widespread in Egypt in his time -- are Sunna, virtues [*fāḍila*] or *bid‘a*. Al-Haythamī’s answer is that the majority of them were originally *bid‘a ḥasana*.¹

Shaltūt seems to be taking a rather similar stance to Riḍā’s. Shaltūt says that the *mawālīd* are a late *bid‘a* that penetrated Islam. He notes that even though some people say the *mawālīd* are good for the sake of praising the name of Allah, taking care of the poor and other good deeds, there are still many *bida‘* and repudiated acts [*munkarāt*] which take place in the process, and that ‘*ulamā*’ do not condemn or stop them.² According to Zebiri, Shaltūt’s attitude towards the elements of sermonizing [*wa‘z*] is most in evidence when he discusses matters about which he feels strongly, such as *khurāfāt* and *bida‘*.³ Schussman adds that Shaltūt criticises both the ‘*ulamā*’ for their disregard of the phenomenon, and government officials for participating in these festivals. However, she notes, he avoided dealing with the question of legitimacy of celebrating the Prophet’s birthday.⁴

Celebrating the Prophet’s birthday

The Prophet’s birthday is the yearly commemoration which worries both Nadvi⁵ and *al-Manār* most.

As usual for *al-Manār*, a historical background to this celebration is provided, starting with al-Malik al-Muthaffar Abū Sa‘īd (d. 630h/1232) from Irbil, (currently part of Mosul Province).⁶ The celebration of the Prophet’s birthday, says *al-Manār*, is basically a good act, which helps improve faith and the Prophetic tradition, and to restore his Sunna.⁷ Nevertheless, as a widespread *bid‘a*, *al-Manār* wishes it to stop.

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 27, p. 661

² Shaltūt, *Fatāwā*, pp. 193-194

³ Zebiri, pp. 108-109

⁴ Aviva Schussman, "The Legitimacy and Nature of Mawid al-Nabī: (Analysis of a Fatwā)", *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1998), pp. 230-231

⁵ Nadvi, *Saviours of Islamic spirit*, p. 225

⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 2, p. 289

⁷ *Al-Manār*, vol. 19, p. 410

Riḍā relies on al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar as the main source who states that the Prophet's birthday is a *bid'a*.¹ As in other cases, *al-Manār* believes this should be done through education.²

In another place, *Al-Manār* ensures that all details are correct. It refers to a compilation of clerical views concerning the celebration, said to have been signed by many 'ulamā', from Egypt and other countries. At first sight, says *al-Manār*, this book is impressive, but on looking further inside, it was found to be full of errors. Writing the book in the first place, *al-Manār* says, comprises in itself an act of *bid'a* – the introduction does not cite the fact that the actual celebration of the Prophet's birthday is an act of *bid'a*, but when telling the story of the Prophet's birth it gives the impression that this celebration is something which comes from the Hadith and Sira; the book does not reject it but makes it into a religious ceremony. It also concludes almost all its chapters with the special prayer for the event. This, *al-Manār* observes, is the main reason why it chose not to publish this compilation.³

And indeed, a few years later Riḍā himself declares his anger at the fact that the celebration, as well as speeches in the mosques, are printed in the papers and magazines, and also translated into other languages. All the stories about the Prophet's birth, he says, have been invented by authors; some stories repeat themselves, describing the wonders of his birth. There are songs too. Reading the story of the Prophet's birth, he maintains, is a habit which was first started by one of the Circassian kings of Egypt.⁴

Riḍā says he has been condemning the official celebration in Cairo, which is led by the Sufi Shaykhs. Every year, he states, he reminds people that acts of *bid'a* and sins take place in the course of this celebration. Riḍā also condemns the fact that religious figures and ambassadors of foreign countries take part in the celebration. The story of the Prophet's birth itself, he says, has been condemned, and in the year 1334H was replaced by the current special prayer. Riḍā continues to attack the existing version of this prayer, which, he says, is also related to the questions of subject, time, place and

¹ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Fatāwā al-imām Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*, vol. 5, p. 2112

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 1, p. 112

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 20, p. 395

⁴ Riḍā, *Fatāwā*, vol. 4, p. 1243

authority. Sayyid Bakrī, head of the celebration, promised Riḍā, so he claims, to replace the existing version of the prayer. He further speaks about his efforts to counter this *bid'a*. A booklet titled *Risālat dhikrā al-Mawlid al-Nabawī* was distributed across the Muslim world, but, according to Riḍā, its effect in correcting some of the existing customs was rather weak.

Riḍā says that he made some successful efforts to invite donations from Muslims in India for the distribution of more booklets, which were also translated into other languages; as well as the *Sira*, which was translated (probably into Urdu) for the first time. In addition, he himself wrote a book which discusses the issue, which, according to him, has been very influential within the Muslim world. Riḍā aspires to transform the celebration of the Prophet's birthday to a 'Muḥammad Day',¹ most likely meaning to celebrate his message and contribution in the form of accentuating the Islamic revelation rather than commemorating a date and highlighting his own personality.

Other commemorations

Al-Manār also discusses the *bid'a* of celebrating the night in the middle of the month of *Sha'bān*, in reply to questions addressed to Rashīd Riḍā. Riḍā says that this celebration has nothing to do with the Sunna, even though people consider it to be so, and this night is no better than any other night.² In his book, Riḍā clearly states that this custom is a *bid'a shar'iyya*, discussing again the differences between this type of *bid'a* and *bid'a laghiyya*. It is, he says, a 'bad *bid'a*' and a proven *ḍalāla*.³

As in the case of the Prophet's birthday, Riḍā tries to follow the historical roots of this custom of celebrating the night in the middle of the month of *Sha'bān*, starting in the Middle Ages -- saying that the person who first introduced it was ignorant [*jāhil*], that the Hadith it is based upon is weak, all the virtues [*faḍā'il*] attributed to it are

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 34, p. 119-120

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 29, p. 586

³ Riḍā, *Fatāwā*, vol. 3, p. 907, 1002

incorrect, and that the special prayers that day are *bid'a*, and, as some scholars have suggested, are false as well.¹

This celebration is a good example of *al-Manār*'s perception of those who were supposedly in possession of the knowledge, but out of their ignorance made a mistaken *ijtihād*. This, as already mentioned, is seen by *al-Manār* as the worst disaster to befall religion.² Furthermore, prominent '*ulamā*' like al-Nawawī wrote against this celebration, stating it was *bid'a*. Others also opposed this celebration, because of the potential wrongful acts which may accompany it. Such acts include charging an entrance fee in the name of religion; the distribution of sweets (forbidden under Shari'a) -- both of which are said to be common in Egypt; the presence of women; the combination of reciting the Qur'an and singing, which is considered to amount to 'playing with religion', and more.³ These acts, especially those involving women, make Riḍā declare that the whole subject of the night of the middle of *Sha'bān* has to be treated as a *khurāfa*.⁴

Al-Manār looked at another celebration, the commemoration of the anniversary of the death of al-Ḥusayn in the streets of Medina, and conducting *ziyāra* to his grave. Here too, Riḍā (signed as the writer) refers to the mixture of men and women, who, he continues, do not cover their faces and raise their voices. This, he concludes, is a *bid'a* which originates in corruption.⁵ *Al-Manār* says that this is a new commemoration, during which women mix with men, dress immodestly and sing. This commemoration is even seen as a parallel offence to *shirk*. This *bid'a*, continues *al-Manār*, leads to decadence, and has its origin in false *ijtihād*.⁶

Still, as we have already said more than once, *bid'a* is seen as a result of ignorance. It is interesting to see, regarding this commemoration and the customs referred to, the more restrained language that Shaltūt uses. Even though his discussion of the subject

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 1, p. 28

² On this specific case see *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 996

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 665

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 2, pp. 429-430

⁵ *Al-Manār*, vol. 5, p. 2099

⁶ *Al-Manār*, vol. 29, p. 590

comes under the title of *bid'a*, he does not use the term itself but says it is an act which leads to the corruption of manners.¹

Clear cases of *bid'a*, Riḍā continues, which were described and present in the days of Ibn al-Ḥājj, are now even more widespread. Riḍā refers especially to the use of drums, dancing and chanting during the performance of the *dhikr*. He cites an answer by Turtūsī on the issue, saying that these rituals come from a Sufi tradition, and that they are false and lead men astray. While Riḍā considers mixed dancing as *bid'a*, both here and in other places,² Turtūsī goes as far as to consider it a matter of unbelief, saying that the Shari'a is based only on the Qur'an and Sunna. Other prominent scholars who have dealt with the issue of *bid'a*, like Qurṭubī, are also mentioned.³

Riḍā expresses his anger towards European countries, which, he claims, facilitated this procedure by supplying electricity and gas. According to the Prophet, he states, using many lights is equal to the customs of the Zoroastrians and the fire worshippers.

To conclude, Riḍā stresses again the need to fight *bid'a* and revive the Sunna. Nevertheless, he says it is permitted to perform certain rituals during this day, as long as they are not planned in advance. By this he means that they are not presented as being in accordance with the Shari'a.

Under the title '*bid'a* and *khurāfāt*', *al-Manār* presents the birthday of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, said to be celebrated by *ahl al-bid'a*. This is a rather interesting case, as it involves the commemoration of a religious scholar. And indeed, in this specific case all the blame is heaped upon the religious establishment as a whole, for persuading people that this is actually a religious ritual. This, *al-Manār* concludes, is the worst thing related to al-Shāfi'ī, a scholar who dedicated his life to reviving the Sunna and disavowing the *bid'a*.⁴

¹ Shaltūt, *Fatāwā*, p. 190

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, pp. 1023-4

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 2, pp. 765-766

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 664

Visiting graves

Another issue widely discussed by *al-Manār* is the matter of visiting (*ziyārāt*) distinguished mosques and graves. Visiting the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, *al-Manār* states, is allowed but is not an obligation for Muslims like the Hajj. Yet it is a noble act to perform, as is stated in a few *aḥādīth*.¹ *Al-Manār*'s main attack is reserved for those who build structures on top of graves or even visit them.² This tendency, according to *al-Manār*, is comprised of six types of *bid'a*, as indicated by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, which are also related to *shirk*:

- 1) turning graves into mosques
- 2) burning manure on them
- 3) making the grave a place of idolatry
- 4) performing *ṭawwāf* around them
- 5) talking over them
- 6) praying to those buried in them.³

To the question of visiting the graves of the predecessors, *al-Manār*'s answer is that visiting graves is not mentioned in the Qur'ān, nor it is part of the Sunna. On the contrary, it maintains, Islam aspired from the beginning not to increase men's devotion to graves, and the Prophet himself forbade building over graves or praying next to them. These *bida'* and repudiated acts [*munkarāt*] occur at the graves of the Salaf and at other graves to a lesser extent. Hence it is clear that what bothers *al-Manār* most is the acts that surround the ritual rather than the ritual itself. It is interesting to note that, in spite of *al-Manār*'s resistance to any religious acts at graves and in their surroundings — as in Ḥanbalī and Wahhābī thought — it distinguishes itself, at least from the former, by quoting Ḥanbalī '*ulamā*' separately. *Al-Manār* concludes by calling people who commit such acts the *munāfiqūn* of our time, saying that they make it easier to ruin religion.⁴

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 2, p. 663

² See for example, *Al-Manār*, vol. 1, p. 93

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 712

⁴ *ibid*, p. 713

Al-Manār concludes by saying that it is allowed to mention the great contribution of the Salaf, and it is allowed to visit their graves in general, especially those who are known for their knowledge and righteousness, whose names *al-Manār* had previously listed.¹

Shaltūt also discusses the ban on building mosques over graves, but, as in previously mentioned cases, and as will be seen later, he does not categorize it as *bid'a*² On the issue of visiting graves, he says that doubts have been raised with regard to this custom, which many believe is at least repudiated. An issue which seems to mainly concern Shaltūt is women visiting the graves. He says that at first visiting was prohibited altogether, but as Islamic belief entered the hearts and its purposes were made clear, it became permitted. Shaltūt further presents a number of *aḥādīth* in order to prove this claim, and says that over time it led to performing acts of *shirk*.³

The early Salafis, as previously have noted, lived in a complex era, when the Ottoman Empire went into a final decline, and Western countries increased their involvement in the Middle East to an unprecedented degree. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Salafis barely analysed Western tendencies and acts in religious terms. Perhaps a sole relevant example in the issue of *bid'a* is an argument for the Ottoman Constitution by Sulaymān al-Bustānī, referred to by Hourani, which refutes the suggestion that it is a *bid'a*. According to Hourani, al-Bustānī's main assertion is that it is exactly as a Muslim would have done, and a similar constitution existed in the first Caliphate.⁴ Such a 'political' stance, in the Western sense of the word, is best manifested in the Muslim Brotherhood doctrine that will be discussed in the next chapter.

We should note here that only one example for a *bid'a* falling under the category of *'ādāt* has been located; Riḍā refers very briefly to the custom of swearing with the right hand during the ceremony of divorce.⁵

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 1, pp. 93-94

² Shaltūt, *Fatāwā*, pp. 104-105

³ *ibid.*, pp. 219-220

⁴ Hourani, p. 277

⁵ Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Fatāwā al-imām Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*, vol. 5, 1970, pp. 1808-1814

Are tobacco and spirits permissible

In several cases, both *al-Manār* and Riḍā separately discuss the issues of using tobacco and spirits -- of which the former will be widely discussed in the chapter on the early Wahhābīs.

Like many others, *al-Manār* believes that there is no proof that the use of tobacco is generally forbidden, unless it causes harm to whoever uses it. Doctors, it continues, agree that the nicotine it contains is harmful to some people and useful to others. Most people, *al-Manār* further claims, say that there is no visible damage in tobacco, but the issue is in dispute and is therefore also accepted by some of the ‘*ulamā*’ and rejected by others. Many ‘*ulamā*’, says *al-Manār*, first rejected it as something new (and we should note that the term *bid‘a* is not raised in this context), but permitted it after it had started to spread. Eventually, Shaykh al-Azhar al-Jizāwī¹ issued a *fatwā* saying that this issue has three different views, ranging from a complete rejection to the middle path.² Hence, *al-Manār* concludes, the issue of buying tobacco belongs, in fact, to the discussion of using it.³

When discussing the permissibility of using spirits and alcohol, following a *fatwā* in India which forbade any use of them whatsoever (even for smell, colour, medical purposes and other cases), Riḍā again attacks ignorance and *dalāla* -- which bring about a situation where men can no longer distinguish between what is forbidden and what is permitted, and completely ignore the issue of commanding the right and forbidding the wrong.⁴ Spirit, Riḍā clarifies, is not wine,⁵ which is completely forbidden in Islam, adding that this was previously confirmed by ‘Abduh.⁶

¹ Shaykh Muḥammad Abu al-Faḍl al-Jizāwī served as Shaykh al-Azhar between 1917 and 1928

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 32, p. 274

³ *Al-Manār*, *ibid*, p. 275

⁴ Riḍā, *Fatāwā*, vol. 4, p. 1611

⁵ Riḍā, *ibid*, vol. 5, p. 1727

⁶ *ibid*, p. 1729

VII. *The Sufis in the eyes of the early Salafi ‘ulamā’*

As for those who brought *bid‘a* into Egypt and into religion, *al-Manār* often says they were ‘*ulamā*’ who made a wrongful *ijtihād*; however, the journal also takes an explicit view of the role played by a majority of Sufi orders, who were responsible for the introduction of various *bida‘* of ‘*aqīdāt* into religion, matters unknown to their forefathers. This claim is repeated several times.

Al-Manār’s approach towards the Sufis is not necessarily coherent. In one place we learn that they do not follow the Shari‘a (which, according to *al-Manār* is derived from the Qur’an and Sunna only). In this way, *al-Manār* says, the Sufis encouraged *bida‘*.¹ But Sufism itself is regarded as an integral part of Islam,² and is defended by *al-Manār* against those who denounce it. Some people claim that the Sufis commit *bid‘a*, and that they had abandoned the Sunna. Sometimes, *al-Manār* continues, they are included under *ahl al-bid‘a wa’l-zandaqa*. However, in an earlier article in *al-Manār*, Riḍā unleashes a fierce denunciation of a writer who attacks the Sufis, saying they all disavow traditions. Riḍā says this writer is not knowledgeable enough to be allowed to write.³

On the other hand, in a different place, *al-Manār* attacks some Sufi groups. It is clear, *al-Manār* reiterates, that at first the Sufis did follow the Sunna until they were joined by the likes of the ‘funded’ Sufis [*al-arzāq*]⁴, or the Sufis by appearance only [*al-rasm*].⁵ Sufism, *al-Manār* states, must only rely on the Qur’an, Sunna and the *sīra* of the pious followers of the ancestors (*al-salaf al-sāliḥ*) if it does not want to be dragged into *bid‘a*. According to the journal, some of the *bida‘* in Sufi writings were taken from non-Muslim sources such as Greek philosophers, while others have been renewed by Shaykhs of some orders.⁶

¹ *Al-Manār*, vol. 12, p. 615

² *Al-Manār*, vol. 1, p. 115

³ *Al-Manār*, vol. 3, p. 818

⁴ *sufiyyah al-arzāq* lived on the religious endowments of their institutions

⁵ *Al-Manār*, vol. 4, p. 1471

⁶ *Al-Manār*, *ibid*, p. 1473

According to Weismann, this distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ Sufism (which, he reminds his readers, was made by both ‘Abduh and Riḍā) was made when one, the ‘true’ version, was connected with the believer’s need for spiritual experience, and the other had to do with the struggle against *khurāfāt* and practices incompatible with the Shari‘a.¹ This could fit the previously introduced theory of the urge to reject popular customs that would not look modern enough in Western eyes. In an article, Hourani cites a translation of a story by Riḍā, who had been invited to attend a ritual prayer for Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī by the Mawlawī order. Riḍā was astounded from the way they were dressed, the beardless youth and some of the acts. He could not control himself, stood up in the centre of the hall and shouted something along the lines of:

O people, or can I call you Muslims! These are forbidden acts, which one has no right either to look at or to pass over in silence, for to do so is to accept them. To those who commit them God’s word applies, "They have made their religion a joke and a plaything".²

In any case, Weismann further notes that the Salafiyya movement after Riḍā no longer made such distinctions and condemned Sufism as a whole.³

This tendency of accusing the Sufis of bringing *bid‘a* into religion is very similar to al-Kawākibī’s approach, although he applies it in a wider context. According to al-Kawākibī, those who did not follow the Shari‘a came to perform *bid‘a* in religion, some of them through esoteric knowledge [*‘ilm al-bāṭin*], and others either through the knowledge of reality [*‘ilm al-ḥaqīqa*] or other elements of Sufism; some invented rituals which entered Islam at the end of the fourth century of Islam; and some made fun of religion and started dancing, using drums, playing with fire and with weapons.⁴ While reviewing the history of Sufism, he also distinguished between the ‘true Sufis’ and those who came after them.⁵

¹ Itzchak Weismann, "Sa‘id Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Ba‘thist Syria", *Studia Islamica*, No. 85 (1997), p. 139

² Albert Hourani, "Rashīd Riḍa and the sufi orders: a footnote to Laoust", *Bulletin d'études orientales*, T. 29, Volume premier (1997), pp. 231-232

³ Weismann, *ibid*

⁴ Al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-qurā*, pp. 91-93

⁵ *ibid*, p. 131

Nadvi, as would be expected, is much more positive towards the Sufis; he writes a great deal about their historic contribution to India, and speaks of them as *muṣālihūn*,¹ explaining that:

*The method employed for attaining proximity to God and avoiding worldliness through perfection of morals, which later on came to be known as tasawwuf or mysticism, was identical with the tazkiyah (purification) and ihsan (sincere worship) in the Qur'anic and Hadith terminology. It was, in fact, one of the four objectives of the prophethood of Muhammad ...*²

VIII. Jews and Christians in the eyes of the early Salafi 'ulamā'

As previously noted, the scholars examined in this chapter were highly critical about Jews and Christians, a position due in part to Qur'anic and Hadith anti-Semitism and anti-Christian polemic, and in part as a reaction to the circumstances and historic events of the era in which they lived and operated. 'Abduh speaks about the period when the *bāṭiniyya* came into being, and created sectarianism and *fitna* over debates about the creation of the Qur'an. Some of those involved in talking about *bid'a* were scholars whose knowledge and piety were well known.³

Al-Manār says that it was the Christians who influenced people to start imitating elements from Christian practice. Some of those who commit *shirk*, says *al-Manār*, hold gatherings to praise Allah, and during these gatherings sing songs which include *shirk*; others do not want to follow the Shari'a at all and actually perform ideas and acts of *bid'a* in Islam by adopting other modes of thought, such as *'ilm al-bāṭin* or *taṣawwuf*, which were not present in the early days of Islam.⁴

Moreover, there are third and fourth groups which invented ritual practices and pious acts which were not part of Islam until the 10th century, saying that God left religion incomplete and that they have completed it, ignoring the explicit Hadith which has already been mentioned. Is it not unbelief to say that the Prophet omitted parts of his

¹ Nadwī, *Rabaniyya la rahbāniyya*, pp. 95-101

² Nadvi, *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, p. 203

³ 'Abduh, *Risālat al-tawhīd*, p. 17

⁴ *Al-Manār*, vol. 5, pp. 264-265

message, *al-Manār* asks? The sad situation, it concludes, is that the entire *umma* is now adopting acts of *shirk* approved by '*ulamā*' -- acts which are often the result of ignorance.

Nadvi cites a passage which curses Jews and Christians for turning their graves into sites of prayer. However, his version is different from the one usually mentioned -- saying that the Prophet has warned against their acts, that Allah will kill them for this, and that neither of the two religions will have a presence on Arab lands.¹ Nadvi speaks about what is discusses matters of interest to the Western world, which also led to an interest in the human body, in the culture of competition, and in horse racing -- all of which are very dangerous. The West is trying to make the Arabs and Muslims imitate its traditions; this alien culture therefore has to be taken away from schools for the benefit of developing a new generation with better Islamic knowledge and ideology.²

IX. The Shi'a in the eyes of the early Salafi 'ulamā'

The division between Sunnis and Shi'a preoccupied the minds of some of the scholars dealt with in this chapter, especially Riḍā and Nadvi -- who quotes the former very widely. Riḍā adheres to the myth that this division began with the conversion to Shi'a [*tashayyu'*] of Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, under the influence of a *mubtadi'* (innovator) of Jewish origin, 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba' from Sana'a in Yemen. Ibn Saba', he says, reputedly called for *ghulūw* in order to divide the *umma* and corrupt its religion, for which purpose he recruited other Jews. This was also advanced as the reason why the Prophet and the Jews went to war. Riḍā speaks about *tashayyu'* as a *bid'a* which spread in the Muslim world in secretive propaganda [*di'āya*]; it was also the main reason for political disputes between various *ṣaḥāba*. Another *bid'a* which the Shi'a have spread is distortion [*tahrīf*] of the Qur'an and similar innovations. Yet another *bid'a* relates to the identity of the expected *mahdī*.

¹ Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī, *Sīrat khātim al-nabiyyīn*, Beirut, Mu'asasat al-Risāla, 1994, pp. 333-334

² Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī, *Al-Tarbiya al-Islamiyya al-ḥurra*, Beirut, Mu'asasat al-Risāla, 1977, pp. 20-21

Riḍā, however, makes a distinction between various sub-groups, like the Zaydis, the *rāfiḍa* and others. He refers to the *rāfiḍa* as non-believers,¹ and accuses some of the current Shi‘a of acting with excessiveness in adhering to the custom of reading the first four verses of the Sūrat al-Tawba, which deal with God’s treatment of the *mushrikūn* on the day of the Great Hajj attributed to ‘Alī.²

Conclusions

In this chapter we have looked at the opinions of the early Salafī scholars, who were the first ‘*ulamā*’ in centuries to regard renewal in religion as a necessity for Muslims. In several cases, their views have been compared to those of scholars like al-Kawākibī and Shaltūt, both of whom represent opinions which are deeply rooted in Islam but which also focus on other aspects -- either concerning the direction Islam should take or on its Arab origins. We have also looked more deeply into the views of Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Nadwi, an important scholar connected both to them and to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Al-Manār, which at first reflected the views of both ‘Abduh and Riḍā, and later, following ‘Abduh’s death, reflected more of Riḍā’s, deals very broadly with this subject, aspiring to eliminate what it sees as the phenomenon of widespread *bid‘a* and drawing most of its examples from Egypt. *Al-Manār* deals both with *bida‘* concerning social affairs and those that bring in a variety of religious rituals. Our research suggests that *al-Manār* is not as decisive as might have been expected in deciding what should or should not be considered *bid‘a*, despite the image attributed to Riḍā of a staunch fighter against *bid‘a*.

Al-Manār accepts several types of *bid‘a*, yet rejects others, saying that *bida‘* have led to the grave situation the country is in. It appears that most of the rejected *bida‘* are connected with popular acts, which may not fit the modern image it would like to form for Islam. Nevertheless, although it generally opposes *bida‘* in religious issues, it does not define what belongs to religion and what does not.

¹ Riḍā and Hilālī, *Al-Sunna wa ‘l-Shi‘a*, pp. 9-14, 92; Nadwī, *Al-Khilāfāt bayna al-Sunna wa ‘l-Shi‘a*, pp. 5-8

² Riḍā and Hilālī, *ibid.*, pp. 83-85

Thus, *al-Manār* also avoids sweeping generalizations, and accuses only part of the Sufis, Shi‘a, Jews and Christians of having introduced *bid‘a* into Islam. When our ‘*ulamā*’ speak about other ‘*ulamā*’, they tend to say that they made such mistakes because of misunderstandings. But who, we may ask, is free of misunderstandings, unless, of course, such a category is restricted to *al-Manār*’s writers and those who participate in their debate over what has been understood and what has not? It is probable that the early Salafis were forced to act like this because they were engaged in apologetics, since they had to guarantee that a revival of religion could take place while introducing changes that are considered legitimate.

A much deeper discussion regarding the tension between renewal and revival and *bid‘a* will be broached in the next chapter, which looks at the Muslim Brotherhood.

Among the other three ‘*ulamā*’ whose writings we examined, al-Kawākibī follows more or less the same line; Shaltūt uses milder language and seems to hold a more positive approach, and Nadvi, in spite of the fact that he rejects any kind of *bid‘a*, still finds ways to justify renewal and revival.

Chapter two: The Muslim Brotherhood's perception of *bid'a*

I. General introduction

Toward the end of the 1920s, Egypt saw the emergence of a 'Supra-Egyptian' national tendency. This trend wished to create a new collective identity for the country before the eyes of the whole Arab-Muslim world. This identity would draw on religious, cultural and linguistic roots, using authentic Egyptian culture as its main source, while turning away from the West. The key to its gaining further momentum was the 'new *effendiyya*' class, made up of young educated middle-class Egyptians who had undergone the processes of Westernisation and urbanisation which took place during the 1930s. The economic crisis caused a drastic reduction in salaries and living standards, and brought about growing unemployment. Gradually, other leading doctrines of Egyptian identity – that Voll considers 'adaptationist'¹ – like the Westernised camp of the National Pharaonic movement, which cherished the ancient history of the country, began to lose their popularity. Members of the young Egyptian parliamentary system were perceived as representing personal and sectarian interests; impatience and disillusionment with the existing order continued to rise.²

The members of the 'new *effendiyya*' addressed the public using such elements in the collective Egyptian memory as Islamic heritage, language and culture -- while at the same time, increasingly turning against Western colonialism. Simultaneously, the process of Islamic revival became stronger and brought about the rapid growth of the new *salafiyya* Islamic protest movements. These movements challenged both the process of cultural and educational Westernisation and traditional orthodox Islam. In their view, orthodox Islam failed to provide appropriate solutions to the unsettling questions of the era, arising from the fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War One and the disintegration of the Caliphate in 1924.

The Society of the Muslim Brothers [Brotherhood] – founded by the young school teacher Ḥasan al-Bannā – began as one of these protest movements, and gradually

¹ John Voll, *Islam: continuity and change in the modern world*, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 1994, p. 174

² Israel Gershoni & James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation 1930-1945*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 1

became the largest and most important of them all. The Brotherhood's leaders and thinkers were typical of the young *effendi* mindset. Many of its members were middle-class, urban people, highly self-aware – teachers, clerks, students and white-collar professionals – who had experienced a Westernizing process but had found no spiritual or social fulfilment in their Western orientation. The most outstanding names in the Brotherhood were not necessarily those of religious functionaries -- an important point which holds relevance for this chapter.

As reported by Mitchell, the Brotherhood members saw themselves clearly as perpetuating the work of the modern Salafī reformers who were examined in the previous chapter -- describing Afghānī as the 'caller' to Islamic reform; 'Abduh as the one who formulated it; and Rida as the 'archivist' or 'historian'. Bannā, however, was seen as the 'initiator' of a renaissance, the leader of a generation and the founder of a nation -- and the first to provide a 'practical' extension to the previous movements.¹

In the founding meeting of the Brotherhood, when asked by his students how the newly formed body would be defined, al-Bannā answered that they should leave formality aside, for this body was unlike any other existing organisation, but rather a 'brotherhood' in service of Islam, concentrating on thought, philosophy and action.² Al-Bannā's 'practical' approach included calling on the government to focus most of its effort on Islam as the basis for national education. At the same time, he started providing activist proselytising [*da'wa*] to the younger generation, using simple, even simplistic Islamic content, combined with political substance. The Muslim Brotherhood, therefore, concentrated its work on all aspects of life, creating religious, educational and social institutions such as mosques, schools, youth groups, and welfare organisations. The Society focused its activities in six areas: promoting knowledge, common principles, fighting economic corruption, raising the standard of

¹ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 321

² Hasan al-Bannā, *Mudhakkirāt al-da'wa wa 'l-da'iyā*, Egypt, Matabi' Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī (undated), p. 66

living for the sake of society, liberating Egypt from British colonialism, and helping achieve world peace in the spirit of Islam.¹

These foundations all aimed to fulfil the first stages in the Society's 'doctrine of phases' designed by al-Bannā – a personal, individual and social revival which would lead to the next stages of political action and then Jihad until the Islamic state, governed by Shari'a, is established. This model, Sullivan adds, still applies today, with the Society preparing a new generation of believers who will support the *da'wa* and become models for others.²

This unique structure lies at the heart of the Muslim Brotherhood's ability to survive political persecution over decades, and the same unique structure has served to facilitate an international movement which is said to be represented in eighty countries, albeit with a rather loose structure. The Muslim Brotherhood today is best described as a global ideology, whose local branches develop and act according to the circumstances in each country, and cooperate in financial or activist affairs (which are not of concern here); hence there are various sub-groups within the Brotherhood, which in many cases also overlap with each other.

The primary trend, which continues the course set by al-Bannā, aims for a gradual revival, focuses on *da'wa* and long-term strategies, and employs both Western and Islamic concepts. The more conservative, Qutbist trend, which has been known to focus more on offensive Jihad and separatism, has been recognised as one of the 'founding fathers' of modern international terrorism. Finally, the democratic-Islamist trend believes that the global revolution should be brought about using democracy and alliances with other forces -- on the way to promote Islamist interests.

The 'Arab Spring' of recent years has witnessed rule by both the Qutbist trend (in Egypt) and the democratic-Islamist trend (in Tunisia). For the present at least, they have both lost power, and Gulf countries are now persecuting them in much of the

¹ For further details, see: Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Al-Imām al-shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā yataḥaddath ila shabāb al-'ālam al-Islāmī*, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, pp. 26-27; 'Abbās al-Sīsī, *Ḥasan al-Bannā: mawāqif fi'l-da'wa wa'l-tarbiya*, Alexandria, Dār al-Da'wa, 1982, pp. 138-139

² Denis J. Sullivan, *Islam in contemporary Egypt*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1999, p. 45

Middle East. However, since the repercussions of the ‘Arab Spring’ are still ongoing, it is difficult to say at this stage what the future will bring for the Muslim Brotherhood.

This chapter is more complicated than the others, for two main reasons. First – as already explained – Muslim Brotherhood thinkers, unlike ‘classic’ *‘ulamā’*, tend to delve less into pure theology, and show a greater inclination to connect religious terms to political and social realities; secondly, since some of the trends have specific foci, they hardly ever touch those issues which are not of their immediate concern. The main figures from each trend will be examined in this study with the addition of some interesting or anecdotal views of other figures.

While reviewing the available source materials, it becomes clear that a key personality from outside the Arab world, Abu al-A‘la Mawdūdī, has to be included, since he is known to have been the first to put together a detailed plan to execute the comprehensive ‘Islamic order’ [*niẓām shāmīl*] that Afghānī initially introduced. True, Mawdūdī is the founder of the sub-continental Jamaat-e-Islami (JI); and while the JI has gained a rather limited success, including in the political field in which it acts as a party, Mawdūdī’s thinking gained much more influence within the Muslim Brotherhood. His books were translated into Arabic by members of the Brotherhood, and he served as an inspiration to several Brotherhood thinkers examined here. Brief introductions of the main thinkers which form the focus of this study are provided below -- according to their trends.

It is worth noting that in his programme to introduce Islamic Law in Pakistan, Mawdūdī recommended the translation of al-Shāṭibī’s *Al-Muwāfaqāt* -- amongst other books on the philosophy of Shari‘a -- into national languages, “so that our legal experts may acquire a deep insight into and gain a correct understanding of the spirit of Islamic Fiqh”.¹

¹ Mas‘ud, pp. 65-66

Biographies of the relevant thinkers

Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-1949) was born to a Ḥanbalī imām in Maḥmūdiyya, a rural town located northwest of Cairo in Al-Buḥayra Governorate in the Nile delta, and graduated from the Dār al-‘Ulūm educational institution for teachers. Dār al-‘Ulūm had been established in 1871 as an alternative to al-Azhar, providing both Islamic and modern education using Western methods and thinking. Al-Bannā founded the Society of the Muslim Brothers at Isma‘iliyya as a young school teacher in 1928, and in 1933 moved its central activities to Cairo, where it started to gain more influence.

Al-Bannā aspired to use the educational process as a means to achieve the *nizām shāmil*, which he sought to establish as a vehicle for national unity. He took Afghānī’s perception much further, and understood the Brotherhood’s call to return to Islam as a call for a ‘greater revolution’ that was more significant than the French or Russian revolutions. This is because Islam combined radical political change with sweeping reforms of the nation’s material, intellectual and spiritual life.¹

Deeply affected by the Western educational philosophy of his day, al-Bannā created the Muslim Brotherhood’s institutions on the basis of a holistic approach. His deep appreciation of the great holistic educators is well expressed in his memoirs -- as recounted in the opening of the Society’s first school in the early days in Isma‘iliyya: ‘the picture of Pestalozzi teaching... Froebel... Herbert and Montessori in the education industry are still viewed as new and fresh, but all in a novel framework that coincides with the current Islamic tendencies and hopes that are... fed by the *da‘wa*...’.² Al-Bannā was also deeply affected by Sufi thinking, having been a member of the Ḥasafīyya *tarīqa* as a teenager.

Al-Bannā was assassinated in Cairo in February 1949: the identity or affiliation of the two men who shot him has remained a mystery. It should be stated that until today,

¹ Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Aḥādīth al-Jum‘a*, Beirut, Manshūrāt al-‘Aṣr al-Ḥadīth, 1972, “Thawra”, pp. 121-126

² Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Mudhakkirāt al-da‘wa wa’l-da‘iyya*, 1966, pp. 85-86

al-Bannā remains the most important theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood, and represents the ‘mainstream’ of the movement.

Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī was born in Egypt in 1926, and has been an active member in the ranks of the Brotherhood from an early age. He spent time in prison as part of Gamal ‘Abd Al-Nasser’s ‘ordeal’ [*miḥna*] as a student at al-Azhar. He now lives in Qatar, where he moved in 1961. Qaraḍāwī succeeded in achieving widespread popularity with the rise of Muslim orientated media, and was exposed to the wider public mainly via his weekly show on the al-Jazeera TV channel, *The Shari‘a and Life* [*al-Sharī‘a wa’l-Ḥayāt*], as well as the *IslamOnline.net* website (established in 1997) -- initiated by the Qatari ruling family. Qaraḍāwī served as the spiritual mentor for *IslamOnline*. In addition, Qaraḍāwī runs a personal website, which was established one year later. During the past few years, he has been serving as mentor of *OnIslam.net*, which is gradually restoring and further developing the extensive database of rulings of *IslamOnline*.

A keen follower of al-Bannā, Qaraḍāwī combines his religious work with political activism. Qaraḍāwī sees in al-Bannā the main personality who brought together activist proponents of Islam in the recent era, at a time of plentiful controversies and religious divisions, and when Westernisation was spreading, and socialism and communism were being promoted.¹ Qaraḍāwī maintains that in order for the Shari‘a system to be restored, the Islamic spirit has to exist; the right people should be put in place; there should be faith in leadership, the ‘Islamic personality’ [*nafsiyya*] and thinking [*‘aqliyya*] have to be developed; and Muslims should be free from the stress of modern times and subordination to the West.²

Qaraḍāwī developed a special interest in Muslim minorities, and was central in developing a new field of jurisprudence - ‘The Minorities Jurisprudence’ [*fiqh al-‘aqalliyyāt*]; all these, and the long-time support by the Qatari ruling family, have allowed Qaraḍāwī to develop his work on a global scale. Having twice refused to become the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s General Guide, Qaraḍāwī has in many

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, “Al-Imām Ḥasan al-Bannā wa-fiqh al-ikhtilāf”. <http://www.Qaradawi.net/new/library2/282-2014-01-26-18-52-49/3369-> (Last accessed – 11/6/2014)

² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Sharī‘at al-Islām: Khulūdiha wa-salāḥiha li’l-tatbīq fī kul zamān wa-makān*, Doha (undated), p. 163, 166, 172, 176

respects started to develop an alternative, international network to the formal movement, based on the same core beliefs.

In 2003 he launched the International Association of Muslim Scholars (later known as The International Association / Union for Muslim Scholars, IAMS / IUMS), made up of hundreds of *'ulamā'* and activists from around the world, who are mainly affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. The IUMS completed Qaraḍāwī's earlier démarche in 1997, when he established the European Council for Fatwā and Research (ECFR) which deals with the daily lives of Muslim minorities, in accordance with the aforementioned *fiqh al-'aqliyyāt*.

Qaraḍāwī's 'Qatari Islamists' appear to have been so successful that the Kuwaiti thinker 'Abd Allah al-Nafīsī wrote an article in February 2007, in which he said that they should have the lead; and that the mother organisation itself, which has become a 'burden', should be disbanded altogether.¹ In the past few years, Qaraḍāwī has gone even further, focusing his efforts on disseminating on a global scale his 'Middle Nation' [*al-umma al-wasat*] thinking, which was first made public in 1996 in an attempt to form the Wasat political party in Egypt.²

Thus, the central objective of the contemporary followers of the Brotherhood doctrine, (including those called 'Wasat Islamists') continues to be the establishment of a Muslim state governed by Shari'a, rather than the sovereignty of man-made law³ Unlike those Islamists, says Sullivan, who decry democracy as a Western construct which is alien to their political philosophy, the Brotherhood embraces the concept, not as Western, but as a set of ideals that is compatible with Islamic constructs.⁴

Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966) was raised in the Upper Egyptian village of Musha, located in Asyut Province. Later he moved to Cairo and started his career as a literary critic and teacher. In 1939, Quṭb started to work at the Ministry of Education. Later, from

¹ This article triggered many waves in the Arab media. See, for example: 'Al-Nafīsī yad'u ila ḥall tanzīm al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn wa-yushīdu bi-najāh al-Islamiyyīn al-Qatariyyīn fi dhalika' *Majallat al-'Ashr* (Kuwait), 11/2/2007; Mshari Al-Zaydi, 'Should the Muslim Brotherhood disband?', *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), 25/2/2007

² The term 'Middle Nation' [*al-umma al-wasat*] first appears in the Qur'an 2:143

³ Sullivan, p. 46

⁴ *ibid*, p. 50

1948 to 1950, he lived in the United States, where he had gone to study the American educational system. There he gradually developed a sense of contempt for the US, and the Western world as a whole. He left a major heritage in the two fields of social justice and anti-Western, Jihadi values. A main authority for him was Mawdūdī. Quṭb became acquainted with Mawdūdī through his follower Nadvi (whose views were discussed in the previous chapter), who himself served as an inspiration to Quṭb and also translated several of Mawdūdī's books into Arabic.

Quṭb claimed that where an Islamic state is established, Shari'a is the authority for all legislation, Allah's limits are observed, and all Muslims administer the affairs of state with mutual consultation. This can be considered part of the Realm of Islam [*dār al-Islām*]. The rest of the world is the Realm of War [*dār al-ḥarb*].¹ His perception of the current world as being in a situation of permanent *jāhiliyya* will be probed later in this chapter.

In 1966, Quṭb was convicted of plotting the assassination of President 'Abd al-Nasser and was executed by hanging. From the late 1960s until the 1980s, Quṭb's ideas inspired a whole strain of organisations which sought to wage the Jihad as he saw it. A member of one of these organisations assassinated President Sadat in 1981. Sayyid Quṭb and his brother Muḥammad (publisher of his brother's works and himself an important thinker) also served as an inspiration to those who founded al-Qa'ida – Usāma bin Lādin, Ayman al-Zawāhirī, and their main ideologue 'Abd Allah 'Azzām. The last three individuals are irrelevant to this chapter, since they have had no direct dealings with the individuals under study.

Quṭb's contribution to social justice led to conceptions such as the Brotherhood's economic programme, which makes both the individual and the state active and responsible participants in the pursuit of social justice. The economic programme makes it the responsibility of all able individuals to donate funds to charity [*zakāt*], which means that Muslims are responsible for one another.² On the other hand, Olivier Roy stresses that Quṭb was unwilling to compromise on any issue. In practice,

¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, New Delhi, Islamic Book Service, 2001, p. 102

² Sullivan, p. 50

he refused to compromise with the Ministry of Education and with President Nasser, and finally resigned.¹

The democratic-Islamist trend within the Muslim Brotherhood has contributed relatively less to this chapter, but it is still important to refer to it. The two main figures who developed this trend are Ḥasan al-Turābī from Sudan, and, more importantly, Rāchid al-Ghannouchī, leader of the Tunisian Al-Nahḍa Party. Al-Turābī interprets democracy as a government whose leaders are advised by a *shūra* of *‘ulamā*.² In general, he refers to the whole issue of modernity as the test [*ibtilā*] of our time, which requires that all professions and forms of knowledge reference each other in order to face in unison the challenges of modernity.³ Al-Turābī is hardly concerned with the nature of innovations which challenging modernity requires.

Ghannouchī goes somewhat further with the democratic idea, saying that secular democratic systems are based on concepts of justice and equality for all; therefore, if not an ideal Islamic system, they are second best and much preferable to dictatorships. It is a religious duty on Muslims, he says, to participate politically in any government that establishes good and prevents evil from dominating society. Ghannouchī argues that it is a Shari‘a principle that when Shari‘a cannot be implemented, the nearest possible system is to be preferred.⁴

For many years, Ghannouchī, who lived for almost three decades in France and Britain, also gained much credit from Western liberal circles. On several occasions, Western liberals even referred to him as the ‘Mahatma Gandhi’ of Islam. On the other hand, according to Tamīmī, Ghannouchī has been condemned by both Jihadists and members of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr as being a *mubtadi‘* (innovator) and *i’tidhārī* (apologist).⁵

¹ Olivier Roy, *The failure of political Islam*, London, I.B.Tauris, 1994, p. 42

² For further details, see for example: Raghid El-Solh, "Islamist Attitudes towards Democracy: A Review of the Ideas of al-Ghazali, al-Turabi and ‘Amara", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1993), pp.

³ Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, "A Theology of Modernity: Hasan al-Turabi and Islamic Renewal in Sudan", *Africa Today*, Vol. 46, No. 3/4, Islam in Africa (Summer - Autumn, 1999), p. 202, 211

⁴ David Zeidan, "A Comparative Study of Selected Themes in Christian and Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1 (May, 2003), p. 65

⁵ ‘Azzām Tamīmī, *Rachid Ghannouchi: a democrat within Islamism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 184

II. The sources of authority

Unlike the Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ and others under discussion in this work, Muslim Brotherhood intellectuals tend to delve less thoroughly into the actual meanings of the basic terms explored in this study. Nevertheless, the terminological discussion is rather coherent, the acceptance of each term being dependent on other relevant terms. For example, as part of the vows to Allah, Muṣṭafā Mashhūr (1921-2002), the fifth General Guide of the Egyptian Brotherhood, lists among the obligations incumbent on all believers, a complete understanding of Allah, His Book and the Prophetic Sunna; and to this he adds that Islam should remain without any changes on the basis of unity [*tawḥīd*] with no sins, and without any *bida*‘ and *khurāfāt*.¹

(a) Qur’an and Sunna

The curricular bases of al-Bannā’s instruction in sincere faith, aimed to attract a new generation of Muslim devotees, were the Qur’an and the Sunna. A student was expected not simply to memorise the Qur’an, but was taught to internalise its lessons and principles. Quṭb went even further – he sought to derive from the Qur’an and the Sunna a whole programme of action, and not simply moral guidance. At the same time, Quṭb believed that this programme would only be effective if Muslims internalised the norms and rulings to be found within their pages. Therefore, he was seeking to clarify the powerful moral obligations of the Qur’an and to convince people that the force expressed in its words was sufficient to overcome the malign logic of the materialistic world. This would provide mankind with the means of moral self-reinvention.²

(b) tawḥīd

Unlike the Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’, for whom, of course, *tawḥīd* is the most fundamental issue, not all Muslim Brotherhood figures even touched the subject. However, those who did usually stressed its centrality in Islam, much as in the Wahhābī conception.

¹ Muṣṭafā Mashhūr, *Munajāt ‘ala al-ṭarīq*, p. 2 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=3989&bn=159&page=2> (Last accessed – 11 June 2014)

² Tripp, p. 154

According to Tamīmī, Ghannouchī maintains that the division of lands that was imposed on the Arabs and Muslims is an obstacle to an Arab renaissance; furthermore, the current territorial state in its present form is antagonistic to the basic tenet of Islam, *tawhīd* – which, to Ghannouchī, is the main basis for all intellectual, political, social and cultural progress. Speaking about the historical revolutions and political status in the Arab world, Ghannouchī, according to Tamīmī, maintains that they always occurred against the ruling elite and had hardly any impact on society itself. This situation remained until the civilizational cycle was completed. This cycle started with the mission of *tawhīd* that emerged out of Arabia more than fourteen centuries ago and ended when division and backwardness overwhelmed the *umma* under the leadership of the Ottoman dynasty in Istanbul less than a century ago.¹

Mawdūdī states that the most important teachings of the Prophet are faith in him and in the unity of Allah, as expressed in the primary *kalima* and ‘bedrock of Islam’, ‘There is no deity but Allah’, which, according to Mawdūdī, differentiates between the true Muslim and the non-believer [*kāfir*] or the *mushrik*. Those who believe in *tawhīd*, Mawdūdī continues, become one single community, while those who do not – form the opposite group. For the believers there is unhampered progress and resounding success in this world and in the hereafter, while failure and ignominy are the ultimate lot of those who refuse to believe in it.² *Tawhīd* is the highest conception of godhead, the knowledge of which God has sent to mankind in all ages through His prophets...³

Qaraḍāwī maintains that the concept of *tawhīd* is relevant in divinity and ruling, and is based on three verses in Surat al-An‘ām: not taking another God but Allah (6:164), not taking a *walī*⁴ but Allah (6: 114), and not looking at other than Allah as a protector and Creator of the heavens and the earth (6: 14).⁵ Qaraḍāwī sees in *tawhīd* the heart

¹ Tamīmī, p. 159, 198

² Mawdūdī, *Let us be Muslims*, pp. 43-44

³ *ibid*, p. 47

⁴ A *walī* in this instance is an intercessor between man and God

⁵ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Jarīmat al-ridda...wa-‘uqūbat al-murtadd fi ḍaw al-Qur’an wa’l-Sunna*, Amman: Dār al-Furqān, 1996, p. 15

of Islam, and the spirit of its presence, ‘the essence of belief in Allah’.¹ *Tawhīd* contributes to the liberation of people; it helps build a balanced personality; it is a source for security of the soul and provides it with power; it is a source for brotherhood and equality, and frees people from servitude [*‘ubūdiyya*] to other people. Moreover, Qaraḍāwī sees *tawhīd* as a message of the Islamic *umma* to the nations. *Tawhīd* will be achieved by three things: sincerity in servitude (worshipping); disbelief in idols; and the avoidance of *shirk*.²

(c) *tajdīd*

One of the most important issues, which has prompted many to define the Muslim Brotherhood as a reformist or revivalist movement, is their longing for renewal [*tajdīd*] in religion. This aspect is of particular interest to this study, as it should redefine the borders of innovations considered *bid‘a*. The term *tajdīd* has already been discussed in a previous chapter. However, the Muslim Brotherhood in particular have taken it a step further, and it could well be said that the movement has made *tajdīd* its *raison d’être*.

Lapidus’s explanation of the uniqueness of this perception indicates that *tajdīd* assisted in transforming the Muslim Brotherhood into the global network it has become – as already illustrated. *Tajdīd*, Lapidus says, is appropriate for network formation, integration of diverse populations, and political mobilisation; it provides a more universalistic and international form of Islam which could appeal to Qur’an and Sunna, as opposed to local, particularistic forms of veneration of saints and details of religious law. In fragmented societies, *tajdīd* provided the basis of commitment to a common cause, and helped transcend fragmentation in favour of religious and ideological unity.³

Most notable among the ‘*ulamā*’ who discuss the issue are Mawḍūdī and Qaraḍāwī -- the latter on several occasions relying on the former. However, both Quṭb and Ghannouchī mention it as well. Quṭb refers several times to the urge for the revival

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Haqīqat al-tawhīd*, Cairo, Maktabat Wahba, 1979, p. 7, 15

² *ibid.*, pp. 33-40

³ Ira M. Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1997), p. 453

[*tajaddud*] of the necessities of life in our days;¹ in his pamphlet dedicated to Qutb, ‘Abd Allah ‘Azzām also speaks of him as a reformer [*mujaddid*].² Ghannouchī declares it is a necessity to have a *tajdīd* movement in order to restore Islamic societies.³

Mawdūdī notes that many people do not distinguish between innovation and revival, and do not understand that not everyone who renews in religion is necessarily a revivalist. He therefore delineates the various aspects of *tajdīd*:

- The diagnosis of current ailments, so as to examine thoroughly the relevant circumstances and ascertain exactly where and to what extent ‘ignorance’ [*jāhiliyya*] has crept in;
- A scheme for reformation, in order to determine exactly where to strike the blow so as to break the power of un-Islam;
- An estimation of one’s limitations and resources in order to determine the course of action for bringing about reforms;
- An intellectual revolution;
- Practical reforms, including the eradication of evil customs, the cleansing of morals, the regeneration of the spirit of practising Shari‘a, and the preparation of men capable of assuming Islamic leadership;
- *ijtihād*;
- A defence of Islam by challenging political forces which seek to suppress and end Islam;
- A revival of the Islamic system, by removing the authority of un-Islam and creating a government built on an Islamic system;
- A universal revolution.⁴

Mawdūdī also defines the stature of a *mujaddid*: although he is not a prophet, his spirit closely approximates prophethood. He is characterised by:

¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Nahūw mujtama‘ Islāmi*, Cairo, Dār al-Shurūk, 1993, pp. 66-67

² ‘Abd Allah ‘Azzām, *Sayyid Qutb: ‘Imlāq al-fikr al-Islāmi* (undated)

³ Rachid al-Ghannouchī, *Maqalāt: Harakat al-ittijah al-Islāmi bi-Tūnis*, Paris, Dar al-Kirwan li’l-Tabā‘a wa’l-Nashr, 1983, p. 89

⁴ Sayyid Abu A‘la Maududi, *A short history of the revivalist movement in Islam*, Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1963, pp. 34,36-38

- A clear mind;
- A penetrating vision;
- Unbiased straight-thinking;
- A special ability to see the Right Path without extremes and to maintain balance;
- The power to think independently of the contemporary and centuries-old social biases and other prejudices;
- The courage to fight against the evils of the time;
- An inherent ability to lead and guide;
- An unusual competency to undertake *ijtihad* and the work of reconstruction.¹

In other words, as also explained by Voll, the *mujaddid* performs the role of a human agent in relation to the permanent message that was performed by the prophets in the age of ‘new revelation’.²

Qaraḍāwī first explains why there should be no qualms about *tajdīd* in religion. While, he observes, some ‘*ulamā*’ condemn the use of *tajdīd* in religion out of fear that it will be used for deviations, *tajdīd*, unlike *bid‘a* for example, actually falls under the category of knowledge [*‘ilm*];³ this is because *bid‘a* refers only to such matters in which religious behaviour must be guided by tradition [*ittiba*’], but other matters related to the mundane require invention and renewal.⁴ Furthermore, *tajdīd* does not mean change in religion, and renewal in religion is not a new phenomenon – rather, it constitutes a return to a pattern which existed in the time of the Prophet and the *ṣaḥāba*.

It is true, Qaraḍāwī says, that *tajdīd* does not appear in the Qur’an itself; however, those with knowledge understand that the secret does not lie in the text and structure but in intentions and meanings; the Qur’an and the Sunna use the ‘words and structure of the [Arabic] language’, and therefore some words can have more than one meaning.

¹ *ibid*, p. 35

² John O. Voll, “Wahhābism and Mahdism: Alternative Styles of Islamic Renewals”, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, The Islamic Alternative (Spring 1982), p. 114

³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Min ‘ajl ṣaḥwa rāshida*, Cairo, Dār al-Shurūk, 2001, p. 29

⁴ Sagi Polka, “Taqrīb al-Madhahib – Qaradawi’s Declaration of Principles Regarding Sunni–Shi‘i Ecumenism”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49:3

Others can be understood literally, figuratively or metaphorically.¹ *Tajdīd* will establish the humanities and social studies within the correct Islamic framework, which derives from an overall Islamic philosophy.²

Tajdīd in religion, Qaraḍāwī continues, can be proposed by a society, school or movement: it could be introduced in the theological, cultural or Jihadi fields, as long as its members act with truth and patience. All the *umma* should take part in this process, and every Muslim should ask himself about his proper place in the movement of *tajdīd*. As for the identity of the individual who can perform *tajdīd* in religion, Qaraḍāwī follows more or less the same course suggested by others -- saying that it was mostly understood that the individual has to have a high educational status -- either an *‘ālim* or another leader from different fields (including those who fight against *bid‘a*). *Tajdīd* in the Sunna is also definitely permitted, according to the Hadith which relates from the Prophet that:

*Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years one who will renew its religion for it.*³

Qaraḍāwī refers to Mawdūdī, who, he says, explained that throughout history there were both full and partial reformers [*al-mujaddid al-kāmil / mujaddidun juz’ī*]; the latter only made changes in specific aspects.⁴ Qaraḍāwī upholds the view that al-Bannā’s spirit of *tajdīd* was based on a balanced approach. At the same time, al-Bannā fought against *shirkiyya* and *bida’*.⁵ As previously discussed, during the al-Bannā era especially the leadership of the Brotherhood was much more representative of the young *effendi* mindset than of traditional *‘ulamā’*. It seems that al-Bannā tried to justify this tendency by saying that everyone should believe that the reformers do what they do for the sake of religion, and do not benefit from their reforms personally. They should therefore be respected and followed.⁶

¹ Qaraḍāwī, *Islamic awakening*, p. 106

² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Wasaṭiyya al-Islāmiyya wa’l tajdīd*, Cairo, Dār al-Shurūk, 2010, p. 186

³ *ibid*, pp. 188-190

⁴ Qaraḍāwī, *ibid*, p. 196

⁵ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Tarbiya al-Islamiyya wa madrasat Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Beirut, Mu’asasat al-Risāla, 2001, p. 79

⁶ Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Majmū‘at rasā’il al-Imām al-shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Cairo, Dār al-Tawzi’ wa’l Nashr al-Islāmiyya, 1992, ‘Risālat al-ta’līm’, section 13, p. 19

Loyal to this path, Qaraḍāwī speaks about *wasatīyya mujaddida* and *tajdīd wasaḥī*. Those, he explains, who wish to change the Shari‘a or do not follow the Prophet and Qur’an are not among the *mujaddidūn*, but are, rather, revolutionaries and followers of the West. On the other hand, as already mentioned, there are those ‘*ulamā* who oppose any renewal in religion, and think that the word *tajdīd* itself has in it a nucleus which might change religion from within; therefore the real *tajdīd* has to rely on tradition, must be derived from history, and must be connected to the past. The real *tajdīd* rejects what Westernized people are trying to do in transforming religion and the identity of the *umma*; but, on the other hand, it also rejects those who wish religion to remain frozen and perform *takfīr* on others. *Tajdīd*, Qaraḍāwī concludes, completes the *wasatīyya*: thus the *wasatīyya* is *mujaddida* and *tajdīd* is *wasatī*.¹

It seems that, for Muslim Brotherhood thinkers, various significant terms which have been examined in other chapters are bound to this necessity for renewal. Qaraḍāwī, for example, maintains that *fiqh* is the key for *tajdīd*, an issue which was also in the background of his initiation of the concept of *fiqh al-aqalliyāt*.² Quṭb links the implementation of *fiqh* to the daily social order, adding that it needs to be developed according to the realities of our time.³

Regarding this point, Tripp notes that Quṭb uses the term for political purposes. According to Tripp, since Quṭb concentrates on ‘dynamic’ *fiqh* and the privileged understanding of the ‘activist’, this can be and has been read as a revolutionary manifesto -- encouraging like-minded Muslims to overthrow the systems of power that prevent the establishment of a truly Islamic order. However, Tripp adds, Quṭb makes it clear that the precondition for this is reconstruction of the Muslim self, if all other forms of imagination and reasoning are to be avoided from the outset.⁴

¹ Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Wasatīyya*, pp. 184-185

² *ibid.*, p. 199

³ Quṭb, *Naḥūw mujtama‘ Islāmī*, pp. 59-60

⁴ Charles Tripp, “Sayyid Quṭb: the political vision” in Ali Rahnema, ed. *Pioneers of Islamic revival*, London, Zed Books, 1994, p. 157

(d) *ijtihād* and *ijmā‘*

Carrie Wickham refers to the ‘quiet revolution of ideas’ in recent decades, characterised primarily by the call for *ijtihād* by certain circles of Islamist intellectuals, who use human reasoning to adapt enduring Islamic principles to modern times. While continuing to seek divine guidance in the Qur’an and the Sunna, these Islamists, she claims, have formulated new interpretations of Islam’s revealed texts that enable ideas of pluralism, representation, and human rights. This trend, she observes, referred to by Western scholarship as ‘liberal’ or ‘modern’ Islam, is, as already mentioned, termed the new ‘Islamic centrism’ [*al-wasāṭiyya al-Islāmiyya*] in Arabic.¹

According to Tamīmī, Ghannouchī constantly seeks spaces [*faraghāt*] for *ijtihād*. Ghannouchī’s *ijtihād*, he explains, also derives from the explanation that there are answers to some questions in the original sources, but only guidelines for others. In some cases there are misconceptions which need to be corrected. Furthermore, not everything the Prophet did is to be considered on a religious [*dīnī*] basis. Tamīmī notes that Ghannouchī explains how the *khulafā’ al-rāshidūn* acted with *ijtihād*.²

As far as Quṭb is concerned, the revelation of Islam arose against the status quo of the *jāhiliyya* (to be investigated later) in all its unjust political, metaphysical and religious manifestations. According to Shepard, he allows the use of *ijtihād* only in places which are unconnected with the revelation – for example, those which focus on social justice.³

Qaraḍāwī states that ‘had He so desired, Allah could have given all religion the same formulation, unquestionable and needing no *ijtihād*, so that those who disobey would immediately make themselves unbelievers’. However, Allah did not do so,

¹ Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, “The Path to Moderation Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt’s Wasat Party”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jan., 2004), p. 207

² Tamīmī, pp. 188-191

³ William E. Shepard, “Islam as a ‘System’ in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 1989), p. 37

*in order that the nature of religion would be consistent with the nature of language and of humanity in order to make things easier for those who believe.*¹

Qaraḍāwī views the freezing and locking of the gates of *ijtihād* as a main barrier to implementing Shari‘a. He aspires to reopen *ijtihād* – which has to be inclusive – and at the same time return to the Salaf and reject the *madhāhib*. *Ijtihād*, Qaraḍāwī maintains, is one of the sources which revive Islam to match current circumstances. It started in the era of the Prophet and continued with his companions. Thus *ijtihād* does not hurt tradition, yet has to look first into the *fiqhī* tradition of all *madhāhib* in all times and pore over those which are most valuable – in order to achieve the goals of Shari‘a for the benefit of society in our era.²

According to Qaraḍāwī, what is needed in our generation is ‘collective *ijtihād* [*jamā‘ī*]’ that will be universal in scope. It needs to be made after study and proper discussion, and by those with the appropriate capacity, far from government pressure and influence or leverage from the masses, so that political considerations are excluded from the process. Furthermore, after looking at the *Mujaddidūn* in the new era, especially Afghānī, Qaraḍāwī elevates *ijtihād* to the level of a religious duty, stating that in some cases it should be considered *farḍ kifāya* and in others *farḍ ‘ayn*.³ There is a necessity, however, to make *tajdīd* in *ijtihād*. *Tajdīd* must be comprehensive and profound, both culturally and intellectually.⁴

III. Terms affiliated with bid‘a

ḍalāla

In his *Risālat al-ta‘līm*, al-Bannā affirms that every baseless *bid‘a* in religion, whether it means adding or removing anything, is regarded as *ḍalāla*. According to al-Bannā,

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Islamic awakening between rejection and extremism*, 2nd English ed. / revised and edited by Anas S. Al Shaikh-Ali, Mohamed B. E. Wasti, London, Zain International, 1991, p. 105

² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Sharī‘at al-Islām*, pp. 77, 106, 108-109, 156; Qaraḍāwī, *Min ‘ajl ṣaḥwa rāshida*, p. 39

³ Qaraḍāwī, *Min ‘ajl ṣaḥwa rāshida*, p. 43, 50

⁴ Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Wasaṭiyya*, p. 200

there is a need to fight and eradicate it, using the best methods, in order to prevent it from introducing evil further than the *bid'a* itself.¹

Quṭb, as in other cases, recruits history and politics to aid his explanations. He refers to the long battle in Algeria which finally ended when the Islamic Movement adopted the decision to place the fools and *muḍallilūn* alongside the French and Crusaders, who, he says, know they are crusaders. The enemies of Islam, he continues, work against it in various fields, including efforts to make believers go astray [*taḍlīl*].²

Mawdūdī submits three main reasons for *ḍalāla*, which, he maintains, is the real *shirk*:

- Love of one's own desires (Qur'an 28:50): a self-worshipping individual who becomes a slave to his own desires can never become a true slave of Allah;
- Social conformity or following blindly the customs and practices, beliefs and notions, rites and ceremonies of society and regarding them as superior to Allah's guidance;
- Obeying other human beings in preference to Allah, when we believe that a specific individual is a great thinker whose words must be true.³

Mawdūdī also complains about the *ḍalāla* which took place during the pre-Islamic Hajj, with many idols installed in the *ka'ba* (until they were destroyed); at the time, the Hajj took the form of an annual carnival. According to Mawdūdī, even those who were sincere towards religion were led into strange, excessive ways by their ignorance. Some people set out for Hajj without any provisions for the journey and lived by begging for food. They considered this an act of piety, claiming that they had full trust in Allah and, while proceeding towards the House of Allah, had no need of worldly goods.

Conducting business or working during the Hajj journey were generally considered unlawful. Many people gave up food and water during the Hajj, and regarded this

¹ Al-Bannā, *Majmū'at rasā'il*, 'Risālat al-ta'līm', section 11, p. 19

² Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Mustaqbal li hadhā al-dīn*, Cairo, Dār al-Shurūk, 1992, pp. 91-92

³ Mawdūdī, *Let us be Muslims*, pp. 95-99

abstention as worship. Another act was keeping silent throughout the Hajj. Mawdūdī rejects all these practices and says they no longer exist.¹

shirk

Quṭb uses the term *shirk* to attack non-Muslims, as part of his perception of *jāhili* societies. All Jewish and Christian societies, he says, are also *jāhili*. In their case, this is because they committed *shirk*; they have distorted the original beliefs and ascribe certain attributes of Allah to other beings. This association of other creatures with Allah has taken many forms. Jews, for example, are repeating an old and false Christian claim, which attributes to ‘Uzair the sonship of God, and the Christians because of notions of the Holy Trinity.²

These people, says Quṭb, did not consider their priests or rabbis as divine, nor did they worship them; but they gave them the authority to make laws – thus obeying laws which were made by man and not permitted by God. If at that time the Qur’an called them ‘associaters of others with Allah’ and ‘rejectors of truth’, then today they are still the same, because now this authority is not in the hands of priests and rabbis but in the hands of individuals chosen from amongst themselves. Quṭb states that any alliance with either Jews or Christians will never be successful.³

Al-Turābī does not discuss the issue deeply, but he states that religion is a divine belief, free from *shirk*,⁴ which shows the importance he attributes to countering it.

Mawdūdī analyses what he sees as the four metaphysical doctrines relevant to mankind: atheism, *shirk*, asceticism and Islam. *Shirk*, he says, is not supported by scientific proof, but is simply the creation of man’s own imagination. Next to atheism, ‘ignorance’ based on *shirk* has been dominating men’s minds from the earliest times. Throughout the ages, *shirk* has been reinforcing atheism.

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 253-254

² Quṭb, *Milestones*, p. 43

³ Quṭb, *In the shade of the Qur’an*, pp. 142-143

⁴ Ḥasan al-Turābī, *Al-Imān: Athruhu fi ḥayāt al-Insān*, Kuwait, Dār al-Kalam, 1979, p. 330

Mawdūdī says that purging Islam of evils and presenting it once again in its original pure form, was the heavy task for which the *mujaddidīn* were needed -- yet it would be wrong to assume that Islam at any time was completely overpowered by this onslaught of ‘ignorance’. As for having faith in the Prophet for guidance to the way of truth, Mawdūdī states that even if some *mushrikīn* may dislike it,¹ the message is clear:

*We must fight until the sovereignty of all beings other than Allah is brought to an end, until only the law of God rules in the world, until the sovereignty of God alone is acknowledged, until we serve only Him.*²

Mawdūdī also refers to what he calls the ‘duality of *dīn*’ -- being faithful to the teaching of two religions at one time, which, he continues, is *shirk* and sheer falsehood.³

Qaraḏāwī differentiates between the big and small *shirks* -- the big *shirk* being devoid of remorse, and the small being one of the gravest sins. Examples of the small *shirk* are vows made in a name other than that of Allah, wearing amulets and silk, love charms, witchcraft, using astrology for witchcraft, fortune telling, and making a sacrifice that is not for Allah.⁴

jāhiliyya

The concept which connects society and a state of *jāhiliyya* has been raised in the previous chapter, in connection with Nadvi. According to Shepard, Nadvi sees the *jāhiliyya* of ancient Greece and Rome resurrected in modern Europe, asserting that the Muslims in many places have become its allies and camp followers; yet they resisted being turned completely into a *jāhili* community. Mawdūdī defines *jāhiliyya* as:

every such conduct which goes against Islamic culture, morality and the Islamic way of thinking and behaving.

¹ Qur’an 9:33

² Mawdudi, *Let us be Muslims*, p. 127

³ *ibid.*, p. 296

⁴ Qaraḏāwī, *Ḥaqīqat al-tawḥīd*, pp. 41-42, 49-65

Mawdūdī sees the Muslim world since the time of the *khulafā' al-rāshidūn* as a mixture of *jāhiliyya* and Islam.¹ This term seems to have affected many of the scholars examined in this study, each in his own direction, with Quṭb being probably the most far-reaching in his perception.

For al-Turābī, for example, any system or sub-system must be grounded in the overall objective of *tawḥīd*. Moussalli notes that he conceives of any methodological cut-off between the *shūra* and *tawḥīd* as an abruption to the divinely ordained formula: the severance of unity from freedom makes it tyranny, while the disengagement of freedom from unity turns it into licentiousness. But liberation, or the balance of both, Moussalli adds, delivers the *umma* from *jāhiliyya*, ritualistic *shirk* and human tyranny [*tāghūt*]. It acts as a continuous process of both the sincere search for *tawḥīd* and constant transcendence of any ungodly authority.²

Shepard also notes that in his latest writings, published from 1962 onwards, Quṭb shifted his focus from the moral to the theological, and started on his course of extreme dichotomising -- which excludes any mixture of Islam and *jāhiliyya*.³ Quṭb points out three forces that operate against faith: unbelief [*kufr*], apostasy [*ridda*] and paganism [*jāhiliyya*].⁴ Quṭb actually transformed *jāhiliyya* from a particular historical period into a 'condition' which both Western and Islamic societies have entered. Unlike the state of ignorance of ancient *jāhiliyya*, the modern one constitutes a conscious usurpation of Allah's authority and *tawḥīd*; it is therefore necessary to separate from this world both spiritually and physically, and work towards the great Islamic revolution to replace governments with new Islamic theocracies – first in the Middle East, and then elsewhere.⁵

Quṭb's main weapon in fighting this *jāhiliyya* is the opening of a new *ijtihād* in *fiqh*, based on his belief that anyone who says that yesterday's law cannot be implemented

¹ Shepard, p. 523

² Ahmad S. Moussalli, "Hasan al-Turabi's Islamist Discourse on Democracy and "Shura", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Jan., 1994), pp. 58-60

³ Shepard, p. 534

⁴ Olivier Carre, *Mysticism and politics: a critical reading of Fi Zilal al-Qur'an by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966)*, Leiden, Brill, 2003. p. 79

⁵ Roxanne L. Euben, "Comparative Political Theory: An Islamic Fundamentalist Critique of Rationalism", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), pp. 34-35; Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 8

today, claims to know man's needs better than Allah. For him, the same seems to apply to the concept of *ijmā'*, which Quṭb maintains should also not be limited to the *'ulamā*, but should be conducted by all people, who have equal rights in terms of formulating new concepts or political behaviour.¹

IV. Bid'a – definition & types

Speaking of *'aqīdāt*, al-Bannā maintains that the misunderstanding of Allah and his Prophet is the source of every *bid'a* and *ḍalāla* that were established in Islam; it is the origin of all sins, whether badly intended or not. Many historical trends like the *qadariyya*, *murji'a*, *khawārij*, *mu'tazila*, *jahmiyya* and *rāfiḍa* are branded by him as *ahl al-bid'a*, with the explanation that they and others who do not understand Allah or his Prophet have left too many issues in the hands of uninformed people.²

Al-Bannā wishes to differentiate these trends from the Brotherhood, whose thinkers, according to his own belief, do have enough knowledge and recognition of Allah and his Prophet -- which makes them qualified to perform *ijtihād*. Al-Bannā further sees that, in the performance of different types of *bid'a*, such as the *bid'a idāfiyya* -- which here means adding to Shari'a, the *bid'a* of neglecting the Shari'a [*tarkiyya*] and engaging in repudiated acts of worship [*ibādāt muṭlaqa*] -- there is a jurisprudential conflict. Everyone, he states, has his own view on them, and it is useless trying to test the truth by supplying evidence [either way].³

According to Qaraḍāwī, *bid'a* does not belong to religion as it was given by Allah, but rather to daily and earthly living [*ḥayāt al-dunya*]; *bid'a* has corrupted all religions, and also brought about a reality in which Muslims were corrupted.⁴ *Bid'a* is the real source of shirk which has crept into religion as a result, and idolatry and *ghulūw* also penetrated religion because of *bid'a*. Qaraḍāwī quotes this Qur'anic verse:

¹ Quṭb, *Milestones*, p. 55

² Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Mabāḥith fi 'ūlum al-ḥadīth*, online version, p. 19 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=3357&bn=133&page=19> – (Last accessed – 11/6/2014)

³ Bannā, *Majmū'at rasā'il*, 'Risālat al-ta'līm', p. 19 section 12

⁴ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-'Ibāda fi'l Islām*, Beirut: Mu'asasat al-Risāla, 1973, pp. 168-170, 175

Thus their partners have made it seem pleasing to many of the polytheists the killing of their children, in order to destroy them and to cover them with confusion in their religion. And if Allah had willed, they would not have done so. So leave them and that which they invent. [Qur'an 6:137]

Qaraḍāwī says that the one who preaches for *bid'a* comes under the definition of *ḥarām*,¹ and preaching *bid'a* is *fasād* (corruption).² Both al-Turābī³ and Qaraḍāwī⁴ agree that Jews and Christians inserted inventions into their religions. Qaraḍāwī adds that invention in religion leads down a satanic path.⁵ Perhaps because of this, he also maintains that those Muslims who performed *bid'a* at various times were always led back to their Sunna,⁶ again relying on the Hadith about a *mujaddid* sent by Allah towards the end of every century, leading it to a different direction, away from *bid'a*.

Qaraḍāwī goes on to explain *bid'a* in *shar'ī* terms. He divides it into *bid'a i'tiqādiyya* (in belief or creed – also called *bid'at al-aqwāl*) and *bid'a 'amaliyya* (in deeds – also called *bid'at al-af'āl*). *Bid'a*, he adds, is one of those prohibited elements which is different from the usual sins and wrongdoings; the most dangerous point here is that whoever performs it believes that he is actually coming closer to Allah. According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Qaraḍāwī continues, these two types are dependent on each other. Yet, *bid'a* is not always the same in terms of its severity; there are *bid'a mukhafafa* (softened) and *bid'a mughalata* (erring).

Bid'a mukhafafa originates in a mistaken *ijtihād* or an ambiguity in reasoning. Such a *bid'a* corresponds with trivial factors which are categorised as sinful. Within this category, there is the *bid'a* that is agreed upon [*mutafaq 'alayha*], and a controversial *bid'a* [*mukhtalaf fiha*]. *Bid'a mughalata* is, of course, much more severe and has even brought some to the verge of *kufr* or the abandonment of religion, as in the case of the Nusayris, Druze, 'radical Shi'a' and the Isma'iliyya. *Bid'a i'tiqādiyya* is relevant here

¹ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-'Ibāda fī'l Islām*, p. 79

² Qaraḍāwī, *Sharī'at al-Islām*, p. 32

³ Al-Turābī, *Al-Imān*, p. 6

⁴ Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Wasaṭiyya*, p. 102

⁵ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-'Ibāda fī'l Islām*, p. 168

⁶ *ibid*, p. 172

as well: there are forms of thinking which do not consign their holders to *kufr*, yet do lead them to stray [*fasq*], like the *khawārij*, *rāfiḍa*, *qadariyya*, *mu‘tazila* and others.¹

In a different place, Qaraḍāwī also makes a connection between *bid‘a* and *ridḍa* (apostasy). Qaraḍāwī suggests that *ridḍa* should be treated similarly to the separation that ‘ulamā’ have made between *bid‘a mukhafaḥa* and *bid‘a mughalaḥa*, and between those who preach to *bid‘a* and those who do not. The example he provides for apostasy is the writer Salman Rushdie who, he states, preached to *bid‘a* in his words or writings.²

In the opening of this chapter, a brief reference was made to Qaraḍāwī’s perception of *wasatiyya*. Qaraḍāwī explains that even if it has a bit of innovation, *wasatiyya* cannot be placed between Sunna and *bid‘a*.³ The word *wasat* itself, he says, does not appear in the Sunna, but he draws it from intent [*qaṣad*], which according to him means maintaining balance.

Wasatiyya is among the four basic elements Qaraḍāwī considers crucial for the *umma*, taking this from the Qur’an – the other three being monasticism [*rahbaniyya*] (that was traditionally not permitted in Islam), *da‘wa* (which is also the way that *wasatiyya* has to be promoted), and unity [*waḥda*]. Qaraḍāwī goes on to justify *wasatiyya* historically, referring to several *aḥādīth* which prove that the *ṣaḥāba* held on to it, including for example:

*The qaṣad in Sunna is better than ijtihād in bid‘a.*⁴

Qaraḍāwī later turns to an examination of what Rashīd Riḍā (referred to as *mujaddid*) and Muḥammad ‘Abduh said about *wasatiyya*. Qaraḍāwī refers to processes undergone in Europe throughout the 19th century, whereby many lost their faith, and even more – they lost their belief in the Church itself, due to various problematic steps

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, "Al-Bida‘ al-i‘tiqadiyya wa’l ‘amaliyya", <http://www.Qaraḍāwī.net/new/library2/275-2014-01-26-18-50-49/3100-> (Last accessed – 22 May 2014)

² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Jarīmat al-ridḍa...wa ‘uqūbat al-murtadd fi daw al-Qur’an wa’l Sunna*, Amman: Dār al-Furqān, 1996, p. 52

³ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-‘Ibāda fi’l Islām*, pp. 67-68, 80-81

⁴ See Al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 3, p. 19

it had taken in the name of religion.¹ *Wasaṭiyya* points to balance between spirituality and substance, religion and mundane matters. Qaraḏāwī cites examples of *ghulūw* from both Jews and Christians, from which Muslims need to learn; *wasaṭiyya* in Sunna refutes any aspects of *ghulūw*. Qaraḏāwī also associates *wasaṭiyya* with *tajdīd*, saying it forms part of its ideology; the IUMS was established to spread its spirit, and part of the *wasaṭiyya* is an interest in Muslim minorities around the world.

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Rāshid, a leading educator from the first generation of the Brotherhood in Iraq who can generally be seen as a follower of al-Bannā, adds two other categories to *bid'a*. During a discussion on the necessity of cultural *da'wa*, al-Rāshid says that if we outlaw the national connection, this will no longer justify the existence of different nations in the Nile Valley, as well as the sense of pride when people remember all the faults of others. *Bid'a jāhiliyya*, he says, is parallel to the *bid'a* of boasting [*tafakkhur*], and it gradually grows to become a repugnant *bid'a* [*bid'a ghāliḏa*] which has to be strongly repudiated. If the Nile Valley consisted entirely of Arabs, it would have been said by historians to be a *shu'ūbī* tendency that would have been seen negatively. Arabs are the foundation stones, since the Prophet came from amongst them and the Qur'an was written in their language.²

V. Bid'a – what needs to be done to avoid it

In general, it has to be said that Muslim Brotherhood thinkers do not examine the question of avoiding *bid'a* thoroughly and theologically; instead, they prefer to warn against proximity to various sects within Islam that they do not accept. This in spite of the fact that it actually contradicts the Brotherhood's main objective of uniting the *umma*. This issue is one of the inherent contradictions in the Brotherhood's ideology and practice. It could be, however, that, historically the fear of performing acts of *bid'a* or identification with such sects was itself one of the reasons that led the Brotherhood to stay away from sectarian heresies. At the same time, for many years this fear caused the Brotherhood to warn against actual involvement in politics and party affiliation [*ḥizbiyya*]. Fathī Yakan, founder of the Lebanese branch of the

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī, *Wujūd Allah*, 1980, pp. 13-14

² Muḥammad al-Rāshid, *al-Massār*, online version, pp. 10, 32-38 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?parts=250&au=محمد%20الراشد> – (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

Muslim Brotherhood, a follower of Mawdūdī and an important theorist of the Brotherhood, considers this to be a form of *bid'a*.¹

Here we may turn again to al-Rāshid, who states that the Brotherhood should stay away from other sectarian Islamic trends and movements which belong to the *ahl al-bid'a*. He says the Brotherhood has to focus on those whom they see as *ahl al-sunna wa'l jamā'a*. On this issue, al-Rāshid quotes Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī, the Egyptian Society's second General Guide, who, faithful to his *Preachers not Judges* thesis, tried to object to the *bid'a* of people who only accept as Muslims those who belong to the Brotherhood. Al-Huḍaybī believed that those people should be notified of their *bid'a*, and that the Brotherhood should explain to them the necessity of following the rightful path. Such acts should be done before the Brotherhood refuses to receive them organizationally.²

The weakness of sectarianism, al-Rāshid continues, is that the path it follows is based on *bid'a* both in religious dogma and personal conduct, and the '*ulamā*' who lead it do not raise their voice against it. Nevertheless, he says, the Brotherhood does not advocate opening a front against the sectarian groups or neglecting all ties with them; they are Muslims, and socially it is an obligation to live with them. Therefore, al-Rāshid calls on Muslims to maintain connections with them and to leave politics aside. The main aspiration, according to him, should be to gradually correct their *bid'a* and make them follow a good trend which adheres to the Sunna.

A typically apologetic approach is taken by the Brotherhood to all those who claim that the Muslim Brothers themselves are practitioners of *bid'a*. To such a claim, al-Rāshid answers by saying that the *qadariyya* is a form of *bid'a*, unlike the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood does not claim to be a feather blowing in the wind; rather, it takes the initiative for renewal. Its people do not ask: 'what do we have to do with the future?'³ rather, they go out and do it. Referring to the issue of obedience to the leader and to the movement, one of the most important characteristics of the

¹ Fathī Yakan, *Mādhā ya 'nī intimā'ī li'l-Islām*, online version, p. 18 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=5712&bn=199&page=18> – (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

² Al-Rāshid, *al-Massār*, p. 11

³ Al-Rāshid, *Ṣinā'at al-ḥayāt*, online version, p. 10 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=2098&bn=140&page=10> – (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

Brotherhood, which may even engender accusations of *shirk*, al-Rāshid answers that obedience is not a *bid'a* but an idea that matches a much earlier concept.¹

VI. Other types of *bid'a*

Visiting graves

Such issues as visiting graves which have been widely discussed by others are barely referred to by the Brotherhood. Al-Bannā says that visiting graves is allowed and it is a Sunna. However, praying to those buried there, seeking help, vowing not in the name of Allah and other actions related to graves, are clearly *bid'a* and there is a necessity to challenge such behaviour.²

Qaraḍāwī refers to al-Bannā, adding that asking assistance from the dead is considered one of the most heinous sins, *kab'āir*, and *kabā'ir* have to be fought. Qaraḍāwī considers *'ādāt* like beseeching the dead and asking them to help women overcome infertility problems, or cure sick persons of whom doctors have despaired, and many similar requests, as one of the biggest *bida' shirkīyya*.³ He also considers any admiration of saints during their lives, or showering blessings on their graves after they die, to be kinds of *ghulūw* which open the gates to *shirk*.

Qaraḍāwī points out that *'ulamā'* have had disagreements regarding women visiting graves due to contradictory *aḥādīth* on the subject. He himself believes that visiting graves is a duty for all.⁴ Interestingly, in spite of all his harsh words, he also refers back to the words of al-Bannā, who had been more lenient towards those performing *'ādāt* like *du'a* on graves. According to Qaraḍāwī, for al-Bannā this sin is not included in the list of *shirk akbar*.

Qaraḍāwī bases his justification of al-Bannā's observation on three stipulations: that these people still say the *shahāda*; that they keep the obligations of prayer, fasting,

¹ Al-Rāshid, *al-Awā'iq*, p. 3

² Al-Bannā, *Majmū'at rasā'il*, 'Risālat al-ta'līm', section 14, p. 19

³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fuṣūl fi'l 'aqīda bayna al-salaf wa'l khalf*, Cairo, Maktabat Wahba, 2005, p. 229, 241

⁴ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-'Ibāda fi'l Islām*, p. 231

zakāt and Hajj and usually stay away from forbidden things; and that every possible effort is made to amend their ways. Qaraḍāwī says these are not *mushrikūn* who should be fought against, nor should they be ousted from religion.¹

Qaraḍāwī's approach, which differentiates between the *'ādāt* concerning the dead for their own sake, and what these customs might lead to, is recorded in response to a question addressed to his ECFR. The question was connected to the dead rather than to graves, and refers to what is titled 'obligatory prayers in absentia' [*al-ṣalāt 'ala al-ghāib*]: if a person has died in another country, is it allowed to pray for him or should this be considered *bid'a* since he has already had prayers recited in his own country? The ECFR, representing its universal approach and aspirations to unite the nation, rules out the possibility that this is a *bid'a*, though it adds that historically such prayers were only said for those holding a high position in Islam.²

Celebrating the Prophet's Birthday

The tendency to politicise *'ibādāt* is perhaps best reflected in the Brotherhood's attitude to annual commemorations, among them the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. In one place, al-Bannā follows the traditional outlook on this celebration. He notes that some people say the celebration of the Prophet's birthday is a *bid'a*, because it was an innovation in religion and was celebrated neither in the days of the Prophet nor in the days of his followers. Others, he continues, say that it is an obligatory event, meant to demonstrate love of the Prophet. First of all, al-Bannā maintains, the justification of those celebrating the event should be taken into account. It is acceptable if this celebration emanates from one's forefathers, and only such acts as the mixing of men and women are problematic.³

Yet, in another place, his solution to this question is completely different. After 20 years of what he sees as a bloody Jihad over Palestine, al-Bannā wants to remember

¹ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-'Ibāda fi'l Islām*, p. 253

² 'Hal tajūzu al- ṣalāt 'ala al-ghāib', 31 January 2014, <http://e-cfr.org/new/?fatwa=%d9%87%d9%84-%d8%aa%d8%ac%d9%88%d8%b2-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b5%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%a9-%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%89-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ba%d8%a7%d8%a6%d8%a8-%d8%9f-3> (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

³ Hasan al-Bannā, *Al-Iḥtifāl bi'l mawlid al-nabawi al-karīm* (undated)

the martyrs and the al-Aqsa Mosque which is under ‘colonialist occupation’, saying that:

it is obligatory on all Muslims to turn the Prophet’s birthday into a day for Palestine, in it will they protest the unjust policy towards it [Palestine], pray for the martyrs in the mosques, have gatherings to assist them and collect monetary aid to ease their thousands of catastrophes. This is part of the obligations of the Muslims towards Palestine in such a day, which its eternal memories are correlated with the history of the holy land and its glories.¹

Qaraḍāwī offers a slightly less political interpretation. Concentrating on the issue itself, he does not treat it as *bid‘a*, but rather as a series of prohibited acts which take place during the celebration. It is known, he says, that this celebration was not celebrated either by the *ṣaḥāba* or during the *hijra* or the battle of Badr. People who lived in those eras, Qaraḍāwī explains, actually lived through the events, and the Prophet always remained in their hearts and minds; only in the following generations were these events forgotten, and therefore needed to be remembered. In this regard, Qaraḍāwī cites a *fatwā* issued by Shaykh ‘Atiyya Saqr, former head of the Al-Azhar *Fatwā* Committee, in which he states the following:

According to historians, the Fatimids were the first to celebrate the Prophet’s birthday. Qalqashandi, in his book Subh Al-A’sha, says that the Fatimids used to make a huge celebration in Egypt and distribute large amounts of sweets for the occasion. Actually, the Fatimids used to celebrate the birthdays of other members of the Prophet’s family and they also celebrated Christ’s birthday.

It is true, Qaraḍāwī continues, that some of these acts are *bid‘a*; all acts involving *bid‘a* should remain unacknowledged. However, the Prophet’s birthday has to be celebrated, so the Qur’an and the Prophetic *sīra* are remembered. When we celebrate the birthday of the messenger, he continues, we celebrate the birthday of the message.²

¹ Ḥasan al-Bannā, ‘Bayan wa-dhikra ila al-Muslimīn ‘ammatan: liyakūn yawm al-Mawlid al-Nabawī al-Sharīf yawm dhikra li-Filastīn’, *Majallat al-faḥ* (600), May, 1938

² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, ‘Celebrating the Prophet’s birthday’, *IslamOnline* 29/03/2007; available on <http://www.islamic-life.com/forums/deviants-heretics/celebrating-prophets-birthday-answered-Yusuf-al-Qaradawi-Atiyya-saqr-1704>

As to whether celebrating the Prophet's birthday has any basis in the Qur'an and Sunna, or whether it is a *bid'a*, Qaraḏāwī repeats his opinion -- saying that it is permissible to celebrate the Prophet's birthday as an expression of love for the Prophet, provided the celebration does not involve any of the prohibited acts. Qaraḏāwī restates his opinion that celebrating such religious occasions is recommended especially in current times, since the youth, who have indulged in other celebrations, have become forgetful of the religious occasions and their significance. Celebrating such a great event, he continues, is actually intended to celebrate the birth of Islam. Such an occasion is meant to remind people of how the Prophet lived; it should be marked by reading more about the Prophet's Sunna and life, building mosques and religious institutions and performing other forms of charity work which remind people of the Prophet's life and his struggle. This is all true, he maintains, provided these celebrations do not involve anything that is prohibited. Some prohibited actions are inappropriate, like the intermingling of men and women, behaving improperly at mosques, participating in innovations such as worshipping at tombs, and other acts that violate the teachings of Islam. If such previously mentioned violations surpass the religious benefit realised from these celebrations, then, according to Qaraḏāwī, they should be stopped in order to prevent harm and wrongdoing as indicated in the Shari'a.¹

Qaraḏāwī's close associate, the Egyptian born Muḥammad Salīm al-'Awā (former Secretary of Qaraḏāwī's IUMS, who also supported his candidacy for the Egyptian Presidency in the 2011 elections) goes a step further and states that celebrating the Prophet's birthday is 'neither a Sunna nor a *bid'a*', and is unconnected with issues of *'ibāda*,² a subject that will be discussed later.

Qaraḏāwī also refers to other celebrations intended to commemorate the Prophet and his life. By celebrating the Prophet's *hijra*, he says,

¹ Qaraḏāwī, *IslamOnline*, *ibid*

² Muḥammad Salīm al-'Awā, 'Dhikra al-Mawlid al-Nabawī', 09/03/2009
<http://www.ikhwan.net/vb/showthread.php?t=81165> – (Last accessed – 11/6/2014)

...we should teach people values such as sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Companions, the sacrifice of 'Alī who slept in the Prophet's place on the night of the hijra, the sacrifice of Asma' as she ascended the Mountain of Thawr. We should teach them to plan the way the Prophet planned for his hijra, and how to trust in Allah as the Prophet did when Abu Bakr told him: We could be seen so easily, the Prophet replied saying: 'O Abu Bakr! What do you think of two when Allah is their third?' (Have no fear, for Allah is with us.) (Al-Tawba, 9: 40). We need all these lessons and such celebrations are a revival of these lessons and values. I think, says Qaraḍāwī, that these celebrations- if done in the proper way- will serve a great purpose, getting Muslims closer to the teachings of Islam and to the Prophet's sunna and life.¹

As for the controversy surrounding the celebration of 'Ashūrā, Qaraḍāwī's deep resentment of the Shi'a is clear. The Prophet, he says, celebrated this day by fasting only. He asked the Jews why they fasted on that day and they told him that it was the day on which God saved Moses and the people of Israel. The Prophet, says Qaraḍāwī, replied by saying: 'We have more of a right to Moses than you'. So he fasted on that day and ordered the people to fast as well.

Towards the end of his life, continues Qaraḍāwī, the Prophet also said: 'By Allah, if I lived longer I would fast on the 9th of *Muḥarram*' -- meaning that he would fast on both the 9th and the 10th, in order to be different from the Jews who fast on the 10th only. However, Qaraḍāwī continues, some Sunnis celebrate 'Ashūrā as if it were a feast. The Shi'a consider it a day of sadness and mourning, but all such things are innovations and are completely un-Islamic.²

The celebration of al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj

The celebration of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj* is also discussed in Brotherhood literature, although much less than the Prophet's birthday. In general, it may be said that this celebration is perceived in a positive way. In his memoirs, Al-Bannā wrote about a

¹ Qaraḍāwī, 'Celebrating the Prophet's birthday', *IslamOnline*

² *ibid*

lecture he delivered on that night, stating that this is a celebration of the Prophet's dignity and spirit.¹

Over the years, the celebration of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'raj* has been politicised, first commemorated by the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood after 1967, and the land of Palestine -- referred to as the 'land of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'raj*'. Like al-Bannā's earlier suggestion to transform the Prophet's birthday into a day for Palestine, it provides an example of the Brotherhood's embracing of religious commemoration for political purposes. In reply to a question sent to *OnIslam*, about the best way Muslims can celebrate the occasion, Dr. Sano Koutoub Moustapha, a professor of *fiqh* at the International Islamic University in Malaysia, and known to be close to the line of Qaraḍāwī, answers:

*As Muslims, we shall take this opportunity to pray for our fellow Muslims around the globe who are suffering from atrocities. All Muslims should remember that the liberation of Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa isn't an obligation upon Palestinians alone but upon every single able-bodied Muslim. Each of us must do his or her best, at least through our prayers and supplications. I hope to see Al-Israa' and Al-Mi'raj celebrated with the return of Al-Aqsa to the Muslims.*²

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Khatīb, a current member of the Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau, even suggests that the commemoration of the event helped arouse the Palestinian *intifāḍa* in the late 1980s.³

Tarāwīḥ prayers

'Azzām Tamīmī speaks about Ghannouchī's father, Shaykh Muḥammad, who, he says, was one of the few literate people in his village. Shaykh Muḥammad, Tamīmī continues, would not accept much local behaviour including the celebration of the *mawālīd* of the Prophets or local *awliyā'*, which every family used to adopt, and

¹ Hasan al-Bannā, *Mudhakkirāt al-da'wa wa'l-da'iyya*, pp. 115-116

² "How to Celebrate Al-Israa' and Al-Mi'raj", 20/5/2014, <http://www.onislam.net/english/ask-the-scholar/morals-and-manners/morals-and-values/170498.html> (Last accessed - 15 June 2014)

³ Shaykh Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Khatib, '(al-Isra wa-al-Mi'raj) al-Mu'jiza al-kawniyya al-hisiyya al-kubra', *IkhwanOnline* 25 September 2003; available online on <http://www.daawa-info.net/article.php?id=226> – (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

considered these acts *shirk*. He would also lead the *tarāwīh* prayer in his house during the month of *Ramaḍān*.¹

Qaraḍāwī notes that ‘Umar referred to the *tarāwīh* prayers as a good *bid‘a* [*ni‘mat*].² Regarding al-Bannā’s opinion on the subject, Qaraḍāwī says that fighting against denounced issues [*munkar*] is good only if these do not lead to matters which are even more denounced; therefore, for example, al-Bannā used to perform eight *rak‘as* during *Ramaḍān*’s *tarāwīh* prayers, as narrated in a Hadith on behalf of ‘Ai’sha, but he did not condemn those who performed 20 *rak‘as*, since each side has its own sources. Qaraḍāwī explains that al-Bannā acted like this because *tarāwīh* prayers are considered Sunna, and unity between Muslims is considered a duty [*farīḍa*], therefore a duty is more important than a Sunna, and it is better to perform *tarāwīh* prayers in the mosque and to keep peace between brothers. Qaraḍāwī states again that al-Bannā was a pure Salafī in the sense of observing *tawḥīd*.³

‘Ibāda (ritual devotion)

The term *‘ibāda*, which defines the practical sides of worship, is of particular interest to Muslim Brotherhood thinkers, who look at using practical ways to unite the nation. This interest goes beyond the *bid‘a* connection usually referred to in this work, and many cases relate to the affiliated terms as well. Al-Turābī, for example, says that *‘ibāda* is personal and the believer will not commit *shirk* in it. Complete *‘ibāda* has to do with *tawḥīd khālīṣ*.⁴ Mawdūdī includes under *‘ibāda* a very wide scope of issues – which concern doing good or avoiding evil for fear of Allah, as well as abiding by the laws of the Shari‘a:

If you free your speech from filth, falsehood, malice and abuse and speak the truth and talk goodly things and do all these only because God has so ordained to do, they constitute ‘ibādāt, however secular they may look in semblance. If you obey the law of God in letter and spirit in your commercial and economic affairs and abide

¹ Tamimi, pp. 4-5

² Yūsuf Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Taysīr al-fiqh fī ḍaw al-Qur‘an wa’l Sunna*, Beirut, Mu‘asasat al-Risāla, 1992, pp. 120-121

³ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-tarbiya al-Islamiyya*, pp. 81-82

⁴ Hasan al-Turābī, *Al-Imān*, p. 132

by it in your dealings with your parents relatives friends and all those who come in contact with you, verily all these activities of yours are 'ibādāt. If you help the poor and the destitute, give food to the hungry and serve the ailing and the afflicted persons and do all this not for any personal gain of yours but only to seek the pleasure of God, they are nothing short of 'ibādāt. Even your economic activities, the activities you undertake to earn your living and to feed your dependants are 'ibādāt if you remain honest and truthful in them and observe the law of God. In short all your activities and your entire life are 'ibādāt if they are in accordance with the law of God and your heart is filled with His fear and your ultimate objective in undertaking all these activities is to seek the pleasure of God.¹

To help achieve these aims, Mawdūdī concludes, a set of formal 'ibādāt has been constituted which serves as a course of training. The more assiduously we follow the training, the better we are equipped to practise. The 'ibādāt are thus the pillars on which the edifice of Islam rests.

Calvert looks at the differences between Quṭb and the early Salafi thinkers, whom, he maintains, interpreted Islam's textual sources in ways that accommodated an image of radical renewal. Whereas Afghānī and 'Abduh attempted to tie Islam's renaissance to an accommodation with Western sciences, Quṭb put forward a discourse that eschewed the 'un-Islamic' practice of discerning truth by means of rationalist methods. Furthermore, Quṭb upbraids those who would distinguish between the 'ibādāt and mu'āmalāt.²

For Qaraḍāwī, on the other hand, the call for 'ibāda of one God is an important issue which involves *tawḥīd* as opposed to *shirk*, and the dissemination of *bida'* has ruined both belief and 'ibāda. The 'ibādāt were filled with *bid'a* and *ḍalāla*; these should be the same in all *madhāhib*: preserving the number of *rak'as* in each prayer, the way the *rak'a* is performed; fasting in the month of *Ramaḍān* from sunrise to sunset for 29 or 30 days; *zakāt* and Hajj. Qaraḍāwī refers to warnings not to add new 'ibādas or add

¹ Mawdudi, *Towards understanding Islam*, p. 59

² John Calvert, "Sayyid Qutb and the Power of Political Myth: Insights from Sorel", *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, vol. 30, no. 3, Islam and Modernity (Fall 2004), pp. 521-523

to existing ones such various customs as practised next to the *ka'ba*, since that will constitute *bid'a*.¹

Qaraḍāwī notes that al-Bannā preferred to leave such issues, which concern *al-iltizām fi'l- 'ibādāt* with no direct answers, in order to unite various religious groups at the outset.²

The use of *bid'a* as part of an internal blame-game

For Quṭb, since *tawḥīd* is the basis of the criteria of right and wrong, the lawful and the unlawful, and the legal and illegal -- governance, or *ḥākimiyya*, belongs only to Allah and not to the individual.³ Quṭb probably developed the perception of *ḥākimiyya* under the influence of Mawḍūdī, who spoke of 'divine government'. The word *ḥukm* appears in the Qur'an in three verses (5: 44, 45, 47) dealing with judgement in light of the revelation. Akhavi notes that Quṭb interpreted it in terms of sovereignty and rule. Therefore, Quṭb was accused by his most significant opponent within the ranks of the Brotherhood, the second General Guide Ḥasan al-Ḥuḍaybī, of promoting a *bid'a* of a creedal background, which has been encountered in this work in relation to certain groups, but not individuals. This, in a way, resembles *takfīrī* accusations that many Muslim Brotherhood scholars object to -- as will be seen later.

Loyal to his main thesis that the Brotherhood should not act as judges,⁴ Al-Ḥuḍaybī, according to Akhavi, objected to the idea that the principle of Allah's absolute power means that human beings cannot make any laws for the regulation of society. He could not accept that a self-appointed group can apply a litmus test to others with regards to their behavior, and whether this behavior increases or weakens the supremacy of Allah.⁵

¹ Qaraḍāwī, *Al- 'Ibāda fi'l Islām*, pp. 135, 166-171

² Qaraḍāwī, "Al-Imām Ḥasan al-Bannā"

³ Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic fundamentalism: the ideological and political discourse of Sayyid Quṭb*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1992, p. 150

⁴ In the spirit of his famous book, *Preachers, not Judges*.

⁵ Shahrough Akhavi, "The Dialectic in Contemporary Egyptian Social Thought: The Scripturalist and Modernist Discourses of Sayyid Qutb and Hasan Hanafi", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Aug., 1997), p. 386

Women's head-coverings – *the niqāb* and *ḥijāb* as a cultural symbol

In recent decades, the issue of women's head-coverings has been gaining attention. This is a custom which reached Islam at a rather late stage and is now, especially in Western countries, at the heart of a cultural debate -- with Western figures describing it as a symbol of women's oppression, while Muslims claim it represents an act of dignity towards women, and even a sign of their liberation.¹ It seems that in most cases when the issue grabs the headlines, those leading the debate on the Muslim side are Islamists, with many following the line of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus, it should be interesting to see how they deal with the subject in the light of our discussion.

According to Mawdūdī, a person who looks closely at the Qur'anic verses cannot deny that at the time of the Prophet women used to veil themselves, though the veil was not specified in the Qur'an, but is Qur'anic in spirit. The *niqāb* (full face covering), he says, is a social practice established by the Prophet. Mawdūdī's discussion of the issue does not deal with the question of whether or not this is a *bid'a*, but is rather a means of taunting Western culture for its lack of understanding of Islamic culture and its purposes. Mawdūdī speaks against terms such as 'civilisation' or 'progress', and says Islam cannot be interpreted from a Western point of view.²

Qaraḍāwī, on the other hand, needs to defend the covering of women's faces in light of the more recent controversy in Western countries, answering a question as to whether this is an intrusive *bid'a* [*bid'a dākhila*] on Muslim society. First of all, Qaraḍāwī says that the term *bid'a dākhila* was invented by a journalist and he therefore rejects it.³ Qaraḍāwī says that covering the face in front of a strange, non-*mahram* man has been accepted by all *fuqahā'* since the days of the *ṣaḥāba*, though he stresses there was no such custom in the days of the Prophet. The controversy, according to him, is more about the *niqāb* than the *ḥijāb*. Qaraḍāwī's conclusion

¹ For further information see for example Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd, "Polemics on the Modesty and Segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Feb., 1987), pp. 23-50

² Abu al-A'la al-Mawdūdī, *Al-Hijāb*, Dār al-Fikr (undated), pp. 199-203

³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Niqāb li'l mar'a: bayna al-qawl bi-bid'iyatihi...wa'l qawl bi-wujūbihi*, Cairo, Maktabat Wahba, 2005, p. 10

resembles his colleagues' with regard to the Prophet's birthday – that covering the face is neither a duty nor a *bid'a*,¹ thus dismantling a possible argument against this symbol from a religious point of view.

Interestingly, a question which appeared on the official Arabic Muslim Brotherhood website (which traditionally reflects the opinion of the Egyptian/Middle Eastern Movement) a few months later seems to be representing a more conservative approach. This question concerns a fiancé who arrives at the house of his future wife every week – whether he is allowed to see her with no cover for the duration of their engagement; the answer is that for the fiancé, his future wife is considered a non-*mahram*, even though the controversy about covering the face is referred to.²

VII. The Muslim Brotherhood's views on other political trends

All the *bida'* in Islamic history started quietly and gradually grew bigger, adds Muhammad al-Rāshid, a leading educator from the first generation of the Brotherhood in Iraq,³ who seems close to the line of al-Bannā. Al-Rāshid provides a historical account on the development of the *bid'a* as he sees it, following a line similar to the one offered by al-Bannā, as previously discussed. He mentions al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī as a creator of a trend which was itself *bid'a*, as he led it by the power of the sword only. This, says al-Rāshid, is part of the *shī'ī* over use of the sword, explaining that they used to shed more blood than needed.⁴

As already mentioned, the Brotherhood tends to politicise religious terms while providing modern examples; this also applies to *'aqīdāt*, and even to non-Muslim ideologies. Thus, we find al-Bannā speaking about the *bid'a* of Communism as a

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Niqāb laysa fardān wa-laysa bid'a*, 13/10/2009; available on <http://forum.islamstory.com/6738-%C7%E1%DE%D1%D6%C7%E6%ED-%C7%E1%E4%DE%C7%C8-%E1%ED%D3-%DD%D1%D6%C7-%E6%E1%ED%D3-%C8%CF%DA%C9.html>

² "Ḥukm julūs al-muntaqaba ma'a khatībuha", 18/04/2010,

<http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.aspx?ArtID=63575&SecID=365>

³ Muhammad al-Rāshid, *Awā'iq*, online version, p. 16 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=6651&bn=240&page=16> – (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

⁴ *ibid*, p. 18

‘new fashion’ which started to strike Egypt, noting that Ṣidqī Pasha had also fought it; this discussion arises in connection with a teacher whom people complained about, saying he was working against the regime.¹

Quṭb goes a step further to include communist society as part of the wider ‘*jāhili* society’:

First because it denies the existence of God Most High and believes that the universe was created by ‘matter’ or by ‘nature’, while all man’s activities and his history has been created by ‘economics’ or ‘the means of production’; second, because the way of life it adopts is based on submission to the Communist Party and not to God. A proof of this is that in all communist countries the Communist Party has full control and leadership. Furthermore, the practical consequence of this ideology is that the basic needs of human beings are considered identical to those of animals, i.e. food and drink, clothing, shelter and sex. It deprives people of their spiritual needs, which differentiate human beings from animals. Foremost among these is belief in God and the freedom to adopt and to proclaim this faith. Similarly, it deprives people of their freedom to express individuality, which is a very special human characteristic. The individuality of a person is expressed in various ways, such as private property, the choice of work and the attainment of specialization in work, and expression in various art forms; and it distinguishes him from animals or from machines. The communist ideology and the communist system reduce the human being to the level of an animal or even to the level of a machine.²

The rebellion of the *jāhiliyya* against the authority of Allah, according to Quṭb, resulted in the oppression of His creatures. Thus, he concludes, both the humiliation of the common man under the Communist systems, and the exploitation of individuals and nations due to greed for wealth and imperialism under the capitalist systems, are but a corollary of the rebellion against Allah’s authority and the denial of the dignity of man given to him by Allah.

Muslim Brotherhood leaders usually reject the Shi‘a; however, this rejection is not as clear as the rejection by Wahhābīs, as will be seen later. This is connected with

¹ Al-Bannā, *Mudhakkirāt al-da‘wa*, p. 83

² Quṭb, *Milestones*, p. 8

political circumstances as well, especially due to the enthusiasm that the Iranian revolution aroused in the hearts of those striving for an Islamic revolution. Apparently, the most significant thinker among this group is Ghannouchī. Relying on the Iranian revolution's political success, he goes so far as to say that the Shi'a are an accepted *madhhab* [the *ja'fariyya*]; that Iran is in a strategic position which prevents Russian encroachment on the Middle East; and that the West continued its rule on Iran via the Pahlavi dynasty, and erased its 'Islamic Personality' by spreading its own culture through education and the arts.¹

Furthermore, Ghannouchī aspires for an organisation to work for the formation of an Islamic state, based on the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e-Islami and the Imām Khomeinī.²

Qaraḍāwī's approach is more complicated, and seems to be related to political circumstances even more, as part of his support in various *muqāwama* (resistance) organisations. As Polka points out, Qaraḍāwī says that the Shi'a cannot be branded unbelievers, and that it will be wrong to excommunicate them from the Muslim *milla*, or community of believers. In support of his assertion, he mentions a number of points, among them that Shi'a do acknowledge the Sunna as a second source of law, although they derive the Sunna from their own traditions. This is a far cry from nonbelieving; at the very worst, it constitutes a *bid'a*.³

On the other hand, in the past few years, especially following the involvement of Ḥizb Allah in the ongoing fighting in Syria, Qaraḍāwī has been using a much more harsh language, from time to time blaming the Shi'a of being *takfīrīs* -- an issue he strongly objects to (see below), since it sparks sedition [*fītna*].⁴ He has, however, acknowledged Ḥizb Allah's contribution to the *muqāwama*. It seems that when speaking about the Shi'a, Qaraḍāwī refers to the Iranian regime rather than to the Shi'a theologically.

¹ Rāchid al-Ghannouchī, *Maqālāt*, p. 77

² *ibid*, p. 91

³ Polka, p. 421

⁴ See for example: "Al-Qaraḍāwī bayna al-taḥrīd ḍid al-Shi'a wa'l fihm al-khati' li'l tashayyu".

Qaraḍāwī says that Sufism must be adopted as a path to belief and *tajdīd*, but that bad Sufism brings with it a cancellation of the personality for the sake of the Shaykh of each order, creates a division between truth and Shari‘a, or creates legends, exaggerations or distortions in thinking.¹ Qaraḍāwī is drawn into the debate about Sufism and *bid‘a*, saying that each relevant *tarīqa* has to be checked in order to verify that it is clear from *bid‘a*; that its Shaykh aspires to the implementation of the duty to command right and forbid wrong on all levels, and that he has dedicated himself to follow the Sunna and fight *bid‘a*. Qaraḍāwī goes on to say that Ḥasan al-Bannā too was not satisfied with the many Sufis who permit *bid‘a* by visiting mausoleums and graves; al-Bannā, he says, maintains that *bida‘* have no source and were approved by people on their own, either by taking off or adding elements, and that *ḍalāla* has to be fought by the best methods so it does not lead to evil.²

Qaraḍāwī makes it clear that al-Bannā is a complete Salafi in his creed, believing in *tawhīd*, while in his heart he is a Sufi. The same approach, he continues, applies to *‘ibāda*, as discussed previously, in which al-Bannā is a follower and not an inventor [*mubtadi‘*], since of course every *bid‘a* is a *ḍalāla* and every *ḍalāla* belongs in hellfire. Yet, al-Bannā makes sure not to turn every innovation into a *bid‘a* as others do. Al-Bannā, Qaraḍāwī concludes, seems to be following a Sufi pattern – focusing on purification of the soul, healing the diseases of the heart and *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (the refinement of morals). This pattern is close to Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim, who have taken from Sufism knowledge, learning and practice.³

Being close to the Salafiyya in its earlier form, the Brotherhood is very positive about it. Ghannouchī says that Salafiyya is what Islam obtains from its sources – the Qur’an, Sunna, and *khulafā’ al-rāshidūn* -- without becoming intolerant of what has been renewed since.⁴ Qaraḍāwī says that it looks as if al-Bannā started his way close to Sufism and ended up close to the Salafiyya, though the two were not in disagreement, with the result that he managed to combine them together. Nonetheless, Qaraḍāwī rejects *takfīrī* trends and perceptions, stressing that this is a rather new phenomenon

¹ Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Wasāṭiyya*, p. 206

² *ibid.*, pp. 162-163

³ *Ibid.*, p. 164

⁴ Ghannouchī, *ibid.*, p. 93

which started with some of those who spent time in prison, including Brotherhood members; such thinking in the past resulted in the creation of the *khawārij*.¹

Qaraḍāwī says that the Brotherhood in general opposes *takfīr*; instead, it offers progress, *tajdīd* and *al-wasaṭiyya al-mujaddida*.² In addition, Qaraḍāwī's social position regarding Jihad is the opposite to that of Quṭb, Mawdūdī and their followers. In his view, waging Jihad against internal corruption and injustice is far more important than waging it against outside non-belief.³

In the chapter about modern Wahhābī thinking, it is apparent that not all 'ulamā were satisfied with the Muslim Brotherhood. It must of course be assumed that there were also political considerations involved in their *fatāwā*. It is therefore interesting to see a major Muslim Brotherhood thinker, Fayṣal Mawlawī, who was head of the aforementioned Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. When asked about the Wahhābiyya, Mawlawī, who was influenced by Mawdūdī and close to Qaraḍāwī, maintains that Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was a person of the Qur'an and Sunna, and states that his original thinking is Salafi. There is no such thing as a Wahhābī trend in Islam, he continues, apart from occasional disputes based on scholarly knowledge, and it is a pity that this sometimes even leads to *takfīr*.⁴

VIII. Muslim Brotherhood discourse over modern daily developments

Originally, sports and body training were one of the most important elements in al-Bannā's characterisation of the Society of Muslim Brothers. Al-Bannā explained the importance of having physically strong believers, as part of the new generation of Muslims whom he aspired to educate. A strong body, he maintained, was a key to performing such Muslim obligations as prayer, fasting, Hajj and charity.⁵ Throughout the years, sports activities have been at the centre of the Brotherhood's school systems, youth groups and camps. It is therefore somewhat surprising to see the issue raised by

¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Zāhirat al-ghulūw fi'l takfīr*, Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1990, p. 3,11

² Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Wasaṭiyya*, p. 166

³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, 'Jihād al-zulm wa'l fasād fi'l dākhil muqaddam 'ala jihād al-kufr fi'l-khārij', <http://jumsonline.org/ar/default.asp?word=٤٤٥&contentID=4104&menuID=17> (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

⁴ Fayṣal Mawlawī, Al-Wahhābiyya, 13 June 2003, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040902203132/http://www.mawlawi.net/fatwa.asp?fid=781>

⁵ Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Majmū'at rasā'il*, 'Risalat al-mu'tamar al-khāmis', p. 149

current Brotherhood intellectuals next to the term *bid'a*. However, it has to be said that this only refers to a narrow problem. Dr. Mas'ūd Ṣabrī, a member of Qaraḏāwī's IUMS from Egypt and a former senior editor on *IslamOnline*, maintains there are problems pertaining to sports which include ceremonies related to the sport's country of origin. This can be seen, he says, in bowing in karate and some other sports -- whose modern forms are different from their original.

Ijtihād or juristic reasoning may reach different conclusions about the permissibility of such sports; one opinion may regard a given sport as allowable [halal] while another opinion may deem it prohibited [haram]. This is because some muftis may overlook the origin of a given sport and base their opinion on its present form, while others may regard it as unfeasible to overlook the origin and the primary rules of the sport. The situation is much the same for women as for men. Women have been practising sports since the earliest times. Islam never prohibited them from doing so but has only regulated how they engage in sports. However, the mania of gender equality has pushed women into wrestling, boxing, and other sports that entail being violent and exposing their bodies. This leads to the masculinization of women, which deprives them of the fairest things Allah Almighty bestowed on them: femininity and beauty.

Unfortunately, many Muslim countries have adopted the call for complete equality, which disagrees with the nature of our Muslim society. This is apart from the Shari'a violations in many sports and the airing of matches such as football and swimming. Amidst all this comes the ijtihād that maintains that women have the right to practise sports within the regulations set out by the Shari'a. However, when one examines the jurisprudence of objectives and consequences, it becomes clear that juristic results vary from one issue to another, and from one sport to another. Thus, for jurists to come up with a contemporary ijtihād, they need to study thoroughly in order to issue fatāwā applicable to the cases being judged.¹

¹ Mas'oud Sabri, 'Sports: past & present', *IslamOnline*, 7 June 2006
https://web.archive.org/web/20060722185343/http://www.islamonline.net/English/In_Depth/Religious/sportsinislam/PlayingSports/articles/01.shtml (Last accessed - 15 June 2014)

In a different place, Şabri deals extensively with exercising through yoga. His conclusion is that its spiritual aspect is forbidden, since it originates in Hindu teachings; however, as physical training it should be allowed.¹

Perhaps due to his Sufi tendencies, Ḥasan al-Bannā used to relate to the importance of the various parts of the day in a believer's daily life. Part of the social activities and group gatherings for prayers, reading the Qur'an and more, deliberately took place at night-time. This was part of al-Bannā's perception of *ma'rifat Allah* (which, unlike the Sufi meaning, referred to becoming better acquainted with the Qur'an). He also called upon his followers to devote an hour daily to self-examination.² Qaraḍāwī, too, puts much emphasis on the Muslim's commitment to the proper use of his time, which, he maintains, has to be efficiently divided between various obligations.

A Muslim, he continues, is expected to start his day early in the morning, at least prior to sunrise, in order to meet a clean and fresh morning, and then pray. The daily actions have to be performed using time planning.³ Muṣṭafā al-Taḥān, a current leading Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood member, who is active in the field of educating students, adds that in the past, the issue of time planning, probably due to its Western source, had been considered *bid'a*. Now, however, the matter has been settled, and time planning, he concludes, has become a science in itself.⁴

Conclusions

Of the various modern trends covered in the course of this work, the Muslim Brotherhood is the most complicated group, especially today, in its global form. Yet in many of the issues under discussion, Brotherhood intellectuals and scholars see more or less eye-to-eye. This can be attributed to the historical developments which made it an internationally widespread ideology.

¹ See <http://ejabat.google.com/ejabat/thread?tid=5b6f91565d779c35> (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

² Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥakīm, ed., *Minbar al-Jum'a li'l-imām al-shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Alexandria, Dār al-Da'wa li'l-tab' wa'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzī', 1978, 'Ayyuha al-Insān man inta', pp. 28-29

³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Waqt fi ḥayāt al-Muslim*, Beirut, Mu'asasat al-Risāla, 1985, p. 12, 18, 25

⁴ Muṣṭafā al-Taḥān, *Idārat al-waqt*, online version, p. 16 <http://www.daawa-info.net/books1.php?id=6635&bn=238&page=16> – (Last accessed – 15 June 2014)

In spite of having branches across the world, many of its leaders and intellectuals share similar backgrounds, have been educated in institutions which were built on its doctrines like the University of Medina and others, tend to maintain the old custom of intermarriages between their sons and daughters, and pass on leadership roles to them. Several studies which looked at Muslim Brotherhood curricula at schools found that most of its substance relies on the literature of its own scholars;¹ thus the Muslim Brotherhood remains a closed community after all.

One of the most important designations of the Brotherhood is a wide re-opening of the gates of *ijtihād*, so that Islam can be re-interpreted and brought into the daily life today. This concept, however, is perceived not as Quṭb saw it -- in an almost anarchistic way, with everyone having his own right to perform *ijtihād*. Most figures still follow Al-Bannā, who believes that only the scholars (probably referring to Brotherhood scholars), have the right to perform *ijtihād* for the sake of the *umma*.

This wide opening of the gates of *ijtihād* allows the Brotherhood to treat the subject of *bid'a* in a rather lenient way, even though in theory they still believe that performing most acts of *bid'a* is wrong. This is mainly true of the commemoration of historical events relating to the Prophet, where the Brotherhood avoids becoming involved in the long debate which surrounds some of them, and simply suggests that the celebrations help modern day believers to be reconnected to the Prophet and his Sunna. Sometimes commemorating the event itself is not even seen as *bid'a* -- but rather problematic issues which derive from the commemoration sermons, such as the mixing of men and women, and other controversial matters which may occur during the celebrations.

At the same time, with many religious terms, *bid'a* included, the Brotherhood's obvious political recruitment of religion to achieve its goals is apparent. In many places, the essence of the religious term itself is not even analysed. Thus, al-Bannā can suggest that the celebration of the Prophet's birthday be dedicated to Palestine, and his followers commemorate the day of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj* to emphasise the importance of Jerusalem to the *umma*. It thus often appears that the attitude towards

¹ See for example: Anne Sofie Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*, Lund, Sweden, Religionshistoriska Avdelningen, Lunds Universitet, 1994

the Shi'a is derived from the success of the Iranian revolution, and issues like the head covering of women, which has become a symbol of the cultural struggle between Islam and the West, can be discharged of not being a *bid'a*.

Chapter three: The perception of *bid'a* by early Wahhābī '*ulamā*'

I. General Introduction

The history of Islam is dotted with a series of dissident movements and trends which claim that orthodox doctrine and praxis deviate from the true faith. Many of these movements objected to the acceptance by Sunni Muslims of pre-Islamic rituals, and their incorporation into the new religion.¹ The Wahhābiyya is outstanding among these trends, in its aspiration to return to the purity of faith, and has been very active and influential in the Middle East and beyond for three centuries; the Wahhābiyya has succeeded in keeping its hold over three Saudi kingdoms until today.

This chapter will examine the views of the Āl al-Shaykh — five generations of '*ulamā*', descendants of the founder of the Wahhābiyya – Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Tamīmī. These '*ulamā*' were chosen not only because they represented the mainstream of Wahhābī thought in their time, but also because each of them wrote several books which enable scholars to study their perception of key religious terms. Most of the '*ulamā*' discussed here lived in the first and second Saudi states. Unfortunately, this in itself poses a challenge to the researcher due to a lacuna in reliable sources regarding their biographies and developments after Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb. It is to be hoped that the present research into these '*ulamā*', their religious approaches and socio-political circumstances will help fill this gap.

A large number of studies of the Wahhābiyya have identified a direct link between Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb.² Others speak of the considerable influence the Wahhābiyya exerted over its surroundings, as well as over groups and societies at later periods. It is said that their influence reached distant places, including India, Indonesia, Morocco, Libya, Sudan and elsewhere.

¹ Helen Lackner, *A House Built on Sand*, London, Ithaca Press, 1978, p. 10

² See for example 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Jundī, *al-Imām Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb aw intishār al-manhaj al-salafī*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1976, p. 70

The *Salafi* movement, to which a separate chapter is dedicated in this study, is also considered by some scholars to have borrowed certain of its ideas from the Wahhābīs.¹

The clerical dynasty begins in the mid to late eighteenth century, with Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb himself, continues with one of his sons – ‘Abd Allah — one of his grandsons – ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan — his most famous great grandchild – Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman — and concludes in the twentieth century during the third Saudi state with Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman.

The study of this consecutive chain of ‘*ulamā*’ from the same dynasty — the Āl al-Shaykh — helps understand the evolution of the term *bid‘a* and other affiliated terms within the Wahhābī trend, and to show links between these changes, the frequency of the use of the term and historical social and political developments in the three Saudi states. Relying on these parameters, the power of the religious establishment in the three Saudi states vis-à-vis the ruling political elite will also be evaluated.

Biographies of the relevant ‘*ulamā*’

Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792), the founder of the Wahhābī movement, was born in the small village of ‘Uyaynah in Najd to a family of ‘*ulamā*’ belonging to the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*. He engaged in religious studies as a child and was later influenced by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya. At an early age, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb began to travel to the main Islamic centres in the Arabian Peninsula, and was influenced by ‘*ulamā*’ who taught him issues related to *tawḥīd*. As part of his travels, he also spent four years in Basra – out of which he was driven after preaching against *bida*.² Upon returning to ‘Uyayna around 1740, he began preaching and putting his ideas into practice, specially emphasising the centrality of *tawḥīd* in faith, alongside the prohibition of *shirk* and grave worship. It is worth noting here that in this spirit, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his followers referred to themselves as *muwāḥhidūn*; the title

¹ Aḥmad Amīn, *Zu‘amā’ al-iṣlāḥ fi’l ‘aṣr al-ḥadīth*, Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahda al-Miṣriyya, 1948, pp. 23-24

² George Rentz, “Wahhābīsm and Saudi Arabia” in Derek Hopewood, ed. *The Arabian Peninsula: society and politics*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1972, p. 55

Wahhābiyya was originally attributed to them by their opponents, who intended to portray them as followers of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb rather than Islam itself.

In the early 1740s Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was already well known throughout the region of Najd, but his dogmatic and uncompromising beliefs and actions caused the rulers of ‘Uyayna to persecute him and he was forced to leave that town and move to the nearby town of Dir‘īya, where he was welcomed by the city’s ruler, Muḥammad bin Sa‘ūd. The alliance forged between the two brought about the foundation for the creation and huge territorial expansion of the first Saudi state, as well as the implementation of the idea of ‘Rulers and the learned’ [*umarā’ wa ‘ulamā’*] which was presented in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya; this idea means that the political rulers of an Islamic state must follow the religious guidance of the ‘*ulamā’*’ while the ‘*ulamā’*’ must obey the political instructions of the rulers and refrain from intervening in political affairs.

Protected and sponsored by the powerful Saudi dynasty, Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and the other Wahhābī ‘*ulamā’*’ introduced the Wahhābī message to all territories taken by the Saudis. By the time of the Shaykh’s death the Wahhābī creed was well known and enforced across almost the entire Arabian Peninsula, the Fertile Crescent and Syria. His numerous theological books were cited by many people.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1751/2-1826/7) was the fourth son of Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and is considered the most prominent Wahhābī scholar in the period after his father’s death and the collapse of the first Saudi state in 1818, when he was captured by the Ottomans and sent to Egypt. During this period, ‘Abd Allah and other Wahhābī ‘*ulamā’*’ (especially his brothers) were able to consolidate Wahhābiyya as a unique school of jurisprudence, distinguished not only from the Ḥanafī, Malīkī and Shafī‘ī schools but also from the mainstream Ḥanbalī school.

¹ For more on his biography, see: ‘Abd Allah al-Sāliḥ al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb – ḥayātuhu wa fikruhu*, Riyād, Dār al-‘Ulūm, 1979, pp. 23-69; ‘Uthmān bin ‘Abd Allah bin Bishr, *‘Inwān al-majd fi ta’rikh Najd*, Riyād, Dārat al-Malik ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, 1982, pp. 33-48, 180-199; ‘Abd al-Raḥīm bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, *Al-Dawla al-Sa‘ūdiyya al-ūlā 1158-1233 / 1745-1818*, Cairo, Al-Matba‘a al-‘Ālamiyya, 1969, pp. 19-26

The fact that Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad and his brothers gained reputations not only among Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ but also among the general Najdī population played a crucial part in protecting the Wahhābiyya at times of crisis after the Saudi state collapsed. This was one of the reasons for the survival of the Wahhābiyya and the ongoing role played by the dynasty of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in the second and third Saudi states. As will be demonstrated, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah’s views and focuses differed from his father’s in several aspects, especially on the subject of unbelief [*kufr*].¹

The Egyptian-Ottoman occupation of Najd in 1818 not only brought an end to the first Saudi state but also broke the consecutive chain of descendants of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Three of his six sons – ‘Ali, Ibrāhīm and ‘Abd Allah died in exile in Egypt, where their own sons also remained. During the 1820s there was a short period of vacuum in Wahhābī leadership until one of the Wahhābiyya founder’s grandsons – Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1868), also known as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, revived the Wahhābī movement, together with his son ‘Abd al-Laṭīf. ‘Abd al-Raḥman returned from Egypt to Najd in 1825 or 1826 and became the spiritual leader of the Wahhābī movement in the second Saudi state until his death.

The second Saudi state was much weaker than the first and often suffered from political instability, mainly due to the frequent struggles within the Āl Sa‘ūd family. As a result, the power of the ‘*ulamā*’ vis-à-vis the rulers and the population increased significantly and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman became a very powerful figure. He was the chief *qāḍī* and the person who appointed all *quḍā*’ and teachers in the Najd region.

Equipped with the religious knowledge he gained during his years of exile in Egypt, when he was also close to the circles of ‘*ulamā*’ from Al-Azhar, ‘Abd al-Raḥman was now better able to defend the Wahhābiyya against its opponents. He wrote no less than six books, the most important of which was *Fath al majīd – Sharḥ kitāb al*

¹ For more on the biography of ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad, see: Firro, Tarik, *Āl al-Shaykh in the Second Saudi State 1824-1891* (PhD Dissertation, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be’er Sheva, 2009), pp. 81-84; Bishr, pp. 186-190; ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’, *Al-Maktaba al-Shāmila*, <http://shamela.ws/index.php/author/1015> (Last accessed - 25 August 2014)

tawhīd, which dealt with the most famous book of Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. In general it would seem that since the political and military capabilities of the second Saudi state were much more limited than those of the first, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman focused in his religious message much less on Jihad against the *kuffār* and much more about enforcing the rules of *tawhīd* on the Najdī society and warning against all sorts of *shirk*.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1810-1876), also known as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, was born in Dir‘iya but went into exile in Egypt with his family following the collapse of the first Saudi state. He lived and studied in Egypt until 1848, when he returned to Najd and resided in the capital of the second Saudi state, Riyāḍ. Both ‘Abd al-Laṭīf and his father played an important religious role in the country. Despite the fact that he outlived his father only by eight years, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf became one of the most prominent and most influential Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ of the second state. His most influential years were between 1865 and his death in 1876. During this period, political conditions in the second Saudi state deteriorated significantly and the state was practically torn apart due to fierce political struggles between various segments of the ruling family, following the death of Fayṣal bin Turkī in 1865.

‘Abd al-Laṭīf put an emphasis on *takfīr*, *fitna* and *shirk*, and considered as *mushrikūn* not only all non-Muslims, but also all Muslims living outside of the politically-controlled territories of the Wahhābī state; this meant that many Najdis were considered by him as *mushrikūn*.²

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh (1848-1921) was the most prominent religious figure of the second Saudi state after his father’s death in 1876. He acted as the religious tutor of King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Sa‘ūd when the latter was a young child. Upon the collapse of the state in 1891 at the hands of the Rashīdī dynasty, the Shaykh was not exiled with the rest of the Saudi family who found its way to the then semi-independent chiefdoms of Kuwait and Qatar, but rather moved

¹ For more on his biography, see: Ṣāliḥ bin ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Farīḥ, *Wāki‘ al-da‘wa ila Allah fi’l dawla al-Sa‘ūdiyya al-thāniyya, 1240-1309H* (undated), pp. 196-209; Firro, pp. 85-101
² al-Farīḥ, pp. 210-220; Firro, pp. 138, 165-170

to Hā'il – the capital of the Rashīdī chiefdom. When Riyāḍ was recaptured by the Saudis in 1902, 'Abd Allah rejoined the Saudi family and remained the most prominent religious figure of the third, newly born Saudi state until his death in 1921.

In 1902, 'Abd Allah's daughter Tarfa married 'Abd al-'Azīz and gave birth to Prince Fayṣal bin 'Abd al-'Azīz, who in 1924 became Viceroy of the Ḥijaz and later the heir apparent to his brother Sa'ūd and finally – King of Saudi Arabia. These connections by marriage strengthened the position of the Āl al-Shaykh family as the leading clan of the Wahhābī elite in the third Saudi state.¹ From the establishment of the third Saudi state in 1902, Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf resided in a very different atmosphere to that surrounding his father. From the early days of the state, the political and military elite led by the ruler, Ibn Sa'ūd, was stronger than the religious elite, and as a result the '*ulamā*' could not issue *fatāwā* or hold public opinions which contradicted Ibn Sa'ūd's political needs.

This means, for example, that under the third Saudi state, the religious elite could not declare Jihad or declare *takfīr* on anyone without Ibn Sa'ūd's permission; such permission was never given due to Ibn Sa'ūd's decision to achieve and secure Saudi interests (particularly territorial expansion in the Arabian Peninsula) by using sophisticated and gradual manoeuvres, either internally with regard to other communities in the Arabian Peninsula or externally, vis-à-vis Britain and the Ottoman Empire.²

¹ Khayr al-Dīn al-Zirkilī, *Shibh al-Jazīra al-'Arabiyya fi 'ahd al-Malik 'Abd al-'Aziz*, Beirut, published by the author, 1970, vol. 1, pp 57-76; David Dean Commins, *The Wahhābī mission and Saudi Arabia*, London, I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2006, p. 210; Alexander Bligh, "The Saudi Religious Elite (Ulama) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom" in Peter von Sivers, ed. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, 1985, pp. 37-50

² Jacob Goldberg, *The foreign policy of Saudi Arabia – the formative years 1902-1918*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 30-34, 48-65; Aharon Layish, "Ulama and Politics in Saudi Arabia" in M. Heper and R. Israeli, eds., *Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, London, Croom Helm, 1984, pp. 29-63

II. The Sources of authority

(a) Qur'an and Sunna

Sunna — the Prophetic Sunna to be precise — is, according to Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, the second of the only two fundamental sources of Shari‘a after the Qur’an. In most cases, he says that the believer should follow both. Furthermore, the Qur’an and Sunna are not just the only two legitimate sources of Shari‘a, but also the two most effective weapons that should be used by the believer in his struggle against the unbelievers, the demons and devils who try to disrupt the believer’s efforts to worship Allah correctly.¹ From his writings, it should be concluded that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb sees Sunna as the direct opposite of *bid‘a*, which means that a person can either be Sunni or *bid‘ī*, either a member of *ahl al-sunna* or of *ahl al-bid‘a*.

Like his father, and as a devoted Wahhābī scholar, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad considers the prophetic Sunna as one of the only two fundamental sources of Shari‘a. For him as well, any deviation from the Sunna constitutes a *bid‘a*; thus, whoever wishes to follow and to revive the Sunna must fight and counter *bid‘a* as his father did.² An important aspect to raise here is the Shaykh’s political use of Sunna. A whole book of his is dedicated to attacks on those he considers to be enemies of the pure Sunnis like the Shi‘a, *khawārij*, Zaydis and various other groups which, according to him, have been challenging Islam from its early days.³ Furthermore, a large proportion of the Shaykh’s work is devoted to the issue of Sunna in general. In another book, for example, he argues that any person who converted his religion to Islam agreed in his conversion to follow the prophetic Sunna, and following the Sunna automatically meant a commitment by the new Muslim to refrain from any act of *shirk* or *ghulūw*.

¹ Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kashf al-shubbuhāt*, Riyāḍ, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, 1419 H, pp. 13-14; *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 1-6, 15, 20-21, 34, 39, 46, 115-117

² ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Al-Kalimāt al-nāfi‘a fi’l mukafarāt al-wāqi‘a*, Saudi Arabia, ‘Abd al- Aziz and Muḥammad al ‘Abd Allah al Jamih, 2000, pp. 340-348

³ ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Jawāb ahl al-sunna al-nabawiyya fi naqd kalām al-Shi‘a wa’l Zaydiyya*, pp. 50-227

Only the Prophetic Sunna, the Shaykh continues, is the correct and explicit one [*al-sunna al ṣaḥīḥa wa'l sarīḥa*]; he adds some quotes from the *khulafā' al-rāshidūn* saying that if there was anything in their traditions or actions a little different from the Prophet's traditions and actions, these should be ignored, and only the Prophetic way should be followed. The same, he argues, applies to a political ruler, who must follow the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunna, or otherwise be considered a tyrant [*tāghūt*].¹ This may reflect the reality that prevailed in the second Saudi state that has already been highlighted – the power of the Āl al-Shaykh family and the religious elite over the political elite led by the Āl-Sa'ūd dynasty, and the frequent religious intervention in the state's political affairs.

Naturally, Sunna is important to Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf too. The Shaykh follows his predecessors' line of thinking by insisting that the Qur'an and Sunna encompass all aspects of life and provide a proper solution for any questions or problems, including in day-to-day issues which have little to do with religion. He argues that a person who does not acknowledge this should be considered as one of 'the worst among the ignorant and among the most deviant of those who have deviated' [*min ajhal al-jāhilīn wa-aḍal al-ḍallīn*]. Any deviation from the Qur'an and the prophetic Sunna is considered a satanic action.

'Abd al-Laṭīf sees *bid'a* as the direct opposite of Sunna, and he says that whoever supports *bid'a* automatically declares war against the Sunna and should be punished accordingly. Being a Muslim or having faith or knowledge is not enough, according to Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf. He further says that among the Muslim believers [*ahl al-Islām*], the best group is the people of faith [*ahl al-imān*]; the best among those are the people of knowledge [*ahl al-'ilm*], and among these the best are the *ahl al-sunna*.² This indicates that he has effectively constructed a virtual religious 'pyramid', in which the *ahl al-sunna* are the vanguard of the believers.

¹ 'Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Faṭḥ al-majā'id – sharḥ kitāb al-tawḥīd*, pp. 33, 100, 139-144, 169, 253-255.

² 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin 'Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Al-Barāhin al-Islamiyya fi radd al-shubha al-Fārisiyya*, Riyāḍ, Maktabat al-Hidāya, 1989, pp. 7, 74, 101; 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin 'Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Miṣbāḥ al-zalām fi'l radd 'ala man kadhaba 'ala al-Shaykh al-imām*, Riyāḍ, Dar al-Hidāya (undated), pp. 67-72

Such a division into groups according to the quality of their belief reflects the position in the last years of the second Saudi state after 1865, in which the religious elite led by Shaykh ‘Abd Aal-Laṭīf, considered many subjects as unbelievers or as bad believers.

A thorough reading of Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s book dedicated to the issue of *bid‘a* suggests that he respects the Sunna, but in his *fatāwā* relies more on the Qur’an. However, he does quote many times the greatest Ḥanbalī or Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ – Ibn Taymiyya and Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, who relied heavily on the prophetic traditions.¹

(b) *ijmā*‘

Despite claims by some ‘*ulamā*’, Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb does not reject the principle of *ijmā*‘ completely. He considers *ijmā*‘ as one of the sources of the Shari‘a, by saying that it was not possible for the entire nation to agree or to have a consensus over something which would make it go astray. However, bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb distinguishes between a ‘correct’ [*ṣaḥīḥ*] and ‘incorrect’ *ijmā*‘; the only correct one possible is over the content of the only two fundamental sources of the Shari‘a – the Qur’an and Sunna.

The Shaykh further adds that if a majority of opinion exists among Muslims about an issue which contradicts the Qur’an and Sunna, such a majority cannot be considered as *ijmā*‘, surely not as a correct one. In other words, *ijmā*‘ applies but is not considered as the third fundamental source of Shari‘a; rather, it is some kind of a logical branch of the first two fundamental sources – the Qur’an and the Sunna.²

In his books, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad does not elaborate so much about *ijmā*‘, but on the occasions when he does refer to the subject it can be understood that he considers the *ijmā*‘ of the *ṣaḥāba* as some kind of a third fundamental source of the Shari‘a. For example, upon describing the wrongdoings committed by *ahl al-*

¹ ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, *Masā’il fi’l munakarāt wa’l bida’*, pp. 18-46

² Al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 132-133; *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 54

bid'a, especially those involved in grave worshipping, he says that this *bid'a* contradicts the Qur'an, the Sunna and the *ijmā'* of the *ṣaḥāba*. This approach, it has to be understood, does not contradict the Wahhābī general attitude which only accepts Qur'an and the Sunna, because it is obvious that any *ijmā'* of the *ṣaḥāba* could be based only on the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunna.¹

Another aspect in Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin Muḥammad's doctrine is the necessity of obtaining an *ijmā'* upon declaring someone a *mushrik* or a *kāfir* (unbeliever). At this point he differs from his father, who, upon detecting an act of *shirk* rushes not only to declare the perpetrator a *mushrik*, but also stresses he should be punished immediately.²

Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan argues, either directly or indirectly, that *ijmā'* is one of the fundamental sources of Shari'a. However, he limits it to include only the consensus reached or agreed by the '*ulamā'*' from the early generations of Islam [*ijmā' salaf al-umma*] – which goes up to the generation of the followers of the followers [*tābi'u al-tabi'in*]. The best believers, according to him, are those he refers to as 'The People of the Sunna and Consensus' [*ahl al-sunna wa'l ijmā'*]; these, according to the Shaykh, are the only people who could preserve and protect the *tawḥīd* from all the damages and disasters caused by *shirk* and *bid'a*.³ Like other issues which have already been examined, attributing importance to *ijmā'* may reflect a necessity for better social and political cohesion in the second Saudi state.

In Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf's writings, *ijmā'* appears very often side by side with the Qur'an and the Sunna, when discussing the legitimate ways of making religious ruling or indeed issues related to those who violate correct *fatāwā*. For example, a sinner who also violates the guidelines of *tawḥīd* is said to have actually violated the Qur'an, the Sunna and the *ijmā'*. However, a deeper insight into the Shaykh's writings gives the impression that for him *ijmā'* is not a fundamental source for Shari'a by itself, but rather a by-product of the contents of the Qur'an and the Sunna. Like some of his predecessors, Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf agrees to have an *ijmā'* which has been

¹ 'Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, pp. 344, 368

² *ibid*, pp. 332-333.

³ 'Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Faṭḥ al-majīd*, pp. 35, 71, 219, 263

determined up to the days of the followers of the *ṣaḥāba* [*al-tābi 'ūn*]; he also supplies a new definition of such a consensus – *al-ijmā' al-ma'ṣūm* (an impeccable consensus), a consensus which cannot and must not be challenged or questioned.¹

Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf refers very briefly to the issue of *ijmā'*. He does not say directly whether *ijmā'* should be considered a fundamental source of Shari'a, but rather states that, upon deciding whether a person or a group should be considered guilty of acts of *kufr* or *ghulūw*, a consensus should exist among those who decide -- namely, the '*ulamā'*'. The Shaykh mentioned two terms: The consensus of the People [*ijmā' al-nās*] and the consensus of the '*ulamā'*' from the early generations of Islam [*ijmā' al-salaf*].² By so doing he follows more or less the perceptions held by his predecessors regarding *ijmā'*.

(c) *ijtihād*

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's approach vis-à-vis *ijtihād* is unique. The Shaykh does not rule out the use of *ijtihād* altogether, but distinguishes between two types – the first being the absolute [*al-ijtihād al-muṭlaq*] which had been carried out by the '*ulamā'*' from the first generations, including the *ṣaḥāba* and the four *imāms* (the founders of the four *madhāhib*), who had been trusted '*ulamā'*' and ruled only according to the Qur'an and the Sunna. The second type is partial or limited [*ijtihād juz'ī / maḥdūd*], which was performed by later '*ulamā'*' with vast and profound knowledge about the issue addressed to them; in any case, their rulings must also rely only on the Qur'an and the Sunna.

Generally, by limiting the legitimacy of *ijtihād*, the Shaykh expresses his fear that by applying it too often, the Qur'an would no longer be the guiding authority for the entire nation, turning instead into a guiding authority only for a handful of '*ulamā'*'. It is quite obvious that like *ijmā'*, *ijtihād* for Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb is not a fundamental

¹ 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin 'Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Al-Barāhin al-Islamiyya*, p. 61; 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin 'Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Miṣbāḥ al-zalām*, pp. 191, 262, 321

² 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, *Masā'il fi'l munakarāt*, pp. 18-26

source of Shari‘a but a tool for the implementation of the only two sources of Shari‘a permitted by the Wahhābiyya – the Qur’an and Sunna.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad follows his father’s path, distinguishing between absolute and partial *ijtihād* and stating that no scholar among his or his father’s generation could claim to be an absolute *mujtahid* or act like one. The Shaykh argues that for experienced ‘*ulamā*’, performing partial *ijtihād* is legitimate, but only in cases where such *ijtihād* is based on a clear and unquestioned text from the Qur’an or the Prophetic traditions. Upon performing partial *ijtihād*, he continues, a *mujtahid* is not necessarily obligated to follow the Ḥanbalī school, as long as he rules according to the Qur’an or the Sunna or both, and as long as his ruling is based on a judgment of one of the four imāms.²

Like his predecessors in the Āl al-Shaykh family, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan is very reluctant to speak about *ijtihād*, claiming that, as time passes, the likelihood increases for deviation from the Qur’an and Sunna while making religious rulings. The Shaykh does not condemn *ijtihād*, and even quotes Ibn Ḥanbal, who said that *ijtihād* is still legitimate within the right boundaries. Nevertheless, he emphasises that a *mujtahid* must be extremely careful in applying *ijtihād* in his rulings. This again means that he must verify that such *ijtihād* relies strongly on the Qur’an or Sunna or both.³

In a related manner, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf does not elaborate much in his writings about *ijtihād*. He looks at strict limitations on those ‘*ulamā*’ entitled to perform *ijtihād*, especially the issues it may cover. The whole issue of *tawḥīd* is beyond question, as well as the duty of prayers, the pillars of Islam and the fundamentals of belief. All other issues are open to *ijtihād*, as long as the process does not contradict the Qur’an and Sunna. Performing a wrongful *ijtihād*, the Shaykh concludes, might

¹ Al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 133-135; *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 17, 29

² Al-‘Uthaymin, *ibid*

³ ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Fath al-majīd*, pp 251, 282; ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Qurat ‘uyūn al-muwāḥidīn*, Taif, Maktabat al Muayyad, pp 29, 191

lead to *shirk* and *ghulūw*, as happened to Christians, the Shi‘a, philosophers and other groups.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf hardly refers at all, in his previously-mentioned book, to the whole issue of *ijtihād*. However, it is quite clear that he is not in favour of it. He warns that by broadening the scope of *ijtihād* and performing it carelessly, believers might find themselves out of Islam, committing sins and wrongdoings while thinking that they are actually obeying Allah. He cites the example of the *khawārij* as a group of believers who overused *ijtihād*, and, as a result, regressed to performing *ghulūw* until they were finally excluded from Islam. In addition, some students of the *ṣahāba* [*talāmīdh al-ṣahāba*] made a wrongful *ijtihād* which caused them to deviate from the right path and as a result were executed.²

III. Terms affiliated with *bid‘a*

ḍalāla

In his writings, Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb frequently refers to the issue of *ḍalāla*. In most cases, his discussion of the term is tied to *bid‘a*, and he repeatedly quotes some familiar Hadith and links the two through the version which results in hellfire. The Shaykh tends to bond the affiliated terms directly, writing about *ahl al-bid‘a wa’l ḍalāl* or *ahl al-shirk wa’l ḍalāl*. For the Shaykh, it looks as if *ḍalāla* is the opposite of truth [*al-ḥaqq*].³

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad also refers several times to the ‘triangle’ of *bid‘a*, *ḍalāla* and *shirk*. The Shaykh quotes the Hadith regarding the first two much less than his father does. His main emphasis lies on the issues of grave worshiping and asking assistance from the dead; he attacks very firmly people who do these things, saying that whoever looks for assistance from the dead actually commits an act of

¹ ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Miṣbāḥ al-ḍalām*, pp. 107-11

² ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, *Masā’il fi’l munakarāt*, pp. 18-22

³ *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 54, 81, 108-117; Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kashf al-shubbuhāt*, Riyāḍ, The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, 1419 H, pp. 27-32; Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-kabā’ir*, pp. 2-6

shirk, and should, therefore, be seen as belonging to the *ahl al-bid'a* and the *ahl al-dalāl*.¹

Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman deals with the issue of *ḍalāla* much more often than his predecessors, a fact which once again may be attributed to the political crises and internal disintegration which prevailed in the second Saudi state. The Shaykh looks at *ḍalāla* as the opposite of going in the right path. While Allah, he says, paved the right path for the believers, Satan paved the way which leads to *ḍalāla*. *Ḍalāla* occurs alongside terms like *bid'a*, *kufr*, *shirk* and *sharr* [evil], especially when they involve acts of worshipping anyone or anything but Allah. On the other hand, if a believer performs an act of worship correctly, according to the rules and guidelines of *tawḥīd*, he is protected from *bid'a* and *ḍalāla*. The Shaykh also warns believers against false *imāms* who try to make them go astray, referring to them as *al-ā'ima al muḍallilūn*.²

For Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin 'Abd al-Raḥman, *ḍalāla* generally accompanies *shirk*; the basis for both is violation of the strict rules of *tawḥīd*, especially sinful grave worship and the sin of invoking assistance and salvation from the dead. In some cases, the Shaykh refers to the ignorance which brings men to deviation, speaking of such people as *ahl al-jahl wa'l ḍalāla*, who distort the contents of the Qur'an and of the sound Hadith. Several groups are named in this way, among them the Sufis.³

Interestingly, Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf does not refer to *ḍalāla* at all. Unlike the others, he deals more extensively with *bid'a*, as well as with *shirk*.

¹ 'Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Waḥhāb, *Al-Kalimāt al-nāfi'a fi'l mukafarāt al-wāqi'a*, pp. 364-372

² 'Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Fath al-majīd*, pp. 2, 13, 32, 101-104, 167, 256, 319

³ 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin 'Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Al-Barāhin al-Islamiyya*, pp. 66, 97-103

shirk

Since Wahhābiyya was based by Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb on the importance and centrality of *tawḥīd*, dealing with the issue of *shirk* would be a key topic for him,¹ his followers and the Wahhābī ‘ulamā’. ‘Aziz ‘Azmeḥ, a Wahhābī historian who wrote his main book in the days of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, stresses more than once that the unbelief of the *mushrikūn* in his time was much more prevalent than those in the days of the ancestors, who were killed by the Prophet.² ‘Azmeḥ further reminds his readers that the first to practise the *bid‘a* of *shirk* in Islamic history was ‘Amr bin Luḥay,³ who according to tradition introduced to the city of Mecca the Goddess Manāt, one of the three daughters of Allah. And indeed it seems that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb believed that *shirk* was the most severe *bid‘a*, and there was a direct path leading from *bid‘a* to *shirk*.⁴

For Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *shirk* means anything which deviates from the strict guidelines of *tawḥīd*, which makes its perpetrator a *mushrik*. In more practical terms he was particularly zealous in his fight against worshipping holy men (like the Sufi shaykhs) and the common habit of conducting prayers at graves and tombstones. The Shaykh emphasises in many of his writings that any such *mushrik* should face the consequences of his actions, whereby he would be subjected to *takfīr*, and executed by the true believers.

A well-known story told about him suggests that he used to personally hunt down those he considered *mushrikūn* and kill them, sometimes with his bare hands. In his writings, the Shaykh repeats many times the claim that the Prophet used to kill the unbelievers who did not follow the Sunna,⁵ which, as already explained, is another main pillar of Wahhābiyya. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his followers also began demolishing graves visited by the people, and stoned to death people who had committed acts of adultery or *shirk*.

¹ See for example Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Majmū‘at al-tawḥīd al-Najdiyya*, Mecca, Matba‘at al-Ḥukūma, 1391H, p. 108

² ‘Aziz ‘Azmeḥ, Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Riyāḍ, Riad al-Rayyes Books, 2000, p. 91

³ *ibid*, p. 55

⁴ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Majmū‘at al-fatāwā wa ‘l-rasā‘il*, Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, 1987, p.69

⁵ *Al-Rasā‘il al-shakhsiyya li ‘l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp 1-13, 43-73, 92-125; Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kashf al-shubbuhāt*, pp. 1-34; Al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 111-127

Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd Allah’s approach is very similar to his father’s; according to him, a *mushrik* is a person who violates the strict rules and guidelines of *tawḥīd*. *Shirk* is a sin which cannot be forgiven by Allah and all *mushrikūn* are sentenced to spend an eternal afterlife in hellfire. Like his father, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah elaborated on the whole issue of grave worship as the main source of *shirk*, but he also refers to *ghulūw* as behaviour which turns a believer into a *mushrik* and *muḍallil*.

Ghulūw, the Shaykh maintains, means attributing divine characters to important people like ‘Ali, Jesus and all the Prophets -- including Muḥammad -- and performing acts of worship to them in person. As mentioned earlier, Shaykh Muḥammad correlates between *shirk* and *bid‘a*, and on many occasions uses the term *ahl al-shirk wa’l bid‘a*; these are defined as unbelievers, who also deserve the greatest punishment for their actions and face death.¹

Shirk is definitely the most important axis of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan’s writings. All chapters of his main book *Fath al-majīd – sharḥ kitāb al-tawḥīd* which has already been referred to several times in this chapter, deal in one way or another with different aspects of *shirk*. His discussion of the subject runs through his other books as well, and is much wider and more thorough than those of his predecessors, going back as far as the pre-Islamic *mushrikūn*. The Shaykh quotes a wide range of relevant verses and *aḥādīth*, which create the impression that *shirk* for him is the ultimate evil. He says that whoever does not implement and practise the harshest rules of *tawḥīd* must be considered a *mushrik* and punished accordingly. This applies even to a strict believer for whom Allah is the creator, but who makes the slightest deviation from the rules of *tawḥīd*.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman also deals extensively with the issue of *shirk*, alongside *takfīr*. In his writings he covers various aspects of *shirk* and describes in full detail any case and any question related to it. All sorts of violation of *tawḥīd*, as well as cases in which Muslims convert to other religions are, in the Shaykh’s opinion, acts of *shirk*, which oblige the true believers to declare *takfīr* of the

¹ ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al- Wahhāb, *Al-Kalimāt al-nāfi‘a fi’l mukafarāt al-wāqi‘a*, pp. 330-341

perpetrator and to kill him. Killing the *mushrikūn* wherever they are is a duty which will prevail and exist permanently, until the day of resurrection. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf developed the discussion of *shirk* and *mushrikūn*, and reached a very high level of argument in describing many kinds of behaviour as *shirk*. For example, he argues that a person who dislikes another person who has accepted the rules of *tawḥīd* for himself, should be considered a *mushrik*, even if the hostility between the two does not originate in religious issues.

The quick political, social and military deterioration of the second Saudi state during the last decade of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s life influenced his religious writings and is clearly reflected in his discussions of *shirk*. After 1865, when the second Saudi state lost many territories and populations, the Shaykh had to deal with a new question which his predecessors did not have to face – how to consider a believer who finds himself living in an area controlled or occupied by *mushrikūn*, and who is forced to join their military in fighting the people of unity [*al-muwāḥḥidūn*]. The Shaykh issued a *fatwā* saying that such a person actually becomes a *mushrik* and should, therefore, be killed as a *kāfir*.

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf continues the wide discussion of *shirk* and *kufr*. He describes in his book several situations of *shirk*, and it seems obvious that he considers it the most horrible sin, which leads to a declaration of *takfīr* against those who perform such acts, which in turn will lead to their execution. However, in his discussion of the sentence that *mushrikūn* deserve, the Shaykh differs from his predecessors.

First, he argues, if a person commits an act of *shirk* or *kufr*, he should not be punished immediately, but sometimes be given the benefit of the doubt. The punishment should be imposed only if the perpetrator was well aware of the duties, rules and guidelines of *tawḥīd*. The Shaykh stresses that if this person was not fully aware of his duties, he should first be taught them and receive a fair warning before moving to the stage where he must be executed as a *kāfir*. Secondly, he responds to a question sent to him by a believer, asking whether everyone is entitled to kill or execute a *mushrik*; or whether the potential executioner should consult with an *imām* (in this

sense, a political leader) first in order to obtain permission. His answer is that there is a debate among the most prominent *'ulamā'* about this question.¹

The fact that Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf conditions the execution of *mushrikūn* and recognises that the *imāms* play a role in the matter reflects the significant change that the third Saudi state brought to the relations between the religious and the ruling political elites.

The ruling elite of the third Saudi state, led by 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Sa'ūd, was much stronger than the religious elite; this meant that the *'ulamā'* were restricted and could not act without first obtaining the political ruler's permission. The *'ulamā'* in this era, led by Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf, had to soften their religious message to some extent, and adjust it to the political needs dictated by the ruling elite.

It should be mentioned that Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf was not only the most prominent religious figure of his time, but was also connected via marriage to the Ibn Sa'ūd family – we already mentioned his daughter Tarfa, who married Ibn Sa'ūd and gave birth to Prince Fayṣal bin 'Abd al-'Azīz; Fayṣal later became the viceroy of the Ḥijāz (1924-1953), the Crown Prince (1953-1964) and finally – King of Saudi Arabia (1964-1975).² These connections via marriage must have made him more attentive to the political necessities of his son-in-law, King 'Abd al-'Azīz bin Sa'ūd, which led him to soften his religious approach.

commanding right and forbidding wrong

For Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, the issue of commanding right and forbidding wrong [*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*] occupies an important position in his discourse. Following Ibn Taymiyya, the Shaykh claims that there are three necessary conditions for the correct implementation of this doctrine. First, the believer should have a vast knowledge about what is right and what is wrong; secondly, the believer must be very accurate and sensitive concerning right and wrong;

¹ 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf Aal al-Shaykh, *Masā'il fi'l munakarāt wa'l bida'*, pp. 18-46

² Al-Zirkilī, vol. 3-4, pp. 953-960; Alexander Bligh, 'The Saudi Religious Elite (Ulama) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom', *International journal of Middle East studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1985, pp. 44-45.

and thirdly, whoever commands right and forbids wrong should be patient and strong in order to be able to cope with the challenges this brings.

One of the factors which led the Shaykh to establish a political alliance with Muḥammad Ibn Sa‘ūd in the mid-eighteenth century was his understanding that without the consolidation of an alliance between the political power of the Saudi family and the religious prestige of himself and his followers, it would not be possible to implement correctly and comprehensively the ideas of commanding right and forbidding wrong. His conclusion seems to match Ibn Taymiyya’s ideas concerning the symbiotic relations which should exist between *umarā’* wa *‘ulamā’*.¹

Unlike his father, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad barely refers to the issue. On the single occasion he does refer to it, he presents a case in which a believer notices an instance of wrongdoing but does not know if he may use force to counter it, and punish or kill the perpetrator, in the absence of permission from his legitimate ruler, the emir. Shaykh ‘Abd Allah does not provide a decisive answer, but rather quotes several correct *aḥādīth* representing both opinions – in part stating that the believer must perform the command to do what is right and prohibit whatever is wrong passively, by heart and words only, while others argue that he must take action and kill the perpetrator, even if this means disobeying the emir.²

As seen earlier, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah tries to be very careful politically. On the one hand, as a prominent religious scholar and the son of the founder of the Wahhābī movement, he cannot ignore the requirements of commanding right and forbidding wrong; however, he refrains from expressing a direct opinion that would recommend disobedience to the ruler, mainly due to the strength of the emirs of the first Saudi state -- who were not tolerant towards interference in the state’s political affairs by the *‘ulamā’*, especially if it could also be interpreted as a call to disobedience in general.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, however, considers the issue to be very important religiously, socially and politically. The Shaykh argues that the guidelines of

¹ Al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 137-139; *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, pp. 114-123

² ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Jawāb ahl al-sunna al-nabawiyya fi naqḍ kalām al-Shi’a wa’l Zaydiyya*, pp. 70-74

commanding right and forbidding wrong must be applied and even enforced; otherwise it will not be possible to carry out any religious or political rulings or decisions. He says that all monotheistic Prophets -- even those who lived prior to the era of Muḥammad – used to apply these guidelines as a guarantee for the preservation of *tawḥīd*, with an emphasis on avoiding all sorts of *shirk*. Perhaps to continue with this line, the Shaykh also argues that Jihad for the sake of Allah is an integral part of the concept of commanding right.¹

The importance and centrality of commanding right and forbidding wrong continues to be reflected in the writings of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman, although he writes about it less than his father did. As already mentioned, most of his writings focus on *shirk* and *takfīr*. In writing on this issue, the Shaykh adopts most of his father’s opinions and especially the argument about Jihad being part of this concept. He also adds that a believer who follows the guidelines properly will not find himself in a situation of *ḍalāla*.²

Finally, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf looks at the importance of the concept, but his emphasis lies much more on its second dimension – forbidding wrong. Most of the discussions in his book are dedicated to *bida’* and wrongdoings [*munkarāt*], and to many of them he attributes *shirk* and *kufr*.³

IV. Bid‘a – definitions & types

According to Jundī,⁴ *bid‘a* for the Wahhābiyya can be defined as something which is claimed to be part of the religion but in fact is not -- appearing either as an abstract or concrete form, or as a general concept. *Bid‘a*, he says, is forbidden and disgraceful because it is a confusion, and it is extremely incompatible with the fundamentals [*uṣūl*] of religion. According to Ḥusayn ibn Ghannām, a Wahhābī historian from the days of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *ahl al-bid‘a* are considered by the Wahhābiyya to be the worst of all people.⁵

¹ Al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 138

² *ibid*; ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Miṣbāḥ al-ḍalām*, p. 85

³ ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Aal al-Shaykh, *Masā’il fi’l munakarāt wa’l bida’*, pp. 18-46

⁴ ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Jundī, *Al-Imām Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb aw intiṣār al-manhaj al-salafī*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1976., p. 31

⁵ Ḥusayn ibn Ghannām, *Ta’rīkh Najd*, Beirut, Dār al-Shurūk, 1985, p. 49

As already cited, Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’, especially in the time frame under discussion, tended to focus their attention on issues involving worshipping the living or dead, or the widespread practice of turning graves into mosques and building over them.¹ Hence, many examples will be drawn from this form of *bid‘a* of ‘*ibādāt*. Ibn Ghannām, for example, is quoted by Zaharaddīn² as saying that in general their period was full of un-Islamic practices such as worshipping the dead and saints. Zaharaddīn continues and conveys an outstanding example of a sixty-cubit long grave in Jeddah which the Arab tribes worshipped, claiming that it was the grave of Eve. Although the ‘*ulamā*’ quoted in this study do not discuss in depth the status of annual commemorations which have been examined in other chapters, the Wahhābīs fought very hard against worship at any tombstones. Between the years 1803-1808, for example, they attacked and destroyed the domes which mark the birthplaces of the Prophet, Abu-Bakr, ‘Alī, Khadīja and others, and also caused the Hajj convoys from across the region to stop for three years.³ Such acts, it should be noted, have been continued by the modern Saudi state.

As will be seen later in this chapter, a strong characteristic of the earliest Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ is the way they associate *bid‘a* with unbelief [*kufr*]. This tendency, it has to be said, goes completely against the rulings of Ibn Taymiyya who stated that *takfīr* itself is the first *bid‘a* in Islam. For Ibn Taymiyya, the difference between the believer and the unbeliever lies in the way that belief in Allah and the Prophet are professed, and with a full recognition of the *tawhīd* of Allah and the Prophet as his messenger [*shahāda*], however this supersedes the power of the Imām⁴ who cannot determine who is a true believer and who is not.

¹ ‘Abd Allah al-Sāliḥ al-‘Uthaymin, *Ta’rīkh al-mamlaka al-‘Arabiyya al-Sa‘ūdiyya*, 1984, p. 53

² M. S. Zaharaddīn, “Wahhābism and its Influence Outside Arabia” *Islamic Quarterly* 23, 1979, p. 147

³ Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Kashf al-irtiyāb fi itibā‘ Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, Iran, Qum, Mu’asasat Ansariyan li’l Tabā‘a wa’l Nashr, [199-], pp. 23, 33

⁴ As‘ad AbuKhalil, “The incoherence of Islamic fundamentalism: Arab Islamic thought at the end of the 20th century”, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 678-679, 687

In any case, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, for example, says:

*When you ought to fight unbelief, among the things you have to know are the reasons for accepting bida‘ and the ways to fight them.*¹

On the issue of tomb worship, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, for example, states (without any explanation or discussion) that among the people who worship graves, the worst are those who go around [*tāfa*] the graves.² Regarding the custom of building mosques on top of graves, he quotes a Hadith in which the Prophet warns against doing so, assuming that the Prophet himself will be worshipped:

*Do not use my tomb to call for prayer, and your houses as graves; worship me from wherever you are, and your prayers will reach me.*³

In general, when referring to *bid‘a*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb usually quotes the Hadith which links *bid‘a* and *ḍalāla*, in the version which says this leads to hellfire.⁴ However, sometimes he quotes the Hadith with the opposite intention, which looks at the reward given to anyone who revives a Sunna.⁵ Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb rejects the perception that there exists a *bid‘a ḥasana*, emphasizing instead the Prophet’s rejection of the notion.⁶ On the other hand, he refers at least once in his writings to what he calls *bid‘a* which is rooted in the shari‘a [*bid‘a lahā aṣl fi’l shir’*], like the act of gathering all Suras into one divine book – the Qur’an – after the death of the Prophet, or the extra prayers performed by ‘Umar (which, as has been shown above, are usually the main source to justify the perception of *bid‘a ḥasana*).⁷ The two elements that he says distinguish between the believers and the *ahl al-bid‘a* are hypocrisy [*nifāq*] and apostasy [*ridḍa*].⁸

¹ Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd alladhi huwa ḥaqq Allah ‘ala ‘ibādihi*, Beirut, Dār al-Qur’an al-Karīm, [19--], p. 42

² *ibid*, p. 47

³ *ibid*, p. 368

⁴ See for example: Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-kabā’ir*, pp. 2, 9; *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 20

⁵ See for example: Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb uṣūl al-īmān*, p. 51

⁶ Al-‘Uthaymin, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 129-131

⁷ *Al-Rasā’il al-shakhsiyya li’l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 51, 108-109.

⁸ Ibn Ghannām, p. 384

During the early days of the Wahhābiyya at least, it appears that *'ulamā'* dealt with issues related to *bid'a* with some measure of mercy. *Bid'a* is presented as a result of utter confusion or even ignorance [*jahl*]. In a large number of instances phrases can be found such as *mubtadi' jāhil* or *jāhil wa mubtadi'*.¹ Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb explains that no matter how good the original intention of its generator has been, *bid'a* leads to terrible things.² Ignorance, he says, could lead to *shirk* when it comes to matters of *tawhīd*. Such ignorance also leads the *mubtadiūn* to cope with many more elements of unbelief than other believers.³

It is also worth noting two types of *bid'a* that do not appear to have been referred to in the writings of other *'ulamā'*. These are mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb himself. The first represents what looks like any slight deviation from Sunna in interpersonal relationships, such as a person who wishes to split his assets and lands in a manner contrary to the guidelines of inheritance set by the Qur'an and shari'a. Such an act is called a 'cursed *bid'a*' [*bid'a mal'ūna*].⁴ Another example of this kind is wasting one's money or evicting one's daughter;⁵ another concerns the divorce ceremony, which should be performed according to the Sunna, meaning the actual declaration of *ṭalāq* on three separate occasions, without adding anything such as curses. Any change from this formula can also be considered *bid'a*.⁶

The second type of *bid'a* established by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb concerns politics in relation to the aforementioned model of *umarā' wa 'ulamā'*, where he says that a legitimate political ruler should be recognised and respected as such, but only if he is stern about two key issues which are actually one: a strict following of the Qur'an and Sunna on the one hand, and avoiding *bida'* and *khurāfāt* on the other.⁷

¹ See for example: Ibn Ghannām, p. 280; Aḥmad bin Ḥajr Abū Tāmī, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb: 'Aqīdatuhu al-salafiyya wa da'watuhu al-iṣlāhiyya wa thanā' al-'ulama' alayhi*, 1999, p. 103

² Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, p. 43

³ Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Majmū'at al-fatāwā wa'l rasā'il*, p. 149

⁴ *Al-Rasā'il al-shakhsiyya li'l-Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb*, p. 37, 51

⁵ Ibn Ghannām, p. 290

⁶ Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mu'allafāt al-Shaykh al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb*, Riyaḍ, Al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'ūdiyya, Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University, 1981, vol. II, pp. 688-689

⁷ Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-kabā'ir*, p. 14

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad does not offer a precise definition of *bid‘a*, but it seems that, in general, he follows his father’s line, positioning it as the opposite of Sunna. Since his main emphasis is on commanding right and forbidding wrong, he correlates these affiliated terms by saying that whenever someone transforms commanding right or Sunna into *bid‘a*, it leads to unbelief [*kufr*] and empties *tawḥīd* of its content. Many times he speaks about *ahl al-shirk wa’l bida‘*, reflecting his father’s view that *shirk* is the worst *bid‘a*.

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah was not as ready to demolish graves as his father, but the Shaykh’s point of view on *bid‘a* is reflected in the way he approaches the topic. If a person, he maintains, comes to visit a grave in order to think about the next world [*al-ākhirah*] or to pray to Allah and ask for his forgiveness, there is nothing wrong with it according to the Sunna. However, if his purpose is to worship the dead or ask for their assistance, this becomes a violation of the Sunna and an act of *shirk* which he calls *bid‘a shirkiyya*; the Shaykh adds that his father was the one who quashed and suppressed such behaviour.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan continues more or less in a similar vein, not providing an exact definition, but citing examples, again mainly related to tomb worship, which give the impression that *bid‘a* is the opposite of Sunna. The Shaykh quotes various ‘*ulamā*’, including Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Taymiyya, who said that tomb worship and the conversion of graves into mosques are considered acts of *ghulūw* and *bid‘a*, which, when combined, add up to *shirk*.

Like his uncle, he distinguishes between two types of visits (*ziyāratān*), the one which is allowed, or the other in which the visitor performs any act of worship, considered as a ‘visit of innovation’ or a ‘visit of unbelief’ [*ziyāra bid‘iyya / ziyāra shirkiyya*]; once again, the tight conflation of the two terms can be noted. With regard to the latter, he also looks at *kufr*, stating that *bid‘a* which leads to unbelief is liked by Satan even more than regular sins; while there is a way back from a sin, there is no return from *bid‘a*.²

¹ ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al- Wahhāb, *Al-Kalimāt al-nāfi‘a fi’l mukafarāt al-wāqi‘a*, pp. 340-342, 347-352, 368

² ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Faṭḥ al-majīd*, pp. 252-253

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf focused his writings on the issues of *takfīr* and *shirk*; naturally, therefore, the other affiliated terms, including *bid‘a*, acquire less attention. Basically, his approach appears harsher than the others – stating that a person could either be a follower of Sunna [*sunnī*] or of *bid‘a* [*bid‘ī*] but not both. The Shaykh further mentioned that Allah must be worshipped according to the rules of the Shari‘a and not by performing any acts of *bid‘a* -- otherwise this would imply that the true meaning of the *shahāda* was not made a reality.

Interestingly, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf quotes not only Wahhābī but also non-Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’, who, according to him, contributed to the struggle against *bid‘a*. These include, for example, Abu ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī – founder of the *madhhab* which bears his name, as a scholar whose work in preventing worship at the Prophet’s grave helped in promoting Sunna and preventing *bid‘a*, since he convinced the believers to pray to Allah alone. Unlike his predecessors in the Āl al-Shaykh dynasty, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, upon discussing *bid‘a*, also refers from time to time to other issues, which are less severe than tomb worship -- for example, invoking the Prophet’s name after the *adhān*, as already noted. This custom, he upholds, was first performed by Muslim warriors in fortifications [*amṣār*] in the fifth and sixth centuries. According to him, this was ‘invented’ by Egyptians and is a *bid‘a* which has no source in the Sunna.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf was the first of his family to compose a book dedicated specifically to the subject of *bid‘a*, comprising a series of questions addressed to him, together with his answers. The numerous direct correlations made between *bid‘a* and *kufr* can be seen clearly here.

One of the questions in this compilation, for example, is what should be done with a person who knows and reads the Qur’an but still does not understand that asking for assistance from anyone but Allah is wrong. The Shaykh answers that such an act of *bid‘a* constitutes *kufr*, and this person should be considered an unbeliever. Another

¹ ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Miṣbāḥ al-zalām*, pp. 39-42, 65-69, 145, 171-2, 299-313; ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Al-Ithāf fi’l radd ‘ala al-ṣahāf*, online version on http://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%89_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%AF_%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81 (Last accessed – 21 August 2014); ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl al-Shaykh, *Al-Barāhīn al-Islamiyya*, pp. 8, 101

question concerns a believer who would like to be friendly with both the preservers of *tawhīd* and the *mushrikūn*, but fails to denounce or condemn the wrongdoings committed by the latter. Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh answers that whoever fails to denounce such wrongdoings should be considered an unbeliever and be punished accordingly, by death.¹

V. Bid‘a – what needs to be done to avoid it

Altogether, most of the ‘*ulamā*’ studied in this chapter focus on attacking *shirk*, *kufr* and *bid‘a*; they do not tend to offer practical ways to avoid *bid‘a*, and most of the time simply speak about the need to adhere to the Sunna and to command right and forbid wrong. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, for example, emphasises the prohibition of worshipping Allah by means of *bid‘a* or in any way not permitted by Him, as it is said:

*whoever wishes to meet his Lord shall worship him the right way, and not commit any shirk while serving him.*²

He states that Allah has ordered Muslims not to argue about His Sunna,³ which should be preserved with the tradition of the first three generations. In order to keep the Sunna, one should refrain from three things – committing acts of *bid‘a*, causing or upholding separation [*tafarruq*] or disagreement [*ikhtilāf*] within the ranks of the *umma*.⁴ This is where the term *salaf* first appears in relation to Wahhābī doctrine. *Salaf* means working to return to the fundamentals which prevailed in the first three generations of Islam, and in modern times is often confused with the Wahhābiyya. Interestingly, even Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s brother Sulaymān, who dedicated a whole book to attacking the Shaykh, agrees that *bid‘a* is opposed to *al-salaf al-ṣaliḥ*.⁵

¹ ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, *Masā’il fi’l munakarāt wa’l bida’*, Rīyaḍ, Maktabat al-Rushd, 2008, pp 18-22, 29-30

² Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Majmū‘at al-fatāwa wa’l rasā’il*, Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1987, p. 69

³ Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mu’allafāt al-Shaykh al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, vol. III, p. 11

⁴ Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb uṣūl al-īmān*, pp. 47-53

⁵ Sulaymān bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najdī, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-ilāhiyya fi’l-radd ‘ala al-Wahhābiyya*, Istanbul, Isik Bookstore, 1975, p. 21

VI. Other types of *bid'a*

Early Wahhābī approaches towards other sects

As with other issues discussed more widely in earlier chapters, the material which exists in Wahhābī writings on the more profound philosophical and sociological types of *bid'a* (which fall under the category of *'aqīdāt*) is quite limited. It seems that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb was either very careful when using philosophy, for fear of making mistakes in his application of it, or chose to ignore it deliberately. There are a few condemnations of the possible misuse of *kalām* (scholastic theology) and *mantiq* (logic), and also some statements by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb such as *'ilm* and *fiqh* can lead to *bid'a* and *ḍalālāt*,¹ explaining that, inter alia, false prophets change what is written in the Qur'an and Sunna in matters of knowledge or issues related to *fiqh*.² In this sense, there is a big difference between the significant place philosophic ideas and moral arguments occupy in the writings of Ibn Ḥanbal or Ibn Taymiyya, and the place they hold in Wahhābī writings. This approach continues when Wahhābīs deal with various philosophical sects like the *jahmiyya*, *mu'tazila* or *'ashā'ira*, which were generally despised by Ibn Taymiyya. Such views are rejected because they misunderstand or misrepresent the right meaning of *tawhīd*.³

Under the title *ahl al-bid'a*, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb also includes other groups which were excluded from the community of believers for their use of philosophy like the *qadariyya* and the *khawārij*, of whom the Prophet said: 'if you find them kill them'.⁴ He refers to the *jahmiyya* and *ahl al-bid'a* in the same breath, accusing both schools of thought of denying men knowledge of the truth [*al-ḥaqq*], due to their scorn of it and of trying to persuade others that their own truth is the right one.⁵

¹ Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Majmū'at al-fatāwā wa'l rasā'il*, p. 128

² *ibid*, p. 135

³ Al-'Azmeḥ, p. 141

⁴ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mu'allafāt al-Shaykh al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb*, vol. I, p. 215

⁵ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Majmū'at al-tawhīd al-Najdiyya*, p. 150

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad focuses many of his attacks on *bid‘a* on the Zaydis, the *khawārij* and the *mu‘tazila*, saying that they violated the principles of the Sunna and tried to mislead the believers by claiming that they belonged to *ahl al-sunna* or the People of Justice [‘*adl*] and *tawḥīd*, while being, in reality, among *ahl al-bid‘a* and *ahl al-shirk*. Their most severe sin, according to the Shaykh, was in misinterpreting [in terms of *ta‘wīl*] the Qur’an in a way which contradicted the way it had been interpreted by the Prophet, the *ṣaḥāba* and the *tābi‘ūn*. Like Jews and Christians, he adds, they also distorted verses from the Qur’an.

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad claims that one of the worst acts of *bid‘a* which they also committed was the misinterpretation of the characteristics and capabilities of Allah [*ṣifāt Allah*]. He argues that by the late years of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Zaydis and the *mu‘tazila* had related the capabilities, descriptions and titles of Allah to human beings; therefore they should be brought to death. As an example he relates the story of a person named Ja‘d bin Dirham, who performed such *bida‘* and was consequently captured by *ahl al-‘ilm* and executed.¹

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan was the first in his family, and probably the earliest of the Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’, to use the term *bid‘a* in order to attack Jews and Christians. While also quoting other ‘*ulamā*’, he writes that Jews and Christians are among those who turned rights into wrongs and Sunna into *bid‘a*, and that by doing so they actually committed the wrongdoings which caused Allah to dislike and punish them. When dealing with other sects in Islam, he includes under the title of *al-rāfiḍa* the *khawārij*, *mu‘tazila* and Shi‘a, and names them all *ahl al-bid‘a*. The *rāfiḍa*, according to him, are actually the source of *bid‘a*, and were the first to worship graves and build mosques on tombs -- hence committing acts of *shirk*. The Shi‘a and other sects which derived from them, such as the Alawites, are considered the worst [*sharr ahl al-bid‘a*].

Like his uncle, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan refers to the misinterpretation of Qur’anic verses as *bid‘a*, and explains that this had its origin in improper knowledge of the Shari‘a by those who made the false interpretation, and who neglected to

¹ See: ‘Abd Allah bin Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Jawāb ahl al-sunna al-nabawiyya fi naqd kalām al-Shi‘a wa’l Zaydiyya*, chapters 14, 25 and 30

consult with the proper *'ulamā'* or *ahl al-sunna* whenever and wherever they could have done so.¹ It is worth noting that this approach is somewhat merciful, and unlike the early Salafis, for example, does not blame the *'ulamā'* themselves for not having sufficient knowledge.

As already explained, Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf's conditions were different, and he was influenced by his opinion about the Muslim communities living outside the realm of Wahhābī control. Therefore he categorises many as *ahl al-bid'a*, including the *qadariyya*, *jahmiyya*, *khawārij* and Shi'a, whom he categorically names *rāfiḍa*. To him, the true believers are only those Muslims living in the territories under the political control of the Saudi state; on other lands in which *bid'a* is widespread, living or even travelling there may encourage sedition [*fitna*]. Like some of his predecessors, the Shaykh speaks very firmly against those who performed acts of religious worship at graves or who asked anyone but Allah for help and salvation. As people who perform *bid'a*, he claimed, they cause *ahl al-sunna* and *ahl al-tawhīd* to deviate from the right path, and perform the same *bida'* performed by the *khawārij*.

The view of Sufis by the Wahhābī *'ulamā'* is examined more closely in the next chapter, but it is still worth mentioning Muhammad Al-Atawneh's comment that they lived 'under the radar' in the first Wahhābī state. He says that they were forbidden to possess Sufi literature and to practise their mystical meditation rituals, both crucial to the Sufi orders.² Evans-Pritchard adds that when the Wahhābīs overran the Hijaz in 1924-1925, they forbade all Sufi practices and orders; but later, when King Ibn Sa'ūd made friends with the self-exiled Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf, he permitted the Sanūsīs to retain their lodges on condition that they did not practise their *da'wa*, a compromise which seems to have lasted till the present time. The Sanūsīyya is said to have received preferential treatment because the Wahhābīs found no *bida'* in its teachings or, at any rate, that it erred less in this respect than the other Sufi orders.³

¹ 'Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Fath al-majīd*, pp 251, 282; 'Abd al-Raḥman bin Ḥasan, *Qurat 'uyūn al-muwahidīn*, pp. 10-16, 28-30, 58-67, 82, 110-116, 133, 229.

² Muhammad Al-Atawneh, "Wahhābī Self-Examination Post-9/11: Rethinking the 'Other', 'Otherness' and Tolerance", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47:2 (2011), p. 267

³ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Distribution of Sanusi Lodges", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 15, no. 4 (Oct., 1945), p. 187

Between *bid'a* and local habits – tea, coffee and tobacco in the Arabian Peninsula – a case study in modernity

In many cases, when referring to the Wahhābiyya and its attitude towards the whole subject of *bid'a*, its policy of fighting against a streak of decadence which was, or so it seems, prevalent in Arabia, is encountered. Such descriptions are seldom found in Wahhābī literature but often raised and discussed in the diaries of Western travellers to Arabia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In many cases, these descriptions are used to create a bad impression of the Wahhābiyya in general, and maybe to illustrate a sense of the primitive specific to them. For example, the strict restrictions on the building of Wahhābī mosques, which were to be built exactly as they were at the time of the Prophet -- without minarets, mosaics or gilding --¹ fall under this category.

The most notable of these subjects is the ban against smoking tobacco and drinking coffee.² One of these travellers, Charles Montagu Doughty, who visited Arabia as late as the end of the nineteenth century, devoted much space to descriptions of the huge amounts of tobacco and coffee consumed by Arabian Bedouin, to the habit of sitting together and having coffee-drinking sessions [*majālis*] and to the large number of coffee houses which could be found along the road to the Hajj, especially from Jeddah to Mecca. He says that many of them cannot remember when they last started the morning without drinking coffee and getting 'drunk' upon a *qalyān* (*shisha*) of tobacco.

According to Doughty, the Badū love to 'drink' the fumes of a strong leaf till the world turns around. Some people, he says, were even known to be totally addicted to smoking and to drinking coffee. Doughty stresses the fact that the 'evil use' is tolerated in the entire Najd, except the Wahhābī state, where the believers would say that 'Tobacco is *bawl Iblīs*, the devil's water'.³

¹ Kenneth Williams, *Ibn Sa'ud: The Puritan King of Arabia*, London, Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1933, p. 189

² Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* vol. II, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971, p. 34

³ C.M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd. & The Medici Society Limited, 1926), p. 247; also Lewis Pelly, *Report on a Journey to Riyadh in Central Arabia, 1865*,

Doughty, who speaks a lot about ‘Wahhābī fanaticism’, including what he describes as their disgust with Christian travellers, and who repeatedly uses the phrase ‘Wahhābī malice’ as some kind of misery inflicted upon the good people of the Banī ‘Aniza, goes on to say that some of those ‘fanatics’ stopped smoking at once following the demands of the Wahhābī doctrine. He says that the ones who ban smoking and drinking think it weakens their bodies.¹ Other bans mentioned in these books are the use of silk in any part of the attire, as well as ornaments of gold, silver and gems,² fine food, soft clothes and also dancing and music, ‘lest they might detract from contemplation of the true God’.³ In religious terms it is noted that they banned the use of the *subḥa* (rosary), and that their shrines are described as very simple and without decorations.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, after the second Saudi state collapsed and before the third was established, an Arab scholar and traveller named Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī al-Dimashqī wandered through the Arabian Peninsula, met with several communities and their ‘*ulamā*’, and observed their eating, drinking and smoking habits. Following his tour in the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere, he wrote a whole book dedicated to the issues of tea, coffee and smoking. The book provides very elaborate descriptions of tea, coffee and tobacco, with an emphasis on their history and on the different ways in which they reached the Arabian Peninsula.

Most of al-Dimashqī’s descriptions deal with the agricultural and medical characteristics of these items, with a relatively light religious reference. The chapter on tea, for example, specifies the different types of tea which reached the Arabian Peninsula. The chapter emphasizes the fact that tea was perceived as a very good drink with many medical advantages and without any objection from religious ‘*ulamā*’ or other people.

Cambridge, Eng.; New-York: Oleander, 1978, p. 9, where the writer refers several times to the free circulation of coffee and Turkish pipe among the tribesmen.

¹ Doughty, pp. 384, 452, 395, 538

² Zaharaddin, p. 148

³ Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom*, London, Hutchinson & Co., 1981, p. 57

His attitude towards coffee, however, is slightly different. After describing the routes and ways from which coffee arrived to the Arabian Peninsula, the author cites contradictory opinions about whether or not drinking coffee is permitted. He quotes various opinions, including those of *'ulamā'* who were opposed to the drinking of coffee and claimed it was addictive, its effects being similar to those of alcoholic drinks which harm the human body. However, others praise the advantages of drinking coffee and emphasize that it actually has many health-giving qualities which have a positive effect on the body and spirit. They were quoted as saying that all the great writers, teachers, poets and scientists used to drink coffee. The author even quotes several non-Wahhābī Shaykhs who say that drinking coffee should be permitted like other drinks such as milk. It should be stated that none of those quoted from either side of the argument mention the issue of *bid'a* in connection to the drinking of coffee.

The attitude towards smoking tobacco, however, is different. Throughout the whole relevant chapter, the author quotes the opinions of many people, including *mashā'ikh*, against smoking. Most of the criticism is based on medical reasons, with the claim that smoking exposes the entire body to many health risks – the mouth, lungs, heart, nerve-system, eyes, kidneys, blood system, etc. Here, a special chapter is dedicated to the religious objection to smoking. In this chapter, the author quotes many *'ulamā'* who claim that smoking tobacco by using any smoking utensil, beginning with a cigarette and ending with a hookah, was a *bid'a* and hence forbidden. None of the Shaykhs quoted in this chapter is Wahhābī.¹

Thus, these three issues were widely dealt with in previous generations, by a wide variety of *'ulamā'* and other relevant figures, and are not specifically restricted to the Wahhābiyya. In addition, most of those who rejected them did not do so on a religious basis, but rather on health or social grounds. This is verified by the similar debate in the chapter on the early *salafī* reformers, where the term *bid'a* is not referred to at all. Furthermore, it seems that even if labelling smoking or drinking coffee as *bid'a* has been discussed by the later Wahhābī generations, this was made on socio-political principles as well, in order for the state to be able to recruit the tribesmen to

¹ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Risāla fi'l shāy wal qahwa wa'l dukhān*, 1322H, pp 1-56

work for its benefit and to stop wasting their time, as described with some exaggeration by Western travelers.

Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with the writings of five generations of '*ulamā*' from the family of the founder of the Wahhābīya, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb. In general, they identified *bid'a* as the first stage in the deterioration of a believer to the status of *mushrik* and unbeliever. Nonetheless, relying on the different geo-political and social circumstances in which each of them lived, it was shown how these factors influenced their outlook on the issue of *bid'a* as well as other related terms. Whenever the '*ulamā*' and the rulers possessed more or less the same power and prestige, or when the '*ulamā*' had more power than the rulers, they tended to look less at *bid'a* and more at severe terms like *shirk*, unbelief and *takfīr* and openly speak about a death penalty.

In the early years of the third Saudi state, when it was already evident that the political elite was stronger than the '*ulamā*' and would not tolerate any political disobedience, the '*ulamā*' preferred to 'lower the flames' and – in other words – shift the discussion from *shirk* and *takfīr* to *bid'a*. Furthermore, in the writings of Shaykh 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf in the third Saudi state, it is obvious that the religious elite felt quite insecure about the measures that should be taken against people who were suspected of *shirk*. Acknowledging that the final word belonged to the ruler, they preferred to give a second chance to people suspected of being *mushrikūn* and recognized that even when a death penalty should be imposed on anyone, they should first ask the ruler's permission to carry it out.

If the attitude of the first generations of Wahhābī '*ulamā*' is compared to the opinions of those who were active from the middle to the late twentieth century and even from the first decade of the twenty-first century (which will be discussed in the next chapter), it is possible to discern that the early Wahhābī '*ulamā*' placed much more emphasis on the greater sins, and were very firm about imposing the death penalty on the *mushrikūn* and unbelievers, sometimes without hesitation. At the same time, their discussions and examples are very limited, mostly focusing on tomb-worship, which

seems to have been a real problem for tribespeople of those times, and possibly to an even greater extent than in later times.

It looks as if Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his successors actually used religion to fight what would seem to have been an outstanding aspect of tribal life in the Arabian Peninsula at that period. Trying to unite the tribes under a common cause, they felt obliged on the one hand to encourage them to rely on themselves and their flesh and blood leaders (instead of saints and tombstones), and on the other hand to eradicate their decadent tendencies so they might become more modest in their behaviour and more closely attached to the Wahhābī community and its leaders. In other words – *bid‘a* serves here as a tool for social change.

In the third Saudi state, especially after King Ibn Sa‘ūd quashed the revolt by the *Ikhwān* of Najd, it was obvious that the royal family was stronger than the religious elite. King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Saud and the other kings, especially Fayṣal, Khālid, Fahd and ‘Abd Allāh significantly limited the powers, authority and influence of the religious elite and created a situation in which the clergy became totally dependent on the ruling classes. As a result, Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ from the middle to late twentieth century had to be very careful, choose their definitions wisely and not incite against non-Wahhābī communities, either in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere.

The third Saudi state is also a technologically modern country which grants the religious establishment very powerful and effective tools with which to control the religious behaviour of the population. As a result, fewer people perform acts of *shirk*, and, when appropriate, the ‘*ulamā*’ can speak about different communities and their *bida*’.

Since the *Ikhwān* have just been mentioned, this may be an appropriate place to mention an issue that will also be looked at in the general conclusions – a possible difference between interpretations of ‘*bid‘a*’, on the one hand as a figure of speech, and on the other the way it is dealt with in religious writings. Mark Sedgwick refers to the telegraph stations that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz inherited from the Hashemite regime in the Ḥijāz. He says that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz needed and wanted more of them to administer his new domains, adding that his attitude seems to have been purely pragmatic.

Sedgwick states that while the Wahhābī *'ulamā'* took a middle line and neither condemned nor endorsed the telegraph, the *Ikhwān* fiercely and inflexibly opposed it as *bid'a*.¹ Such discussions are not to be found in the sources used here: they took place either orally or through other outlets. Of course, the lack of written *Ikhwānī* sources also contributes to the difficulty.

¹ Mark J. R. Sedgwick, "Saudi Sufis: Compromise in the Hijaz, 1925-40", *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 37, issue 3, Shiites and Sufis in Saudi Arabia (Nov., 1997), p. 355

Chapter four: The perception of *bid'a* by current Wahhābī 'ulamā'

I. General Introduction

Throughout Saudi history, in spite of the variable tensions in various times between the relationships of *umarā' wa 'ulamā'* which were highlighted in the previous chapter, the Wahhābī 'ulamā' generally played an important role within the state. Their opinions on all aspects of life were important, especially with regard to various aspects of day-to-day life in the kingdom. In addition, they played an important part in shaping the political, religious and social map in Saudi Arabia.

Until the late 1980s, the official religious establishment was the only player in the religious arena within the kingdom. The prosperity derived from huge oil revenues enabled the royal family to educate, foster, nominate and promote tens of thousands of people to religious positions within the state apparatus; in return, the 'ulamā' obeyed the royal family, issued *fatāwā* according to the rulers' wishes, and almost completely abstained from expressing any independent opinions.¹

However, due to several geo-political, economic, demographic and social developments, changes have occurred. Since the beginning of the 1990s the Saudi regime not only lost part of its credibility in the eyes of the 'ulamā', but also was no longer able to provide them with the many social and economic benefits they had hitherto enjoyed.² As a result, the present religious map in Saudi Arabia is much broader and more complicated than before.³ In modern Saudi Arabia, a distinction can be made between 'official' 'ulamā', who hold key positions in the Saudi official religious establishment, and 'unofficial' ones. The second group can further be divided into sub-groups: from Shaykhs who were previously in the opposition in the

¹ Willard A. Beiling, *King Faisal and the modernization of Saudi Arabia*, Boulder, Colorado, 1980, pp. 39-41; Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than thou- Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition*, Washington, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000, pp. 17-19; Gwenn Orkhulik, 'Networks of Dissent: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia', *Current History*, January 2002, p.23

² Joseph Kostiner, 'State, Islam and Opposition in Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) E-journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (July 1997)

³ Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New "Islam Liberal" Reformists", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 58, no. 3 (Summer, 2004), p. 345

1990s but are now much more affiliated with the government and even help the government to combat radical approaches, to shaykhs affiliated with *al-Qā'ida*.

All these developments in the religious map of the country open a window to current developments in Wahhābiyya in general, and especially in Saudi Arabia, during the last two decades. In this regard, it could be said that two contradicting trends are developing simultaneously. One, which began after the 1991 Gulf War, created a process of turning against the existing religious-political order; the other turning to violence on its way to topple the regime.

The first trend started with petitions and pamphlets sent by unofficial Wahhābī '*ulamā*' to the King, in which they expressed criticism of the political and religious leadership of the kingdom, continued with street demonstrations against the government, and ended with an increasing number of Wahhābī '*ulamā*' openly calling on the public to topple the political and religious leadership of the country which, according to them, did not govern the country according to the Shari'a. They referred specifically to the corruption of many members of the royal family, and to the military cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The second, opposing trend followed the calls to topple the regime, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and other attacks committed by *al-Qā'ida* in Saudi Arabia itself.

The leadership, especially King 'Abd Allah, made many efforts to promote a new line of Wahhābī thinking -- the *Wasaī* trend which greatly respects the Shari'a and the '*ulamā*', but at the same time rejects any kind of violence and promotes moderation, dialogue and understanding between different religious groups. As a result, the Saudi authorities launched a programme aimed at introducing changes in the schools' curricula and also enabled non-Wahhābī scholars to become members of religious establishments such as the Supreme Committee of the '*ulamā*' [*Hai'at kibār al-'ulamā*].

The most important official religious position in Saudi Arabia is that of the Grand Mufti. For many years this post was held by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Bāz; at present it is held by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allah Āl al-Shaykh, who also chairs the above-mentioned Supreme Committee of the '*ulamā*'.

Other important official '*ulamā*' are the Minister for Islamic Affairs and Endowments [*Wazīr al-shu'ūn al-Islamiyya wa'l-awqāf*], currently Shaykh Sāliḥ ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl al-Shaykh; the Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council [*Majlis al-Qadā' al-A'la*], currently Dr. Sāliḥ ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Ḥumayd; and the chairman of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice [*Hai'at al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'ala al-munkar*], currently Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Humayn.

The 'unofficial' '*ulamā*' and shaykhs do not, in most cases, hold important official religious positions in the state apparatus, and are or were at odds with the Saudi regime. As already mentioned, this group can be divided into several sub-groups, the most relevant of which is the 'Shaykhs of the Awakening Movement' [*shuyūkh al-ṣaḥwa*]. This movement views the true Islamic government as one based on an equal partnership between the religious establishment and the state, and the Muslim law as derived solely from the Qur'an and Sunna. This group started to gain popularity during the 1970s, and its '*ulamā*' were also influenced by the Salafi ideas imported into Saudi Arabia by members of the Muslim Brotherhood who had fled from Egypt.

In the past, many '*ulamā*' affiliated with this group were considered an opposition to the regime; and in the light of their *fatāwā* and activities, the Saudi regime also deemed them a threat. However, as time went by, the regime endeavoured to co-opt them into the mainstream and the consensus of the Saudi religious life, and they themselves moderated their language when speaking about the regime. The most prominent figures in this group are the Shaykhs Safar al-Ḥawālī and Salmān al-'Awda. The main reason for the regime's rapprochement with this group was the emergence of the most extremist religious trends in the kingdom, starting in the late 1990s. '*Ulamā*' like Shaykh Yūsuf al-'Uyayrī, Shaykh 'Alī bin Khudayr al-Khudayr, Shaykh Nāsir al-Fahd and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Khālīdī, issued calls to topple the Saudi regime. Some, like al-Rashūd, were affiliated with *al-Qā'ida*.

This chapter will focus mainly on the thinking of three shaykhs -- 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Abd Allah Ibn Jibrīn and Safar al-Ḥawālī. The three shaykhs have been chosen not only because they represent different trends in the kingdom (Ibn Bāz served in

every possible position in the state religious apparatus; Ibn Jibrīn was a prominent Wahhābī theologian who held no major official position; and Safar al-Ḥawālī belonged to the Awakening Movement), but also because they have spoken, taught, lectured and issued *fatāwā* on a wide range of concerns. In some instances, the rigid views of Shaykh Sāliḥ al-Fawzān, a member of the religious establishment, will be examined.

'*Ulamā*' of the third group tend to concentrate most of their scholarship on issues of Jihad, and in general their writings are theologically very superficial -- hence no appropriate scholar belonging to this group has been located. Since the chapter represents sub-divisions within the current Wahhābī state, it is somewhat differently structured from the other chapters. Many references in this chapter are extracted from the internet -- in particular, the personal websites of the '*ulamā*' under discussion, which offer databases and excellent search possibilities to allow the most comprehensive picture of their views on the subject. But first, each figure will be introduced, and their viewpoints on related terms will be presented.

Biographies of the relevant '*ulamā*'

'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allah Ibn Bāz (1910-1999) was one of the most important Wahhābī scholars in modern Saudi Arabia. Born in Riyāḍ, he lost his sight at the age of twenty. Nonetheless, he thoroughly studied all fields of Islamic theology and Sharī'a law with many instructors, including the then Grand Mufti, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Latīf Āl al-Shaykh. Ibn Bāz served in many official positions -- Chief *qāḍī* of the al-Kharj Province (1938-1951); a teacher in the Riyāḍ Institute of Science and Thought (1951-1961); Vice President and President of the Islamic University of al-Madina (1961-1975); and Chairman of the Department of Scientific Research and Judgment, with the rank of Minister. In 1992 he was appointed Grand Mufti and Head of the *Committee of Supreme 'ulamā*'.

Ibn Bāz was also the President of the Constituent Assembly of the Muslim World League, President of the Higher World League Council, and President of the Islamic Fiqh Assembly. During his career, he authored many books in all fields of Islamic

Studies. During the first Gulf War, he issued a *fatwā* permitting the deployment of non-Muslim troops on Saudi soil to defend the kingdom from the Iraqi army. In addition, as Grand Mufti, Ibn Bāz attempted both to legitimise the reign of the royal family and to support calls for the reform of Islam in line with Salafī ideals. Many criticised him for supporting the Saudi government when, after the war, it muzzled or imprisoned some Quṭbist ‘*ulamā*’ such as Safar al-Ḥawālī and Salmān al-‘Awda -- both of whom were regarded as too critical of the royal family.

When Ibn Bāz died in 1999, the loss of ‘his erudition and reputation for intransigence’ was so great that the Saudi government was said to have ‘found itself staring into a vacuum’, unable to find a figure capable of ‘filling Ibn Bāz’s shoes’. His influence on the Salafī movement was very significant, and most of the prominent judges and ‘*ulamā*’ of Saudi Arabia today are his former students.

Ibn Bāz engaged himself with Cosmological issues for many years, and some of his controversial claims aroused wider discussions around the world. For several decades, for example, he maintained that the sun orbits Earth. In addition, a *fatwā* in which he explained that the earth appears flat for the people so they do not fall was later taken out of context, and Ibn Bāz is mocked today for having issued a *fatwā* that the ‘Earth is flat’. It should be noted that Ibn Bāz’s discussions on these subjects usually involved questions regarding *takfīr*.

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Jibrīn (1933 - 2009), born in the Najdī village of al-Quway’iyya, is another prominent Wahhābī scholar in Saudi Arabia. He studied and memorised the Qur’an and Hadith, subsequently completing his secondary studies in a religious institute in Riyāḍ by the age of 15. Ibn Jibrīn then turned to academic religious studies, and spent approximately 25 years until he concluded his doctoral thesis in Shari‘a studies. During his years of study, he had many teachers -- each for every aspect of Islam and the Shari‘a; one of his important mentors was Ibn Bāz. In the early 1960s, Ibn Jibrīn was sent by King Sa‘ud to teach Islam and Shari‘a and perform *da‘wa* work in several peripheral cities and villages. He then became a teacher and taught in several religious institutions, including the Shari‘a College in Riyāḍ. By the early 1990s, Ibn Jibrīn had been appointed Chairman of the Department of Scientific Research and Judgment and was already a well-known Mufti.

At the same time, he worked as an *imām* in an important mosque in Riyāḍ and a teacher at all levels of Islamic education. He also gave weekly lessons in all the major mosques in Riyāḍ. In addition, Ibn Jibrīn was a member of the Council of Senior '*ulamā*'.¹

Safar ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Ḥawālī (1950-), born in al-Baha' Province, was awarded a PhD in Islamic theology from the *Umm al-Qurā* University in Mecca in 1986. In his earlier MA thesis at the same university, al-Ḥawālī traced the origins and consequences of secular thought spreading throughout the Arab and Muslim world. In his PhD research, which was conducted under the supervision of Sayyid Quṭb's brother Muḥammad, he analysed the concept of *irjā'* [a separation between the claims of faith and deeds of worship].²

Along with Shaykh Salmān al-'Awda, al-Ḥawālī is known to have led the 'Awakening Movement' in the kingdom. During the 1990s, he was detained for a period by the Saudi authorities for his criticism and incitement to overthrow the government in sermons which were distributed as audio cassettes throughout the kingdom. However, following the emergence of more extremist trends in those years, al-Ḥawālī was released from prison and became closer to the mainstream and the consensus of Saudi religious life (although he did not go as far as Salmān al-'Awda in his criticism).³

Shaykh Sāliḥ al-Fawzān ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Fawzān (1933-), born to a family of the al-Dawasir tribe, graduated from the elementary and secondary religious schools in the city of Burayda, North of Riyāḍ. Al-Fawzān completed his academic studies at the Shari'a college of Riyāḍ, taught in several religious institutions in the capital and finally joined the government apparatus. He was appointed to senior positions, such as a membership in the *Supreme Committee of the 'ulamā'* and the *Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatāwā* [*al-Lajna al-Dā'ima li'l-Buḥūth al-Ilmiyya wa'l-Iftā'*].⁴

¹ Daryl Champion, *The paradoxical Kingdom*, New-York: Columbia University Press, 2003. P. 240

² Jarret Brachman, *Global jihadism: theory and practice*, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, 2009, p. 54; <http://muntada.islamtoday.net/t25816.html> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ "Safar al-Ḥawālī: al-faqīh al-siyyāsī am al-siyyāsī al-faqīh?", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* 12/05/2005

⁴ http://www.sohari.com/nawader_v/fatawe/fozan.html (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

II. The sources of authority

(a) Qur'an and Sunna

Ibn Bāz cites the Qur'an, the Sunna and *ijmā'* as the three main sources of authority. With regard to a fourth source, *qiyās*, he maintains that the people of knowledge were split. The Muslim *umma* as a whole, he believes, should follow the Prophetic Sunna. Whoever claimed that Sunna should be disregarded and that the believers should be satisfied with the Qur'an alone was actually misleading and should be considered a non-believer [*kāfir*] and apostate [*murtadd*]. This is because, by saying such things, a person denies [the existence of] Allah and the Prophet, ignores what has been said by them and disregards the *ijmā'* of the people of knowledge.

For example, Ibn Bāz refers to the *khawārij*, who, due to their bad relations with the *ṣaḥāba*, decided to rely only on the Qur'an. By doing so, they actually became non-believers. Ibn Bāz even refers to 20th century leaders, like the Libyan president Mu'ammār Gadhafi, who disregarded the Sunna and claimed that only the Qur'an was valid. If those people were really obeying the Qur'an, he says, they would have followed the Sunna, since the Qur'an commands its believers to follow the Sunna. The importance of the Sunna, according to Ibn Bāz, is that it provides guidance in areas and realms to which the Qur'an did not refer, in all aspects of life, such as the way the five obligatory prayers [*ṣalāt*] should be conducted, in addition to issues related to crime, money, fasting and Hajj.¹

Following the Sunna of the Prophet, Ibn Bāz maintains, should not only be applied to people who lived or events that took place during the time of the Prophet, but to all people in all times until the day of resurrection; the Prophet should be regarded as the messenger of Allah for demons and human beings, for Arabs and for non-Arabs, for the rich and the poor, for rulers and subjects and for men and women, as it is said in the Qur'an:

¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'al-Sunna wa-makānatiha fi'l-Islām wa-fi uṣūl al-tashri'', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8632> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

We have not sent thee but as a universal [Messenger] to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them [against sin]. [Qur'an 53: 1-4]

Ibn Jibrīn follows a similar route. He emphasises the importance of the Sunna by saying that it came to the world in the same way as the Qur'an -- namely, by the divine inspiration of Allah, which was bestowed on the Prophet and enabled him to act and speak in the way he did. However, Ibn Jibrīn further points out the differences between the Qur'an and the Sunna: the Sunna is not being quoted and repeated by people with the same frequency that people use Qur'anic verses, and the most important factor is that, in religious rituals, the Qur'anic verses speak for themselves. Thus, there is no need to refer to any traditions, such as *aḥādīth*, upon quoting a verse, while those traditions cannot stand by themselves but rather have to be strengthened by a verse.¹

Al-Ḥawālī defines the Sunna as following the Prophetic path in every aspect, starting with the issue of divine unity [*tawḥīd*] and ending with the smallest acts that the believers are obliged to do and refrain from doing.² He says that the Sunna is the very *straight way* to which the Qur'an refers in the following verses:

Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace. [Qur'an 1: 6-7]

This is my way, leading straight. Follow it. Do not follow [other] paths. They will scatter you about from his path. [Qur'an 6: 153]

(b) ijmā'

Ibn Bāz discusses the 'positive consensus' [*al-ijmā' al-yaqīnī*], saying that not only is it a strict necessity, but it is also among the three sources of authority that should not be violated: the Qur'an, the reliable Sunna and the consensus. This consensus, he

¹ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, 'Sharḥ muqādamat al-tafsīr li-ibn Taymiyya', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=214&page=7376> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Itibā' al-Sunna wa-tark al-bid'a', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1096&keywords=المسنة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

emphasises, was limited to the time of the *ṣaḥāba*, and following them there was no further consensus.¹

Ibn Jibrīn refers to *ijmā'* as a consensus reached by the Muslim Nation, in instances where neither the Qur'an nor the Sunna provide an answer to a specific question. For Ibn Jibrīn, the term 'Nation' refers to the '*ulamā'*' of a given generation. However, this was only relevant with regard to the *ṣaḥāba*, their followers [*tābi 'ūn*] and the followers of these followers [*tābi 'ū'l-tābi 'īn*] up to the third *hijrī* century; *ijmā'* of these generations is binding,² and in order to emphasise its importance Ibn Jibrīn quotes the Prophetic Hadith:

*My nation will never reach a consensus in something which has to do with ḍalāla.*³

Ibn Jibrīn divides *ijmā'* into two types: *ijmā'* via the spoken word [*qawlī*], and *ijmā'* by an action [*fi 'lī*]. The first type relates to sayings of the *ṣaḥāba* (and up to the third *hijrī* century) when answering questions which are neither in the Qur'an nor in the Sunna; after that, people followed these sayings and actually accepted them as *fatāwā*. This kind of *ijmā'*, continues Ibn Jibrīn, was also called an 'unchallenged *ijmā'* [*sukūṭī*].

It refers to a situation in which these people reached a resolution which others followed, and no one resisted. The second type of *ijmā'* deals with a situation in which the *ṣaḥāba* performed a certain act when there was confusion about the correct reaction, and no answer was found in the Qur'an or the Sunna. For example, when people did not know how many times a person should kneel during the noon prayer, the *ṣaḥāba* knelt four times.⁴ Nowadays, according to Ibn Jibrīn, it is much easier for a believer to know what an issue of consensus is. Thanks to the modern and

¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Hal al-*ijmā'* ḥujja qat'iyya am dīniyya?', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/2049> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, 'Sharḥ al-waraqāt', p. 25, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=216&page=7472> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ Quoted from Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, p. 2093

⁴ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *ibid*, p. 28

sophisticated worldwide media, a believer does not have to wander around the world in order to find this consensus.¹

Al-Ḥawālī does not define the term *ijmā'* literally. However, from one of his lectures it is apparent that he sees *ijmā'* as an important source of authority, in instances where an answer to certain questions has either been reached by the *ṣaḥāba* or their followers.² However, in one of his lessons al-Ḥawālī speaks about the philosophers, stating that all of them – the Greek as well as the Arabs – should be considered as non-believers [*kuffār*]. Al-Ḥawālī adds that there was a consensus [*ijmā'*] among all Muslims that these people were non-believers. It should also be noted that some of the Arab philosophers he mentions, such as Ibn Sina, al-Farrābī and al-Kindī, lived and acted during the third, fourth and fifth *hijrī* centuries, after the generations which he considers fit to set an act of *ijmā'*.³

An example provided by al-Ḥawālī for legitimate *ijmā'* is the consensus reached by the early '*ulamā*' with regard to the celebrations of non-believers [*kuffār*]. According to this consensus, these days a Muslim should totally refrain from acting or speaking in a way that might be understood as participation in such a celebration. For instance, when *Noruz* (the first day of the spring and the New Year for all Iranians, including Zoroastrians and Baha'is) is being celebrated, a Muslim should not give someone else an egg, because this is what the non-believers do. Al-Ḥawālī emphasises that '*ulamā*' of all *madhāhib* of Sunni Islam, not just Ḥanbalīs, have agreed on this point.⁴

It seems that al-Ḥawālī's approach is accepted by official Saudi institutions such as the aforementioned Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatāwā*; Al-Atawneh notes that the Committee follows in the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyya, who recognises only the *ijmā'* of the *salafī* predecessors. According to Ibn Taymiyya, a

¹ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Fatāwā*, online version, p. 124, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=49&page=2092> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Naql *ijmā'* al-salaf 'ala an al-imān qawl wa-'amal', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1760&keywords=اجماع> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Ijmā' al-firaq al-Islamiyya 'ala takfīr al-falāsifa', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=4762&keywords=اجماع> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁴ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Ijmā' al-fuqahā' 'ala taḥrīm mushabahāt al-kuffār wa-dukhūl ayādihim', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1137&keywords=اجماع> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

valid *ijmā'* has not been established since early Islam, because later '*ulamā'* are numerous and widely dispersed, making it difficult to ascertain the existence of one. The Committee, al-Atawneh adds, only acknowledges *ijmā'* established by the *ṣaḥāba*.¹

(c) *ijtihād*

Ibn Bāz relates to the issue of *ijtihād* by saying that there was no place for it in any religious issues having a reference or a basis in the Qur'an, Sunna or *ijmā'* of the scholars from the first generations. *Ijtihād*, he says, could be used in disputed issues when there was no reference or no basis in the Qur'an or the Sunna. In such a case, a person considered among the people of knowledge, who is qualified to exercise *ijtihād*, is allowed to do it out of his sincere quest for the truth, and will be rewarded for it; he will be rewarded twice if his *ijtihād* is right, and rewarded once if it turns out to be wrong.²

Ibn Jibrīn defines *ijtihād* as an attempt to reach a religious solution with the utmost effort. According to him, a person could be considered a *mujtahid* if, upon dealing with a problem or a question, he sought the solution in the Qur'an and the traditions and finally found the answer. A *mujtāhid* is a person who also uses his skills to conduct research, understand the problem, and the language and grammatical tools which can help him reach a solution. If a person does his best and finds the right answer, he will be rewarded twice; and if he did his best but nevertheless makes a mistake, he will be rewarded once for his efforts.³

Ibn Jibrīn also deals with the link between *ijtihād* and the issuing of *fatāwā*. Not everyone, he maintains, is entitled to issue *fatāwā*. A person who issues *fatāwā* should be qualified for the task, and should have a wide-ranging knowledge of all the relevant issues. He has to be able to understand the texts and the meanings behind

¹ Muhammad al-Atawneh, "Wahhābī legal theory as Reflected in Modern Official Saudi fatwās: Ijtihād, Taqlīd, Sources, and Methodology", *Islamic Law and Society* 18 (2011), pp. 347-348

² 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Hal yasiḥ al-ijtihād fi'l-umūr al-ma'lūma min al-dīn bi'l-ḍarūra?', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/164> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Jibrīn, *Sharḥ al-waraqāt*, p. 41, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=216&page=7488> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

them; he has to have knowledge of all aspects of religion; he should know where to look for answers; and he should be familiar with the interpretations and with the opinions of the ‘*ulamā*’ and *fuqahā*. But even if he had all these qualifications, Ibn Jibrīn stresses, he should not rush to issue a *fatwā*; rather, he should check and double check what he is about to say. Only after meeting these conditions, is his *ijtihād* good and welcome.¹

Regarding the use of *ijtihād*, al-Ḥawālī claims that there exists a ‘permitted independent reasoning’ [*al-ijtihād al-saigh*] which should not cause splits and quarrels among the believers.² There have been occasions, he continues, in which people of *ahl al-sunna* made an incorrect *ijtihād*, but this was forgivable, because they had intended to act for the sake of truth.³

Probably influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood’s approach, al-Ḥawālī claims that *ijtihād* is especially needed due to the current challenges facing the Muslim nations, such as the hostile Western media -- which he regards as one of the ways in which the ‘crusades’ against the Muslims take place, and which need to be confronted by new means and new methods.⁴ Al-Ḥawālī says he was once asked whether the Palestinian uprising [*intifāḍa*] against Israel should be regarded as a mistaken *ijtihād*.

His answer is that even if this were the case, it is a positive thing, not only because it symbolises the beginning of a holy war [Jihad], but also because the alternative is worse-- a Muslim who opposes the *intifāḍa*, saying that it is a wrongful *ijtihād*, actually puts himself on the same side with Jews and Christians, secularists, and other

¹ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *al-Lu’lu al-mukīn min fatāwā al-shaykh ibn Jibrīn*, online version, p. 81, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=67&page=3621> (Lst accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Baghī fi’l-ijtihād’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=3120&keywords=الاجتهاد> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Khat fi’l-ijtihād’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=3122&keywords=الاجتهاد> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁴ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘Laqad ḥadhara Allah min arājif al-yahūd al-I’lāmiyya, wa-‘ala al-mumin al-ijtihād fi muqāwamat al-bātil’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=177&keywords=الاجتهاد> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

enemies of Allah against an unfortunate [other] Muslim like the children of the *intifāda*.¹

Al-Fawzān seems to be more open for modern changes in this field. According to al-Atawneh, he divides jurists into four major categories:

- The *mujtahid muṭlaq*, who is independent, is neither affiliated with any *madhhab* nor bound by the methodology of any other scholar; according to al-Fawzān, this type of *mujtahid* no longer exists.
- A *mujtahid* in his *imām*'s *madhhab* or in that of another school, which further divides into several subgroups.
- A *mujtahid* who is an expert in a specific body of knowledge; such a *mujtahid* is authorised to conduct *ijtihād* and to issue *fatāwā* within his particular area of expertise, using a specific methodology.
- *Mujtahids* who are experts in specific issues from one or more areas of knowledge; they may issue *fatāwā* only on those particular issues within the purview of their expertise.²

Al-Atawneh asserts that the drawing of legal inspiration not only from Ḥanbalī 'ulamā', but rather from a wide array of non-Ḥanbalī as well -- has been motivated by the desire to foster the religious authority of the official religious establishment, and to further develop legal mechanisms to accommodate the challenges of modernity.³ Perhaps this also accords with the spirit said to have been promoted by King Fahd, whereby 'ulamā' ought to reconsider the practice of *ijtihād* as a useful approach in "reconciling Islamic Law with modern life".⁴

¹ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Kayfiyyat al-ta'āmul ma'a min akhtaa fi'l-ijtihād', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=2200&keywords=الاجتهاد> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Al-Atawneh, *Islamic Law and Society*, pp. 333-335

³ *ibid.*, pp. 354-355

⁴ Joseph A. Kechichian, "The Role of the Ulama in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Feb., 1986), p. 65

III. Terms affiliated with bid‘a

ḍalāla

Ibn Bāz does not explain literally what *ḍalāla* is, but ties it to his definition of *bid‘a* by quoting the Prophetic Hadith (referred to many times in this work), which states that every *bid‘a* is *ḍalāla*.¹ This Hadith is quoted in many of his *fatāwā*; for example, when asked whether it is necessary to sacrifice an animal (such as a cow or a sheep) when the construction of a mosque is completed, prior to holding a Friday sermon or prayers within it, Ibn Bāz rules that no such custom should be applied, because it was nothing more than a *bid‘a* which would lead to going astray.²

Unlike Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn examines the issue of *ḍalāla* thoroughly, regarding it as the loss of the rightful religious path. Ibn Jibrīn also refers to certain people or communities whom he states should be considered to have gone astray. First of all, Christians are referred to as the ones who ‘go astray’ in the following Qur’anic verse:

The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, not those whose (portion) is wrath, nor those who go astray. [Qur’an 1: 7]

He then cites further examples of people to whom the term *ḍalāla* applies: people who leave in the middle of a prayer [*ṣalāt*], people who do not participate in collective prayers [*ṣalāt*], people whose acts challenge Allah but who are still proud of what they do, people who object to what the *ṣaḥāba* have said or done, people who prefer to hear music rather than the words of Allah, people involved in prostitution, or who drink alcohol or use drugs. According to Ibn Jibrīn, the term *ḍalāla* applies to social behaviour as well – for example, if a Muslim steals from a fellow believer or cheats him or even mocks him.³

¹ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, ‘Wujūb luzūm al-Sunna wa’l-ḥadhr min al-*bid‘a*’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8159> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, ‘Ḥukm dhabḥ al-Abqār aw al-aghnam ‘ind intihā’ bin ā’ al-masjid’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8328> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Tawjihāt salāh al-ḥudūd*, online version, p. 3 <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=159&page=6865> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014); ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *al-‘Aqīda*, online version, p. 6, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=1&book=11&page=401> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

According to Ibn Jibrīn, Allah is the one who decides whether to guide or misguide anyone, depending on the person's belief: in order to receive the guidance of Allah one must open oneself to a deep and devoted belief.¹

Like Ibn Bāz, al-Ḥawālī provides examples rather than explaining the actual term. He says that some believe that not every *bid'a* is necessarily a *ḍalāla*, but, he continues, these people are wrong, because whoever accepts that there are 'good' *bida'* [*bida' ḥasana*] is mistaken and misleading.²

Al-Ḥawālī refers to several groups and communities as 'misguided groups', who have lost their way, like the *khawārij*, the Ibadis (who currently constitute the dominant form of Islam in Oman), the *mu'tazila* and the Sufis.³ He specifically refers to Jews as an example of a community which has lost its way; in spite of the miracles that Allah performed for them when they left Egypt, and despite the commands that Allah gave Moses, they chose the wrong way, by producing the Golden Calf. According to al-Ḥawālī, Jews thus committed *shirk*, challenged Allah and disobeyed him. To reinforce his point, al-Ḥawālī refers to an old saying which states that:

*A misguided Muslim scholar has a part of the Jews inside him and a misguided servant [of Allah] has a part of the Christians inside him.*⁴

shirk

Shirk, according to Ibn Bāz, means "worshiping anyone else alongside Allah" – 'anyone else' meaning idols or other items on which a person calls for help, prays to,

¹ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Sharḥ lum'at al-i'tiqād*, online version, p. 59, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=88&page=5535> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1550&keywords=ضلالة> (Last accessed 23 February 2009)

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Bayān ḍalāl man ya'bud al-malāika', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=4955&keywords=ضلال> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014);

Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Ḍalāl al-Ṣūfiyya fi fihm al-tawakul 'ala Allah', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=5895&keywords=ضلال> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁴ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Suwār min ḍalāl al-yahūd', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=3548&keywords=ضلال> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

fasts for or sacrifices for. Ibn Bāz provides examples: if a person makes sacrifice to *jāhili* idols such as Idrīs, prays to someone, asks the Prophet for salvation or calls to the stars or the demons; the worst manner of *shirk* is performed when a person worships items or people and forgets Allah altogether. In such a case he becomes a non-believer. The same applies to those who do not even acknowledge the existence of Allah, like communists and atheists and they are considered the worst non-believers.

Ibn Bāz refers to those who believe that by beseeching people or stars, they are using them as a means [*wasīla*] to get closer to Allah. They are definitely committing *shirk* – because a true believer could become closer to Allah by obeying him, praying to him, making a sacrifice for him, following the rightful path, fasting, performing Jihad and giving alms.¹

In his *fatāwā*, Ibn Bāz placed special emphasis on defining calls to the Prophet for help as *shirk*. According to Ibn Bāz, calling upon the dead for help, guidance or cure, or even to help the Muslim nation, means worshipping the dead -- which makes this a *shirk*, as all calls and pleas for help should be directed to Allah only.²

Contrary to the majority of the '*ulamā*' whose writings are analysed in this chapter, Ibn Bāz perceives the act of building a mosque on a grave not as *bid'a* but as *shirk*. This is a ruling that he made after a Muslim organisation in Jordan called *The League of Islamic Sciences* [*Rābitat al-'ulūm al-Islāmiyya*] announced that it intended to build a mosque on top of a cave in which a grave had been found.³

Ibn Jibrīn defines *shirk* in a more inclusive way, saying that it includes calling for the worship of anyone else alongside Allah, calling to worship anyone else [without or instead of Allah], fearing anyone else, begging anyone else for [divine] help or trusting anyone else like trusting Allah, or indeed anything which resembles these acts. According to Ibn Jibrīn, a person who does one or more of these things is a *mushrik*,

¹ 'Abd Allah Ibn Bāz, 'Tawhīd ma'na al-shirk bi-Allah', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/28> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² 'Abd Allah Ibn Bāz, 'Man dā'a al-Nabi ṣallā Allah 'alayhi wa-salam wa-huwa mayyit faqad ashraka', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/1672> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ 'Abd Allah Ibn Bāz, 'al-Taḥrīr min binā' al-masājid 'ala al-qubūr', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8216> (last accessed - 1 May 2014)

is considered an ally of Satan and is not a follower of Allah. Ibn Jibrīn specifically says that *shirk* is the polar opposite of unity [*tawhīd*], and that committing *shirk* is the worst offence in Islam.¹

The same authority attaches importance to semantics with regard to *shirk*, and argues that words mean everything in this matter. If a person curses another person by saying ‘take him’, ‘burn him’ or ‘kill him’, it is exactly like asking for the help of a demon [*jinn*] or Satan. In addition, if someone thinks that by swearing in the name of his honour or in the name of the Prophet he adds emphasis to his words, he should beware of crossing the line and committing *shirk*. People should also avoid saying things which could be interpreted as referring to the Creator and his creatures as equals, by employing such formulations as: ‘I have only you and Allah’, or ‘you are for me on earth and Allah is for me in heaven’.²

Ibn Jibreen warns especially against episodes in which *tawhīd* and *shirk* may be combined, as, for example, during the Hajj. Performing any rituals during the Hajj which do not follow the Prophetic path constitutes *shirk* or at least may lead to it -- for example, if people focus their rituals and their minds on the holy stone or the fence which surrounds it. Ibn Jibrīn further maintains that the Shi‘a who come to perform the Hajj, and call on the names of ‘Alī and his sons during their stay on Mount Arafat, should be considered *mushrikūn*.³

Another issue which Ibn Jibrīn warns against is crossing the line between decent behaviour and *shirk* while visiting graves.

He claims that if a person visits a relative’s grave and tells him things like ‘rest in peace’, that is harmless; but when a person visits a grave in order to ask for the help of the dead man’s spirit, this is *shirk*. If a Muslim goes to the city of Medina, his purpose should be to pray in the Prophet’s mosque and not to visit the Prophet’s

¹ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Majmū‘at mukhaḍarāt wa-durūs ‘an al-ḥajj’. <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=224&page=7745> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Mukhaḍara bi-‘unwān man yurīdu Allah bihi khayran yufqihīhi fi’l-dīn’, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=218&page=7524> (Last Accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Majmū‘at mukhaḍarāt wa-durūs ‘an al-ḥajj’, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=224&page=7716> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

tomb.¹ And indeed, it should be noted, many buildings and graves in Mecca and Medina were demolished by the authorities, in order to avoid this kind of *shirk*.

Al-Ḥawālī deals with the issue of *shirk* at length. His definition is quite similar to that of Ibn Bāz. Like other scholars adhering to the Wahhābī tradition, al-Ḥawālī defines *shirk* as the opposite of *tawḥīd* and claims that the sources and basics of wisdom are to follow *tawḥīd* and avoid *shirk*.² He even says that if the believers abandon the principle of *tawḥīd*, they will find themselves ruled and governed by non-believers.³ However, al-Ḥawālī elaborates on many sub-items related to *shirk*. For example, he refers to the two types of *shirk*, and defines the ‘smaller *shirk*’ [*al-shirk al-asghar*] as an act of hypocrisy [*riya*], when a person is worshipping Allah not for the sake of it but rather for a different purpose. This kind of act is worse than committing a mere sin, but still does not exclude the perpetrator from the ranks of the *umma*. In contrast, the ‘bigger *shirk*’ [*al-shirk al-akbar*] is worshipping Allah together with other idols, people or objects, even if the perpetrator means to place Allah as ‘first among equals’; this type of *shirk* excludes the one who commits it from the *umma*.⁴

Similarly to his approach towards *dalāla*, al-Ḥawālī brands certain religious groups or communities as *mushrikūn*: Christians, who consider Allah to be one of three divine entities; Zoroastrians, who attribute goodness to light and evil to darkness; in addition to the *qadariyya* and Sufis.⁵ He further describes the Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfuz as an example of modern *shirk*, probably under the influence of Sayyid Quṭb’s argument with the latter, or the Muslim Brotherhood’s general displeasure with his works. Mahfuz’s Cairo Trilogy, al-Ḥawālī says, for which he

¹ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Sharḥ silm al-wusūl wa-abwāb min kitāb al-tawḥīd’ <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=198&page=7220> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘Aṣl al-ḥikma wa-asāsuhā huwa al-tawḥīd wa’l-nāhī ‘an al-shirk’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=6100&keywords=الشرك> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Shirk wa-‘awaqibahu ‘ala al-insān’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=889&keywords=الشرك> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁴ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Farq bayna’l-shirk al-akbar wa’l-asghar’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=5707&keywords=الشرك> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁵ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Ṣūfiyya al-mawjūda shirk wa-zandaqa’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=2131&keywords=شرك> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014); Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘Shirk man ja‘ala ma‘a Allah illahan ākhir’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=891&keywords=شرك> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

also received a ‘Zionist prize’,¹ tells the story of an ancient Egyptian goddess,² and in it there are sentences such as ‘the goddess became angry’ or ‘the goddess was satisfied’; this is definitely a *shirk*, as in Islam there is no God but Allah.³

commanding right and forbidding wrong

According to Ibn Bāz, commanding right and forbidding wrong is one of the most important duties in Islam, and one of Islam’s greatest commandments. In societies whose people have knowledge and who are believers, this duty is one of the most important reasons for success and for avoiding punishment by Allah, both in the long and the short term. To underline his opinion, Ibn Bāz quoted a verse:

You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. [Qur’an 3: 110]

Ibn Bāz emphasises that every believer has to work to command right and forbid wrong according to his or her abilities, and to ensure that it is done with wisdom, modesty and politeness -- and not with violence and extremism.⁴

Like Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn quotes the aforementioned Qur’anic verse. Ibn Jibrīn says that commanding right meant doing everything that has been said and referred to by Allah, and has been considered by the peaceful and ordinary people as ‘good’. On the other hand, forbidding wrong means abstaining from things that Allah disliked and which have been considered by the peaceful and ordinary people as ‘bad’. When a believer is about to act or not act in a way which promotes commanding right and forbidding wrong, he should first have a strong belief, for without it the whole issue is meaningless.⁵

¹ Al-Ḥawālī is probably referring to the the Nobel Prize Maḥfuz received in 1988

² It is likely that al-Ḥawālī is mistaken, and actually refers to Maḥfuz’s 1983 book, *Amām al-‘arsh*

³ Al-Ḥawālī, *ibid*

⁴ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, ‘Kayfiyyat al-amr bi’l-ma‘rūf wa’l-nāhī ‘an al-munkar wa’l- ḥikma al-maqšūda fihī’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/214> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

⁵ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Khutbat al-Jum‘a ajwibat al-asīla’, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=10&book=209&page=7285> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

Not only does Ibn Jibrīn say that commanding right is a great deed for the believer,¹ he also believes it is an important duty. A believer who abandons this commandment opens the way to allowing *bid'a*, committing sins and challenging religious commands; he will be severely punished for all these things.²

Ibn Jibrīn recalls that commanding right and forbidding wrong was not only an individual duty but a collective one. This he learns from the verse:

And fear tumult or oppression, which affect not in particular [only] those of you who do wrong. [Qur'an 8: 25]

In addition, people who do nothing when others violate the codes of commanding right and forbidding wrong are guilty as well. The concept of commanding right and forbidding wrong, Ibn Jibrīn says, was important even before the birth of Islam. As an example, God warned the Prophets of *Banu Isra'īl* (the Children of Israel) that he would kill 40,000 'good' and 60,000 'bad' people; when asked why good people should perish as well, he said that these allegedly good people did nothing when they saw the bad ones challenging Him.³

Ibn Jibrīn further explains the difference between *da'wa* and the concept of commanding right and forbidding wrong: while *da'wa* means providing advice, guiding and urging people to perform good deeds and abstain from the bad, commanding right and forbidding wrong means ordering and forcing people to obey Allah and abstain from religious wrongdoings, or isolating those people from the rest of the believers.⁴

Al-Hawālī considers commanding right and forbidding wrong to be a religious duty that should be adopted by the believers under all circumstances -- in weakness as well

¹ *ibid*

² 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, 'Kalima fī riasat al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=9&book=199&page=7237> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, 'Kalima fī'l-ḥayāt', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=9&book=164&page=6923> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁴ 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jibrīn, 'Qaḍāya da'wiyya: ḥājat al-bashr ila al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nāḥī 'ala al-munkar', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=5&book=27&page=1115> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

as in strength. This duty, he says, is so important that one of the Qur’anic verses even prioritises it over the duty to believe in Allah:

You are the best of all people to have appeared among mankind. You command what is good and forbid what is evil, and you believe in Allah. [Qur’an 3:110]

Al-Ḥawālī promotes commanding right and forbidding wrong to the level of an individual duty [*fard ‘ayn*],¹ which is also relevant for states and communities. A state or community which does not promote commanding good or forbidding wrong, and is corrupt, will eventually collapse and vanish. Such an entity will experience economic crisis, lose wars and suffer earthquakes and other forms of punishments by Allah, as the Qur’an says:

*Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrongdoing if its members were likely to mend.*² [Qur’an 11: 117]

Al-Ḥawālī warns against attempts to overlook this commandment, saying that if such a thing is to happen, there will be no difference between the Muslim society and the non-believing societies; all kinds of *ḍalāla*, *bid‘a* and *shirk* will spread, and the Muslim society will turn into a society of *mushrikūn*. Gradually, he continues, total chaos will take over: the atheists and the *ahl al-bid‘a* will interact and talk freely, Muslims will convert to Christianity or Judaism, and people will worship idols. He notes that historically, whenever Muslims abandoned this commandment, they lost power and control within their own countries to Jews and Christians.³

Finally, Al-Ḥawālī also links the concept of commanding right and forbidding wrong to Jihad. He sees Jihad as ‘the highest rank of sacrifice’. We have to make sure, he says, that people worship Allah only, and this is needed for the promotion of

¹ *ibid*

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘‘Alāqat al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa’l-nāhi ‘an al-munkar bi-ḥuqūq al-duwal’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1886&keywords=الامر> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘Ahmiyyat al-amr bi’l -maruf wa-al-nāhi bi’l-munkar’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=2898&keywords=الامر> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

commanding right and forbidding wrong. To emphasise the issue, al-Ḥawālī quotes a Qur’anic verse:

*To those against whom war is made, permission is given [to fight] because they are wronged and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid.*¹ [Qur’an 22: 39]

IV. Bid‘a – definitions & types

According to the Shari‘a, Ibn Bāz maintains, a *bid‘a* is every act of worship innovated by people, which does not have any reference or any root in either the Qur’an or the Sunna, or in the actions of *khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*. He quotes two *aḥādīth* regarding this issue, which define the innovator as executing an apostasy [*radd*]:

- 1) *He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it, will have it rejected.*
- 2) *Whoever does an act which is not in agreement with our matter, will have it rejected.*

In addition, he quotes the famous *hadīth* which stated that every renewal was a *bid‘a*, and every *bid‘a* was a *ḍalāla*.²

Although Ibn Bāz does not actually say so, a reading of his *fatāwā* and articles indicates clearly that he considered Sunna the direct opposite of *bid‘a*. For example, in one of his articles, titled ‘The duty to follow the Sunna and avoid *bid‘a*’, he cites several examples in which the *bid‘a* committed by people contradicted the Sunna. He mainly focuses on one issue -- the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday. According to him, this issue is causing divisions between those who follow the Sunna and so do not celebrate the event, and those who commit *bid‘a* by celebrating it.³ Furthermore, in a

¹ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘Qawā’id wa-ḍawābit fi’l-amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa-al-nāhī ‘an al-munkar’

² ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, ‘Ma’na al-*bid‘a* wa-itlāqihā fi abwāb al-‘ibādāt’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/307> (Last Accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ Abdul Aziz bin Bāz, ‘The duty to follow the Sunna and to Avoid *bid‘a*’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8159> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

different quotation from Ibn Bāz, he urges the people of the Sunna to fight and to counter everything related to *bid'a*.¹

Although Ibn Bāz condemns all kinds of *bid'a*, he distinguishes between two 'groups'. One is related to creed and belief [*bid'a i 'tiqādiyya*] -- and includes calling for the help of the dead, the angels or demons, as well as building mosques over tombs. This type of *bid'a*, he says, is the worst of the two and leads to *shirk*. The second group, *bida'* related to acts [*bida' 'amaliyya*] -- includes acts like celebrating the Prophet's birthday, commemorating the night of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*, and more.

These *bida'* are bad, but cannot be compared to the first group.² Ibn Bāz rejects any other type of division regarding *bid'a*. He especially objects to the division into 'good' [*bid'a ḥasana*] and 'bad' [to which he refers as *bid'a ghayr ḥasana*], saying this is misleading: all *bida'* are bad and should be considered as misguidance. Therefore, Ibn Bāz further rejects the division into five sections, according to which at least some *bida'* are perceived as permitted.³

Ibn Bāz also deals with the question of who should be considered a *mubtadi'*, committing an act of *bid'a*. Basically, he says, every person who performs a *bid'a* deserves the negative title of *mubtadi'*; however, if a person unknowingly commits a *bid'a* and then expresses his regret, he should not be considered as one. Only if this person knowingly commits a *bid'a* – such as celebrating the Prophet's birthday, praying near graves, or building mosques on graves, and insists on continuing with such practices – should he be classified as a *mubtadi'*.⁴

On many occasions, Ibn Jibrīn stresses the importance of adhering completely to the Prophetic Sunna as the way to preserve and protect the perception of unity [*tawḥīd*]. According to him, the Sunna is the polar opposite of *bid'a*, because the latter damages

¹ Abdul Aziz bin Bāz, "Islamic Unity, Sufi Groups, Propagating *bid'a* and going astray and what the people of the Sunna must do to counter it" <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8561> (Last accessed 28 Feb 2010).

² 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ma hiyya al-*bid'a* al-i-'tiqādiyya, wa-ma hiyya'l-*bid'a* al-'amaliyya?', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/9945> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥaqīqat al-*bid'a* al-ḥasana wa'l-ghayr ḥasana', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/9997> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

⁴ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Mata yuṭlaq 'ala al-shakḥ innahu mubtadi'an?', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/10701> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

tawhīd;¹ furthermore, *bid‘a* harms or damages the Muslim creed and contradicts the Prophet’s path. In a similar way to Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn claims that it does not matter whether the *bid‘a* itself is related to *bid‘a i‘tiqādiyya* or *‘amaliyya*.²

Ibn Jibrīn further discusses various kinds of *bida‘* and says that celebrating events and holidays which do not originate in the Sunna constitutes *bid‘a*, because anyone celebrating such events is effectively claiming that the Islamic religion was not complete and needs additions. Like Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn makes it clear that whoever commits such an act violates or ignores the Qur’anic verse:

This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. [Qur’an 3: 5]

as well as the Hadith:

He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it is executing an apostasy [radd].³

Ibn Jibrīn categorises *bida‘* according to their severity, and divides them into two groups. He distinguishes between a *bid‘a* that leads to a sin [*bid‘a mufsaqa*] but not to unbelief [*bida‘ ghayr mukfira*], which includes conducts such as celebrating the Prophet’s birthday or performing irregular prayers; and a *bid‘a* which leads to unbelief [*bid‘a mukfira*], such as the one resulting from the behaviour of certain sects like the *rāfiḍa* (in this context meaning the Shi‘a), who celebrate events related to ‘Alī and his family, including ‘Āshūra and the events of Ghadir Khumm (in which, they believe, he was appointed as successor to the Prophet).⁴ Ibn Jibrīn elaborates further about the sub-groups which introduced the most severe acts of *bid‘a* -- the *jahmiyya*, the *rāfiḍa* and the *khawārij*. Nowadays, he continues, the descendants of these *khawārij* are the Ibādīs living in Oman.⁵

¹ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Majmu‘at mukhāḍarāt wa-durūs ‘an al-ḥajj’, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=224&page=7638> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Qawāḍih fi’l-‘aqīda*, online version, p. 3 <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=110&page=6368> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Ibn Jibrīn, *ibid*, p. 11 <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=110&page=6376> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014) (the Hadith is quoted from Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-i‘tiṣām*, p. 20)

⁴ Ibn Jibrīn, *al-Lu‘lu al-mukīn fi fatāwā al-shaykh ibn Jibrīn*, p. 29 <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=67&page=3569> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁵ ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘al-Salaf al-ṣāliḥ bayna al-‘ilm wa’l-‘imān’, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=109&page=6359> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014); ‘Abd Allah ibn

Under *bid'a mukfira* he includes acts such as calling upon the names of holy persons and / or beseeching them for a cure or salvation; fasting and praying [*du'a*] while visiting their tombs; exaggerations of the kind which Sufis make when they consider their *wālis* as outranking the Prophet; and what the Shi'a did in a similar fashion with their twelve *imāms* while, he continues, disregarding Allah. All of these acts are *shirk*, and hence mean unbelief.¹

The second group includes acts which those who committed them believed were made in accordance with the Shari'a. This group generally refers to the performance of rituals such as celebrating the Prophet's birthday, marking the night of Mid-*Sha'bān* or the night of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*, and performing religious rituals in inappropriate locations.² Thus, here we see a different division than the usual three categories referred to in this work, as various acts which fall under the category of *'ibādāt* are placed under different categories not according to their type rather their level of severity.

The polarisation between Sunna and *bid'a* is best reflected by ibn Jibrīn's definition of the phrase *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*. These people, ibn Jibrīn says, are the ones who follow the Prophetic path, and they are also known as 'The People of the Tradition' [*ahl al-ḥadīth*]. In contrast, those who come under the definition of *ahl al-bid'a*, who do not recognise the powers of Allah and who question the truth of the Qur'an and the reliable *aḥādīth*, cannot be included under the banner of *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*.

Even a person who committed a *bid'a* without the intention of challenging Allah, or raising doubt about the Qur'an, would be excluded from *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*; however, he maintains, there are exceptions. For instance, a person who used to belong to *ahl al-bid'a*, but at a certain point of his life abandoned the *bid'a* and started

Jibrīn, 'Asmā' Allah wa-ṣifātuḥu', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=104&page=6196> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

¹ Ibn Jibrīn, *Sharḥ lum'at al-i'tiqād*, p. 86 <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=88&page=5562> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Ibn Jibrīn, *Sharḥ lum'at al-i'tiqād*, p. 85 <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=88&page=5561> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

to live according to the Prophetic path, would be considered once again as belonging to the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*.¹

Ibn Jibrīn considers the graveyards of some of the sects which he defines as *bid'a* sects (like the *rāfiḍa*), as places that should not be sanctioned by the Saudi Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. In these places, he says, *shirk* is practised, as people use them to pray *ad'iya*, to ask for intercession from the dead, and build [shrines] on graves.²

According to al-Ḥawālī, a *bid'a* is every innovation which strives to resemble the acts included in the Shari'a but is actually non-*shar'i*. The most important element to take into consideration is whether a deed classified as a *bid'a* began during the lifetime of the Prophet or after his death. However, al-Ḥawālī adds, the matter is complicated and depends on the time and the person from whom a certain *bid'a* emerged.³ He does not believe that every innovation is a sinful *bid'a*, rather only those relating to rituals of worship. Hence cars, roads and universities have nothing to do with *bid'a*. Even communism, he states, cannot be considered a *bid'a*, because those who promoted it did not intend to enter it into the Shari'a in the first place.⁴

Al-Ḥawālī stresses the fact that the best and strongest advice given by Allah to the believers is to fully adopt the Sunna and avoid the *bid'a*. He refers to Sunna and *bid'a* as polar or mirror opposites. Acknowledging Sunna as the second source of authority of jurisprudence [*fiqh*], al-Ḥawālī refers to *bid'a* as the second worst sin in Islam, directly after unbelief [*kufr*].⁵ Like Ibn Jibrīn, the dichotomy that al-Ḥawālī makes between the Sunna and *bid'a* leads him to divide people into two groups: *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*, and *ahl al-bid'a*.

¹ 'Adel Bana'ima, 'Ḥiwār hātifī ma'a al-shaykh', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=9&book=186&page=7013> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Ibn Jibrīn, 'Ḥājat al-bashar ila al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nāhi 'ala al-munkar'

³ *ibid*

⁴ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Dābit al-bid'a', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=3555&keywords=البدعة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁵ Al-Ḥawālī, *ibid*

In many of his *fatāwā*, lectures, lessons and interviews, al-Ḥawālī describes the great devotion of the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a* with regard to the implementation of the straight path of Islam. He presents this group as the mainstream of Islam, those who stand firmly in the heart of the consensus and as the right between two wrongs: the *mu'tazila* on the one hand and the Sufis on the other, between the speculative theologians [*ahl al-kalām*] and the people of the considered opinion [*ahl al-rā'y*].¹

In one of his interviews, al-Ḥawālī refers to the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a* in its contemporaneous political meaning. Asked why the West has launched an offensive against it, he replies that after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the West lives in horror and fears that the dormant giant, meaning the Muslim Nation, especially *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*, will awaken and fight against Christians in the war of civilisations.²

Al-Ḥawālī's *fatāwā* and lessons indicate that he thinks people who urge or cause others to commit *bid'a* should be put to death, no matter whether this *bid'a* leads to unbelief [*kufr*] or not. He bases his opinion on the early '*ulamā'* [*salaf*]. In this regard, he discusses a situation in which a person performs *ijtihād*, and mistakenly commits, or causes others to commit a *bid'a*. Although such a person, he claims, should be rewarded once (in contrast to a successful *mujtahid*, who is rewarded twice), a distinction should be made between the rewards and punishments of this world [*al-dunya*] and those of the next world [*al-ākhirā*]. In other words, such a person should be punished by death in this world, and the one reward he is entitled to will be given in the next world.³

¹ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'al-Mumayyizāt al-'amaliya li-ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=4723&keywords=السنة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Asbāb hujūm al-'ālam al-gharbi 'ala ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=998&keywords=السنة> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Qutl al-da'i ila al-*bid'a* bighadh al-nadr 'an takfirihī', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=6445&keywords=البدعة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

V. Bid'a – what needs to be done to avoid it

In order to avoid *bid'a*, Ibn Bāz suggests, Muslims must abstain from doing anything which counters the Shari'a, by an unconditional belief in the unity of Allah [*tawhīd*] and by strictly adhering to the Qur'an and Sunna. This, he maintains, was exactly what was being done and promoted by the rulers and religious scholars of Saudi Arabia. According to Ibn Bāz, the Saudi government and '*ulamā*' practised rigour only in the following issues: promoting the concept of *tawhīd*, adherence to the Qur'an and Sunna, and confronting *bid'a*.¹

From Ibn Bāz's texts, lessons and *fatāwā*, it can be adduced that in order to prevent *bida'*, one should not only abstain from it himself, but also look around and act inside his society. He should not visit people who commit *bid'a*, with one exception – if by visiting them or talking to them, he can help promote the right path and advise them what to do or what not to do in order to avoid *bid'a* and return to the rightful way of the Prophetic path.²

Ibn Jibrīn does not go into many details on the subject. His only advice is that in order to avoid a *bid'a*, one must follow the Qur'an and the Sunna in a very strict way.³

Al-Hawālī is asked how to eradicate all sorts of *bid'a*. His answer is that the only way to eradicate the evil of all *bida'* is to obey the Qur'an and follow the Prophetic Sunna. He argues that every believer who lives in a neighbourhood or other locality in which people are not aware of these rules, must guide those people to obey the Qur'an and follow the Sunna. A Muslim who committed a *bid'a* should seek forgiveness by any of the following means – using his money for deeds which are

¹ Ibn Bāz, 'Wujūb luzūm al-Sunna wa'l-ḥaḍr min al-*bid'a*'

² 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Naṣīḥat al-ahl min al-*bida'* wa'l-shirk', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/18273> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, 'al-Irshād sharḥ lum'at al-i'tiqād al-hādī ila sabīl al-rashad', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=1&book=57&page=2982> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

Sunna, practising Jihad for Allah, memorising the Qur'an, giving alms to the poor and performing acts of charity.¹

Finally, al-Ḥawālī provides a list of books written by various 'ulamā' who have defined all types of *bid'a* and warned against them. Reading these books by 'ulamā' like Ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Ajārī (d. 360 h), Ibn Batta (d. 387 h), Tartushī, Salīm al-Hilālī and a few modern Wahhābī 'ulamā', may help a believer to avoid committing *bid'a*.²

VI. Other types of *bid'a*

Celebrating the Prophet's birthday

According to Ibn Bāz, celebrating the Prophetic birthday is strictly forbidden and considered *bid'a*. This is founded in the Hadith already referred to:

He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it, is executing apostasy [raḍḍ].

In addition, it is founded on the famous Hadith which characterises every *bid'a* as *ḍalāla*. Moreover, he continues, celebrating any person's birthday is considered *bid'a* as well: the Prophet, his ṣaḥāba and their followers did not celebrate birthdays, and customs like these only began in later times.³ Celebrating the Prophet's birthday is therefore not only a *bid'a* but definitely unnecessary too.

First, because Muslims already have two great occasions to celebrate -- '*id al-fiṭr* and '*Id al-adḥa*'; secondly, there are other ways for a believer to demonstrate his love for the Prophet and God, especially by following the Prophet's deeds, by obeying the

¹ Safar al-Ḥawālī, '*Bid'at al-Mawlid wa-khatrīha*', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1068&keywords=بدعة#2799>

(Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Al-Ḥawālī, '*Ḍabit al-bid'a*'

³ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, '*Hal yuḥal li'l-Muslimīn 'an yaḥtafilu bi'l -Mawlid al-Nabawī?*', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/85> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

Shari‘a, by performing the Jihad for the sake of Allah, and by using *da‘wa* aimed at delivering the message of the Prophetic Sunna.¹

Like other Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*, Ibn Bāz claims that the first to introduce this *bid‘a* were the Fatimids in Egypt and North Africa in the fourth and fifth *hijrī* centuries. Ibn Bāz notes that the Fatimids used to mark the birthdays of Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Fātima and other *shi‘ī* figures. Celebrating these birthdays, he continues, was not only a *bid‘a*, but also led to *shirk* and *ghulūw* in regard to these figures.²

Sedgwick reports on a controversy in 1973, when various Ḥijāzī ‘*ulamā* publicly disagreed in a Kuwaiti newspaper with the Wahhābī establishment’s renewed condemnation for Sufi celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday, which had been practised for centuries; Ibn Bāz, he says, condemned the *mawlid* forthrightly, on the simple grounds that it was a *bid‘a*. It was not until the 1980s, Sedgwick continues, that the Baluchi Naqshbandis again celebrated this *mawlid*.³

In one of his *fatāwā*, Ibn Bāz rules that a believer wishing to practise the off-season pilgrimage [‘*umra*] should not perform it intentionally in accordance with birthdays (of the Prophet and others). Performing the ‘*umra* is permitted at all times, without linking it to birthdays, and it is best to perform it during the month of *Ramaḍān*; the Prophet himself, Ibn Bāz remarks, said that performing the ‘*umra* during *Ramaḍān* should be considered equal to performing it in the Hajj season.⁴

Ibn Jibrīn also provides several reasons as to why the Prophet’s birthday should not be celebrated. First, there is no evidence that the Prophet himself marked his own birthday, and the same applies to the first Caliphs and to the Prophet’s *ṣaḥāba*. If these people, who loved the Prophet so much, did not mark his birthday, neither should the believer in modern times. Secondly, there are many more appropriate days and dates for the believer to mark and celebrate, such as the day in which the word of

¹ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, ‘Ḥukm al-iḥtifāl bi’l -Mawlid al-Nabawī’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/4855> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² *ibid*

³ Mark J. R. Sedgwick, "Saudi Sufis: Compromise in the Hijaz, 1925-40" *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 37, issue 3, Shiites and Sufis in Saudi Arabia (Nov., 1997), pp. 366-367

⁴ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Azīz Ibn Bāz, ‘Ada al-‘umra fi’l-mawlid’, <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8471> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

Allah reached the prophet [*yawm nuzūl al-waḥy*], the day of the battle of Badr, the day of the battle of Hunayn and others. If a believer wishes to express his devotion, this should be done by following the Sunna and implementing the Shari‘a, and not by celebrating the Prophet’s birthday.¹

Ibn Jibrīn refers to the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday as a bad creed [‘*aqīda say’a*’] and as *bid’a*. He claims that this *bid’a* was first introduced in the fourth *hijrī* century by the Buwayhids (a *shi‘ī* dynasty in Persia and Iraq) and afterwards spread into most of the Muslim lands to such an extent that it was accepted by the ‘*ulamā*’ of these lands. Those who introduced and disseminated this *bid’a*, he adds, introduced an alien element to Islam.²

Al-Ḥawālī deals with the question of whether celebrating the Prophet’s birthday should be considered Sunna or *bid’a*. Such an event, he explains, was marked or celebrated neither by the Prophet nor by his *ṣaḥāba*. The people who celebrated the Prophet’s birthday were those who hated God’s religion and the Prophet’s *ṣaḥāba* the most. According to al-Ḥawālī, they were the *rāfiḍa* (Shi‘a), the esoteric people calling themselves the *bātiniyyūn* (who claim to have a sacred spirit within them for personal guidance), and the Zoroastrians [*majūsiyya*] whom al-Ḥawālī considers *zanādiqa*. The main group to introduce this celebration into Islam, he continues, were the Fatimids, whose state -- he claims -- was actually Jewish, despite the fact that they identified themselves as descendants of the Prophet; and it is well known, he adds, that Jews are the enemies of the Prophet and of Muslims. Hence, al-Ḥawālī concludes, celebrating the Prophet’s birthday is a *bid’a* which should not be allowed.³

Another question which al-Ḥawālī refers to is whether celebrating the Prophet’s birthday would lead to secularism [‘*almāniyya*’]. This, he answers, is a new phenomenon which satisfies the mind but neglects the Sunna. Those who started with this celebration caused a situation in which people dream about the Prophet’s ghost at

¹ Ibn Jibrīn, *al-Lu’lu al-mukīn fi fatāwā ibn Jibrīn*, p. 27, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=67&page=3567> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² *ibid*; ‘Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, ‘Fatāwā fi’l-tawḥīd’, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=16&page=700> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014).

³ Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Iḥtīfāl bi’l-Mawlid al-Nabawī *bid’a*’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=3027&keywords=بيعة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

night and afterwards in daytime as well, to such an extent that these dreams prevent them from performing their religious duties correctly. Henceforth, the way to further violations of Islamic laws is swift. Al-Ḥawālī concludes by saying that Muslims should pray to Allah to spare them these modes of *bid‘a*.¹

Another point which al-Ḥawālī raises is connected with the exact date on which the Prophet was born. While it is known that the Prophet passed away on 12th *Rabi‘ al-Awwal*, the exact date or even month in which he was born are uncertain. Fatimids (who are considered to be Jews), who in the past ruled Egypt and North Africa, and had control over Muslims there, tried to introduce a tradition of celebrating the Prophet’s birthday in order to cause the Muslims to confuse it with the date of the Prophet’s death, which for the Jews -- he asserts -- is a celebration. Hence, al-Ḥawālī claims, whoever marks a certain date as the Prophet’s birthday actually performs a *bid‘a*. Furthermore, the Shi‘a, who are also the enemies of Islam, use the same mourning slogans, songs and speeches both during the ‘Āshūra and the Prophet’s Birthday, and this, of course, is a *bid‘a* as well.²

The night of Mid-*Sha‘ban*

Ibn Bāz claims that marking, celebrating or fasting on the night of Mid-*Sha‘ban* is considered *bid‘a*. If there are any *aḥādīth* which permit this innovation, they are all weak and unreliable. In order to explain his position, Ibn Bāz refers to the same argument that he invoked when considering the issue of the Prophet’s birthday -- it is something that was innovated many years after the Prophet’s days, and not something that Allah or the Prophet had advanced. As in the case of the Prophet’s birthday, Ibn Bāz relies upon the same *aḥādīth*, and adds the Qur’anic verse:

“O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah

¹Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘al-Ihtifāl bi’l-Mawlid al-Nabawī *bid‘at* al-‘abidiyyin’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=2137&keywords=بدعة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, ‘*Bid‘at* al-Mawlid wa-khatriha’, <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=1068&keywords=بدعة> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination". [Qur'an 59: 4]

For a believer seeking a certain night to perform a special worship, Ibn Bāz offers other options which, he continues, are more apposite. One example is on a Friday night, since Friday is the best day of the week; other, more specific dates are the aforementioned *Laylat al-Qadr* and the nights of *Ramaḍān*. Ibn Bāz mentions a reliable Hadith regarding these nights:

Whoever makes [the month] of Ramaḍān a time for belief and self criticism, will be pardoned for all his sins, and whoever makes Laylat al-Qadr a time for belief and self criticism, will [also] be pardoned.¹

If the night of Mid-*Sha' bān* was so important to mark, he adds, then the Prophet would have instructed the Nation to mark it, or at least he would either have marked it himself or he would have said something to his *ṣahāba*. Since none of the above took place, Ibn Bāz concludes, marking this night should be considered *bid'a* and believers should refrain from doing so.²

With regards to fasting through this night, Ibn Bāz suggests that this is also a *bid'a*; however, if someone is used to fasting every month of the [lunar] year in the 'three white days',³ he would not be committing a *bid'a*, because the Prophet himself used to fast on these days.⁴ It should be noted that according to Ibn Bāz it is also forbidden to make a sacrifice in Mid-*Sha' bān*, eat the meat of a sacrifice that had been made on that day,⁵ and even make a special prayer. All of these acts are considered *bid'a*.⁶

Ibn Jibrīn is asked whether it is permitted to perform special rituals in the night of Mid-*Sha' bān*, and whether people should fast during this day. He rules that the

¹ Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb faḍl laylat al-qadr, no. 1

² 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥukm al-iḥtifāl bi-laylat al-niṣf min Sha' bān', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8186> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Ibn Bāz refers to the days of 13-15 each month, when the moon is full

⁴ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥukm takhṣiṣ al-khamīs 'ashar min Sha' bān bi'l-ṣiyyām', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/9894> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁵ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥukm al-dhabḥ fi layla mu'ayyana ka-laylat al-niṣf min Sha' bān wa-sab'a wa-'ishrin min Rajab', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/9963> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁶ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥukm ṣalat al-khamīs 'ashar min Sha' bān', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/10130> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

source of the stories or *aḥādīth* regarding such rituals as well as the fast may have come from one of the followers of the *ṣaḥāba*, but all are questionable or unreliable, and were transmitted in countries in which unbelief was widespread. Ibn Jibrīn concludes that no special rituals are allowed in this night and no fast was allowed specifically during the day.¹

In al-Ḥawālī's opinion, considering the night of Mid-*Sha' bān* a special night for worshipping Allah is *bid'a*. There are people, he observes, who believe that the following Qur'anic verse actually refers to the night of Mid-*Sha' bān*, but they are wrong:

We sent it down during a blessed night. [Qur'an 44: 3]

The sacred night definitely comes during the month of Ramaḍān and not *Sha' bān*, as two other Qur'anic verses suggest:

Ramaḍān is the [month] in which we sent down the Qur'an. [Qur'an 2: 185]

We have indeed revealed this [Message] in the night of Power. [Qur'an 97: 1]

Al-Ḥawālī admits that there are *'ulamā* who claim that the night of Mid-*Sha' bān* should be dedicated to worship, based on a Hadith which says that Allah reveals himself to the believers in that night and pardons everyone who is not a *mushrik* nor has abandoned the Sunna. However, he says, even if this is true, it does not mean that this night should be dedicated to a special worship and therefore people who do so commit *bid'a*.²

¹ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, 'Fatāwā al-ṣiyyām', <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=18&page=849> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Bida' Shahr Sha' bān', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=906&keywords=شعبان> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014); Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Laylan al-niṣf min Sha' bān', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=2683&keywords=شعبان> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

The celebration of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*

According to Ibn Bāz, there is no doubt that the Prophet's night journey to the furthest mosque and subsequent ascent to heaven [*al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*] was a significant event; this journey proved the Prophet's truthfulness and the great status he acquired in the eyes of Allah, the almightiness of Allah and the superiority of Allah over all creatures. However, he continues, we must distinguish between the importance of the journey itself and the commemoration of Laylat *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*, a custom that some people perform on the night of the 27th of *Rajab*.

There is no reliable Hadith from which a believer could deduce that this night should be marked by any special worship or rituals. Ibn Bāz argues that neither the Prophet nor his *ṣaḥāba* celebrated or marked this night, and none of them ever ordered or recommended doing so. Therefore, no Muslim should mark this night, and these acts are considered *bid'a*. As in other cases previously discussed, Ibn Bāz quotes the Hadith which states that an innovator is an apostate, as well as other *aḥādīth* which condemn all religious innovations. Ibn Bāz says that Muslims committing *bida'* like this were behaving like Jews and Christians, who had introduced innovations into their religions.¹

Like Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn regards the act of celebrating the night of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj* with special rituals as *bid'a*. In addition, similarly to Ibn Bāz, he states that this night should not be celebrated in any special way, since there is no reference to it in any reliable *aḥādīth*. However, unlike Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn does not deal with the issue specifically, nor does he issue a special detailed *fatwā* on the subject. Instead, Ibn Jibrīn addresses it as part of a discussion on other *bida'* which he sees as damaging to the Muslim creed -- such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday or other birthdays, the commemoration of Mid-*Sha'bān* and more.²

¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥukm al-iḥtifāl bi-laylat al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/8185> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014); ¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Bida' fi Shahr Rajab', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/1105> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² Ibn Jibrīn, *Qawadih fi'l-'aqīda*, p. 11, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=8&book=110&page=6376> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

Like Ibn Bāz, al-Ḥawālī distinguishes between two issues -- on the one hand, the importance of the actual occurrence of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj* to Islamic doctrine, and on the other, the commemoration of it on the night of 27th of *Rajab*. The first issue is rather clear and simple; al-Ḥawālī emphasises that *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj* is an integral part of the Qur'an, and whoever denies it actually denies the Qur'an, and thus becomes an unbeliever.¹

With regard to the second issue, al-Ḥawālī's starting point is that the exact date on which the night of the *Isrā'* took place is unknown. It was, he says, the Egyptian writer Shihab al-Dīn al-Khafajī (d. 1069 h) who first stated in his book *Nasīm al-riyād fī sharḥ shifa' al-qādī Iyād* that it took place on 27th of *Rajab*. Having established that, al-Ḥawālī continues, not only commemorating this night is a *bid'a*, but it is also a very late innovation. Al-Ḥawālī repeats the same arguments presented by both Ibn Bāz and Ibn Jibrīn, and says that neither the prophet nor his *ṣaḥāba* or their followers have ever commemorated the night of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*.

Nowadays, al-Ḥawālī says, there are many people who gather in mosques. During this gathering, the opening verse of the relevant Sura, ("Glory be to Him Who took His Servant [Muḥammad] on a journey by night", [Qur'an 17: 1]) is narrated, and many radio and television stations also broadcast these rituals. There is, of course, no objection to reading this verse, but when read on the night of 27th *Rajab*, it gives people the wrong impression and misleads them into thinking that this night concerns the actual event. Al-Ḥawālī summarises his argument by repeating the Hadith which defines the innovator as an apostate.²

Mourning rituals

Ibn Bāz considers several mourning rituals performed in the Muslim world as *bid'a*. These include, for example, the custom of instructing the dead after the burial [*talqīn*], and even if made before death; reading the *shahāda* following a death, during the

¹ Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Hukm man ankara al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=4613&keywords=والمعراج> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Hukm al-iḥtifāl bi-laylat al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=5565&keywords=والمعراج> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

funeral, after it or while digging the grave. Another custom is grabbing some dirt from the grave and, while doing so, reading some Qur'anic verses. All these acts have no origin whatsoever in the Sunna -- the deeds or sayings of the early Muslims, the Prophet and his *ṣaḥāba*. Back then, people who participated in a funeral only spoke in low voices. In addition, all the *aḥādīth* which allowed these customs are unreliable.¹

According to Ibn Bāz, prayers should be said in a special place set aside for prayers, prior to the funeral, and quoting the *shahāda* is permitted only prior to the death of a person. During the funeral itself, the only words that should be said must urge the participants to seek forgiveness for the deceased for all his wrongdoing during his lifetime. Ibn Bāz bases his opinion upon the Prophetic Hadith:

*Seek forgiveness for your brother and ask for his steadfastness for indeed he is now being questioned.*²

Ibn Bāz further argues, regarding mourning rituals, that gathering in the house of the deceased after his death to eat, drink and read from the Qur'an is a *bid'a*. As in other cases, this relies on the Prophet and his *ṣaḥāba*, who never performed such rituals upon hearing the news of the death of one of their fellow-believers.

The Sunna accepts the performance of certain rituals after the funeral once all people have left, such as offering condolences to the family [*ta'ziya*], and for the relatives or neighbours to send food to the family. When Ja'far, one of the Prophet's companions, died, the Prophet said: 'Make food for the family of Ja'far to occupy their minds'. Furthermore, if people gather in the deceased's house, they should not perform a

¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Bida' 'ind al-dafn', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/10215> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'al-Talqīn ba'd al-dafn *bid'a*', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/2670> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014); 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'Ḥukm al-ṣalāt 'ala al-mayyit fi'l-maqbara – al-taḥlīl bi-raf' al-sawt 'ind al-dafn – wa talqīn al-mayyit ba'd al-mawt', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/14082> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014); 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'al-qirā'a fi turbat al-qabr thumma hathuha 'ala kafn al-mayyit *bid'a* munkara', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/2656> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014) (the Hadith is quoted from See Al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, p. 56)

prayer there, a custom which also has no origin in early Islam and is therefore a *bid'a*. Prayers, according to Ibn Bāz, should only be performed in a mosque.¹

Ibn Jibrīn refers to the custom of quoting the *shahāda* after the death or burial of a deceased person. He says that this is a widespread *bid'a* in Iraq, Syria and Africa and that the origin of this ritual is an unreliable Hadith in which the Prophet allegedly said:

Say after your dead there is no God but Allah

However, Ibn Jibrīn continues, whoever performs this custom ignores the fact that this Hadith is unreliable; similarly to Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn also states that quoting the *shahāda* is only permitted prior to a person's death. When asked whether it is permitted to quote verses from Surat Ya Sin after one's death or burial, his answer is rather similar -- that the origin of this custom is also an unreliable Hadith, in which the Prophet allegedly said:

Recite Surat Ya Sin over your dead.

If this Hadith were to be taken seriously, he adds, then there could be no doubt that its original meaning was to read this Sura next to a dying person, and not over the grave of a deceased.²

Regarding funeral rituals, Ibn Jibrīn is asked about words being said over a deceased's grave, and he mentions the phrase that many scholars suggested people should say: 'In the name of Allah and the nation of the messenger of Allah'.³ There is no sign Ibn Jibrīn sees it as a *bid'a*. Like Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn does not approve of speaking loudly during a funeral, but unlike Ibn Bāz, he does not consider it a sin or *bid'a*, but refers to it as a disliked practice [*makrūh*].⁴

¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz' Azīz Ibn Bāz, 'al-Ijtima' fi-bayt al-mayyit li'l-akl wa'l-sharab wa-qirā'at al-Qur'an *bid'a*', <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/2772> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Fiqh wa-ahkām*, Online version, p. 96, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=3&book=51&page=2453> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Fatāwā*, p. 57, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=6&book=50&page=2179> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

⁴ 'Abd Allah ibn Jibrīn, *Kitāb al-rawḍ al-murabba'*, online version, vol. 1, p. 45, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=77&page=4326> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

Ibn Jibrīn also differs from Ibn Bāz over the issue of prayer inside the cemetery. He claims that if a prayer is not performed before the funeral, it is permitted to pray near the grave itself, even if many years have passed since the death of the deceased.¹

Al-Ḥawālī addresses the question of whether it is permitted to read from the Qur'an over a grave. In his opinion, the most important issue here is the number of people who gather near the grave and participate in the reading. All the *'ulamā*, he claims, have agreed that if a large number of people gather near a grave and read from the Qur'an; if a person reads from the Qur'an after the funeral to many others; or if a person comes to read from the Qur'an near the deceased's grave when several days have passed since his death – these are clear cases of *bid'a*. Even if a person stands on his own near a grave of a dear relative, and while asking forgiveness for the deceased inserts Qur'anic verses into his words, this is still a *bid'a*, albeit the lightest, most tolerable and most forgivable act of all such matters.²

Neither Ibn Jibrīn nor Safar al-Ḥawālī elaborate or even refer to rituals being performed after the funeral in the deceased's house. Yet these issues are dealt with by Shaykh Ṣaliḥ al-Fawzān. In a small booklet dedicated to the issue of *bid'a*, Fawzān sees more or less eye-to-eye with Ibn Bāz on issues related to mourning rituals. He considers reciting Qur'anic verses (especially from *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*) after someone's death a *bid'a*, and also says that if the family members of the deceased prepare food and claim that this act benefits the dead, they will be committing *bid'a*.

Al-Fawzān, like Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn and al-Ḥawālī, names other rituals and acts that have already been referred to as *bida'*: the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, the performance of special rituals in the night of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*, the performance of special rituals during the night of Mid-*Sha'bān*, building mosques on graves, shaping graves like mosques, visiting graves to receive blessings and calling upon the deceased for assistance.³

¹ Ibn Jibrīn, *ibid*, p. 31, <http://ibn-jebreen.com/book.php?cat=7&book=77&page=4312> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² Safar al-Ḥawālī, 'Ḥukm qirā'at al-Qur'an 'ala al-amwāt', <http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=3557&keywords=الاموات> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ Salih al Fauzaan, *Innovation and its bad effects*, translated by Dr Hafiz Muhammad Shabbir Usmani, Birmingham, Maktabah Darussalam UK, 2000, pp.12-16.

It should be noted that the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatāwā*, in which Fawzān is a member, has also issued rulings on matters relating to mourning and funeral rituals. Like the other '*ulamā*' discussed in this chapter, it rules that reciting the Qur'an during a funeral or near the deceased's grave are definitely not acts which were performed by the Prophet. The Permanent Committee recalls that many important '*ulamā*', like the great Ibn Taymiyya, have said that performing these rituals was *bid'a*.¹

VII. The Shi'a in the eyes of current Wahhābī 'ulamā

In late February 2009, a crowd of several thousand Shi'a from the Eastern Province (al-Ahsa') of Saudi Arabia made a pilgrimage to the al-Baqī' cemetery in Medina, close to the Prophet's mosque. This cemetery is well known as the place in which some *ṣahāba*, one of the Prophet's wives and several important *Shi'ī* Imāms are buried. The Saudi religious police [*Mutawa'a*], who work under the authority of the 'Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice', filmed some *shi'ī* women near the cemetery. In the riots which broke out as a result of this incident, three *shi'ī* pilgrims were killed and nine arrested.²

This incident is symbolic of the state of relations between the Saudi regime and the *shi'ī* minority in Saudi Arabia, which comprises between 10% and 15% of the kingdom's population, and which resides mainly in al-Ahsa' Province. The deep hostility between the Saudi Wahhābī regime and the Shi'a in the country has existed from the mid-eighteenth century, when the first Saudi state was established; currently, the hostility is reflected in both its religious and national aspects. There is no doubt that the Wahhābī religious establishment is one of the main instigators of the tension between the Shi'a and the Saudi regime. The friction began when the *Shi'ī* population

¹ Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz al Musnad (collected), *Fatāwā Islamiyah – Islamic Verdicts*, Vol. 3, Riyadh, Jeddah, Sharjah, Lahore, London, Houston & New York, Darussalam, 2002, pp. 109-110.

² Rannie Amiri, 'Unrest in Medina', 2 March 2009, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=30707> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

of the al-Qatif and al-Ahsa' came under Saudi rule in 1913, when Ibn Saud occupied the Province.¹

The hostility has been developing since then, and has also brought about the gradual politicisation of the *shi'ī* community in Saudi Arabia, mainly during the 1950s and 1960s. On several occasions over the years, this political tension also manifested itself in religious terms -- with the Saudi regime banning the publication and distribution of religious or political texts; forcing limitations on mosque construction or ruining destroying sacred and social centres; or persecuting those observing *shi'ī* rituals such as 'Āshūra and visits to graves.² Violent and active *shi'ī* resistance continued during most of the 1980s, but in the early 2000s, *shi'ī* leaders joined the reformist forces in their fight against *al-Qā'ida*.

The ongoing *shi'ī*-Wahhābī tensions have also been expressed in intellectual religious terms. Senior '*ulamā*', including those who have been cited in this chapter, and many others, issued *fatāwā* against the Shi'a in general and those living in the kingdom in particular, claiming they were non-believers, and that their rituals should be considered *bid'a*.

Ibn Bāz, for example, when asked about the difference between the *ahl al-sunna* and the Shi'a, says:

There is a difference between them. Allah has not created the people equal. Those who do the good things cannot be compared to the wrongdoers. The innocent and the sinners are not the same... We should distinguish between the non-believers and the Muslims, and between the Shi'a and the others. The Shi'a are innovators [mubtadi'a] with all their [sub] groups: the Rāfiḍa, the Nusairis, the Ismailis and others. They are divided into sects and castes and fragments. There are among them

¹ Najīb al-Khanīzī, 'al-Nashāt al-siyyāsī li'l-shi'a fi'l-Sa'ūdiyya', *Al-Jazeera* 03/10/2004, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/78043615-9EE9-4403-8C01-A60FF61A98C3.htm> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

² See for example 'The Shi'i Question in Saudi Arabia' – *Middle East Report* no. 45 (19 September 2005), *International Crisis Group*, pp. 1-2; 'The Shi'i Question in Saudi Arabia', pp. 3-4; Jacob Goldberg, 'The Shi'i Minority in Saudi Arabia', in Juan Cole & Nikki Keddie (eds.) *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, New York, Yale University Press, 1986, p.

*the Rāfiḍa, the Nusairis and others who worship Ahl al-Bayt¹ even without worshipping Allah. They ask for Ahl al-Bayt's help. They are non-believers...*²

Al-Hawālī warns that the Shi‘a pose a danger to the real and true believers:

*Those people always stand side by side with the enemies of Allah. They form alliances with the Jews, the Christians, the Mongols, the Tatars and with whoever attacks the Muslims' land. They stand side by side with those against the Muslims. They seek to fight against the People of the Sunna, even if that means standing side by side with the non believers.*³

According to Al-Atawneh, Ibn Jibrīn went even further by declaring that the killing of Shi‘a was not a sin.⁴ Michaela Prokop provides an insight into Saudi school textbooks; she notes that many of them, especially those concerned with *tawhīd*, refer to various rituals examined here as *bida‘*. According to her, until 1993, schoolbooks openly denounced Sufi and Shi‘a beliefs as *bid‘a*, warned the students against mixing with the ‘innovators’ and many times referred to the Shi‘a as *mushrikūn* or even *kuffār*. This should partly be attributed to the rivalry with Iran. The curriculum was changed after protests, Prokop adds, and the supposedly ‘repugnant’ and ‘deviating’ aspects and religious practices are no longer attributed to one particular sect. Nevertheless, she concludes, Shi‘a beliefs continue to be denounced in books distributed at Saudi-financed mosques both within the country and abroad.⁵

VIII. The Muslim Brotherhood in the eyes of current Wahhābī ‘ulamā’

Modern Wahhābī ‘ulamā use the issue of *bid‘a* to attack non-Wahhābī groups throughout the Muslim world. One example is the way that these ‘ulamā look at the Muslim Brotherhood, which is dealt with in a separate chapter.

¹ Those figures believed by the Shi‘a to have been divinely appointed to teach the true faith after the Prophet.

² See: <http://www.binBaz.org.sa/mat/4172> (Last accessed - 1 May 2014)

³ See:

<http://www.alHawali.com/index.cfm?method=home.SubContent&contentID=2993&keywords=الشيعة>
(Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

⁴ Al-Atawneh, *Middle Eastern Studies*, p. 256

⁵ Michaela Prokop, "Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Education", *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 79, No. 1 (Jan., 2003), p. 81

Ibn Bāz was very strict in his *fatāwā*, interviews and publications about the Muslim Brotherhood, saying that their fate is to be burnt in hell. Various sources cite an interview (whose exact timing is unknown) in which Ibn Bāz quotes the famous Hadith which says that the Muslim Nation would split into seventy-three sects -- with all, except for the saved sect, belonging in hell. This, according to Ibn Bāz, includes the Muslim Brotherhood, which means that he considers the Brotherhood to be a group which does not follow the Sunna.

In a different place, answering a question on the Muslim Brotherhood, Ibn Bāz says that the movement has been criticised by the people of knowledge [*ahl al-‘ilm*] since its participation in spreading the da‘wa is not for the sake of the unity of God, nor in order to reject *shirk* or *bid‘a*. Furthermore, he continues, the Muslim Brotherhood has its own methods of worshipping which are inconsistent with those of the *ahl al-sunna*. In his answer, Ibn Bāz criticises Muslim Brotherhood rituals such as visiting the tombs of saints like Ḥusayn, Ḥasan or al-Badawī, and asking for the saints’ intercession -- which, according to the true faith, is considered *shirk*.¹

Another objection raised by Ibn Bāz is that various groups like the Muslim Brotherhood or Tablighi Jamaat are organised as parties, an anomaly which is not allowed; the true believers belong only to the Party of Allah and should never form parties in their political sense, even ones based on religion. Since neither the Prophet nor his followers were organised in parties, such acts should be considered *bid‘a*.²

In general, it looks as if this view is shared by many Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*. For example, Shaykh Ṣāliḥ ibn Fawzān also includes the Muslim Brotherhood, alongside other political groups such as Tablighi Jamaat and Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, in the seventy-two sects destined to go to hell, since they have violated the principles of the *ahl al-sunna*. Ibn Fawzān even goes as far as to say that members of such groups should not be welcome in the Lands of the Muslims [*Bilād al-Muslimīn*] – which probably refers to

¹ See: <http://www.isfalah.com/vb/showthread.php?s=ecd0ff589f03d9dc0faa33489e840398&p=16038#post16038> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014). See also: <http://www.ajurry.com/vb/showthread.php?t=10594> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

² See: <http://www.sahab.net/forums/showthread.php?t=363727> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

Saudi Arabia – since they want to practise deviation [*inḥirāf*] and divide the people of that land, which is equivalent unbelief.

Another Wahhābī scholar – Shaykh Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Āl al-Shaykh – the Saudi Minister for Religious Affairs – also attacks the Muslim Brotherhood. In one of his *fatāwā*, he accuses the Brotherhood of neither respecting the Sunna nor liking the people of the Sunna. All the Muslim Brotherhood is interested in is political benefits, and their true objective is not to perform a proper *da‘wa* but to utilise it as a means to seize political power in any given country.¹

Ibn Jibrīn, on the other hand, does not treat all members of the Muslim Brotherhood as one group, but distinguishes between various groups and members inside the Brotherhood: according to him, those who follow the path of the *ahl al-sunna*, abstain from asking for help from dead saints, perform acts of worship properly, and command the right and forbid the wrong, should be seen as good people and good believers [*min ahl al-khayr*].

Furthermore, in contrast to Ibn Bāz, who places the Muslim Brotherhood on the same level as Sufis and the Shi‘a (among the seventy two groups who will be burnt in hell), Ibn Jibrīn distinguishes between various groups – referring to Sufis as *mushrikūn* and to the Shi‘a as non-believers.² According to Ibn Jibrīn, the name of a group to which a person belongs does not matter; the only factor which matters is whether a person is faithful, believes in the unity of Allah and lives his life according to the right path [*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*]. From his *fatāwā* it can be understood that only non-Muslim groups -- such as Jews, Christians and Buddhists, belong in hell as a single group.³

Finally, given Safar al-Ḥawālī’s background and the influence exerted on him by significant Muslim Brotherhood scholars, it should not come as a surprise that there is no indication he holds similar views.

¹ See al-Fawzān and Āl al-Shaykh’s opinions quoted on:

<http://www.nationalkuwait.com/vb/showthread.php?t=91538>

² See: <http://ibn-jebreen.com/ftawa.php?view=vmasal&subid=5756&parent=786> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

³ See: <http://www.ibn-jebreen.com/ftawa.php?view=vmasal&subid=10948&parent=3954> (Last accessed – 1 May 2014)

Conclusions

This chapter has focused mainly on the opinions and rulings of three of the most famous Wahhābī '*ulamā*' in Saudi Arabia in the last century -- individuals who represent not only three different generations, but also two currents in modern Saudi Wahhābiyya: the 'official' and 'non-official' '*ulamā*'.

Despite the differences in age and general attitude towards the ruling family, there are many common denominators among the three with regard to the focus of this study. They all stress the great importance of the Sunna, all consider *bid'a* as something very bad which should be avoided and eradicated, and all agree this should be done by strict adherence to the Qur'an and Sunna. They all refuse to distinguish between a 'good' and a 'bad' *bid'a*, and only divide the *bida'* into two levels of severity. In addition, they present *bid'a* as the polar opposite of the Sunna; they all consider Sunna and *bid'a* as a 'zero-sum game'; and all have more or less the same opinion concerning rituals which Wahhābiyya condemns. All three attribute the origins of *bid'a* to groups which the Wahhābīs hate the most: Shi'a, the *mu'tazila* and the *khawārij*.

The fact that all three deliberate on, and concentrate far more on rulings about Sunna, *shirk* and *bid'a* compared to issues such as *ijtihād* or *ijmā'*, shows that all of them are very loyal to the Wahhābiyya and its pillars; in other words, they say in all possible ways that the Sunna is highly important, and thus, by not respecting the Sunna, one puts himself in a risk of ending up committing *bid'a* and / or *shirk*. In addition, they speak relatively briefly about *ijmā'* and *ijtihād* -- two issues which the Wahhābiyya treats with suspicion.

However, in spite of these common denominators, it is also not difficult to observe the differences between Ibn Bāz and Ibn Jibrīn on the one hand, and Safar al-Ḥawālī on the other. Al-Ḥawālī, while dealing with all issues under study here, not only refers in his rulings much more to current events, groups and individuals -- for example, the Palestinian *intifāḍa*, the Ibadis in Oman, and the writer Naguib Maḥfuz -- but also exposes his relatively extremist opinions, by referring to the struggle between the Muslim and Western civilisations, by attacking Jews and Christians much more than

the other two scholars, and by claiming that the appropriate treatment for people who commit *bid'a* is execution.

At least some of these discussions show how deeply al-Ḥawālī was influenced by the Qutbist trend within the Muslim Brotherhood, its language and the subjects it tackles.

Another difference is that the scholars affiliated with the regime – Ibn Bāz, Ibn Jibrīn and even al-Fawzān – deliberate much more than al-Ḥawālī on other theological issues, including mourning rituals. One can attribute this to age and experience, but it can also be assumed that these issues were much less on the agenda of relatively young and oppositionist scholars such as al-Ḥawālī.

Conclusions

This research has opened a window to a dispute in the modern period of the Arab Middle East, in challenging times when the Ottoman Empire collapsed and brought the rule of Islam into a gradual decline, while the influence of Western countries grew. Two groups stood at the focus of this dispute, each trying to bring to the forefront Islam and their respective views with regard to innovations in religion. The first two chapters dealt with the thought of the revivalist camp, which aspired to bridge between modern developments and religion, and the third and fourth introduced the conservative Wahhābī trend. According to these opposite worldviews, each side was expected to have treated the subject of *bid'a* and its affiliated terms differently.

The aims of the study were to look at the influence over each group's thinking, try to observe whether any developments were made in treating *bid'a*, explore the types of *bid'a* that the '*ulamā*' of each group tend to concentrate on and try to find a connection between all this and the circumstances under which each group of '*ulamā*' operated.

Before reaching the main chapters, a shorter background chapter was offered, summing up the findings of the main studies in the field, and trying to define the different historic approaches to *bid'a* and the types of actions included under its title; the intention was first to place this very complicated issue into certain patterns, and second -- to serve as a point of reference to the views of the '*ulamā*' under discussion in this study.

Chapter one looked into the views of the early Salafī scholars, who operated under the shadow of the final stages of decline of the Empire and the growing influence of Western countries, which they personally experienced; the cultural Western influence over countries like Egypt, where most of them operated, was felt in the intellectual circles they wished to belong to. Thus, these scholars had to balance between the tension of their aspiration to revive religion, apply it to modern times and re-open the gates of *ijtihād*, while avoiding wrongful innovations, most of the time focusing on what they saw as the need for social and educational reforms.

Afghānī was the first to choose this path, and sought to combine religion with modern science and its discoveries, which, he maintained, had hidden references in the Qur'an. He saw stagnation and imitation as the main enemies of religion, so in order to promote *islāh* and *tajdīd* had no problem in adopting views from outside Islam, which according to the plain definition of *bid'a* could be considered as falling under the category of '*aqīdāt*. The question for him lay in the identity of those allowed to perform such acts and bring about the renewal of *ijtihād*, who should be knowledgeable and authoritative enough. Afghānī was followed by 'Abduh who spoke specifically about fighting *bid'a*, while broadening the scope of what was included under this title not just to strict religious issues but also to many superstitions which entered Islam and needed to be addressed.

Since the early Salafī thinkers generally had a positive attitude toward open-minded thinking and voiced their objection to *taqlīd*, various Islamic sects condemned in other chapters for being part of the group performing *bida'* of '*aqīdāt* are not referred to. Both 'Abduh and Riḍā who followed him tended to place on Jews and Christians the blame for bringing such conduct into Islam. However, while 'Abduh looked mostly at what he referred to as superstitions and the necessity to rid religion of them, Riḍā was much more strict in defining what *bid'a* was, stating that innovations were only allowed in secular and earthly matters.

The main source of reference in this chapter was the periodical *al-Manār*, which tended to be very Egyptian-centric, drawing most of the examples it provided from local conduct, but gradually developing itself into an international platform of revivalists. As noted and explained, in most of the period it was published, *al-Manār* was primarily under the influence of Riḍā. While *al-Manār* referred to the division made by al-Shāṭibī into *bida' ḥaqīqiyya* and *iḍāfiyya*, in other places it also referred to different known categories such as the repugnant *bid'a [qabīḥa]* or even created new types.

In some places a separation between the legal *bid'a [bid'a shar'iyya]* and the non-legal, or erring *bid'a [bid'a laghwiyya]* can be found, perhaps to continue with Riḍā's approach that no innovation at all was allowed in religious issues. In addition,

according to *al-Manār*, even in such matters it was not always allowed to present innovations, and *bid‘a duniyawiyya* (mundane) was brought up.

An exceptional example which could reflect Riḍā’s rejection of the pro-Western spirit in Egypt made him speak about a ‘trendy’ innovation [*bid‘a kanasiyya*].

Such expressions of Western conduct in Egypt, and the wide Sufi influence which manifested itself in public events of celebrations and commemorations, also caused early Salafī scholars, *al-Manār* most of all, to focus their attacks on such *bida‘* of *‘ibādāt*. At the same time, ‘Abduh, Riḍā and *al-Manār* were very careful when speaking about *‘ulamā*’ whom they believed brought about the decline of religion; at least when it came to the subject of *bid‘a*, they tended to speak about mistakes which led to these circumstances. Speaking about the division of *bid‘a* into ‘good’ and ‘bad’, *al-Manār* did not rule it out but said that a loophole was created by those *‘ulamā*’ who allowed it, and the current situation of widespread *bid‘a* was a result of this act, which brought about perplexity and lack of knowledge.

Even harsher were two others discussed in this chapter as a point of reference – al-Kawākibī who put a stronger emphasis on the false spirit of passive *taqlīd* by leaders, and Nadvi who specifically focused on ‘One of the greatest fallacies that had very often led the people astray, namely *bid‘a ḥasana*, which can never be accepted’.

Chapter two looked at the Muslim Brotherhood, analyzing the views of several scholars who represent a number of trends within the Movement, to which the Brotherhood refers as a current, global ideology. As explained, some of these trends were represented more than the others, which hardly deal with the subject at all. For the Muslim Brotherhood, *ijtihād* was elevated to a degree of religious duty, and a special place was dedicated to *tajdīd* and the place of the *mujaddid* as ‘agent’ of the Prophets and the Islamic revelation who deliver the permanent message to the believers.

Among the scholars under discussion in this chapter, the most widely represented was the trend led by Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, who today leads the international trend of the Brotherhood. On an overall view of the subject of *bid‘a*, Qaraḍāwī continues the line of Riḍā, stating that *bid‘a* does not belong to religion, which was given by Allah,

but rather to daily and earthly living [*ḥayāt al-dunya*]. Qaraḍāwī places *bid'a* as the main course through which very problematic phenomena which have corrupted religion found their way into it, such as *shirk* and *ghulūw*. Qaraḍāwī also continues with a similar approach regarding Jews and Christians, who are said to have inserted *bida'* into their religions. At the same time, he is more tolerant toward Muslims who perform *bid'a*, stating that eventually they are always returned to Sunna.

Qaraḍāwī explains *bid'a* in *shar'ī* terms, dividing it into *bid'a i'tiqādiyya* (in belief or creed – also called *bid'at al-aqwāl*) and *bid'a 'amaliyya* (in deeds – also called *bid'at al-af'āl*), showing as in the previous chapter the emphasis put by revivalists on activism. In his discussion he adds new types of *bida'* according to degrees of severity – *bid'a mughalata* (erring) and *bid'a mukhafafa* (softened) which originates in a mistaken *ijtihād* or an ambiguity in reasoning. When looking at certain '*ādāt*, he uses the term *bida' shirkiyya* which demonstrates the proximity of the two terms in his view. Ḥasan al-Bannā discussed a *bid'a* of leaving the Shari'a, which he called *bid'a tarkiyya*.

Qaraḍāwī is more specific than the early Salafis in labelling other sects, putting the Nusayris, Druze, 'radical Shi'a' and the Isma'iliyya on the verge of unbelief [*kufr*] and other groups such as *khawārij*, *rāfiḍa*, *qadariyya*, *mu'tazila* as straying groups [*fasq*]. However, his general approach toward Shi'a in general is more complicated, and seems to have been affected by political circumstances, mainly having to do with his support in various *muqāwama* (resistance) organisations. In fact, the tendency to politicise religious terms is reflected in many examples provided, starting with the days of Ḥasan al-Bannā who suggested solving the long term controversy over the celebration of the Prophet's birthday by turning it into a day for Palestine, as well as other '*ibādāt* that the Muslim Brotherhood used as political instrument such as commemorating the night of *al-isrā' wa'l-mi'rāj*.

For Sayyid Quṭb and the Qutbist trend, most of the whole discussion falls under his definition of society as being in a permanent state of *jāhiliyya*; an interesting anecdote was his own branding by Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī as a figure whose beliefs constituted a *bid'a*, almost similar to declaring *takfīr*, a tendency affiliated more with early

Wahhābī ‘*ulamā*’ – this coming from a leader best known for his attempts to steer the Brotherhood away from violence and radicalisation.

Chapters three and four focused on the Wahhābī trend, covering its history from its early days until recent times as well as the thinking of the major ‘*ulamā*’ who lived and operated during the days of the three Saudi states. The Wahhābī focus on the concept of *tawhīd* naturally led it to reject anything which went against it, including *shirk*, *ḍalāla* and *bid‘a* (including a reference to *bid‘a shirkiyya*). Chapter three looked into the writings of five ‘*ulamā*’ belonging to Āl al-Shaykh, starting with the founder of the Wahhābiyya – Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, who reportedly considered *ahl al-bid‘a* to be the worst of all people, and continuing with his descendants, most of whom lived in the first and second Saudi states.

Regarding Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, his unique approach towards *ijtihād* was demonstrated, which distinguished between the absolute *ijtihād* [*al-muṭlaq*], carried out by the ‘*ulamā*’ of the first generations, and the partial or limited *ijtihād* [*juz‘ī / maḥdūd*], which was performed by later ‘*ulamā*’ with vast and profound knowledge who also had to rely on the Qur’an and the Sunna alone.

Among the ‘*ulamā*’ dealt with in this work, only a small number in this chapter could be perceived as belonging to the first group of ‘*ulamā*’ which was introduced in the background chapter – those who rejected any innovation completely. These put a special emphasis on the duty of performing Jihad against the non-believers, taking the subject of *takfīr* far beyond the views of Ibn Taymiyya who considered *takfīr* a *bid‘a* by itself. In most cases, an explanation was provided for their behaviour, which seemingly could be seen in light of the socio-political circumstances and the tension between *umarā*’ and ‘*ulamā*’ in their times.

A similar explanation was given to the considerable attention paid to *bid‘a* of *‘ibādāt*, especially those involving worshipping the living or dead, or the widespread practice of turning graves into mosques and building over them. It seems that the ‘*ulamā*’ were concerned with changing the habits of the tribes, in an attempt to unite them under the Saudi states.

This chapter also included a case study discussing the different views expressed by Wahhābī *'ulamā'* on drinking coffee or smoking tobacco. Commonly these examples are quoted as issues which the Wahhābiyya forbade as *bida'*. In fact, these issues were part of a discourse throughout the Arab and Muslim world, and those who forbade them usually did it on medical grounds. Apparently these kinds of myths on Wahhābiyya were created by Christian travellers to the area, who usually viewed the tribes from a patronising point of view. At least some of these myths were later adopted by classic Western scholars.

Chapter four referred to geo-political, economic, demographic and social developments, changes which occurred in the modern Saudi state since the beginning of the 1990s and brought upon the stage new groups of prominent *'unofficial'* *'ulamā'* next to the official ones. This era witnessed the spread of strictly radical approaches; some of the shaykhs who had previously been in opposition to the government were now helping it combat these radical tendencies, while others were themselves instigators of the same approach. This chapter was therefore dedicated to looking into the views of some of the most prominent shaykhs in the Saudi state in the past decades who served in senior positions, as well as into the views of Safar al-Ḥawālī, a Qutbist scholar – once a fierce oppositionist – who with his friend Salmān al-*'Awda* started to cooperate with the government in later stages to counter the most radical views.

Although these *'ulamā'* continued to see only the negative side of *bid'a*, and to reject any attempts to accept the notion of *bid'a ḥasana*, some more flexibility on the subject was noticeable, and the use of *takfīr* was less common. Both Ibn Bāz and Ibn Jibrīn divided *bida'* into those related to creed and belief [*i 'tiqādiyya*] (more broadly referred to in this work as *'aqīdāt*) and those related to acts [*'amaliyya*], including various commemorations included in this work under the title *'ibādāt*; Ibn Bāz even stated that the latter type was less severe than the former.

Another division which Ibn Jibrīn made was also based on the severity of the *bida'* – a *bid'a* that leads to a sin [*bid'a muḥṣaqa*] such as these commemorations, and a *bid'a* which leads to unbelief [*bid'a mukfira*], such as the one resulting from the

behaviour of certain sects like the *rāfiḍa*, *jahmiyya* and *khawārij*, or various issues related to tomb worship.

It should be noted that the discussion on the place of Sufis in religion and regarding their contribution to spreading *bida'* in religion was relevant to this chapter only, and appears almost nowhere in the writings of the '*ulamā'*' covered in chapter three. There is future room for scholars to look at the history of Sufis under Wahhābiyya and try to explain this.

This chapter also looked into the views of several Wahhābī '*ulamā'*' regarding the Muslim Brotherhood. Ibn Bāz for example included the Brotherhood as part of the seventy three sects which belonged in hell on the day of resurrection; Shaykh Ṣāliḥ ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Āl al-Shaykh – the Saudi Minister for Religious Affairs attacked the Brotherhood for disrespect of the Sunna or *ahl al-sunna*, stating that the Brotherhood was interested only in political benefits, and that its true objective was not to perform a proper *da'wa* but to utilise it as a means to seize political power in any given country.

This work reflected on the religious writings and continuous discourse on the subject of *bid'a*. As part of the discussion, opposite views of scholars were presented, from those thinking that any innovation in religion was prohibited to those who believe that the route of branding acts and thoughts as *bid'a* actually served as an alternative legal system to allow the integration of renewals in religion. It seems that modern discussion on the subject has expanded in terms of the different kinds which *bid'a* is defined as. Most of this debate still concerns *bida'* of '*ibādāt*' and '*aqīdāt*', however, as elucidated, in many cases '*ulamā'*' choose what and whom to attack and what and whom to accept, taking under consideration geo-political and social circumstances, while adding new classifications of *bida'* which help them establish their decisions and reinforce them on religious grounds. This appears to derive from the fact that while discussing issues of *bid'a*, the '*ulamā'*' are confined to dealing only with what falls under the category of Islam.

In 2004, Ali Mazrui, the renowned professor for African and Islamic studies, wrote in an article:

*Muslim doctrines, which have hurt our progress, have included the concept of bid'a. Originally intended to protect the young religion from premature reform and distortion, bid'a became a symbol of Muslim distrust of all kinds of innovations and inventions. While the word innovation has positive connotations in the English language, the word bid'a in Islamic discourse carries negative and sinful implications. The concept of bid'a came to symbolise a fundamental Muslim resistance to change. Orthodoxy defended itself against innovation.*¹

In various academic publications, different acts and ways of behaviour by Muslims are stated to have been defined as *bida'*, from the prohibition of photography and television, or even the use of knives and forks in eating (as claimed by the Fahmī Huwaydī, the well-known Egyptian journalist affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood)² to declarations by the Saudi authorities that anti-regime demonstrations are *bida'*³ and claiming homosexuality to constitute *bid'a*.⁴ Thus, in modern times, the common use of the term *bid'a* in various circles seems to have become more widespread than ever, in many cases in order to embarrass those said to have branded any action or tendency as *bid'a*, as part of a 'blame-game' to express a revulsion against their backwardness.

So if in the past, the academic discourse of the term *bid'a* concerned itself with the differences between its etimological meaning and the connotations it has acquired, today a further layer should be added -- understanding what *bid'a* actually means requires more than ever comprehending the identity of the speaker, the context and tone of speech in which the term is used and also the way it is argued.

¹ Ali A. Mazrui, "Islam and the United States: Streams of Convergence, Strands of Divergence", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (2004), p. 813

² Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihād", *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter 2002), p. 626

³ Mai Yamani, "Passing Nightmare?", *The World Today*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), p. 17

⁴ Sara Scalenghe, "We Invite People to Think the Unthinkable": An Interview with Nizar Saghieh", *Middle East Report*, No. 230 (Spring, 2004), p. 36

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