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Section 5: Obduracy in accepting any innovation

The founder of the Wahhabi creed campaigned against all sorts of heresy, something that fundamentally was not denied by the other Islamic sects, because they all wholly rejected the heresies in religion.¹ But he committed a grave mistake in the meaning of heresy, and for this reason he led a campaign against anything that was new.

What is meant by heresy?

Is every novel issue, every new invention heresy? Should we campaign against every new man-made invention and call a bicycle the steed of Satan and refrain from it, shred to pieces the telephone line that connects the palace of the Saudi king to the central army?!

They regarded as forbidden photographic cameras and their sale and purchase was banned until recently, and the the head of the Taliban, *Mulla Omar*, never allowed himself to be photographed. He opposed educating girls and women even in his own special schools, considered *Haram* (forbidden) the driving of women even with full *Hijab* (covering), and considered and forbid as heresy the celebration ceremonies on the Prophet's (S) birth and other similar events! They condemn all other Sunni and Shia Muslims for committing this logical and humanistic act!

Certainly, according to prominent jurist-consults and the scholars of Jurisprudence², **heresy** has a different meaning.

"Heresy"³ has its own particular interpretation, which is: "*Heresy means to include that which is not from religion into religion*"⁴ Certainly no body makes use of the new inventions such as bicycle, telephone, picture camera and computer... for being an obligatory⁵ affair or a recommended⁶ religious practice, but just as an ordinary matter, like different kinds of food, clothing and buildings that change with the passage of time and take on a new form.

Some acts that we perform are conventional acts, which are not related to religion, akin to the examples mentioned above: disparity in clothing fashions, means of travelling, domestic goods, foods, rituals and

habits.

Heresy (*Bid'ah*) implying beneficial innovations in these matters is certainly a very admirable act and is an indication of the development of human civilization, therefore neither is a bicycle Satan's steed nor a picture camera Satan's eye. Neither are different telephone brands the cause of degeneration and corruption, nor the celebration ceremonies held for the birth of great ones in religion considered as sin. The birthday party for each and every member of a family, a great religious scholar, or palatial ceremonials for the Holy Prophet (S) and the great personalities of religion are not sinful.

We have no reason to prohibit⁷ performing the above except misunderstanding the denotation of heresy and lack of knowledge of the jurisprudential meaning of this term and misapprehending conventional affairs as religious rulings.

We are not only concerned with the shrine and the tomb of religious pioneers, which is a subject for another discussion, but with the ordinary graveyards. In Saudi Arabia graveyards are the most hideous and repulsive areas resembling a barren desert, rock-ribbed, rugged and disorganized, with not one straight stone on any one grave!

The ordinary building of graves is a conventional act amongst all nations and rational-beings in the world who try to construct the graves in a manner that retains their respect, and prevents them from being belittled and affronted, placing plants and trees in their surroundings to bring calm and tranquility to their remains.

For the poets and the pioneers in knowledge and literacy, appropriate burial chambers are built with respect to their status, and for every person according to his position. This is a humanistic and conventional act, it is neither heresy nor polytheism nor idol-worship but a respectful humane ritual, whereas, prohibited heresy⁸ means adding something to religious rulings.

Nowadays everywhere in the world centennial ceremonies are held for leaders, poets, inventors, and outstanding human beings to motivate the youth towards knowledge and science and its development. Can any rational person call this heresy or polytheism, or that something is being added to religion?!

Yet, if it is done for religious personalities to attract the public towards their notions, teachings and agendas, and create a solid bond between them, how can this act be called heresy or polytheism?

Conventional innovations are sometimes aligned with religious matters and without being merged with them gain the title of heresy. For instance, today we see many minarets in *Masjid-ul-Harām* and *Masjid-un-Nabi* that had certainly not existed at the time of the Prophet (S). The *Mihrab*⁹ of the Holy Prophet (S) has been decorated with beautiful and artistic designs, and many Quranic Verses have been printed with beautiful calligraphy on the walls and inside the arches of the Prophet's (S) Mosque. The name of his Holiness (S) and all the Imams (disciples) of the Household (S) and some of the renowned traits of Islam can be spotted on the facade of one of the courtyards of the Mosque.

None of these were present at the time of the Prophet (S). Are they therefore, considered as heresy and forbidden? If they are, why then do the Wahhabis not remove them all? After all it is under their control, and if it is not heresy, then why don't they allow the same elsewhere?

Surely no body initiated these with the intention of making it a part of religious rulings, but are only the result of a series of conventional acts prompted by the love and respect of people.

Those who are against these social practices by Muslims and non-Muslims, due to ideological obduracy, have no place in today's world and must be dispatched with, unless the moderate party amongst them rectifies and recompenses for these huge mistakes.

We reiterate that forbidden and *harām* heresy is when I claim that I do something on the premise that it is a religious ruling while there is nothing on this regard in both the general and specific laws.

Heresy means adding some parts to prayer or the fast or the rites and rituals of Hajj or claim that religion has commanded us to celebrate such and such night for the birth of the Prophet of Islam (S).

Unfortunately obduracy and the lack of information have caused these two subjects: **"Conventional innovations"** and **"religious heresy"** to be misconstrued.

Another Contradiction!

Amongst the strange contradictions of this group is that the same people who, one day, regarded bicycles as the "steed of Satan" and considered its use as heresy, today drive the latest American and Japanese cars and no one complains about them. And those who, one day, considered it heretical to use the telephone line of the palace of the Saudi king to his military base and shred the wires, today all of them are seen holding a *Jawwān* (mobile) in hand! Isn't this 180 degrees turn evidence enough of these ideas collapsing? And it is remarkable that their government, heedless of these reactionary ideas, charges ahead in the industrial development of the country, and is drowned in its dependence on these industries.

The Reasons For The Failure Of Ibn Taymiah

Those informed know that the Imam of the Wahhabi creed – according to his own confessions – has been sitting at *Ibn Taymiah's* table. Ibn Taymiah had the same thoughts about polytheism, monotheism, intercession and the like, but he couldn't spread his ideas in Damascus (the centre of his activities) and this danger was fended off from Syria, but his student Mohammed Abdul-Wahhab succeeded, why?

It is important to take a glimpse at the biography of Ibn Taymiah.

"Ahmad ibn Abdul-Halim ibn Taymiyyah Hanbali" ¹⁰ was born in 661 and departed in the year 728 AH. He was born in the city of *Harān* in Syria and due to the Tartar rule, he left *Harān*, in the company of

his family, for Damascus. As he believed in the Hanbali creed, he decided to preach it and denounced the science of Theology regarding theologians as heretics! On the subject of the qualities attributed to God, like the Hanbalis, he accepted the expressions reflecting the Almighty's Attributes that are mentioned in the scriptures without any sort of exegesis. By and large he condemned any sort of rationalism. He supported the methodologies and principles of the traditionalists¹¹ and added certain other principles to their code of belief that were unheard of before him.

For instance, he stated that the intention of visiting the Shrine of the Prophet (S), and requesting blessings and resorting to the Household of the Prophet (S) was akin to polytheism! He denied the virtues of the Household of the Prophet (S) that are explicitly mentioned in the books of the people of Sunnah¹² and even in the *Musnad* of his own Imam **Ahmad ibn Hanbal** and tried, just like the **Bani Umayyah**, to disparage the status and position of Imam Ali ('as) and his descendants.

But the incitements of *Ibn Taymiah* were not accepted by the Sunni scholars, and except for a few of his own students like "*Ibn Qayyim*", the rest of them opposed him and authored many different books discrediting him and his heresies. Among them was "*Thahabi*"¹³ from the scholars of his own age who wrote him a letter of reproach, and demanded his submission to the truthful traditions.

"*Thahabi*" writes in his address: "Now that you are in the seventh decade of your life and your departure from this world is nearby, is it not time for you to repent and be penitent?"

The supreme judge of the four Sunni faiths in Egypt announced the ideas of *Ibn Taymiah* as false and heresy.

But in the twelfth century, **Mohammed ibn Abdul-Wahhab** emerged and supported the ideas of *Ibn Taymiah*, and stressed his new ideas the most.

In addition to the above mentioned beliefs, *Ibn Taymiah* held certain other beliefs. In the year 698 AH,¹⁴ he used to openly enter into ideological discussions, and debate with his opposition. Among his beliefs and attitudes some that can be referred to are the following:

He used to implement the religious limits himself.

He used to shave the heads of children!

He was set for war against those who disagreed.

He proscribed people from giving oblations.

He believed in the possibility of corporeal sighting of God!!

1. Regarding the Kharijites¹⁵ (Rebels) he wrote: "Although the Kharijites were excommunicated from religion yet they were the most veracious people!" ¹⁶

Amongst his positive actions was that he struggled against the Mongols in year 702 AH.

Allamah Amini, after mentioning the allegations by *Ibn Taymiah* in rejecting the tradition of "the commencement of the Prophet's (S) call" [17](#) [*Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk*" (Sura *Al-Shu'ara* 26: 214)] and stating that he does not authenticate the evidence of this tradition, states:

"This statement is not unexpected of him because he is a fanatic who insists on denying the self-evident truths and excommunicating Muslims. He is especially harsh in negating whatever is related to the virtues of the Prophet's Household (S)." [18](#)

In another instance he adds:

"This was why he was persistently criticised by the great clerics of Sunnah, among whom is Shukrānī, who narrates from Mohammed Bukhārī Hanafi that he excommunicated him and said: "Whoever calls Ibn Taymiah by the title of 'Shaikh-ul-Islam', is an infidel (Kāfir)." [19](#)

Amongst the fervent supporters of *Ibn Taymiah* was *Ibn Kathīr*, the author of the book "*Al-Bid'ayah and Al-Nihayah*" (Died in 744 AH), who has defended and praised *Ibn Taymiah* throughout his book.

Out of the contemporaneous clerics with *Ibn Taymiah*, one who has defended him and as a result, has been despised by his community is the famous traditionist *Abu Al-Hajj Mezi*, owner of the book "*Tahdhib ul-Kamal*", who passed away in the year 742 AH.

Among other students of *Ibn Taymiah* is *Ahmad ibn Mohammed Meri Lebli* [20](#) who was, according to *Ibn Hajar*, opposed to *Ibn Taymiah* at first, but after paying him a visit became his friend and student and wrote his manuscripts and promoted and supported him on the issue of denying travel permission for paying a visit to the Prophet's (S) Tomb. Ultimately, *Ikhnayee*, a Mālikī judge, summoned him and gave him a sound whipping so that his body became all bloody, and then ordered the personnel to mount him upside down on a mule and take him around the town to humiliate him.

The greatest student and fervent supporter of *Ibn Taymiah* was without doubt *Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jooziyah* [21](#), who was in all the declarations and beliefs, his indisputable adherent and advocate, and responsible for the publication and expansion of *Ibn Taymiah's* beliefs both during his life-time and after his death. He went to prison with *Ibn Taymiah* time after time, and just for this reason they whipped and humiliated him by taking him around the town on a camel, and then imprisoned him with *Ibn Taymiah* in the fort of Damascus. [22](#)

Now we return to the main topic of discussion, which was why *Ibn Taymiah* did not succeed in arranging the Salafi banquet in Syria, but *Mohammed ibn Abdul-Wahhab* managed to do so in the region of *Najd* and also managed to extend that to the whole Arabian peninsula and recorded these beliefs in history under his own name under the title of "Wahhabism".

There were two major causes for that:

Firstly, Damascus was one of the centres of the Islamic sciences at that time, and it had lots of prominent scholars and Islamic seminaries; they firmly resisted the misconceived ideas of *Ibn Taymiah*, and although he had found a notable number of supporters, they demolished his influence with logical reasoning, whereas the *Najd* region at that time was very poor in this respect, and the doubts inserted by this group did not face much resistance and was soon spread among the common folk. Every region that was full of scholars and scientists remained safe from their affliction.

Moreover, at that time there were serious power struggles among the tribes of *Najd*. According to the existing history, **Mohammed ibn Abdul-Wahhab** took advantage of this situation and made a contract with the descendents of Saud that they promote his ideas, in return for which he would support them to gain power over the warring factions.

1. – In a tradition from the Holy prophet (S) we study: (أَهْلُ الْبِدْعِ شُرُالْخُلُقِ وَالْخَلِيقَةِ) The heretics are the worse of God's creation) Kanz-ul-Ommal tradition number 10951. And in a tradition from Imam Ali ('as) it has been narrated that he said: (No heresy took place unless a ritual was deserted سُنَّةٌ إِلَّا تُرِكَ بِهَا سُنَّةٌ) The exegesis to Nahj-ul-Balaghah by ibn Abi-al-Hadid, Volume 9, page 93; and other similar traditions on this topic is enormously found in the books of both sects.
2. – اصول.
3. – بدعة.
4. – (ابن نجيم) heresy has been defined as follows: Its dominant application is within causing defect or that which is redundant in religion (غلب) and in the book (فيض القدير) by Manaawi it is mentioned as follows: An incident in religion after its completion (الحدث في الدين بعد اكماله) and all these definitions refer back to a unified meaning.
5. – واجب.
6. – مستحب.
7. – حرام.
8. – بدعة.
9. – Mihrab is the prayer alcove in the mosques. It acts as a direction marker towards Ka'bah in Mekkah.
10. – احمد بن عبد الحليم بن تيمية حنبلي.
11. – اهل الحديث.
12. – صحاح أهل السنة.
13. – الذهبي.
14. – According to this Islamic Lunar calendar we are now in year 1428.
15. – خوارج (They were a group of people who were in Imam Ali's (as) army in his battle against Mo'awiah, but later they excommunicated Imam Ali and fought against him in a battle known as Nahrawan, and in that battle they were all sent to hell by Imam Ali and his army).
16. – الخوارج مع مروقيهم من الدين فهم أصدق الناس.
17. – وأنذر عشيرتك الأقربين.
18. – Al-Ghadir, Volume 2, page 280.
19. – Ibid, Volume 1, page 247, (in the footnote).
- لذلك عاد غرضاً لنبال الجرح من فطاحل علماء أهل السنة منذ ظهرت مخاريقه وإلى هذا اليوم وحسبك قول الشوكاني في البدر الطالع ج 2 ص 260: "صرح محمد البخاري الحنفي المتوفى 841 بتبديعه ثم صار يصرح في مجلسه: إن من أطلق القول على ابن تيمية: أنه شيخ الاسلام، فهو بهذا الاطلاق كافر؛".
20. – احمد بن محمد مري لبلي.
21. – ابن القيم الجوزية.
22. – Collected from a variety of sources; for reference look in the bibliography.

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