

Programme Two; Understanding Shirk.

2.0 Shirk- Introduction.

Shirk is to associate somebody or something in Allāh's inherent nature or in any of His attributes. This is the greatest of all crimes according to Allāh, as the Qur'ān states that He is willing to forgive all types of sins except Shirk (4:116). This fact is sufficient to warn us of the magnitude of this crime.

2.1 Defining Shirk; Imam al-Qurtubī's definition.

The Qur'anic scholar Allama Qurtubī (d. 673 A.H./1273 C.E.) offers a detailed definition of Shirk in his Tafsīr, *al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*.¹ He writes that there are three different stages or forms of Shirk, and all three are forbidden (*Harām*).

- (i) To consider a being other than Allāh (a tree, idol, person, jinn etc.) worthy of worship. This is the major form of Shirk, and the type of Shirk committed by the people of the Jāhiliyya period.²
- (ii) To consider another being other than Allāh can perform and create certain actions independently (without Allāh), even if the person does not believe that that person/being is a God.
- (iii) Lastly, Shirk in worship, and this is *Riyā* (showing off). This too is a form of Shirk.

From this we can appreciate that Shirk is when someone (i) ascribes a partner to Allāh in His essence or attributes (ii) with the knowledge and belief that this being/object is worthy of such accolade and that it can be done independently of Allāh.

2.2 Defining Shirk; the Wāhhābi interpretation.

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wāhhāb writes in *al-Usūl al-Thalātha*:

'The greatest element that Allāh has ordered is Tawhīd; this is to single out Allāh alone for worship. And the greatest thing He had forbade is Shirk; and this is calling other than Him with Him (وهو دعوة غيره معه).'³

Muhammad Nāsir al-Dīn Albānī writes:

There are three types of Shirk. The first is Shirk in Godliness (*Rabūbiyya*). This is to believe that there is another creator with Allāh Almighty...and this type of Shirk in this Ummah is less, *al-Hamdu Lillāh*. The second type of Shirk is Shirk in deity-ness (*al-Alūhiyya*) and worship (*al-Abūdiyya*). And this is that someone other than Allāh is worshipped, namely the Prophets and pious ones (*Sālihīn*), in the form of seeking assistance from them (*Istighātha*) and proclaiming them in times of difficulty and its likes. With great regret, this is common in this Ummah...And the third is Shirk in attributes (*al-Sifat*). This is

¹ Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (may Allah shower his mercy upon him) has cited this in *Zia al-Quran*, (vol. I, p-351-2). Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 1980.

² The period prior to the Prophet's physical appearance in this world is known as *Jahiliyya*, which means 'ignorance'.

³ p. 25-6. *Al-Usul al-Thalatha*. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wāhhāb, Dar Taiba Publications, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

when some of the creations of Allāh are ascribed with attributes exclusive to Allāh alone, like the knowledge of the unseen (*Ghaib*). This type [of Shirk] is common amongst many of the Sufis, like the saying of some of them [namely Imam Busīrī];

And from parts of your generosity are the world and the hereafter.

And from your knowledge is the knowledge of the Tablet and Pen. ⁴

Ibn Sa'dī (d. 1376/1957) wrote in the commentary of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, under the heading 'Chapter he who seeks *Tabarruk*⁵ with a tree or stone or its like':

'This is from Shirk and it is the actions of the polytheists. For verily the scholars have agreed that it is not part of Sharīah to seek *Tabarruk* with anything from the trees, stones, places, Islamic sites and its likes...this is the major Shirk. This (principle) is general in everything from the Station of Ibrahim (*Maqām Ibrāhīm*), the room of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), the stone of Bayt al-Maqdas [in Jerusalem] and other excellent places.'⁶

In the same book, Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb includes a chapter titled 'what has been mentioned in slaughtering for other than Allāh':

'this is Shirk...slaughtering in the name of a being other than Allāh is the major Shirk and excludes one from the circle of Islam.'⁷

Later he writes:

'...and major Shirk is like praying to the people of the graves, and seeking help through them (*Istighātha*) and praying for worldly and heavenly matters...this is exactly what the idol-worshippers do with their idols.'⁸

To summarise, according to the followers of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, the following are considered Shirk:

- Calling anyone other than Allāh (like proclaiming *Yā Rasūllāh*) for *Istighātha* (seeking help).
- Seeking the Prophet's *Wasīla* (medium).
- to suggest that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has *Ilm Ghaib* (knowledge of the unseen).
- to seek blessings (*Tabarruk*) from Islamic relics.
- to slaughter in the name of someone other than Allāh.
- visiting the shrines of Allāh's pious servants. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb was vehemently against people visiting Madina Sharif in order to greet the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

⁴ Muhammad Nasir al-Din Albani in *al-Aqidah al-Tahaywiyya, Sharh wa Taliq*. pp. 7-8. Maktaba al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawdih, Riyadh, 2001.

⁵ *Tabarruk* means to seek blessings.

⁶ p. 39. *Kitab al-Tawhid wa Kitab al-Qawl al-Sadid*. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, commentary by Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir ibn Sa'di. .n.d. on publication.

⁷ p. 41. *Ibid*.

⁸ p. 65-6. *Ibid*.

2.3. Understanding Shirk.

To truly understand what Shirk is, it is important to highlight Islam's concept of worship, or *Ibāda*. All scholars agree that *Ibāda* is 'utmost humility and humbleness'. A simple example would be that of prostration in *Salāh*. However, *Sajda* is not the only part of *Salāh* which is considered as worship- to stand up with the hands tied, to perform *Rukū*, to return from the *Rukū* position with the hands on the side, to sit and to turn the face right and left after *Salām* are all part of *Salāh* and thus all considered as worship. If *Ibāda* is defined as 'utmost humility and humbleness', then this is only really found in the prostration position. Does that mean that the rest of the *Salāh* is not really worship? And if all the acts of *Salāh* are considered as worship, then when a student sits with his hands on his laps in the presence of his Sheikh, or when a child stands for his father, then is it possible to say that the student and the child are worshipping the Sheikh and father respectively? Of course not.

Therefore the question is what has made these acts – when performed in *Salāh* – a form of worship, and the very same acts – when performed in the presence of a Sheikh or father – something other than worship? The answer is simple; it all depends on what the person really thinks and believes in his mind when he performs these acts in front of the being. If he sits in the *Qa'da* position with the firm belief that he is worshipping Allāh, then it is considered as *Ibāda* and he is showing 'utmost humility and humbleness' whilst doing so. But if he sits in the *Qa'da* position in front of his Sheikh and firmly believes that he is a servant of Allāh, and that he is not intending to worship him, then this will be interpreted as respect, dignity and honour for the Sheikh, but not worship.⁹

It is therefore clear from this that no-one or nothing is worthy of worship other than Allāh Almighty. He is the most Able and all-Knowing. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all. He alone possesses the power to forgive and punish. And only when someone truly *believes* that a being other than Allāh is worthy of worship and able to perform actions reserved for him alone does he become a *Mushrik*.

2.4. Refuting the Wahnabi position.

Certainly, if someone truly believes that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) can answer our *Duās* to the exclusion of Allāh, and that he possesses the knowledge of the unseen independently and without the assistance of Allāh, then this is *Shirk*. But this is not what the *Ahl Sunna* claims and believes. Also, we do not believe – like Muhammad Nāsir al-Dīn Albānī thinks we do – that 'the Prophets and pious ones (*Sālihīn*)' are worthy of worship. What follows is a brief refutation of the *Wahnabis*' interpretation of *Shirk*.

2.4.1. 'Calling anyone other than Allāh' (like proclaiming *Yā Rasūllāh*) for *Istighātha* (seeking help).

- If saying *Yā Rasūllāh* is *Shirk*, then the Companions committed *Shirk* when they would proclaim 'Yā Muhammad' before going into battle. This was after the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) physically left this world.¹⁰

⁹ Having said this, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) did clearly forbid prostrating to anyone other than Allāh.

¹⁰ The Muslims were engaged in a fierce battle with Musailma Kazzāb during the Battle of Yamāma. Allāma Ibn Athīr describes the events as follows:

'Then Khālid ibn Walīd challenged the enemies to fight. Thus according to the [established] practice of the Muslims, the Muslims proclaimed *Yā Muhammadau* loudly. They then killed all those who challenged them to fight.' (*Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*. Vol. II, p. 246. Dar al-Kutub al-Arabi Publications, Beirut.)

- If saying *Yā Rasūllāh* is Shirk, then the Companion Bilāl ibn Hārith Muzannī committed Shirk when he came to the grave of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and said ‘O Messenger of Allāh! Please pray for rain for the sake of your Ummah, because they are being destroyed as a result of the drought.’ This was in the caliphate of Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him).¹¹
- If *Isthighātha* from beings other than Allāh was forbidden, then we would not have been taught to say *Yā Ibād Allāh Aʿtūnī* when we come across difficulties in our travels.¹²

2.4.2. Seeking the Prophet’s Wasīla (medium)

- If seeking the Wasīla of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was forbidden, then:
 - (i) Ādam (peace be upon him) would not have sought forgiveness through the Prophet’s Wasīla.¹³

Hāfiz Ibn Kathīr also recorded the same report (*Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Vol. VI, p. 324. Dar al-Fikr Publications, Beirut).

Both Ibn Athīr and Ibn Kathīr have clarified that it was the established practice of the Companions and Successors to proclaim *Yā Muhammadau* loudly in times of difficulty and hardship. The Muslims who deny the legitimacy of such calls are the same ones who respect the opinion of Ibn Kathīr immensely. Hence, this quote is strong evidence against their view.

¹¹ There was a severe drought in a particular year during the caliphate of Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him). Bilāl ibn Hārith Muzannī (may Allāh be pleased with him) came to the resting place of the Messenger and requested him to pray for rain on behalf of his Ummah. Hāfiz Ibn Abū Shaiba reports with his chain:

‘Mālik al-Dār, who was the food minister for Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him), reports that during Umar’s caliphate, a drought inflicted the people. One person (Bilāl ibn Hārith Muzannī) went to the resting place of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and said, ‘O Messenger of Allāh! Please pray for rain for the sake of your Ummah, because they are being destroyed as a result of the drought.’

The Prophet appeared in the dream of this person and said, ‘Go to Umar; offer my salutations to him and tell him that undoubtedly rain will descend upon you. And tell him ‘adhere to understanding, adhere to understanding.’

The man went to Umar and told him what happened. Umar began to cry and remarked, ‘O Allāh! I only leave those things which I cannot do.’ (*Al-Musannaf*. Vol. XII, p. 32. Matbua Idara al-Quran, Karachi, 1406.)

Ibn Kathīr has reported the above incident almost identically in his work *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (*Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*. Vol. VII, p. 91-2. Dar al-Fikr Publications, Beirut).

¹² Hāfiz Abū Bakr Dinūrī, known more famously by the title Ibn al-Sinni, reports:

‘Ibn Mas’ūd (may Allāh be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

‘When the transporting [animal] of one of you disappears in an alien land, then you should say, ‘O the pious servants of Allāh! Stop [the animal]! O the pious servants of Allāh! Stop [the animal]!’ This is because on earth there are Allāh’s servants who can stop it.’ (*Am! Yaum wa Laila*. p. 162. Majlas al-Daira al-Ma’arif Publications, Hyderabad, 1315).

¹³ Imām Baihaqī reports with his chain:

‘Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said,

‘When Ādam committed the mistake, he said to Allāh, ‘O Allāh! In the name of Muhammad I ask you to forgive me.’ Allāh asked, ‘O Ādam! How do you know of Muhammad when I have not yet [physically] created him yet?’ Ādam replied, ‘O Allāh! When You were creating me and blew the spirit into me, I looked up to the *Arsh* (throne) and I saw inscribed *Lā Ilāha Illallāhu Muhammadur Rasūl Allāh*. I knew then that the person whose name is coupled with Yours is the most beloved of creations.’ Allāh replied, ‘Ādam, you have said the truth. He is the most beloved of My creations and I have forgiven you because you have asked Me with his *Wasīla*. Had I not created Muhammad, I would not have created you all.’ (*Dala’il al-Nabūwwa*. Vol. V, p. 489. Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya Publications, Beirut).

- (ii) the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) would not have taught his own Companions Duās in which his Wasīla is taken.¹⁴
- (iii) the Companions would not have performed Duās using his Wasīla after he left this world.¹⁵

2.4.3. To suggest that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has *Ilm Ghaib* (knowledge of the unseen).

No one from the Sunni Muslims hold the belief that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has knowledge of the unseen independently. Pir Karam Shah al-Azharī (may Allāh shower His blessings upon him) explains our position:

‘Our belief is that Allāh Almighty inundated the Prophet’s (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) heart with knowledge of the unseen.

This narration has also been recorded by Imām Tabrānī with his own chain, and with the narration of Umar (*Mujam Saghīr*. Vol. II, p. 82-3. Maktaba Salfiyya, Madina, 1388) and Imām Ibn Jawzī through Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) and a similar narration through Maysara (may Allāh be pleased with him). *Al-Wafa*. p. 33. Matbu’a Maktaba Nuriyya Rizwiyya, Faisalabad).

¹⁴ ‘Uthmān ibn Hunaif (may Allāh be pleased with him) reports that a blind man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and said, ‘O Prophet of Allāh! Please pray to Allāh to return my sight.’ The Prophet said, ‘if you wish, I shall pray to Allāh, but if you wish you can endure it, for that is better for you.’ The blind man replied, ‘O Allāh’s Messenger! My blindness causes me great hardship.’ The Prophet told him, ‘go and perform ablution. Then perform two Rak’ats of Salāh and then pray, ‘O Allāh! I ask You and I turn to You by the *Wasīla* of our Prophet Muhammad! I turn to my Lord by your *Wasīla* for my need, so that it might be fulfilled. O Allāh! Grant the Prophet intercession for me.’ (*Sunan Ibn Māja*. p. 99. Nur Muhammad Kharkhana Tijarat Kutub Publications, Karachi)

This Hadīth has also been recorded by the following:

Imām Tirmidhī (*Jami Tirmidhī*. p. 515, Nur Muhammad Kharkhana Tijarat Kutub Publications, Karachi), Imām Ahmad (*Musnad Ahmad*. p. 138, Vol. IV. Maktab Islami Publications, Beirut, 1398), Imām Hākim (*Mustadrak*. Vol. I, p. 519. Dar al-Baz li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’ Publications, Makka) and Ibn Asākir. *Mukhtasar Tarikh Dimishq*. Vol. III, p. 304. Dar al-Fikr Publications, Damascus.

¹⁵ Uthmān ibn Hunaif reports that a man repeatedly visited Uthmān [Ibn Affān] concerning something he needed, but Uthmān did not pay attention to him or his need. Thus the man complained to Uthmān [ibn Hunaif], who said to him, ‘Perform ablution and visit the Holy Prophet’s Mosque, and perform two Rak’ats of Salāh therein and then read this *Du’ā*, ‘O Allāh! I ask You and I turn to You by the *Wasīla* of our Prophet Muhammad! I turn to my Lord by your *Wasīla* for my need, so that it might be fulfilled. O Allāh! Grant the Prophet intercession for me.’ The man did as he was instructed and then went to Uthmān’s [Ibn Affān] door. The doorman came, grabbed him by the hand and took him to Uthmān, who treated him with great respect and seated him on his cushion. Uthmān asked him, ‘what do you need?’ and the man mentioned what he wanted, and Uthmān fulfilled it for him. Then he said to him, ‘I hadn’t remembered your need until now; whenever you need something just mention it.’

The man then departed and met Uthmān ibn Hunaif and thanked him saying, ‘May Allāh reward you, for you spoke to Uthmān ibn Affān [on my behalf].’ Uthmān ibn Hunaif replied, ‘By Allāh! I did not speak to him. But I was once present in the Holy Prophet’s company and I saw a blind man come to him, complaining of his sight-loss. The Prophet said ‘If you wish, I shall pray to Allāh, but if you wish you can endure it, for that is better for you.’ The man replied, ‘O Allāh’s Messenger! I do not have anyone to lead me around and it causes me great hardship.’ The Prophet then instructed him ‘perform ablution, then perform two Rak’ats Salāh and pray the following [Du’ā].’

Uthmān ibn Hunaif said, ‘it was not long after the blind man returned to us as if nothing had ever been wrong with his eyes!’

This Hadīth is *Sahīh*.

Hafiz Zakī al-Dīn Abd al-Azīm ibn Abd al-Qawī Munzirī (d. 656 A.H.) has recorded this Hadīth in al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb. (Vol. I, p. 476-472. Matbu’a Dar al-Hadith, Cairo, 1407). It has also been mentioned by Hāfiz al-Haithamī in *Majma al-Zawā’id*, who declares the report as Sahīh (Vol. II, p. 279; Beirut)

However, the Prophet's knowledge – in comparison to Allāh's – is not his own, nor is it infinite. Rather, it is merely given from Allāh. In comparison to Allāh's knowledge, the Prophet's knowledge is not even a particle of sand to the whole desert, or a drop in the ocean. In comparison to the knowledge of the rest of humanity, the Prophet's knowledge is a huge ocean whose depth have not been explored, and whose shores have not been reached.'¹⁶

2.4.4. To seek blessings (*Tabarruk*) from Islamic relics.

- The son of Ahmad ibn Hanbal reports that:

سألت أبي عن الرجل يمس منبر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم و يتبرك بمسه و يقبله و يفعل بالقبر مثل ذلك رجاء ثواب الله تعالى قال لا باس به

'I asked my father Ahmad ibn Hanbal about a person who wipes the pulpit of the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), seeks blessings (*Baraka*) by wiping it, kisses it and does the same with the grave, all with the hope of a reward from Allāh. Ahmad ibn Hanbal replied, 'there is no harm in this.'¹⁷

Ahmad ibn Hanbal did not object to this practice because there was no intention of worshipping someone or something other than Allāh.

- Umm Salma (may Allāh be pleased with her) possessed some blessed hairs of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). When people were ill or affected by the evil eye, then they would come to her with water in a basin. She would then dip the hairs of the Prophet in the water. They would then drink this water or bathe from it as a means of *Shifā*.¹⁸
- Anas ibn Mālik requested to be buried with the hairs of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) under his tongue.¹⁹
- Mu'āwiya (may Allāh be pleased with him) possessed the shirt, nails and hairs of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). He asked to be buried with these relics. When he made this bequest he remarked, 'If anything will benefit me [in the grave], then these relics will.'²⁰

2.4.5. To slaughter in the name of someone other than Allāh.

Abū Talha (may Allah be pleased with him) related that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sacrificed one ram, and while sacrificing the other he said, 'this is on behalf of every one of my Ummah who believe in me and testified (to my prophethood).'²¹

The sacrifice is done for the sake of Allah and for the sake of His worship. As the above Hadīth shows, there is no harm in *dedicating* the reward to one of His creations.

¹⁶ *Zia al-Quran*. Vol. I, p. 301. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 1980.

¹⁷ *Tashih al-Aqa'id*. p.112. Muhammad Abd al-Hamid Budayuni. Zia al-Quran Publications, Lahore.

¹⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of Clothes. Hadith no. 5446.

¹⁹ p. 16. *Tabarruk al-Sahaba bi Athar Rasul Allah*. Sheikh Muhammad Tahir ibn Abd al-Qadir ibn Mahmud al-Kurdi. (p. 13) Maktaka al-Qahira Publications, Cairo. 1997.

²⁰ p. 24. *Tabarruk al-Sahaba bi Athar Rasul Allah*. Sheikh Muhammad Tahir ibn Abd al-Qadir ibn Mahmud al-Kurdi. (p. 13) Maktaka al-Qahira Publications, Cairo. 1997.

²¹ Recorded by Imam Tabrani.

2.4.6. Imam Busīrī; a Mushrik?

Unreservedly, Muhammad Nāsir al-Dīn Albānī decreed Imam Busīrī a Mushrik for the contents of his *Burdah*²². This does not explain why the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) appeared in his dream and cured him from his paralysis. One cannot imagine for a moment that our Messenger would appear in the dream of an infidel.

In short, some Muslims blindly interpret permitted acts as Shirk, though literally and Islamically, such claims are baseless. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) himself never envisaged that his followers would be subject to the wrath of Shirk, so it is strange that the Wahhābi movement thinks otherwise.

Imam Bukhārī reports from Uqba ibn Āmir who said:

‘Indeed the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) left one day and performed Salāh on the People of Uhud, the Salāh of the deceased. Then he turned to the pulpit and said, ‘I am preceding you; and I am a witness over you. And indeed, by Allāh, I am undoubtedly looking towards the *Hawdh* [right] now. And indeed I have been given the keys to the treasures of the earth, or the keys of the earth. And verily, I do not fear that you will commit polytheism after me. But I verily fear you will dispute with one another in it (i.e. the world).’²³

In short, if the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) did not fear his Ummah would commit polytheism after him, why do these Muslims think it is a problem of epidemic proportions? Do these people purport that – God forbid – the Prophet’s prediction and analysis was wrong and that they are right? Do they think that they know and understand the religion of Allāh better than the Beloved Prophet, who, in the words of this Hadīth, had been given the keys to the treasures of the earth?

2.5. Takfīr: the issue of declaring others Kāfir.

To propagate his beliefs, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb directed all the verses in the Qur’ān referring to the polytheists of Makka to the mainstream Muslims, something which continues today. No other Qur’ānic commentator prior to him suggested that these verses were revealed regarding the Muslims. It is wrong and wholly incorrect to direct the verses revealed regarding the pagan Arabs towards the Muslims. The polytheists of the Prophet’s time:

- actually considered their idols worthy of worship.
- actually believed that the idols could help them to the exclusion of Allāh.

As a result of this view on Tawhīd and Shirk, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb viewed any Muslim who did not agree with his sect as a Mushrik (polytheist) or Kāfir (non-believer).

²² The *Burdah* is the famous poem written by Imam Busiri (d. 694/1294) in praise of the Prophet.

²³ *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Chapter, the prayer upon the martyr; Hadith no. 1258: Chapter, *Uhud* loves us and we love *Uhud*. Hadith no. 3776: Chapter, the *Hawdh* (Pool), Hadith no. 6102; Chapter, what is warned against from the fruits of the world and dispute within it. Hadith no. 5946), *Sahih Muslim* (Book of Superiorities; Chapter, the proving of the *Hawdh* of our Prophet; Hadith no. 4248), *Musnad Ahmad* (The chains of the Shamis, The reports of Uqba ibn Amir. Hadith no. 16705).

Stephen Schwarz writes:

‘The essence of Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb’s preaching came down to three points. First, ritual is superior to intention. Second, no reverence for the dead is permitted. Third, there can be no intercessory prayer, addressed to God by means of the Prophet or saints...Prayers to God by means of a pious person or even honours to any individual other than God were condemned as idolatry, despite their acceptance by all previous generations of Muslims and the Prophet himself...

...He demanded that the Muslim profession of faith (i.e. the *Kalima*) be made a second time, as an adherent of his Wahhābi sect.’²⁴

Later, Schwarz writes:

‘Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb is said to have killed a blind Muezzin who insisted on praying for the Prophet at the conclusion of his summons to worship (i.e. *Azan*), as required by the four established legal schools...He denounced his opponents, and all Muslims unwilling to accept his views, as idolaters and apostates, and abused the prophets, scholars, saints and other pious figures of the past. Al-Zahawi states that Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb ‘made no secret’ of his opinion that all Muslims had fallen unto unbelief and that if they did not follow him, they should all be killed, their wives and daughters violated and their possessions confiscated.’²⁵

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb’s own brother Sulaimān ibn Abd al-Wahhāb was one of the biggest critics of this new school of thought. He wrote a book called ‘*al-Sawā’iq al-Ilāhiyya fī al-Radd alā al-Wahhābiyya*’, in which he highlighted the misguided nature of his brother’s version of Islam. In his Friday Khutba, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb would every week declare that ‘whosoever seeks the Wasīla of the Prophet has become a Kāfir.’ His brother Sulaimān approached him regarding this and asked him, ‘How many pillars of Islam are there O Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb?’ He replied, ‘five.’ Sulaimān said, ‘you have made a sixth pillar; that whoever does not follow you, is not a Muslim. This, according to you, is the sixth pillar of Islam.’²⁶

To call a Muslim a non-Muslim is a serious crime which can result in damning repercussions for the one who utters such a remark. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) warned in a Hadīth reported by Ibn Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him):

‘Whoever says to his brother ‘O infidel!’, then the statement returns to one of them.’²⁷

In other words, when one makes a statement as such and cannot prove why he is a non-Muslim conclusively, then the speaker himself becomes a non-believer.

²⁴ p. 69. *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa’ud from Tradition to Terror*. Stephen Schwarz. Doubleday, New York, 2002.

²⁵ p. 70-71. *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa’ud from Tradition to Terror*. Stephen Schwarz. Doubleday, New York, 2002.

²⁶ p. 137. *al-Darar al-Sanniya fī al-Radd ala al-Wahhābiyya*. Sayyid Ahmad ibn al-Sayyid Zaini Dahlan. Dar Jawa’mi al-Kilam Publications, Cairo, 1991.

²⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Book of Adab (manners), Hadith no. 5639.