



Brother Against Brother: Early Refutation of Wahhabism by the 18th-Century Hanbali Scholars

Wahhabism has been a source of intergenerational controversies among sunnī madhabī scholars and even among respected Hanbali scholars themselves, initially from its rise in the 18th century until the date. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s fatwas have drawn sharp critiques and refutations by Hanbali scholars, particularly those regarding *tawḥīd ulūhiyyat*, which justifies declaring others as infidel-apostates (kāfir murtadd). Other contested fatwas include those on Muslim practices of seeking blessings (tabarruk), seeking intermediaries (tawassul), visiting graves (ziyārat), and seeking help (istighāthah). Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his followers have theologically deemed these practices of major idolatry (as-shirk al-akbar) and have erred and biased in proclaiming his Wahhabism as the true successor to Ibnu Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and even manhaj of Ahmad b. Hanbal. In this regard, this article portrays the refutations and rebuttals by Hanbali scholars of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his early Wahhabism based on primary sources. The discussion describes theological examinations and counter-narrative campaigns against Wahhabism initiated by the 18th-century Hanbali scholars. The findings show that the majority of Hanbali scholars at the time refuse the teachings of Wahhabism and argue that the fatwas of Wahhabi scholars on the notion of *ulūhiyyat*, *tabarruk*, *tawassul*, *ziyārat*, and *istighāthah* are irrelevant and disconnected from the intellectualism of Hanbali scholars.

Keywords: Islamic theology; Ibn al-Wahhāb; Hanbali; Tawhid; *Takfirī*.

Wahhabisme telah memicu kontroversi dan penolakan dari mayoritas sarjana Suni lintas mazhab dan termasuk dari para pemuka mazhab Hanbali, sejak kemunculannya pada abad ke-18 hingga sekarang. Kritik dan penolakan keras para pemuka mazhab Hanbali sendiri mengarah pada fatwa-fatwa dan doktrin kontroversial Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Melalui fatwa-fatwa teologisnya, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb memvonis praktek dan amaliah tersebut dalam kategori syirik akbar, khususnya konsep *ulūhiyyah* yang digunakan sebagai justifikasi untuk memvonis kāfir murtad kaum Muslimin dimasanya, termasuk vonis takfir pada amaliah dan ritual umat Muslim semisal *tabarruk*, *tawassul*, *ziyārah*, dan *istighāthah*. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb juga secara sepihak menisbatkan doktrin dan fatwa ekstrim Wahhabismenya sebagai penerus utama manhaj Ibnu Taymiyyah, Ibnu Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, dan Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal. Artikel ini mengamati sanggahan dan bantahan para ulama Hanbali atas Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb dan doktrin awal Wahhabisme berdasarkan sumber-sumber primer. Bagan pembahasan menampilkan hasil pengamatan teologis dan kampanye kontra-narasi terhadap Wahhabisme yang diprakarsai oleh para ulama Hanbali di abad ke-18 Masehi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan, mayoritas ulama Hanbali saat itu menolak Wahhabisme dan berpendapat bahwa fatwa-fatwa Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb dan ulama Wahabi tentang *ulūhiyyat*, *tabarruk*, *tawassul*, *ziyārah*, dan *istighāthah* telah bertentangan dan terputus dari intelektualisme ulama Hanbali.

Kata Kunci: Teologi Islam; Ibn al-Wahhāb; Hanbali; Tauhid; *Takfirī*.

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Dates:

Received 2 Feb 2022

Revised 1 Aug 2022

Accepted 12 Aug 2022

Published 30 Aug 2022

How to cite this article:

Fata, Badrus Samsul, and
Idnursham Ismail.

“Brother Against Brother:

Early Refutation of

Wahhabism by 18th-

Century Hanbali

Scholars”. ESENSIA:

Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu

Ushuluddin 23, no. 1

(June 3, 2022). Accessed

September 8, 2022.

<http://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/esensia/article/view/3243>.

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Introduction

Over the last decade, Wahhabist sources and Wahhabist historians dominated modern academic studies on Wahhabism. Sources from Wahhabi scholars impose that Wahhabism was a modern, puritanical, and reformist Islamic-theological movement that originated from Ibn Taymiyya and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, while ignoring the critical perspectives of four Sunni scholars.¹ Such ignorance among experts on Wahhabism should be addressed in-depth to avoid bias since they view the emergence and development of Wahhabism solely from its political dominance and do not take into account other legitimate narratives such as epistemic-theological bases.² Surprisingly, after the *Black September* 2001, numerous scholars and experts, such as Woodward,³ Conesa,⁴ Nenad and Odjakov,⁵ and Ward,⁶ pointed out Wahhabism as the top cause of violent extremism worldwide.

Wahhabism has been a theological source of intergenerational controversies and is firmly rejected by various Sunni schools, including Ḥanafī, Malīkī, Shafī'ī scholars, and even Ḥanbalī scholars throughout Muslim territories, including Mecca, Medina, Baghdad, Aleppo, Basra, Yemen, al-Hasa, Zubair, and Bahrain.⁷ The

earliest refutations of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) were disclosed by his father and the older brother, 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Sulaimān and Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb who were both represented as Mufti or *Qāḍī* of Ḥanbalī scholars at that time in '*Uyayinah* and '*Huraimilā'*, districts of *Najd*.⁸ Furthermore, the Sulaymān had written a series of theological refutations of his younger brother's school of thought under works titled *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah* and *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb min Kitābi Allāh wa al-Ḥadīthi al-Rasūl wa Kalāmi al-Ulamā' fī Madhhabi Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb*.⁹

In the early days of Wahhabism, in addition to his older brother's rejection, other prominent Hanbalis scholars and ulema began to argue against the theology of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb. These included Shaikh al-Faqīh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Saḥīm al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1744); Shaikh al-Faqīh Sulaimān b. Muḥammad b. Saḥīm b. Aḥmad b. Saḥīm al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1815); Shaikh al-Faqīh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Afāliq al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1751); Shaikh al-Faqīh 'Abd Allāh b. 'Isā al-Muwaisī al-Tamīmī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1762),¹⁰ and hundred other

¹ Rosie Bsheer, *Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia* (California: Stanford University Press, 2020), 20–26; Khaled Medhat Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 46–110; Siti Mahmudah Noorhayati and Ahmad Khoirul Fata, "Exclusive Islam From The Perspective of Ibn Taymiyah," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 2 (October 20, 2017): 213–223.

² Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Face of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism* (New York: First Anchor Books Edition, 2003), 74–100.

³ Mark Woodward, "Islam Nusantara: A Semantic and Symbolic Analysis," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 6 (December 27, 2017): 181.

⁴ Pierre Conesa, *The Saudi Terror Machine: The Truth about Radical Islam and Saudi Arabia Revealed* (France: Skyhore Publishing, 2018), 37–99.

⁵ Nenad Taneski and Ferdinand Odjakov, "Militant Islamism, Domestic Terrorism and Macedonian National Security," *Violent Extremism and Radicalization Processes as Driving Factors to Terrorism Threat* (2018): 137–154.

⁶ Terrence Ward, *The Wahhabi Code: How The Saudis Spread Extremism Globally* (New York: Archade Publishing, 2018), 10–130.

⁷ Al-Ḥabīb 'Alawī b. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. Quṭb al-Ḥabīb 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alawī Al-Ḥaddād, *Miṣbāh Al-Anām Wa Jalā' u al-Qalām Fī Radd Shubahi al-Bida' i al-Najdī allatī Adhalla Bihā al-A'wām* (Istanbul: Maktabah Ḥaqīqah, 2014), 4–5.

⁸ Ibnu Ḥumaid al-Najdī Al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Suḥub al-Wābilah 'Alā Ḍarā' Iḥā al-Ḥanābilah* (Mecca: Maṭba'ah al-Imām Aḥmad, 1996), 275–277.

⁹ Sulaimān b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, ed. Ḥusayn Ḥilmī (Istanbul: Ikhilās Vakfi Yayindir, 1979); *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb min Kitābi Allāh wa Ḥadīth al-Rasūl wa Kalām al-'Ulamā' fī Madhabi Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb*, ed. Lajnah al-'Ulamā', 4th ed. (Istanbul: Maktabah Ishiq Kitabevi, 1979).

¹⁰ Muṣṭafā Ḥamdūn 'Ilyān, *Al-Ḥanābilah Wa Ikhtilāfuhum Bi al-Salafīyyah al-Mu'āṣirah Fī al-'Aqā'id Wa al-Fiqh Wa al-Taṣawwuf* (Cairo: Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn, 2014), 133.





scholars.¹¹ Such rejection and rebuttals stemmed from the controversial fatwas or doctrines espoused by Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. This paper begins with an examination of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s controversial doctrines and fatwas regarding *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*, *takfīr*, *naṭwāqīd al-islām*, *kāfir*, *mushrik*, *murtad*, *tabarruk*, *tawassul*, *ziyārah*, *istighāthah*; it then explores academic examination and theological rebuttals by the leading Hanbali scholars represented by his older brother, Shaikh Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in the aforementioned works.

Controversial Doctrines of Early Wahhabism

The first controversial doctrine of early Wahhabism was its extreme conceptual interpretation of *tawḥīd*. Initially, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb relied on Ibnu Taymiyyah’s thoughts on *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*, *tawḥīd rubūbiyyah*, and *asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt*. However, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, later on, introduced a more extreme interpretation of *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*. This led to the issuance of *takfīr al-‘ām wa al-mu‘ayyan* doctrine, which cast Muslims in his time as non-believers (*kuffār*) if they violated *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah* by performing *tawassul* (i.e. through intermediary angels, idols, guardians, pious people) between Allah and His followers,¹² as follows:

Allah SWT says [And I did not create the jinn or men for any other reason than to worship Me: Al-Dhariyat 56], and the Almighty’s saying [And We did not send before you any Messenger except that We revealed to him that there is no god but Me, so worship Me:

¹¹ ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Mu‘Jam al-Mu‘Allifāt al-Islāmiyyah Fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Firqah al-Wahhābiyyah* (Beirut: Markaz al-Zahrā’ al-Islāmī, 1430 H), 1–480.

¹² Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Rasā’il al-Shakhṣiyyah*, ed. Ṣāliḥ b. Fawzān al-Fawzān (Riyad: al-Mamlakah al-‘Arabiyyah Sa’ūdiyyah, 1976), 187.

¹³ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb Al-Tawḥīd Alladhī Huwa Ḥaqq Allāh ‘alā al-‘Abīd* (Beirut: Manṣūrat Dār Maktabah al-Ḥayāt, 1970), 5–6.

Prophets 25]. And this monotheism for which they were created and called to is the unification of the divine (*tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*), the unification of intent and demand. As for the monotheism of godliness (*tawḥīd rubūbiyyah*), the unification of names and attributes (*tawḥīd asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt*), and the unification of actions, is the unification of knowledge and belief, and most nations have affirmed it for God. As for the Oneness of Divinity (*tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*), most of them have denied it, as God Almighty said about the people of Hud when he said to them [And we have sent in every nation a messenger to worship God and avoid tyrants (*ṭāghūt*): An-Nahl 36].¹³

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb even argued that the pre-Islamic Mecca pagans had stronger convictions of *tawḥīd* than Muslims in his time due to their devotion to *ulūhiyyah* despite violating *rubūbiyyah* by worshipping *Lātta* and ‘*Uzzā*,¹⁴ as follow:

And know you that the polytheists (non-Wahhabists) in our time have exceeded the infidels in the time of the Prophet, may God’s prayers and peace be upon him, that they call upon the angels, the saints, and the righteous and they want their intercession and draw close to them, otherwise they acknowledge that the matter is for God, so they do not pray to them except in prosperity, so if adversity comes they are sincere to God, as stated in the Quran al-Isra’ verse 67, “And when you are touched with hardship at sea, you ‘totally’ forget all ‘the gods’ you ‘normally’ invoke, except Him. But when He delivers you ‘safely’ to shore, you turn away. Humankind is ever ungrateful.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 186–187; Ahmad Atabik, “The Discourse of The Qur’anic Metaphors: The Embryo of Theological Sects Disputes in Comprehending the Holy Qur’an,” *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (July 5, 2021): 45–61.

¹⁵ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḥiyyah Li Mujaddid al-Da‘wah al-Najdiyyah*, 1st ed. (Egypt: Maṭba‘ah al-Manār, 1931), 3–4.





Such extreme belief or interpretation was then amplified throughout Mecca and Medina (Hejaz) during his Wahhabism campaign. This was evident in Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s letter number 28, addressed to the residents of *Riyadh* and *Manfuhah* (Saudi Arabia) before Wahhabi troops attacked and occupied these regions. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s letters can be traced in his works entitled *al-Rasā’il al-Shakhṣiyyah* and *al-Durar al-Saniyyah fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, as follows:

And I inform you about myself, I swear by Allah whom there is none worthy to worship except Him, I have sought knowledge and those who knew me believed that I had knowledge (*ma’rifah*), while I did not know the meaning of *Lā Ilāha illā Allāh* at that time and did not know the religion of Islam before this grace that Allah favored. As well as my teachers (*mashāyikh*), no one among them knew that. And if someone from the scholars of *al-Aridh* (the lands of Najd and surrounding areas) claims that he knew the meaning of *Lā Ilāha illā Allāh* or knew the meaning of Islam before this time, or claims on behalf of his teachers that someone from them knew that, then he has lied and said falsehood and deceived the people and praised himself with something he does not possess.¹⁶

This statement illustrates Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s understanding of tawhid and God. He “defined” *Ilāh* (gods) to include individuals (teachers, saints, masters, angles, and sayyids) whom Muslims believed to have otherworldly privileges, and through them, Muslims could receive benefits and blessings to avoid harm. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb warned that whoever believed in such privileges,

even though these entities were prophets, apostles, or angels, considered them as “gods” other than Allah SWT. He, thus, saw no difference between Muslims and Christians who deemed Prophet Isa (as) and the mother Maryam (as) as “gods”.¹⁷ Altogether, these reinforced his notion that the relationship between Allah and His followers was direct.

As for monotheism: divinity, it is your saying: There is no god but God. And you know its meaning, just as you knew the meaning of the names related to Godliness, so your statement: There is no god but God is a denial and affirmation; It denies all divinity and affirms it for God alone. The meaning of god in our time is: the sheikh and the master of whom it is said: a secret, who is believed to bring benefit or repel harm, so whoever believes in these or others as a prophet, whether or not he is such a belief, has taken him as a deity besides God. The Children of Israel, when they believed in Jesus, son of Mary and his mother, God called them two gods.¹⁸

A similar interpretation has also been compiled in Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s book entitled *al-Durar al-Saniyyah fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*. The author argues that every Muslim who simply recites the *tawḥīd shahādah* but lacks understanding and practice of Islamic law (*al-‘Ilm wa al-‘amal*) based on Wahhabism interpretation, for instance, is labeled as an infidel-apostate (*kāfir murtad*).¹⁹ Therefore, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb believed that the practice of simply reciting *tawḥīd shahādah* has no value and no

¹⁶ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Al-Rasā’il al-Shakhṣiyyah*, 186–187; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Qāsim al-‘Āsimī, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah: Majmū‘ah al-Rasā’il Wa Masā’il al-‘Ulamā’ Najd al-A‘lām Min ‘Aṣr al-Muhammad B. ‘Abd al-Wahhab Ilā ‘Aṣrinā Hādhā*, vol. 10, 5 (Riyad: Dār al-Qāsim li al-Nashr, 1976), 51.

¹⁷ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Qāsim al-‘Āsimī, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, vol. 2, 5 (Riyad: Dār

al-Qāsim li al-Nashr, 1995), 126; Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍiyyah Li Mujaddid al-Da’wah al-Najdiyyah*, 5–6.

¹⁸ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Al-Rasā’il al-Shakhṣiyyah*, 186–187; Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, “Kitāb al-Tawḥīd,” in *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Qāsim al-‘Āsimī, 6th ed., vol. 2 (Riyad: Maṭba‘ah Umm al-Qurā, 1996), 126.

¹⁹ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Qāsim al-‘Āsimī, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, 10:87–88.





benefit to Muslims.²⁰ He argued that such simple practice was not only similar to the devil's or Pharaoh's behavior but was also more despicable than the true infidels (*al-kāfirūn al-aṣḥiyūn*).²¹ Unfortunately, this led to his arbitrary argument that the bloodshed and property of Muslims deemed infidel apostates were permissible to be taken by Wahhabi troops during their campaign in the Arabian peninsula.²²

Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb in his book *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍīyyah li Mujaddid al-Da'wah al-Najdiyyah* justified his thinking by highlighting an ironical comparison between Muslims and the kafir-Quraish. He added that while the Muslim majority believed that *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah* is to simply recite the *tawḥīd shahādah* regardless of faith, the kafir-Quraish understood faith to be central in the concept of *ulūhiyyah*. Therefore, he argued that such Muslims have no honor and nobility because pre-Islamic infidels and even pagans had a better understanding of *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*.²³ Accordingly, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb believed that the verse *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* possessed dimensions of both negation and affirmation (*al-nafy wa al-ithbāt*). The verse talks about disbelieving gods other than Allah (*al-ālihah*), eliminating idols (*al-ṭawāghīt*), and getting rid of rivals (*al-andād*). He concluded that such *tawḥīd* verse, thus, demonstrates the need for ultimate faith in the hearth.

Consequently, if one merely performs *tawḥīd rubūbiyyah* without perfecting it with the Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's interpretation of *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah*, the individual is yet to become a Muslim, even though the *tawḥīd shahādah* has been recited. Instead, the individual is deemed to be akin to the Quraysh infidels

(kafir-Quraish) who opposed Prophet Muhammad SAW. Additionally, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb arbitrarily argued that they were akin to Quraysh infidels (kafir-Quraish) and the bloodshed and property of these "deviant Muslims" were permissible for Wahhabism troops.²⁴

Such a controversial interpretation of *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah* led to more extreme derivatives, namely the concept of *nawāqīd al-islām* (invalidating an individual's status as a Muslim). In his book *Nawāqīd al-Islām al-'Ashrah* compiled by Rashid Ridha, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb identified practices or instances where Muslims were to be deemed apostates or disbelievers. He argued this by referencing Surah al-Nisa' verse 116 and al-Maidah verse 72. Practices such as the slaughtering of animals at the saints' graves (*al-dabḥ li ghayr Allāh*), seeking intermediaries for blessings between himself and Allah SWT (*tawassul* or *tabarruk*), and asking for help through a human or holy spirit intermediary (*istighāthah*) and indirectly to Allah SWT were deemed to be acts of idolatry. Those who committed such idolatry were, thus, considered true infidels.²⁵

The second controversy was Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb practical judgment of Muslims who carried out religious rituals such as *tabarruk*, *tawassul*, *ziyārah*, or *istighāthah* through prophets, angels, and saints as "unbelievers" (*kāfir*) and even "polytheists" (*mushrikīn*). He asserted that they were more sinful than the pre-Islamic apostles of the Quraish tribe and worse than those from the period of *jāhiliyyah* unless they repented and adopted a "pure form" of Islam, i.e. Wahhabism.²⁶ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb

²⁰ 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ḥasan Ālū al-Shaykh, *Fath Al-Majīd Li Sharḥ Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Rahmān Ālū Fariyyān, 8th ed. (Riyad: Dār al-Muayyad, 2002), 65.

²¹ Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb, "Kitāb Al-Tawḥīd," 125.

²² Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb, "Al-Risālah al-Rābi'ah Fī Arba'i Qawā'id Li al-Dīn," in *Majmū'ah al-Tawḥīd al-Najdiyyah*, by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (Egypt: Maṭba'ah al-Manār, 1999), 102.

²³ Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍīyyah Li Mujaddid al-Da'wah al-Najdiyyah*, 5–6.

²⁴ Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb, "Al-Risālah al-Rābi'ah Fī Arba'i Qawā'id Li al-Dīn," 102.

²⁵ Ibid., 177–179.

²⁶ Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb, *Kashf Al-Shubḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Jibrīl al-Saḥarī (Dammāj: Dār 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 2009), 62–63.





also wrote a similar interpretation in his book *al-Jawāhir al-Muḍiyyah li Mujaddid al-Da'wah al-Najdiyyah* which sought to punish Muslims for practicing polytheism. The punishments he cited were harsher than those inflicted on pagans during the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW.²⁷

Was such *takfirism* also applied to 'Ām (group or community)? Insights can be obtained from how early Wahhabism viewed acts of *shirk*. At the individual level, 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Bathin (1780-1865M), an early Wahhabism ideologue, asserted that when one commits an act of *shirk*, the person is immediately deemed to be an infidel under the law of apostasy (*ḥukm al-murtaddīn*) and is obligated to repent immediately. If he did not repent, the person must be fought (*qutila*).²⁸ 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Bathin also asserted that anyone who does not agree, doubt, or continue to believe in such idolatry is also an infidel without exception (*man lam yukaffir al-kufra fahuwa kāfir*).²⁹ In the case of *shirk-akbar*, "ignorance or doubts" will not preclude one from being labeled as *mushrik-akbar* (*la 'udhr bi al-jahl fī shirk al-akbar*).³⁰

Abu Bathin added that the so-called *Mushrikin* who pray or perform rituals by slaughtering a goat (*dabḥ al-ḥayawān*), for instance, at graves to solve difficulties face the same fate as the aforementioned idolaters. As such forms of *nazar* were the worst form of *shirk* (*mushrik akbar*), there was, thus, no doubt about

their status as infidels. Furthermore, those who questioned the fatwa or did not deny polytheists' behavior have their values and status as Muslims tainted, and they are no longer Muslims.³¹ In short, these indicated that *takfirism* was also applied to groups or communities.

The third controversy was the one-sided judgment of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb that his manner of interpretation was aligned with the *ijtihād* or *manhaj* model of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. These self-proclamations can be found in numerous of his aforementioned works including *Hādhihi Masā'il Lakhiṣahā Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb min Kalām Shaykh al-Islām Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn 'Abd al-Salam Ibn Taymiyyah*.³² These proclamations expanded when 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad b. Qasim al-'Asimi (1894-1972M), *muḥaqqiq* of *al-Durar al-Saniyyah fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, ordained Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb as the *Mujtahid Muthlaq* who was intellectually equal to the four madhab founders (Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik b. Anas, Imam Syafī'i, Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal).³³

This narrative is still espoused by contemporary *Salafi-Wahhabi* ideologies, including Muhammad b. Salih al-'Uthaymin in his two books *Uṣūl fī al-Tafsīr*,³⁴ and *Sharḥ fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*,³⁵ Abu Badr Muhammad b. Bakr b. Ibrahim Alu 'Abid in his book *Manhaj al-Imām Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb fī Tadabbur al-Qur'ān*.³⁶ However, this unilateral affirmation of

²⁷ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍiyyah Li Mujaddid al-Da'wah al-Najdiyyah*, 3–4.

²⁸ Al-'Āsimī, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, 10:353–376.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10:78.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10:79.

³¹ 'Abd al-Rahmān Qāsim al-'Āsimī, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah*, vol. 1, 5 (Riyad: Dār al-Qāsim li al-Nashr, 1976), 655.

³² 'Abd al-'Azīs b. Zaid Al-Rūmī, Muḥammad Baltajī, and Sayyid Hijāb, *Majmū'at Muallifāt Muḥammad B. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb: Hādhihi Masā'il Lakhiṣahā Muḥammad B. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb Min Kalāmi Shaykh al-Islām Ahmad B. 'Abd al-Halīm B. 'Abd al-Salām Ibnu Taymiyyah* (Daḥnah Mantīqah al-Qaṣīm: al-Maktabah al-Sa'ūdiyyah, 1978), 190–199.

³³ 'Abd al-Rahmān Qāsim al-'Āsimī, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah fī al-Ajwibah al-Najdiyyah: Kitāb al-Jihād*, vol. 9, 5 (Riyad: Dār al-Qāsim li al-Nashr, 1995), 15–19.

³⁴ Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ Al-'Uthaymīn, *Uṣūl Fī Al-Tafsīr* (Riyad: al-Maktabah al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), 27.

³⁵ Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ Al-'Uthaymīn, *Silsilah Muallifāt Al-Ibn 'Uthaymīn: Sharḥ Fī Uṣūl Fī al-Tafsīr*, ed. Muassasah Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ Al-'Uthaymīn al-Khairiyyah (Riyad: Maktabah Malik Fahd, 2013), 9, 42–45, 113.

³⁶ Abū Badr Muḥammad b. Bakr b. Ibrāhīm Ālū 'Abīd, *Manhaj al-Imām Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahhāb fī Tadabburi al-Qur'ān* (Mecca: Maktaba al-Furqān, 2011), 4–5.





the scientific relationship between Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was without critical examination and academic verification with the works of leaders of the Hanbali school who lived during his time or those close to him.

Such narratives were ironically reaffirmed by the orientalist Carl Brockelmann in his book *The History of Islamic People*. Brockelmann stated, that while in Baghdad, Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab studied the jurisprudence of Ahmad b. Hanbal and the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, who revived the ideas of Ahmad b. Hanbal in the 14th century. The teachings of these two figures became Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s basis to purify Islamic teachings from the various deviations that occurred at that time, Brockelmann’s accounts were also less critically examined or verified by both sides by using the works of Hanbali school leaders who lived during his time or those close to him. Consequently, several modern Muslim and non-Muslim scholars proclaimed the sole influence of Ibn Taymiyyah’s works on Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.³⁷

Theological Refutations by a Leading Hanbali Scholar

Al-Qadhi Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī (1700-1794M) was one prominent Hanbali scholar who opposed and criticized early Wahhabism doctrine. Apart from being an eyewitness to the birth of the Wahhabism movement, he was the older brother of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī documented his criticisms and rejections in three versions of his

book *al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah* published in Istanbul Turkey in 1399H (1979M), *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī al-Radd ‘alā Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb* taḥqīq Lajnah ‘Ulama’ published in Istanbul Turkey in 1399H (1979M) and *al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah* taḥqīq al-Sarawī.³⁸

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī assessed that the emergence of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s ideology demonstrated Muslim calamity and problems (*al-balā’ wa al-ibtīlā’ li al-muslimīn*). This was because Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb self-declaration of achieving the status of a *mujtahid muthlaq* was uncontestedly accepted by his followers. Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī argued against this as Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not meet the minimum requirements and standards of Quranic and Hadith knowledge for his interpretations to be deemed fatwas or *ijtihād*.

In his book, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī al-Radd ‘alā Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, his older brother Shaykh Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī outlined his rejection of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s *ijtihād* model and his authoritarian approach to religion, including classifying those who rejected his *ijtihād* as infidels (*kāfir*), as follows:

“Today, people are being tested (severely) by the presence of a person (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) who claims to have mastered the Koran and Hadith. He admitted that it seems as if he was involved in the sciences derived from it, and he no longer cared about the opinions of different scholars or even straightens them out. Every time I (Sulaiman b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab) asked him (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) to

³⁷ For instance, see ‘Abd Muta‘ālī Al-Ṣa’idī, *Al-Mujaddidūn Fī al-Islām Min al-Qarni al-Awwal Ilā al-Rabi’ ‘Ashar* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Adab, 1996), 330; Amīr Shakīb Arsalān, “Tārīkh Najd Al-Ḥadīth: Ālū Sa‘ūd Wa Ālū Rashīd,” in *Hāḍir Al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*, by Lothrop Stoddard, trans. ‘Ajāj Nuwaihīd, vol. 4 (Egypt: Maṭba‘ah ‘Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1352 H), 161.

³⁸ The author uses all versions with slight differences in *ta’līq* and *takhrīj* in the footnotes. This book

was once given a preface by Muḥammad Sulaimān al-Kurḍī al-Shāfi’ī. Muḥammad Sulaimān firmly opposed Wahhabism because of his refutation that Wahhabism have went beyond the permissible deeds. Other Suni scholars who rejected the fatwas of Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab included Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Laṭīf al-Shāfi’ī (Mufti al-Hasa) and Muḥammad Ḥayāh al-Sindī al-Ḥanafī. See Al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Suḥub al-Wābilah ‘Alā Ḍarā’Iḥa al-Ḥanābilah*, 275–277.





discuss the results of his *ijtihad* with the scholars, he (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) never did. However, he obliged (forced) the public to submit and obey his opinions and ideas. He even sentenced anyone who rejected his opinion as a disbeliever. He (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) cannot perform *ijtihad*, and by Allah SWT, a tenth of them did not have that capacity. So clearly, his opinion and the ideas of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb were the same as the opinions of regular people in general. Verily, we belong to Allah and Him, and we shall return.”³⁹

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī in his book *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī al-Radd ‘ala Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb* also refuted the one-sided claim of scientific affiliation between Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *vis-à-vis* the concepts of *kufir* and *takfir*; *taqlīd*, *muqallid*, and *mujtahid*; *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, and *istighāthah*; *nadhārah* and *‘udhur bi al-jahl*; *dār al-Islām*, *dār al-ḥarb* and *hijrah*; *shirk akbar*, *shirk Asghar* and *kāfir*; *shafā’at* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and others.⁴⁰

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī also detailed the mistakes and carelessness of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb such as errors in quoting and referring to the opinion of Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on various issues, including the attitude of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah* towards so-called deviant sects in Islam, such as *Khawarij*, *Qadariyyah*, *Mu’tazilah*, *Murji’ah*, and *Jahmiyyah*.⁴¹

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s rejection and criticism of Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb focused on several issues: *First*, rejecting the

unilateral “claim” of Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as *mujtahid*, an authoritative lawmaker which was acknowledged by himself and his followers.⁴² Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not consider Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to have met the minimum standard of being a *mujtahid* based on the requirements and conditions set by Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal and the first generation of the Imams of the Hanbali schools, and even the minimum requirements set by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751H) in the book of *I’lāmu al-Muwaqqi’īn ‘an Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*,⁴³ or the *ijtihad* model and mechanism introduced by Ibn Taymiyyah himself.⁴⁴

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī quoted Ibn Qayyim in his book *I’lāmu al-Muwaqqi’īn ‘an Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, “It is not permissible for a Muslim to do *ijtihad* directly from the Qur’an and al-Sunnah before he fulfilled the terms and conditions of becoming a *mujtahid* and mastering the relevant religious sciences”.⁴⁵ Additionally, the reference sources of Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥanbalī referred to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s statement in his *I’lāmu al-Muwaqqi’īn ‘an Rabb al-‘Ālamīn* and the sub-chapters of *Fuṣūlun fī Kalām al-A’immah fī Adawāt al-Futya wa Shurūṭuhā wa Man Yanbaghī lahu an Yuftā*, as follows:

“The son (Shalih b. Ahmad b. Hanbal) quoted Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal’s fatwa: A Mufti must understand the details of the various dimensions of Qur’anic interpretation; know the details of the qualities of the *sahih* sanad and the authentic hadith narrations. The major misinterpretations were caused by the lack of knowledge of hadith narrations of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, including the valid and

³⁹ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 45.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1–11, 19–23, 29–31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴² Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, ed. al-Sarāwī, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dhū al-Faqār, 1998), 109–110.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned the terms and conditions of the *ijtihad* model through three mechanisms;

Tahqīq al-Manāṭ; Tanqīh al-Manāṭ; and Takhrīj al-Manāṭ. These models are also similar to the *ijtihad* models developed by al-Shāṭibī. See ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusain Raḥḥāl, *Ma’ālim wa Dhawābiṭ al-Ijtihād ‘Inda Shaykh al-Islām Ibnu Taymiyyah*, 1st ed. (Ardun: Dār al-Nafā’is, 1422 H), 84–85.

⁴⁵ Al-Wahhāb, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb min Kitābi Allāh wa Ḥadīth al-Rasūl wa Kalām al-‘Ulamā’ fī Madhabi Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, 24–25.





defective sanad. If a Muslim has books of Hadith or Musnad that explain the differences between the Companions and Tabi'in, then it is not permissible for a Muslim to do *amaliah* based on his own choice. It is not permissible to choose and decide on a fatwa about a particular practice and execute it before discussing it with scientific experts in the field so that its practice is truly in line with strong evidence. This requirement is reinforced by a quote from one of the students of Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal, Abu al-Harith, it is not permissible to give fatwas except for someone who understands the Qur'an and Hadith in-depth, and knows the difference between the opinion of the previous scholars. If not, then it is not permissible for him to give a fatwa."⁴⁶

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also cited the minimum competencies of a Mujtahid in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's aforementioned book, especially for someone in the field of hadith science to be able to deliver a fatwa. Ibn Qayyim quoted the narration of Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Munadi al-Hanbali about the minimum competence required by Ahmad b. Hanbal in the field of hadith science, as follows:

"Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Munadi al-Hanbali said: I heard one of the students ask Ahmad b. Hanbal: If someone abled to memorize 100,000 hadiths, did he automatically become a *Faqih* (expert) on Hadith and could give fatwas? Ahmad b. Hanbal replied: No. What if he memorized 200,000 hadiths? Ahmad b. Hanbal replied: No. What if he memorized 300,000 hadiths? Ahmad b. Hanbal replied: No. What if he memorized 400,000 hadiths? Ahmad b. Hanbal replied: No while moving his hand in a sign of refusal". Imam Abu al-Husain al-Hanbali narrated: I asked my grandfather Muhammad b. 'Ubaidillah, how many Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal memorized hadiths? Muhammad b. 'Ubaidillah replied Ahmad b. Hanbal memorized at least 600,000 hadiths."⁴⁷

Quoting Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali iterated the minimum number of hadith that must be memorized in order to qualify as a *mujtahid* based on the criteria of leaders of Hanbali schools, as follows:

"Abu Hafsh said: Abu Ishaq has informed the story of Ahmad b. Hanbal's memorization when he was the Chairman of the Fatwa Board of Majlis al-Manshur. Suddenly one of the members of the ulama asked me if so, you (Abu Ishaq) should not issue fatwas until you fulfill the number of memorization like Ahmad b. Hanbal. Abu Ishaq replied: I do not have memorization like Ahmad b. Hanbal, but when I give fatwas, I always refer to the fatwas of scholars who have memorized hadith standards such as Ahmad b. Hanbal or more. Al-Qadhi Abu Ya'la al-Hanbali emphasized, through this story, it is clear that anyone is not worthy of the title *Mujtahid* as long as they do not have the standard number of memorization of Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal."⁴⁸

Subsequently, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali asserted, this requirement is the *ijmā'* (consensus) of Salaf al-Shalih scholars and intellectuals of four madhabs, not only the Hanbali schools. In light of this minimal requirement for a *mujtahid*, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali did not expand the discussion to include the dignity of a *mujtahid*. He felt Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's quote was sufficient to serve as a basic rule for Muslims of future generations without exception. This description became Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's epistemological criticism of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab's ineligibility in *ijtihad*, including strong rejection of the unilateral claim of his supporters.

In line with Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali, Imam al-Hajj Malik Bih al-Hanbali in

⁴⁶ Ibnu al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyya, *I'lāmu al-Muwaqqi 'in 'an Rabb al-'Ālamīn*, ed. Abū 'Ubaidah (Riyad: Dār Ibnu al-Jawzī, 1423 H), 83–84.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 84–85.





his book *al-Ḥaqqā'iq al-Islāmiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Mazā'im al-Wahhābiyyah* emphasized several points: (1) It is not proper (permissible) for a person to immediately engage in *ijtihad* with the Qur'an and Hadith before mastering their respective scientific tools. (2) *Mujtahid* should memorize at least 600,000 thousand hadiths, both *matan* and *sanad*, as the minimum requirement for becoming a *mujtahid* like the founders of a school of thought. (3) The Islamic scholars such as al-Nawawi, al-Suyūṭī, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzi, al-Ghazali, al-Ṭanṭawi, Ibn al-Qasim, Khalīl b. Ishāq) had not even judged themselves as *mujtahid muṭlaq*. They even declared themselves as followers/successors (*muqallid*) of their Imams, or at most in the *fiqh* category, they could be classified as *mujtahid fī imāmihi*.⁴⁹

From the beginning, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali offered his younger brother opportunities for an intellectual examination and discussion of his teachings and doctrines with scholars of the Hanbali school at that time. However, in the testimony of Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab ignored his offers. Instead of seeking the truth, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab behaved more severely by forcing the Islamic community at that time to obey and submit to Wahhabism. Anyone who opposed it was guilty of apostasy.⁵⁰

In his book, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali gave direct testimony regarding the inappropriateness of the scientific standards of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, "by Allah SWT, he (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab) has absolutely no capacity and does not even meet the minimum requirements as a *mujtahid*, not even a tenth. So clearly, the quality of his opinions and ideas is comparable to the opinion

of people in general (*al-juhhāl*) and even *zindiq*. Indeed, we belong to Allah SWT and to Him we return."⁵¹

A majority of Hanbali scholars did similar assessments of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. Such thinking is also prevalent today. 'Isham Yahya 'Ali al-'Imād al-Hanbali in his book *Naqd Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb min al-Dakhīl* stated, "When I studied at the University of Imam Muhammad b. Sa'ud Riyadh, I followed the studies of scholars in the university, and many of the scholars stated, misinterpretation by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab was primarily caused by his ignorance in using scientific approaches or methods (*al-manhaj al-'ilmi*). The *ushul fiqh* methods, for instance, are pivotal to interpreting the Qur'anic and Hadith texts, including *al-'ām wa al-khāṣ*; *al-muṭlaq wa al-muqayyad*, *al-mujmal*, *al-dzahīr*, *al-mu'awwal*, *al-muhkam wa al-mutashābih*, *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* and other Islamic studies."⁵²

This is consistent with Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's epistemic criticism of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab.⁵³ Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb considered Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab to have erred in understanding the general concepts of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya without referring to the detailed explanations of both and other Islamic scholars carefully:

Regarding the statement that you (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab) refer to the opinions of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim who judge "partially" the practice of *istighāthah* as an act of envy, I can understand it. However, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim, in their various works, never state that *tawassul* and *istigāthah* are included in the biggest apostasy (*shirk akbar*), which automatically

⁴⁹ Al-Ḥajj Mālik Bih, *Al-Ḥaqqā'iq al-Islāmiyyah Fī al-Radd 'Alā al-Mazā'im al-Wahhābiyyah*, ed. Maḥmūd (Istanbul: Hakikat Kitabevi-Darussefaka, 1986), 43–45; M. Zaidi Abdad, "Analisis Dan Pemetaan Pemikiran Fikih Moderat Di Timur Tengah Dan Relasinya Dengan Gerakan Fikih Formalis," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 1 (January 22, 2011): 39–62.

⁵⁰ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 37.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² 'Iṣām Yaḥyā 'Alī Al-'Imād, *Naqd Muḥammad B. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Min al-Dakhīl* (Mecca: Manshūrāt al-Ijtihād al-Muqaddasah, 2008), 67–68.

⁵³ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 38–40.





makes the perpetrators apostates, so they deserve punishment (death) for apostasy. Including your opinion that a Muslim who believes in them is also an apostate. You all need to know, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim, at the maximum level, punish these practices as minor apostasy (*shirk asghar*).⁵⁴

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali further criticized the belief that a minor apostle (*shirk asgar*) can be a major apostle (*shirk akbar*) merely based on the "intention" of the Muslims alone (*niyat al-muslim*). In their various books, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim never deemed such practices to be worthy of classifying one as a true infidel-apostate (*kāfir murtad*). Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali said, "I call you to return to the Qur'an, Hadiths, and the opinions of Muslim scholars and follow the limits that they have set. Why? Even the scholars of *fiqh* madhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i) had explained in detail the sort of behavior and criteria of unbelievers-apostates (*kāfir murtad*), and they had never argued that *nadhār* to others other than Allah SWT, for instance, directed Muslims to be the true apostates (*murtaddin*). They have also never argued that Muslims who ask for help from others other than Allah SWT (*istighāthah*) become true apostates. They have never argued that Muslims who slaughter animals not for Allah SWT (*al-dabḥ li Ghair Allāh*) become true apostates, or Muslims who wipe the graves of the Prophet or guardians and take the land to wipe the blessings (*tabarruk*) become true infidel-apostates (*kāfir mushrik*) as your extreme fatwas so far have absolutely not. Therefore, you (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab) should do *tabayyun* because it is not permissible for anyone to hide knowledge."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid., 45–46.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 46–47.

⁵⁶ Aḥmad Zainī Daḥlān, *Khulāṣah al-Kalām fī Bayāni Umarā' al-Bilādi al-Ḥarām min Zamāni Sayyidinā al-Nabī Ṣallallāhu 'Alaihi wa Sallama ilā Waqtinā Hādihā bi al-Tamām*, ed. Muḥammad Fārish al-Shāfi'ī al-Qāhiirī (Mecca: Maṭba'ah Arḍ al-Ḥaramain, 1935), 299; *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah* (Cairo: Dār

The Haramain Ulema spanning all schools of thought also conducted examinations of the extreme teachings of Wahhabism. Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan referenced the record, stating, "The Wahhabi delegation opposed the *munādzarah wa munāqashah* (discussion and debate) mechanism held by the Haramain Ulema in an open and academic public trial. The conclusion at that time, the majority of the scholars of Haramain Mecca across four schools of thought considered the teachings and doctrines of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab as *heretical*, so that the ruler of Mecca at that time, Sharif Mahmud b. Sa'id b. Sa'id b. Zaid ordered the detention of some and the release of the others."⁵⁶

Second, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali rejected the verdict of infidels against Muslims (*ahl al-qiblah*) who carry out the practices of *ziyārah*, *tawassul*, celebrating *mawlid* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, citing *ṣalawāt* and *istighāthah* in a congregation.⁵⁷ Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also criticized his younger brother Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab who judged that Muslims in *Najd* and the Arabian Peninsula at that time had fallen into the practice of polytheism, worshipping graves, guardians, angels, and the jinn, thereby changing their status to infidel-apostates.⁵⁸

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali argued that the leading Hanbali scholars, who lived in *Najd* belonged to the Hanbali school and had even mastered the books of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, had never judged those practices or traditions at that time as polytheist or infidel. Sulaiman al-Hanbali added that Ibnu Taymiyyah and Ibnu Qayyim had never sentenced Muslims asking for help (*istishfā'*), asking for blessing (*tabarruk*) on the

al-Jawāmi' al-Kalim, 1420), 151–152; See also *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, ed. Jibrīl Ḥaddād (Damascus: Dār Ghār Ḥirā' and Maktabah al-Aḥbāb, 1424), 115.

⁵⁷ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 41–45.

⁵⁸ Ibid.





tomb of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as true infidels.⁵⁹

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali in the book *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah* accordingly asserted, “As for the practice of *tabarruk* with the guardian of Allah SWT, wiping the grave, taking sand, and *tawāf* around the grave, some experts punish it as *makruh*, and others punish it as *haram* behavior. However, none of the scholars has punished the perpetrators with apostasy like your (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) verdict so far. You all dare to disbelieve in other Muslims who do not disbelieve in such behavior. You can see a detailed explanation of such topic in *Kitāb al-Furū’* by Ibn Muflīh al-Hanbali and *Kitāb al-Iqnā’* by Abū al-Naja Mūsā ibn Aḥmad ibn Mūsā al-Hajawī al-Hanbali and various sources by other leading Hanbali scholars, especially the chapter *al-Janā’iz* sub-chapter on procedures for burying and visiting the dead.”⁶⁰

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also called out, “You (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab) have now handed down a verdict of infidel to Muslims who stated two sentences of *shahādah* clearly, performed prayers, paid zakat, fasted in the month of Ramadhan, performed Hajj to Mecca, faith in Allah SWT, faith in angels, faith in the book and its apostles, and they are firm with the Shariat of Islam. You (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab) also (too much exaggeration when) condemned Muslims as infidels and declared that their country was *dār al-ḥarbī*. So I (Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) asked, who are the imams of the schools that are your reference for your opinion?”⁶¹

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali argued, “If you (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab) condemn Muslims who ask for the unseen (*ghaib*)

or people who die, ask blessings by kissing the graves, or take grave sand, and commit a *shirk-akbar* (*shirkun akbar*), then you sentenced all their deeds, blood, property, and even family to be erased lawfully, so I (Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) asked, what was the basis for this opinion? If you (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab) answered, “This is the result of my *istinbāt* and interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunnah,” then I (Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) need to emphasize, “there is no scholar who agreed with your current understanding, and it was inappropriate for a Muslim to follow your opinion. Because almost the majority of people today think, *istinbāt al-ḥukm* is only appropriate for those who have attained the degree of qualified mujtahid (*ahl al-ijtihād alā al-muṭlaq*). *Ijtihad* of scholars who reach the degree of the absolute mujtahid, regardless of the opinions and results of *ijtihād* of other scholars.”⁶²

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali referred to Abu Muhammad al-Zabidi al-Shafi’i (625-702H), who said, “Whoever forces or obliges Muslim to obey only one *ulama’* or schools without analysis and dialogue with the others, then the person who forces him must repent and if not then he must be fought.”⁶³

Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also put forward the fact that Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya had never sentenced Muslims who carried out the aforementioned religious practices as infidels (*kāfir*) and lawful for their bloodshed, property, and family, or even put them in the verdict of apostasy against them. Sulaimān b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali added, “these religious rituals (*ziyārah*, *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, *istighāthah*, etc) were the worldwide Muslim tradition and legacies inherited from

⁵⁹ Al-Wahhāb, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb min Kitābi Allāh wa Ḥadīth al-Rasūl wa Kalām al-‘Ulamā’ fī Madhabi Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, 38; Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 52; Daḥlān, *Al-Durar al-Saniyyah Fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 95–97.

⁶⁰ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 51.

⁶¹ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 8–9; Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 43–46.

⁶² Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 10; Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah, 43–44.

⁶³ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 10; Al-Ṣawā’iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah, 44.





their pious *Salaf al-Shalih* successors and scholars (Sahabat, Tabi'in and Tabi' al-Tabi'in) since the past 600 years. Since then, neither of them convicted those Muslim practitioners of being infidels (*kāfirīn*) nor apostates (*murtaddīn*) whose bloodshed and property were lawfully deemed permissible. Such kinds of Muslim rituals or practices, including Muslims in (*Najd*) here, have lasted throughout the history of Muslims.⁶⁴

Third, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali opposed the hostility and threats of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and his followers to execute scholars from Hijaz who disagreed with him.⁶⁵ Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also rejected the verdict of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab at that time, which condemned the land of *Hejaz* (Mecca and Medina) and other Muslim countries as war lands (*dār al-ḥarbi*). He was also against the verdict that the people of these two cities in Hijaz practiced polytheism and were therefore infidels, as well as the decision that the people were infidels..

In fact, since the events of *Fath Makkah* and as contained in authentic hadiths, the cities of Mecca and Medina are Muslim lands where there will never be idol worship again. Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also quoted authentic hadiths about Dajjal who will never be able to enter the city of Mecca because of the glory, majesty, and assurance of Allah SWT over the city of Haramain.⁶⁶ This refusal of Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb also reflected the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.⁶⁷

Fourth, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali rejected the fatwas of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab who justified the plunder of properties and lands of those accused of heresy and superstition or apostasy.⁶⁸ Sulaimān b. 'Abd

al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali added that Ibn Taymiyyah explored in detail his opinion on asking to others other than Allah SWT (*al-su'āl li ghair Allāh*). Ibnu Taymiyyah never considered this practice an act of envy unless the person sought assistance other than Allah SWT for forgiveness of sins, entry to Heaven, and to be kept away from Hell. This is because such power only belongs to Allah SWT.

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali added, "Taking blessings (*tabarruk*) to the grave for some scholars is only in the category of "makruh or less-welcomed deeds" (*al-makrūhāt*), and some other scholars include it in the category of prohibited practices (*al-mahrūmāt*). Ibn Taymiyyah also never categorized those who were still practising these practices as *mushrik akbar*, infidels, or even apostates.⁶⁹

Fifth, regarding Muslims who conducted *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, *nadhhar* in Mecca and Medina in his time, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali referred to Ibn Muflih al-Hanbali quoting Ibn Taymiyyah, "a person who relies on other than Allah SWT has the same as the *nadhhar* of a student to his teacher when asking for help to meet his specific needs." *Nadhhar* like this is also permissible with those who take an oath in the name of other than Allah SWT. Some scholars call this kind of *nadhhar* just "immoral *nadhhar* (*nadhhar ma'shiyyah*)". According to Ibn Taymiyyah, this form of *nazar*, in the name of saints, should not be fulfilled (*lā yajūzu al-wafā bihi*); Ibn Taymiyyah, however, had never labeled them who made this vow as true disbelievers or apostates."⁷⁰

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also cited Ibn Qayyim's statement in his famous book *Madārij al-Sālikīn* based on the history of Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal that only a minority of

⁶⁴ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 11; *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 46–47.

⁶⁵ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 56–60.

⁶⁶ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 12.

⁶⁷ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 46–47.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 128–130.

⁶⁹ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 14; *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 51–52.

⁷⁰ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 49.





Hanbali scholars classified this practice in the category of minor-shirk (*shirkun asghar*) and did not punish the perpetrators as infidels or even apostates. It is very excessive and contrary to the teachings of the *salaf al-shalih* and contrary to the manhaj of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* itself.⁷¹

Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim classified slaughtering animals to others other than Allah SWT (*al-dabḥ li ghair Allāh*) as *al-maḥrūmāt* rather than *al-mukaffirāt*, while excluding people who worship idols (Hubal, Latta, Uzza, Manat), stars, sun, fire, the moon as pre-Islamic practices. According to both, the last practice was major shirk (*shirkun ṣarīḥ*) and is by no means the first condition. Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali in this regard also highlighted the opinion of Taqiyy al-Din Abu Muhammad al-Qahiri al-Zabidi al-Shafi'i which was completely different from the opinion of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab.⁷²

Sixth, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali rejected the claim of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab as the successor of Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.⁷³ Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali asserted that because he (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab) and his followers have no adequate capacity and were utterly incapable of understanding and interpreting the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali argued that Ibn Taymiyyah merely labeled Muslims who still practice *Nadhhar* on the graves of saints or slaughtering animals for them as a habit of ordinary Islamic society, but he never once handed down a verdict of infidel or apostate against them.⁷⁴

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali asserted, that Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab

has even erred in understanding the details of Ibn Taymiyyah's opinions that Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab referred to in a book entitled *Kitāb Iqnā'*, which in general stated that Ibn Taymiyyah punished infidels as anyone who made intermediaries between himself and Allah, including if a person prays, asks for something, and submits himself to the intermediary."⁷⁵ In particular, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali wrote, as follows:

The current disaster is happening because he (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab) does not understand the opinion of the scholars (Ibnu Taymiyyah and scholars of the Hanbali school). If you (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab) understand the details of Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas comprehensively, then you will realize that your opinion is the wrong *ta'wil*. However, I (Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb) was not at all surprised because from the very beginning, you (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb) deliberately ignored the details of Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion, and you only took the concept in general (generalizations), even though it is contrary to the opinion of all experts of science (Hanbali scholars). Instead, You claim your opinion as to the consensus (*Ijmā'*) of the scholars. So, name only one scholar before you who has the same opinion as yours? Glory be to Allah SWT, are you not afraid of Allah SWT.⁷⁶

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali said, "The sentence of being infidels and apostates that you accuse most Muslims of so far, no scholar has mentioned the same fatwas before you. On the contrary, most of them (Hanbalis' scholars) categorized it only as a small form of heresy, and some of them classified it as prohibited matters (*al-maḥrūmāt*), while none of

⁷¹ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 13; *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 46.

⁷² Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 14; *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 49–51.

⁷³ Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq*, taḥqīq al-Sarāwī, 140–150.

⁷⁴ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 140–150.

⁷⁵ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 14.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.





them sentenced them as true infidels, polytheists, and apostates."⁷⁷

The opinion of academic scholars (*'ibārat ahl al-'ilmi*) whom Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb referred to in his book *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah* illustrated the internal debates of the Hanbali school itself and not others, because the other three *mujtahids* (Imam Abu Hanifah, Malik b. Anas and Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafi'i) and their successors (Hanafiyyah, Malikiyyah, and Shafi'iyah) did not classify these practices as prohibited matters (*al-maḥrūmāt*). Instead, the other three madhabs of thought have other arguments that allow and even encourage such practices based on the *manhaj al-istidlal* of theirs. Moreover, if we referred to the practices of Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal himself, the family, and leaders of the early generation of Hanbali schools in the aforementioned review, they allowed the practice of seeking intermediaries (*tawassul*), seeking blessings (*tabarruk*) on the graves of saints, and commemorating *Mawlid* for the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

In addition, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali asserted that even with the breadth of religious knowledge in various fields, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya still did not reach the dignity of the *maqām* Ahmad b. Hanbal. Instead, the two of them and the Hanbali scholars quoted by Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb were in the category of *mujtahid fī madhabi imāmihī*.⁷⁸

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali firmly assessed that Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb did not have the capacity to *ijtihād*, generalize, and reduce the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb and the leaders of the Hanbali schools at that time considered this movement similar to the *Khawarij* movement because it justified the bloodshed of Muslims and punished Muslims using the Qur'anic verses addressed to the polytheists (*mushrikīn*).

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali even quoted the opinion of Ibnu 'Abbas and Ibnu 'Umar when rejecting the teachings of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab:

"Are not you all (Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab and your followers) like the *Khawarij*, they punished the *ahl al-qiblah* with verses of the Qur'an revealed to the *ahl al-kitāb* and the pre-Islamic *mushrikīn* (polytheists). Because of ignorance, they justified bloodshed, seize property, and sentenced the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* as heretics. Therefore, You all must have sufficient knowledge of the verses of the Koran (Ibnu 'Abbas)."⁷⁹

"The *Khawarij* are the worst Muslim because they deliberately punish the *ahl al-qiblah* with the verses of the Qur'an revealed to the pre-Islamic *mushrikīn* (polytheists). Ibn Umar quoted the Hadith, "Indeed they are like the dogs of hell, and indeed they kill the Muslims themselves. They feel the same as the Qur'an, even though they are above (manipulating) the Qur'an."⁸⁰

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali assessed that Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb had manipulated the detailed opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Takfirism was firmly in contrast to the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah himself. As he said clearly, "one of the biggest bid'ah [a religious act that has no basis in the Qur'an and Sunna] is when a Muslim issuing takfirism on other Muslims, justifying their bloodshed and property based on two main arguments;

First, to judge of disbelieving (takfirism) of one particular group over another group cannot be used as evidence of their attitude, because the person who disbelieves may be more infidel; *Second*, even though there are conditions where two groups face each other in a religious conflict, there is not a single basis in the practice of

⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁸ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 53.

⁷⁹ Al-Wahhāb, *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah*, 8–9.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 10–11.





scholars who merely disbelieve because of just wrong pronunciation.⁸¹

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali added that although Ibnu Taymiyyah strongly opposed the heresies of *Mu'tazilah* and *Jahmiyyah*, he still held to the noble opinion and wisdom of Ahmad b. Hanbal. Ibnu Taymiyyah asserted that Ahmad b. Hanbal had always shown compassion and always asked forgiveness for them (proponents of *Mu'tazilahs* and *Jahmiyyahs*). Ahmad b. Hanbal said, "Although they deny some of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, they do it because of the limited *ta'wil* method of their leaders, even though their leaders are incorrect and deviant."⁸²

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali even considered that Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's ideology and movement were completely different (fractured) from *Ijma'* (consensus) among the leaders of the Hanbali school itself. Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali quoted, "Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal himself never handed down an absolute infidel verdict on the so-called *Ahl al-Bid'ah* (Jahmiyyah, Mu'tazilah, Qadariyyah, Murji'ah, or even the *Ghulāt* sect) although they have very extreme fatwas, and this is similar to Ibnu Taymiyyah's opinion".⁸³

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali also wrote a letter to the other Hanbali scholars about his rejection of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his loyalists. The letter emphasized that Wahhabism was against the Hanbali schools and even in contrast to the detailed classification of Ibnu Taymiyyah and Ibnu Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Sulaiman al-Hanbali argued against the Wahhabists as follows:

⁸¹ Ibid., 30.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 46; Aḥmad Zainī Daḥlān, *Fitnah Wahhābiyyah* (Istanbul: Darussefaka, Isik Kitabevi, 1978), 3–4 Aḥmad Zainī Daḥlān noted, Wahhabi da'wah was nothing more than a war movement, invasion, slander originating from Dhir'iyyah in order to gain power over the

"Surely you all do not adhere to and do not take the example of the Hanbali scholars including Ibnu Taymiyyah and Ibnu Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Your opinion (Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb) is the result of your *istinbāt*. How did you believe that anyone who rejects your opinion has rejected the basics of religion? Your method of *istinbāt* is just a mere manipulation (*talbis*). By this letter, I intend to invite you to do *tabayyūn* on the opinion of the Hanbali scholars that you refer to them. However, there has been no reply other than insults and accusations of me being an infidel. For the sake of this last ummah, none of the practices like what you are doing today comes from the traditions of the *Salaf Shalih* before you, and none of them will accept your opinion."⁸⁴

The Fate of the Older Brother

What happened to Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Hanbali after he rejected and refuted early Wahhabism so vehemently? The leading Shafī'i scholar of Mecca and Medina, Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan, noted that because Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb received threats of violence from the Wahhabism loyalists and troops, he decided to move to Medina, where he detailed his rejection of Wahhabism in his book *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyyah* which he sent to Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, on the other hand, never cared about him.⁸⁵

After his successful conquest of *Hejaz* (Mecca and Medina), Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his Wahhabi paramilitary forces managed to capture his older brother Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali. Ibnu La'bun in his book *Tārīkh Ibn La'būn* reported that in 1170H (1757M), a paramilitary delegation from *Ālū*

Arabian Peninsula whose position at that time was neglected from the control of the Ottoman Empire because it was facing war with European troops and the succession of regimes at that time.

⁸⁵ Daḥlān, *Khulāṣah al-Kalām fī Bayāni Umarā' al-Bilādi al-Ḥarām min Zamāni Sayyidinā al-Nabī Ṣallallāhu 'Alaihi wa Sallama ilā Waqtinā Hādhā bi al-Tamām*, 302.





Zulfā and Ālū Manīkh visited Dhir'iyyah, the headquarter of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb and 'Abd al-Aziz b. Muhammad al-Sa'ud and reported the success of capturing his older brother Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb then placed him under house arrest until his death in Dhir'iyyah in 1794.⁸⁶ Ibn Bassam in his book *Ulama' Najd* also confirmed this arrest and incident.⁸⁷

The other early Wahhabism ideologue, 'Abd al-Lathif b. 'Abd al-Rahman Alu al-Shaikh (1810-1876 M), narrated a *version* that at the end of Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's life, he wrote a treatise of repentance stating reconciliation and finally agreeing with the *da'wah* of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb. The notes of repentance were narrated by 'Abd al-Rahman Alu al-Shaikh. However, Ibn Bassam explained in *Tarikh Najd* that the existence of such a treatise is not true:

"I (Ibn Basam) have studied all versions of the treatise and, in fact, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Hanbali never reconciled his previous rejection. The treatise did not come from Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb. They (Alu al-Shaikh descendants) did so, perhaps to avoid divisions among the descendants or as a reaction to the opposition's rejection of such Wahhabism *da'wah*."⁸⁸

Ibn Bassām strengthened his arguments based on four considerations; *First*, Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab was one of the many scholars at that time who vehemently opposed and rejected the Wahhabist campaign. Till the death of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab, Ibn Bassam had

never known any opponents who declared peace or reconciliation with Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab. None were faithful successors of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab at that time except for his students;⁸⁹ *Second*, Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Hanbali would not be willing to stay in Dhir'iyyah unless forced to be under house arrest, as narrated by Ibn La'bun in his book *Tārīkh Ibn La'būn*; *Third*, Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Hanbali was at a point of no return to reconciling with Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab simply by a treatise;

Fourth, Ibn Bassam looked into three treaties written by Ahmad al-Tuwaijiri, Ahmad, and Muhammad b. 'Uthman b. Tsabanah in response to the treatise of his older brother Sulaiman's repentance.⁹⁰ However, Ibnu Bassam found that the treatise was firmly written after Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's death, which was followed by the death of Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab precisely two years later. In fact, during his 18 years of house arrest, Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Hanbali has never declared reconciliation or repentance, even when Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb was still alive.⁹¹ These different narratives represented were so-called by Bsbeer as the "archive wars" between the *Wahhabist* and *Madhabist* sources.⁹²

Conclusion

Looking at Sulaiman b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Hanbali's criticisms and the fractures between Ibn Taymiyya and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, this article presents seven essential premises as follows; *First*, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's interpretation on the concept of *uluhiyyah* in early

⁸⁶ 'Ilyān, *Al-Ḥanābilah Wa Ikhtilāfuhum Bi al-Salafīyah al-Mu'āshirah Fī al-'Aqā'id Wa al-Fiqh Wa al-Taṣawwuf*, 127.

⁸⁷ 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ṣāliḥ Ālū Bassām, *Ḥizānah al-Tawārikh al-Najdiyyah*, vol. 1 (Riyad: Dār al-Jayl, 1414 H), 350.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:354.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:355.

⁹¹ Apart from Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, it is easy to find narrations in classic books written by the leaders of the Hanbali school who lived during the time with

Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb contained the rejection and refutation of the association of Wahhabism teachings and ideology with Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ṣāliḥ Ālū Bassām, *'Ulamā' Najd Khilāla Tsamāniyyat Qurūn* (Riyad: Dār al-'Āshimah, 1419 H), 355.

⁹² Bsbeer, *Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia*, 20–26; Schwartz, *The Two Face of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism*, 74–100; Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 46–110.





Wahhabism was significantly characterized by the notion of *takfirī*, *tashrīkī*, and even *tardīdī* against Muslims. *Second*, using *ulūhiyyah* indoctrination, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb justified his political ideology to wage war against Muslims. *Third*, such an understanding of *tawhid ulūhiyyah* is inapplicable and incompatible with the ideology of Pancasila in the Indonesian context; *Fourth*, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab simplified and generalized numerous theological fatwas that prior scholars of *salaf aṣ-ṣālih* had discussed for centuries. The leading Hanbali scholars had thoroughly examined the theological concepts and categories that were in contrast to the early Wahhabism doctrines, such as “*imān*”, “*Islam*”, “*ahl al-qibla*”, the criteria of “*takfir*”, the notion of “*kufr dūna kufrin*”, apostate categories, and the responses and attitudes of the previous scholars;

Fifth, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb erred when he applied Quranic verses for pre-Islamic *Mushrikīn* who were subject to the Muslim society and ulemas of Sunni Madhab schools during his time. *Sixth*, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab, and Wahhabism ideologues often use the basis of al-Qur’an and Sunnah to justify their one-sided interpretations and truth claims. There have been epistemological disagreements between four *sunnī madhabī* schools and *Salafī Wahhabism*, both in terms of *Ushūl* and *Furū’*. *Seventh*, the one-sided claim of direct affiliation model of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb by some scholars may be viewed as lacking cross-sources comparisons studies regarding the early refutation and rejection of Wahhabism by the leading Hanbali scholars in 18th century; *Eight*, Sulaiman b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab and the Hanbali ulemas at that time asserted that Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal himself and even major prominent Hanbali scholars had never convicted those practitioners of *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, *ziyārah*, *istighāthah*, and other contested issues in the aforementioned works, such as *mushrik akbar* or *kafir murtad*.

This study finds many epistemic fractures (*al-infiṣāl al-ma’rafi*) between the perspectives of the 18th-century Hanbali leading scholars and

Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb on various aspects, including Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. To avoid bias, the widespread misunderstandings and ignorance among modern and contemporary scholars must be thoroughly addressed, as they view the emergence and development of Wahhabism solely through the lens of its political dominance while ignoring other more legitimate academic narratives, such as those with theo-epistemological foundation. It is recommended for future research to investigate and compare Wahhabism from the perspectives of western travelers in *Hijaz* during the early Wahhabism campaign.

Acknowledgments

This paper would not have been completed without the remarkable contribution of both authors during the preparation, production, and reviews, and also my gratitude to our colleague, Maufur, who finally proofread this paper.

Competing Interests

None of the authors have any financial or personal relationships with other people, companies, or corporate that could unfairly affect or prejudice the content of the study.

Author’s Contributions

The aforementioned authors contributed to the production of this article. Badrus Samsul Fata, as the chief of authors, initiated the original draft writing, concept studying, data collection, concept analyzing, and research conclusion. Idznursham Ismail contributed to the chapter systemizing, topic refocusing, language editing, and proofreading.

Ethical Considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for a research paper, without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding Information

This research paper received no specific grant or funding from any funding institution and agency in public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.





Data Availability

Data sharing does not apply to this article as no new quantitative data or cross tabulation data were presented or analyzed in this study.

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