

## Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and the Excuse of Ignorance for Muslims who Fall into Affairs of Shirk



Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was a peaceful preacher to whom enmity, hatred and violent aggression was shown because he educated the common people with the most basic foundation of Islām indicated by fiṭrah, reason and revelation: to abandon invoking and worshipping deities amongst the creatures (who do not have independent power to create, own, regulate, benefit, harm, guide, misguide) and instead to invoke and worship Allāh alone, this being the message of all the Prophets. The spread of his message conflicted with the interests of political and religious authority figures in his time. Centuries of bigotry, partisanship, intellectual decline and blind-following coupled with enmity were mobilised against his call and, in his own words, he only resorted to fighting in order to protect himself from unlawful, unjustified violence.

His enemies from the partisan religious authorities fabricated lies against him in order to scare the common folk from him and to instigate political authorities against him. From the slanders and fabrications made against him was that he made generalised takfir of the ignorant masses<sup>1</sup> and demanded that his opponents emigrate to him in order to validate their faith and other such lies, leading to the accusation of Khārijism against him and his followers.

Another faction, the actual Khārijites in the manifestation of al-Qaeda, ISIS and splinter groups exhibiting some of their qualities and stances such as the

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<sup>1</sup> This accusation does not cease to be made, not just by antagonistic doctrinal schools such as the Sūfīs and their likes, but also by those who were upon the doctrine of the Khārijites, being students of the likes of Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī. They claim that Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not grant the excuse of ignorance except in the case of compulsion, meaning under threat of loss of life or limb. And this is plainly false. However, since most of these types of people who followed Khārijites like Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī were ignorant and deceived, due to the blind-following, when they abandoned that doctrine, they remained in ignorance and continued thinking that this was the way of Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

Ḥaddādites have in turn made the accusation of Irjā' (divesting faith of actions) against those who grant the excuse of ignorance (al-'udhru bil-jahl) in matters of kufr and shirk and who require establishment of the proof (iqāmat al-ḥujjah) for making takfīr of specific individuals. They claim to be followers of Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb but many of them conceal the doctrine of the Khārijites, or are sympathetic to the cause and activities of the Khārijites of ISIS. They use this ascription to camouflage their doctrine and give it legitimacy.

In this article we present that which is explicit and clear in his words with respect to the issue of takfīr and the excuse of ignorance and by this both groups are refuted and silenced.

1. Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb (رحمته الله) said: We do not make takfīr of [anyone] except a man who came to know the truth and rejected it **after the proof had been established upon him**, who is invited to it but does not accept it, shows stubborn resistance and obstinacy. What has been mentioned about us—that we make takfīr of the one who condition is other than this—is a lie against us.”<sup>2</sup>
2. He also said: “As for what the enemies have mentioned about me: That I make takfīr on the basis of presumption (ẓann), and on the basis of loyalty (muwālāt), **or that I make takfir of the ignorant person upon whom the proof has not been established**, then this is a mighty slander. They desire to make the people flee from the religion of Allāh and His Messenger by way of it.”<sup>3</sup>
3. He also said: “From Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb to whom it reaches from the Muslims. Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allāh. To proceed: What has been mentioned to you about me, **that I make generalised takfīr**, this is from the calumny of the enemies. Likewise their saying that I say: ‘Whoever follows the religion of Allāh and His Messenger and who resides in his own land, it does not suffice

<sup>2</sup> Al-Durar al-Saniyyah (3/20-21).

<sup>3</sup> In Majmū' Mu'allafāt al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb (7/25) in his letter to Muḥammad bin 'Īd.

him [in his faith] until he comes to me [in emigration].’ This is also calumny. Rather what is desired is to follow the religion of Allāh and His messenger, no matter which land you are in. Likewise, we make takfīr of the one who affirms the religion of Allāh and His Messenger but then showed enmity towards it and hindered people from it. Likewise, the one who worshipped idols after he came to know that this is the religion of the polytheists and beautified it for the people [to invite them to it]. This is the one that I make takfīr of and every scholar on the face of the Earth makes takfīr of them, save an obstinate or ignorant [scholar]. Allāh knows best and peace [be upon you].”<sup>4</sup>

4. He also said: “And likewise, his distortion upon the common people that Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb says, ‘*Whoever does not come under my obedience is a disbeliever.*’ And we say: Sublime are you (O Lord), this is a mighty slander! Rather, we call Allāh to witness over what he knows from our hearts that whoever acts upon Tawhīd and frees himself from Shirk and its people, then he is a Muslim in whatever time and place (he maybe in). But we make takfīr of the one who associates partners with Allāh in His sole right of worship (ilāhiyyah), **after we have made clear to him the proof for the futility of shirk.** Likewise, we make takfīr of the one who beautifies it to the people, erects false doubts for its permissibility, or who raises his sword to defend these mausoleums (mashāhid) at which [others are worshipped as] partners to Allāh, and who fights against the one who rejects them and strives to remove them, and from Allāh is aid sought.”<sup>5</sup>
5. He also said: “And as for the lie and slander, then it is like their saying that we make generalized takfīr (of the masses), and that we make emigration (hijrah) obligatory towards us for the one who is able to manifest his religion, and that we make takfīr of the one who does not make takfīr and who does not fight, and multiple times the likes of this (type of lying and slander). All of this is from lying and slander by which they hinder the people from the religion of Allāh and His Messenger.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid (7/58).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid (7/60).

And when it is the case that we do not make takfīr of the one who worships the idol (tomb) which is on the grave of ‘Abd al-Qādir, and the idol which is on the grave of Aḥmad al-Badawī and their likes, **due to their ignorance, and the absence of the one to notify them (of their opposition)**, then how could we make takfīr of the one who does not associate partners with Allāh, when he does not emigrate to us and who does not make takfīr (of us) and does not fight (against us)? **“Glory be to you (O Lord), this is a mighty slander.”** (24:16)”<sup>6</sup>

6. He also said: “And as for takfīr: Then I make takfīr of the one who knew (the reality) of the religion of the Messenger, and then after he came to know it, he reviled it, prohibited the people from it and showed enmity to the one who implemented it. This is the one I declare a disbeliever **and most of the ummah, and all praise is due to Allāh, is not like that.** As for fighting, then we did not fight anyone till this day except to protect our lives and honour. They are the ones who came to our lands, and they left no [other] possibility [for us]. However, we may sometimes fight some of them from the angle of reprisal [i.e. for their unjust attack against us], and the reward for evil is [an evil] of its like.”<sup>7</sup>
7. He also said: “As for Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his likes from the Ittiḥādites<sup>8</sup>, they are not from Ahl al-Sunnah. They have statements on account of which Ahl al-Sunnah censured them. They mentioned that these statements ascribed to them are [statements] of disbelief... From the people of knowledge are those who held a negative opinion of him due to these words, some gave them an interpretation and carried them away from their apparent meaning, maintaining a good opinion of him. And from the people of knowledge and religion are those who took what emanated from him [of words] upon their apparentness and said: These lines of poetry and what is like them comprise the doctrine of the people of ittiḥād (divine union), from those who speak with waḥdat al-

<sup>6</sup> In the section Fatāwā wa Masā’il in Majmū‘ Mu’allafāt (4/11).

<sup>7</sup> Al-Durar al-Saniyyah (1/73).

<sup>8</sup> The Ittiḥādītes are those who propound the doctrine of divine union between Allāh and His creatures.

wujūd (unity of existence) and divine indwelling (ḥulūl) such as the composition called ‘Naẓm al-Sulūk’ and like much of the poetry of Ibn Isrā’īl, Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn Sab‘īn, al-Tilmisānī and the literature that agrees with it, agrees with it in meaning.”<sup>9</sup>

The compiler of al-Durar al-Saniyyah, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad bin Qāsim commented on this statement: “Reflect upon how he (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) labelled this statement as disbelief (kufr) but did not make takfīr of the one who said it. So understand the difference, because applying the label of disbelief to a specific individual upon whom the proof has not been established is not permissible. **And I believe that this imām (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) who said this speech about them thought that the proof had not been established upon the one who said this speech and that Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his likes, due to their ignorance do not know what their speech and doctrine contains of disbelief.** Those scholars who held a good opinion about them as has preceded gave their words an interpretation to convey meanings besides those that are apparent.”<sup>10</sup>

8. Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb also said: “As for what occurred of soliciting intercession from the Prophets and Righteous after their death, venerating their graves, building domes over them, praying next to them, taking them as places of celebration, and putting keepers [guards] over them and making oaths to them, all of these are newly-arisen affairs which the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) informed about and warned against... This is what has necessitated the differing between us and people until the affair led them to make takfīr of us, fight us and declare the spilling of our blood and taking of our wealth lawful, until Allāh aided us against them and granted us victory over them. This is what we call the people to and we fight them [in their aggression against us] over this, **after we have established the proof against them** from the Book of Allāh, the Sunnah of His Messenger and the consensus of the Righteous Salaf.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Al-Durar al-Saniyyah (3/21-22).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. (3/23).

<sup>11</sup> Majmū’ Mu‘allafāt al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (7/110-115).

9. **Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf bin‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin Ḥasan** whilst refuting the accusation against his grandfather (Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) stated, “And Shaykh Muḥammad (ﷺ) was from the greatest of people in withholding and desisting from applying (the judgement of) kufr, until he would not be resolute upon the takfīr of the ignorant person who called upon other than Allāh from the inhabitants of the graves or other than them when one who could advise him and make such proof be conveyed to him - the abandoner of which would fall into disbelief - was not readily available to him. He said in one of his letters, ‘And when we do not fight against the one who worships the shrine of al-Kawāz until we advance with calling him to make the religion sincerely and purely for Allāh (alone), then how can we make takfīr of the one who did not emigrate to us despite being a believing monotheist.’ And he had been asked about the likes of these ignorant people and he affirmed that the one upon whom the proof had been established and was capable of knowing the proof, he is the who disbelieves by worshipping the graves.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Minhāj al-Ta’sīs wal-Taqdīs (Dār al-Hidāyah, 1407H, p. 98-99).

<sup>13</sup> Many of these statements were translated years ago and thus, this article is mostly a compilation of those earlier translations.