

200 Years of New Kharijism: the Ongoing Revision of Islam

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We live in a time when the enemies of Islam are attempting to destroy it from within. Resourceful and determined, they announce new mode of leadership that pretends to restore the purity of the faith as a guise to gain the confidence of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The unwary observer is readily misled by their portrayal, which is eagerly disseminated by the media. In fact, it is these proponents of extremism who are themselves outside the realm of true Islam. “The Religion of God,” al-Khatib said, “lies between extremism and the laxity.”ⁱ

1.0 Prophetic Traditions

The advent of these extremists was foretold by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (s). Prophet Muhammad’s authentic traditionsⁱⁱ detail for us the characteristics and behavior of the extremists, stating that their existence in our world would be revealed when “...the destitute (*al-buhm*) camel-herds compete in building tall structures,”ⁱⁱⁱ or in another narration “...the barefoot, naked, indigent (*al-’âla*) shepherds compete in building tall structures.”^{iv} “...The barefoot and the naked are the heads of the people,”^v or “...the barefoot and naked, the deaf and dumb are the kings of the earth.”^{vi}

“Barefoot and naked” and “deaf and dumb” are metaphors to describe in figurative speech just how depraved the new leaders would be. “Barefoot and naked” relates to people of the desert, and implies their utter ignorance in matters pertaining to organized society.^{vii} “Deaf and dumb” implies that they would fail to use common sense in anything concerning religion, though they are perfectly sound in mind and limb.^{viii} Implied as well is the notion that the extremists’ ultimate goal is world domination, to be “kings of the earth.”

The traditions reveal another of the signs of the extremists’ onset is “the affectation of eloquence by the rabble and their betaking to palaces in big cities.”^{ix} Prophet Muhammad predicted a reversal in society whereby these depraved leaders would take over the rule of every region by force. They would become extremely rich and their primary concern would be to erect the tallest buildings, rather than maintain order or care for the common welfare.^x

2.0 A Reversal of Values

Sadly, we have witnessed the realization of the Prophet’s prediction in the dominance of extremist ideology in the Middle East and its increasing influence in the West. Because of their influence and their reversal of values, we now see doctrinal, political, and physical wars of exclusion being waged everywhere in the name of Islam. In the United States, extremist ideologues have waged a fifty-year long campaign to exclude moderate, traditional Muslims from political arenas as well as the mosque. The effect has been to create the impression that the

extremists are the majority whereas they are simply the most vociferous, having made it more comfortable for the majority of Muslims to stay at home, away from their doctrinal wrangling.

These two phenomena, depraved leadership and exclusionism, are the mainstays of New Kharijism in our time. What clearer proof of this than what took place in Makka on November 20, 1979, when hundreds of armed men seized the Holy Mosque under the 36-year old Juhayman al-'Utaybi and proclaimed him as the new leader of the country? They held the mosque for two weeks during which they practiced lewd sexual behavior with the women they held captive and those they had brought with them.

According to the *New York Times*, "There were hundreds of casualties on both sides before Saudi forces were able to drag out the last remnant of what by then was a bunch of filthy, bedraggled young men." Al-'Utaybi and sixty-three of the captured were later executed by public beheading. According to As Sayyid Yusuf al-Rifa'i, these wild young people learned their ways from the same teacher as Abdel Aziz Ibn Baz (d. 2000), a famous Wahhabi scholar.

3.0 The Original Khawârij

Before we speak of the modern phenomenon of New Kharijism it is important to define the principal constituents of Khariji doctrines. The name "Khawârij" was applied to those who, in the time of the Successors of the Companions to the Prophet (one generation after Prophet Muhammad's lifetime), parted ways with other Muslims and declared them disbelievers, just as the followers of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, or "Wahhabis" (also known as the "Salafis"), do today.^{xi}

The Khawârij or "Kharijites" were tens of thousands of Muslims mostly comprised of Qur'an memorizers and devoted worshippers who prayed and fasted above the norm. Yet, they declared every one of the Companions and all who associated with them to be apostate disbelievers and took up arms against them. The practices of declaring Muslims apostate (*takfir/tashrîk*) and taking armed action (*baghî*) against the central Muslim authority – the Caliphate – became and continues to remain the hallmark of the Khawârij.

In addition, the Khawârij altered the interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunna, and used them to declare it lawful to kill and take the property of Muslims, as do their modern counterparts, the Wahhabis.^{xii}

The classification of the Wahhabis as Kharijis has been a *leitmotiv* of Sunni heresiography for the past 200 years. Only now has it become politically incorrect among the scholars of Islam (*ulema*).

4.0 Three Principles of the New Kharijis

The chief brand of New Kharijism, or Wahhabism, distinguishes itself from traditional Islam by three main principles:

1. **Anthropomorphism of the Deity:** Attributing a body to the object of Islamic worship.
2. **Disrespect of Prophet:** Harming the Prophet through:

- Disrespect of his noble person, mosque, grave, vestiges, Family, or Companions.
- Disrespect of those who visit, love, and praise him.
- Disparaging or holding his status as an intercessor in disdain.

3. **Disregard for the schools and methods of the Sunni Imams including:**

- The Imams of Sunni doctrine (*'aqīda*): al-Ash'ari and al-Maturidi.
- The scholars of traditional Sunni jurisprudence (*fiqh*): Abu Hanifa, Malik, ash-Shafi'i, and Ahmad.
- The Imams of Sunni morals (*akhlâq*) known as the Poles^{xiii} of the science of soul-purification (*tasawwuf*): al-Junayd, al-Gilani, al-Shadhili, al-Rifa'i, al-Chishti, al-Suhrawardi, Shah Naqshband, and al-Tijani.^{xiv}

Since all sincere Muslims believe God is transcendent and love their Prophet, it follows that this third principle, disregard for the Sunni Schools and their jurisprudential authority, is by far the most harmful tenet of New Kharijism and its most devastating achievement. The attack on the schools of thought has resulted in the pollution of pure belief, the arrogant rejection of Islamic authority, and the discrediting of pious Muslims striving to follow the straight path.

The traditional schools were immediately supplanted by extremist ideologues and radical centers of education. Africans tell the story of a young man sent to study Shari'a at great expense by his Sunni parents. Upon his return a few years later, he refused to eat a chicken slaughtered in his honor by his father stating, "my father is an apostate." Scenarios like this one quickly caused a great rift between the generations of peace-loving Muslims and the chaos-driven youth who were their children.

More ugly still is the violence wreaked by extremists on the Muslims of Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Afghanistan, Daghestan, Chechnya, and within the Indian Subcontinent. Violence and societal upheaval were instilled at the new schools by radical ideologues like Egyptian ex-Communist Sayyid Qutb. Sayyid Qutb declared a Muslim is either a "revolutionist" or an infidel,^{xv} and went so far as to declare all the Islamic societies of his time apostate and fit to be overthrown. He stated, "Islam is a force that runs to gift freedom to all people on the earth with no regard to the variety of their religious beliefs. When this force meets with aberrant forces, it is the duty of his so-called "Islam" to struggle and annihilate them."^{xvi} Invoking the memory of the original Kharijis, he also wrote, "Islam is a whole: its separated parts should be united and the differences removed."^{xvii}

5.0 Prohibitions of the New Kharijis

Today Sayyid Qutb's spiritual children – such as the followers of Taqi al-Din al-Nabahani, who are outlawed in most Muslim countries – tell Muslims not to:

- Participate in government.
- Sit on jury duty.

- Vote.
- Collaborate with other faith groups.
- Recite the remembrance of God in collective gatherings of *dhikr*.^{xviii}
- Commemorate the birthday of our Prophet (*mawlid*) nor read poetry in his honor.
- Wear turbans or attempt to revive Prophetic traditions concerning dress.
- Show deference or respect to religious scholars or pious elders.
- Visit the tombs of saints.

5.0 The Ongoing Revision of Islam

The Neo-Kharijis and their sponsors are mounting a worldwide offensive to convince Muslims and the rest of the world that theirs is the only way. To this end, a vast publishing campaign to revise Islam has been under way since the early thirties, an effort that has been redoubled since the eighties. This campaign is waged on five fronts:

5.1 Tampering with the Texts

A wanton, unethical manipulation of the great books of Islam has removed words or entire chapters from classical works by the great Imams such as al-Nawawi, al-Sawi, and Ibn ‘Abidin. Quranic exegeses such as *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* and the works of ‘Abd Allah Yusuf ‘Ali have all been reprinted with changes. This corrupt tampering of these guiding texts has been documented at length.^{xix}

5.2 “Improving” on the Foundational Books of Islam

They have unabashedly published corrective comments on manuals whose contents were long ago established as normative in the scholarly community of Islam. Many such instances have also been documented.^{xx}

5.3 Revising Their Own Source Texts

Not content to fiddle with historically accepted books, they also find fault with the minor texts they publish and distribute in order to gainsay their own putative authorities. This is a patent illustration of the principle that each new generation of innovators rejects the previous one as too moderate.^{xxi}

5.4 Reprinting Discredited Works

The Neo-Kharijis are supplementing their own works by re-circulating books that have already been condemned by the majority of scholars. Though heretical and un-Islamic, numerous books are now being promoted as the fundamental guides for the practice of Islam.^{xxii}

5.5 Promoting the Works of Unqualified, Self-styled Scholars to Attack Sufis and Asharis

Including:

- Muhammad Ahmad ‘Abd al-Salam,
- Muhammad al-Shuqayri,
- Ibn Abi al-‘Izz,
- Muhammad Nasiruddeen al-Albani,
- Abdul Aziz Bin Abdullah Bin Baz,
- Muhammad bin Saleh Al-'Uthaymin,
- Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips,
- Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali,
- Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan,
- And many others. ^{xxiii}

Their dismissal of the traditional schools of thought, their development of schools as incubators for radical ideology, their attack on the source texts of Islam and generations of recognized scholars, and their financing by ideological counterparts worldwide, have truly enabled the Neo-Kharajite movement to dominate the vision of Islam in the world. Finding roots in the Khawârij of ca. 750 CE, and given new life by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab in the 19th century, these extremists have only really succeeded in their efforts to subvert Islam in the past 75 years.

Traditional Muslims, the silent majority, remain numerous and confident enough to repel the Neo-Kharajite movement from within Islam, given the necessary support. However, backed by the oil-wealth of their ideological counterparts overseas, Neo-Kharajites have a definitive advantage over the majority of Muslims, who have only their own humble resources at their disposal. Only with real financial and political support can classical Muslim scholars and moderate, mainstream Muslims reclaim the banner of Islam from these usurpers, retake the podium they have hijacked, repel these extremists and discredit their heretical ideology. Truly, this is a battle worth fighting. And it is a battle which, with the help of Almighty God, we can and must win.

Truly we belong to Allah and to Him is our return, and there is no power nor might except in Allah the Exalted and Almighty Lord.

NOTES:

ⁱ In al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'* (1997 ed. 13:598).

ⁱⁱ Prophet Muhammad's sayings and advice communicated through verifiable chains of transmission, known as the *ahadith*. The body of traditions are called the *Sunna*, and form the second basis for Islamic law, in addition to the Holy Qur'an.

ⁱⁱⁱ The well-known hadith of Gibril in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

^{iv} *Sahih Muslim*.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} see Al-Taymi, Sulayman.

^{viii} Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*.

^{ix} Related by Al-Tabarani, through Abu Hamza, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas.

^x Al-Qurtubi.

^{xi} Ibn 'Abidin, *Radd al-Muhtar 'ala al-Durr al-Mukhtar* (3:309), "*Bab al-Bughat*" [Chapter on Rebels].

^{xii} Al-Sawi, *Hashiya 'ala Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (v. 58:18-19) in the Cairo, 1939 *al-Mashhad al-Husayni* edition (3:307-8) repr. *Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi* in Beirut.

^{xiii} *Aqtâb*, sing. *qutb*

^{xiv} The schools of *tasawwuf* are known as Paths, *turuq*, sing. *Tariqa*.

^{xv} Qutb, Sayyid, *World's Peace and Islam*.

^{xvi} *The Future is Islaam* (p. 203).

^{xvii} *Social Justice in Islam* (p. 35).

^{xviii} Dhikr is considered by traditional Muslims as the most excellent form of devotion for a servant of God, and is stressed over a hundred times in the Holy Qur'an. For the spiritually-inclined, it is polish for the heart, the essence of the science of faith, and the key to all success. Nor are there any restrictions on the form, frequency, or timing of dhikr whatsoever.

^{xix} Cf. Appendix, "Albani and Company," in *Struggle for the Soul of Islam: Exposing the Scholars of Najd and the Wahhabi/Salafi Movement*, paragraph on Ibn Baz.

^{xx} For example: Ibn Abi al-'Izz's commentary on al-Tahawi's *'Aqida*. Al-Tahawi's *'Aqida* is a normative classic of Islam but Ibn Abi al-'Izz is unknown and unacceptable as a source for *Ahl al-Sunna* teachings. Examples of his unreliability are his rejection of al-Tahawi's articles:

- §35: "The Seeing of Allah by the People of the Garden is true, without their vision being all-encompassing and without the manner of their vision being known" and
- §38: "He is beyond having limits placed on Him, or being restricted, or having parts or limbs, nor is He contained by the six directions as all created things are".

Al-'Izz states, "Can any vision be rationally conceived without face-to-face encounter? And in it there is a proof for His elevation (*'uluw*) over His creatures," and "Whoever claims that Allah is seen without direction, let him verify his reason!" [Ibn Abi al-'Izz, *Sharh al-'Aqida al-Tahawiyya*, p. 195]. He also endorses Ibn Taymiyya's view of the finality of Hellfire, in flat contradiction of the al-Tahawi's statement, §83. "The Garden and the Fire are created and shall never be extinguished nor come to an end." [Ibid. p. 427-430] There is also doubt as to Ibn Abi al-'Izz's identity and authorship of this *Sharh*.

^{xxi} Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqqi objects apoplectically to Ibn Taymiyya in his edition of the latter's *Iqtida' al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* in the section entitled "Innovated festivities of time and place." He criticizes Ibn Taymiyya for saying that "some people innovate a celebration out of love for the Prophet and to exalt him, and Allah may reward them for this love and striving." Al-Fiqqi writes a two-page footnote exclaiming, "How can they possibly obtain a reward for this?! What striving is in this?!"

xxii Including:

- Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s *Tawhid*, which is replete with doctrinal errors such as:
 - Calling the Ash‘aris “Nullifiers of the Divine Attributes” (mu‘atila) [chapters 2, 16]
 - Declaring the Lesser shirk an integral part of the Greater. [7]
 - Misinterpreting the hadith “do not make my grave an idol” to mean: do not even pray near it whereas the agreed-upon meaning is: Do not pray towards or on top of it. [20]
 - Stating: “The disbelievers who know their disbelief are better-guided than the believers.” (*inna al-kuffâr al-ladhîna ya ‘rifûna kufrahum ahdâ sabîlan min al-mu‘minîn*) [23]
 - Stating: “Among the polytheists are those who love Allah with a tremendous love” [31].
 - Stating that “the two opposites [belief and disbelief] can be found in a single heart” [41] in violation of the verse [Allah has not assigned unto any man two hearts within his body] (33:4). This and the previous four concepts are fundamental to understand their propagation of mutual suspicion among Muslims.
 - Stating that Allah is explicitly said to have two hands: the right holds the heaven and the other holds the earth, and the other is explicitly named the left hand. [67]
- ‘Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal’s *al-Sunna*, a foundational book of the Wahhabi creed. According to Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ut, “at least 50 percent of the hadiths are weak or outright forgeries” in this book. Its publication was sponsored by His Highness King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Sa‘ud and a Jeddah businessman named Muhammad Nasif in Cairo in 1349/1930 at *al-Matba‘a al-Salafiyya*.

The same Muhammad Nasif financed:

- an attack on Imam Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari and the Hanafi School by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Mu‘allimi al-Yamani (d. 1386 H) entitled *al-Tankîl li Ma Warada fi Ta‘nîb al-Kawthari min al-Abatil*.
 - the reprinting of al-Qari’s hapless fatwa against the parents of the Prophet.
 - the dissemination in India of al-Khatib’s derogatory biography of Imam Abu Hanifa from Tarikh Baghdad.

Also:

- Ibn Taymiyya: *Fatwa Hamawiyya; ‘Aqida Wasitiyya; Hadith al-Nuzul; Awliya’ al-Shaytan; Iqtida’ al-Siratal-Mustaqim; Qa’ida fi al-Tawassul; Ziyarat al-Qubur, etc.*
- Ibn al-Qayyim: *al-Qasida al-Nuniyya; Ijtima’ al-Juyush al-Islamiyya.*
- al-Harawi’s *Dhamm ‘Ilm al-Kalam wa Ahlih*
- al-Biqai’s takfir of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi – may Allah have mercy on him – in his book *Masra’ al-Tasawwuf, Tanbih Al-Ghabi Ila Takfir Ibn ‘Arabi*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Wakil (Bilbis: Dar al-Taqwa, <1989>)

xxiii In Arabic:

- Muhammad al-Shuqayri who wrote the book *al-Sunna wa al-Mubtada‘at*
- Muhammad Khalil Harras wrote a commentary on Ibn Taymiyya’s *‘Aqida Wasitiyya* – distributed for free in the Arab world
- Al-Albani
- ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Abd al-Khaliq, al-Albani’s student and deputy in Kuwait, *al-Fikr al-Sufi* (“Sufi Thought”) and its abridgment *Fada‘ih al-Sufiyya* (“The Disgraces of the Sufis”).
- ‘Abd al-Rahman Dimashqiyya
- Mahmud ‘Abd al-Ra‘uf al-Qasim al-Madkhali, *al-Kashf ‘an Haqiqat al-Sufiyya* (“Unveiling the Reality of the Sufis”), 1993. The book was refuted by Dr. ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Isa in his 700-page *Haqa‘iq ‘an al-Tasawwuf*.
- Al-Tuwayjiri (Hamd ibn ‘Abd al-Muhsin). With all respect to his person, he demanded that women caught driving in Saudi Arabia be labeled as prostitutes in the courts.

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- Al-Jaza'iri (Abu Bakr)
 - Al-Wadi'i (Muqbil ibn Hadi), *Nashr al-Sahifa fi Dhikr al-Sahih min Aqwal A'immat al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil fi Abi Hanifa, Fada'ih* ("Disgraces"), 1999.

In English

- Ibn Baz, Sunnah and Caution against Innovation
- An anonymous tract entitled A Brief Introduction to the Salafi Da'wah.
- Muhammad Ma'soomee al-Khajnadee (d. 1961 ce), Blind Following of Madhhabs (Birmingham: al-Hidaayah Publishing, 1993).
- A. A. Tabari, a fictitious name for the author of The Other Side of Sufism, a tract distributed in Wahhabi-funded mosques and posted on the Internet.
- The Naqshbandi Tariqat Unveiled, al-Hidaayah, Colombo, Sri Lanka.