

Wahhabi's labeling of Ahl as-Sunna Muslims as polytheists and its answer

43 - Followers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, who died in 1206 (1762), are called the Najdis or Wahhabis. They say:

"All Muslims who have spread over the world for six hundred years have been polytheists, unbelievers. Since it is fard to worship Allah directly, nothing can be put as an intermediary for worship. It will be polytheism to pray or to ask for help from anybody besides Allah and it will never be forgiven. All of those who, mentioning the names of prophets or awliya', ask for help from them and who respect shrines by performing vows, alms and other things, are polytheists. 'We expect their shafa'a. We render them intermediaries in order to approach Allahu ta'ala'; these words do not rescue them from polytheism. Polytheists of the time of Rasulullah also used to pray and beg Allah when they were in trouble. When they became safe, they used to pray angels, awliya' and idols. Likewise, today's polytheists beg such and such a chief Darwish or such and such shaikh. These polytheists are worse than the ancient polytheists. Let alone the polytheists who beg a shaikh, even those who say, 'O Rasul-Allah! Do shafa'a for me, come to my rescue,' are unbelievers, too."

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab explained the kalimat at-tawhid according to his own point of view and disseminated his opinion that all Muslims had been polytheists.

The Ahl as-Sunnat scholars refuted him and declared that he was on a wrong path. Sulaiman ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad's brother, wrote a great book to refute him. The books Fasl al-khitab and Kashf al-khijab by 'Ali ibn Ahmad, a famous molla and a scholar of

Basra well-known with the name al-Kabani, prove that he has deviated from the right path.

He had the book Dalail al-khairat put in fire because it contained such words as 'Sayyidina' and 'Mawlana'. Whereas, Sultan 'AbdulHamid Khan It read this book every day. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab frequently said, "If I could, I would demolish the Prophet's shrine. I would throw away the golden gutter on the Kaba and put a wooden gutter in its place." He called those who would not believe him "unbelievers". He frequently said that Hadrat "Umar ibn al-Farid and Hadrat Muhyiddin ibn al-'Arabi were unbelievers. He made fun of the hadith, "The parting of my umma into madhhabs is [Allahu ta'ala's] compassion for them." He did not believe that the waqf (pious foundation) was Islamic and said that the salary the Qadis received was a bribe. Al-Kabani rebutted these one by one with documents.

Ibn Taymiyya claimed that it was a sin to go to a river-side, hot spring, forest, mountain, cave, etc., as health resorts or to vow something for tomb and that it was polytheism to visit tombs, to sacrifice animals near shrines or to ask for help from the dead.

According to the Ahl as-Sunnat scholars, it is sunnat to visit Rasulullah's ('alaihi 's-salam) shrine. Some even said it was wajib. Ibn 'Abidin wrote in the commentary of Durr al-mukhtar, "Before Ibn Taymiyya, no scholar had prohibited visiting tombs. He made up a new bidat. He fell into disesteem in front of all Muslims." A hadith reported in the Sahih of Muslim declares, "I prohibited to visit graves before. From now on, visit them!" Najm ad-din 'Umar ibn al-Hajji, in his book Al-jawab fi'r-raddi 'ala Ibn Taymiyya, proved that it was permissible to visit tombs and refuted Ibn Taymiyya with sound evidences. Also Burhan ad-din Ibrahim ibn Muhammad wrote a beautiful book under the same title. [These two books exist in the Sulaimaniyya Library, in the "Beshir Aga" section with call number 142.]

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab said that what Ibn Taymiyya had forbidden was unbelief. He called "unbelievers" those who vow, pray, walk around or kiss the coverings of, take soil from shrines, and who ask for help from awliya'. He claimed that those who do not consider these as unbelief are unbelievers, too. In fact, he wrote, "It is halal to kill and confiscate those who make mediators of prophets or awliya' with a view to attain shafa'a or nearness to Allahu ta'ala," [Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Kashf ash-shubuhah, also translated into Turkish.] and thus ordered murder and plunder of Muslims. Whereas, he who does not believe the well-known indispensable beliefs in the religion, e.g. the Oneness of Allahu ta'ala or the fact that it is fard to perform salat five times a day, will be an unbeliever. A Muslim who believes what are declared clearly cannot be called an unbeliever just because of a doubt. Ibn Taymiyya should have used the word 'shirk' (polytheism) for these to mean minor polytheism, but Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab said it was polytheism equivalent to unbelief. It is apparent polytheism to worship idols. The occult polytheism (shirk khafi), however, to ask something from anyone besides Allahu ta'ala. Men cannot escape occult polytheism. Even prophets begged Allahu ta'ala in order to escape it. Following the nafs, sexual desires and hypocrisy are examples of this kind of polytheism, which removes the thawab of worship. But no scholar has said, "The hypocrite is an unbeliever. It is halal to kill and confiscate him."

Prostration (sajda) towards the sun, the moon, stars, idols or statues as a form of worshiping any of them is unbelief. It is not unbelief but a sin to prostrate before other things for reverence without a view of worshiping them. Though it is unbelief to sacrifice an animal for something whom one worships, it is not unbelief but haram for a worshiper of Allahu ta'ala to make a sacrifice for others without worshiping them. By 'worshiping' ('ibada) is meant the 'believing that every benefit and every harm come from, and everything is made by, and, therefore, begging, the one adored.' It was said that it was makruh for the worshipers of Allahu ta'ala to take soil from or to walk around shrines. The Wahhabite book, however, say polytheism for these and use the word 'unbelievers' for millions of Muslims of all ages. For the martyrs who fought against Musailamat al-Kadhdhab, as-Sahaba built graves about 27 inches above the ground so that everybody could recognize and recite the Fatiha for them. The heretics speak ill of as-Sahaba for this reason, too. They have demolished these graves. This shows that they are on al-Kadhdhab's way.

They said it was a bidat to build tombs over graves or minarets for mosques or to eat with spoons. They ruined Husain's (radi-Allahu 'anh) tomb in Karbala and plundered the invaluable things in it. They burned and ruined the city of Ta'if and killed the Ahl as-Sunnat Muslims including the women and children and plundered their possessions. The most valuable books such as the Sahihain of al-Bukhari and Muslim and thousands of books on hadith, fiqh and other fields, even the Qur'an, were trodden underfoot. Out of fear, no one dared to pick them up. They

even dug in the ground and looked for possessions. They set the city afire. They demolished the tombs in Mecca and the blessed houses where the Prophet ('alaihi 's-salam), Abu Bakr, 'Umar (radi-Allahu 'anhuma) and Fatima (radi-Allahu anha) were born. They said it was polytheism for muazzins to recite the salawat for the Prophet's soul. They forbade smoking and burned all the pipes, hookahs, cigarette-boxes and musical instruments in Mecca.

Showing the ayats, "Besides Allahu ta'ala, do not pray to anybody, who is neither useful nor harmful to you!" and "Do not pray to another person together with Allahu ta'ala!" and the hadith "Prayed is the essence of worship," they said that he who asked for something from someone besides Him would become an unbeliever. Whereas, the prayer prohibited in the ayat means the 'prayer that is performed as worship' in the Islamic knowledge. This prayer can be performed only to Allahu ta'ala. And, a person knowing that only Allahu ta'ala can be worshiped, that He alone can be prayed to, that no one besides Him is creative, that everything is made by Him, is permitted to put prophets and awliya' as intermediaries and asks help from their souls by thinking that they are the beloved human creatures of Allahu ta'ala who has given their souls the power to help people. They are alive in their graves in a life which we do not know. Their souls have been given miracles and the power to do work. A person who believes so cannot be called a polytheist. However, Muslims ask the souls of awliya' to help them in purifying their hearts and to give them faid and marifa, knowledge which has flowed from Rasulullah's ('alaihi 's-salam) blessed heart to their hearts. They do not ask for the transitory things of this world such as property and position. They do not even think about them.

Allahu ta'ala declares in the surat az-Zumar, "Those who worship beings other than Allahu ta'ala say, 'We worship them only so that they intercede for us,' " and points out that this pretext will not rescue them from Hell. Ahl al-bidat liken the Ahl as-Sunnat to idolatrous disbelievers and say that the words "In order to approach Allahu ta'ala, we put His beloved human creatures as intermediaries," will not rescue the Ahl as-Sunnat from polytheism. It is true that, since idolaters are polytheists, their pretext does not rescue them from the punishment of polytheism, but is not polytheism to put His beloved human creatures as intermediaries. Why should the Ahl as-Sunnat be rescued from polytheism, then? If a person who has killed another on purpose says in the law-court, "I did not think of killing. I knew it was a guilt to kill a man," he will not be listened to and will be punished. Though his words are true, he is punished not because of his words but because he killed a man. If an innocent person utters the same words and an enemy of his pleads against him by saying, "You have punished the one who uttered such words. Punish this one, too!" he will not be punished, since punishment of the former person was for having killed a man. Likewise, the idolaters will go to Hell not because of their above-quoted words but because they worship beings other than Allahu ta'ala.

Muslims cannot be called unbelievers by making an analogy to this ayat, which refers to polytheists, because, even if unbelievers and polytheists said that Allahu ta'ala created the good and the evil and everything, they worshiped the statues called al-Lat and al-Uzza and angels, which, they believed, were worth worshiping and could have Allahu ta'ala do everything they wished. With this belief, they prostrated before them, made sacrifices to them and vowed to them. As for Muslims, they do not make sacrifices to Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) or to the souls of awliya'. They make sacrifices only to Allahu ta'ala and send its thawab for the souls of awliya.' "Shafaat ya Rasul-Allah!" ('alaihi 's-salam) means "O the Prophet of Allah! I love you much, for He commands us to love you. Because I love you, may He have me attain thine intercession!" This is said briefly like the

ayat, "Ask the village," in the Qur'an. 'Umar (radi-Allahu 'anh), while visiting the Kaba, said before the Hajar al-aswad, "You cannot do anything! But I kiss you in order to follow Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam)." 'Ali (radi-Allahu 'anh) said upon hearing this, "Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) said, 'On the Day of Judgment, the Hajar al-aswad will intercede for people.' " [This hadith is reported by at-Thirmidhi, an-Nasai, al-Baihaki, at-Tabarani and al-Bukhari in his History.] And 'Umar thanked 'Ali (radi-Allahu 'anhuma). While a stone can be helpful, is it possible that prophets and others who are loved by Allahu ta'ala cannot be helpful? Allahu ta'ala declared that He would admit the prayers and intercession of those whom He loved. [The forgoing ten paragraphs are extracted from the seventh volume of Jevdet Pasha's History.]

Hadrat Mawlana Khalid al-Baghdadi, a profound scholar and a treasure of miracles, wrote in his work Ar-risalat al-Khalidiyya, "Muslims, when holding on to a means, think that it will be a means through which Allahu ta'ala will create what they want; they do not believe that the means will be the maker. As for polytheists, they believe that their idols will create or have Allahu ta'ala create it. Those who cannot distinguish between these two beliefs from each other perish by falling into the whirlpool of denial."

Yusuf an-Nabhani, extracting from the book Khulasat al-kalam [Second part of this book is reproduced by Hakikat Kitabevi, Istanbul, 1395 (1975).] by Sayyid Ahmad Dahlan, writes: "Some say that the one who regards Rasulullah (sall-Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam) or another prophet or wali as an intermediary or visits his grave and says, for example, 'O Rasul-Allah ('alaihi 's-salam), I ask for your intercession,' becomes an unbeliever. By putting forth the ayats such as, 'Do not pray to anybody besides Allahu ta'ala!' Who else can ever be more heretical than the one who prays to somebody besides Allahu ta'ala?' and 'Those to whom you pray besides Allahu ta'ala can do nothing. If you ask anything from them, they will not hear you. Even if they heard you, they would not answer you. On the Day of Resurrection they will deny your polytheism,' which descended for unbelievers, these people of bidat called the believers 'unbelievers'. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab said, 'These ayats show that the one who addresses a grave and asks for intercession is a polytheist. Ancient idolaters, too, believed that their idols could make nothing, that Allahu ta'ala alone created everything, but they said that their idols would intercede with Allahu ta'ala for them, and, therefore, they became polytheist. Also, those who ask for shafa'a at graves or shrines become polytheists.' These words are very wrong, for the believers neither worship prophets or awliya' nor attribute them as partners to Allahu ta'ala, but believe that they, too, are creatures, impotent human beings, who are not worth worshiping and cannot do any use or harm. Because they are His beloved, select human, creatures and He pities His human creatures for their sake, the believers want to get benefit through them. Whereas, the polytheists, mentioned in the ayats believed that the idols were worth worshiping, and they were polytheists because of this misbelief. When they were told that the idols were neither useful nor harmful, they would say that they worshiped them so that they intercede with Allahu ta'ala for them. It is surprising, indeed, that the true believers are likened to idolatrous unbelievers. If it were polytheism for the believers to ask for intercession. Rasulullah (sall-Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam), as-Sahabat al-kiram or the Salaf as-Salihin would have never asked for intercession. As a matter of fact, when praying, Rasulullah (sall-Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said, 'O my Rabb! Give me for the right (haqq) of those human creatures whom Thou gave when they asked!' It is obvious that he asked intercession in these terms. He taught this prayer to his companions and declared, 'Pray in this manner!' It is declared in a hadith quoted in Al-Jami' al-kabir by Jalal ad-din as-Suyuti and reported by Ibn Maja, 'When leaving your house for the mosque, say this prayer!' Islamic scholars said this prayer every day. At-Tabarani, Ibn Habban and Hakim reported that

when interring Fatima bint Asad (radi-Allahu 'anha),' Ali's (radi-Allahu 'anh) mother, Rasulullah (sall-Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said, 'O my Rabb! Forgive Mother Fatima bint Asad for the right of Thine Prophet and Thine other prophets who came before me!' " Also, Ibn Abi Shaiba and Ibn 'Abd al-Birr reported this hadith with more details as written in the book Al-Jami' al-kabir by as-Suyuti. There is an evident tawassul in the prayer Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) taught a blind Sahabi. These people of bidat, however, prohibit that prayer and say that he who says it becomes an unbeliever. It can never be right for them to say so, for as-Sahabat al-kiram al-ways said that prayer when Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) was alive.

"While visiting the Masjid an-Nabi, Jafar Mansur, the second 'Abbasid caliph, asked Imam Malik, 'Shall I turn my face to the Kaba or face Rasulullah's ('alaihi 's-salam) grave when reciting prayers?' [One stands between the Ka'ba and the Prophet's blessed grave when standing in the Masjid an-Nabawi.] Imam Malik said, 'How can you turn your face away from Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam)! He is the cause of you and your father Adam ('alaihi 's-salam)! Turn your face to him and pray through him!' Hadrat Ibn Hajar al-Makki wrote in his book Jawhar al-munzam that this report was so authentic that it cannot be rejected. Those who say that Imam Malik said that it was makruh to pray while facing Rasulullah's ('alaihi 's-salam) grave slander the exalted imam by saying so.

"It is not right that only prophets ('alaihimu 's-salam) can be put as intermediaries, for Hadrat 'Umar (radi-Allahu 'anh), when praying to Allahu ta'ala so that it would rain, put Hadrat 'Abbas (radi-Allahu 'anh) as an intermediary. None of the Sahabat al-kiram who were present there said anything against him. Since Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) had said, 'Allahu ta'ala has placed the truth into 'Umar's tongue,' Hadrat 'Umar's putting Hadrat 'Abbas (radi-Allahu 'anhuma) as an intermediary is an apparent evidence, a sound document and was intended to show everybody that it was permissible to put others besides Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) as intermediaries, for everybody knew that it was permissible to put prophets as intermediaries, and there were those who hesitated if it was permissible to put others as intermediaries. 'Umar (radi-Allahu 'anh) taught that it was permissible. If he had prayed through Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam), it would have been understood that it was not permissible to pray through others for rain. However, this does not show that the dead cannot be put as intermediaries, for all as-Sahabat al-kiram prayed through Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) after his death, some examples of which have already been given above.

"Some people, on the one hand, say, 'No one besides Allah can affect. He who says that someone else also can affect becomes a disbeliever,' and on the other hand, claim, 'The alive can be put as intermediaries, but the dead cannot. The alive can affect, but the dead cannot.' Their words disagree with each other. believers deem both the dead and the alive as intermediaries or causes and believe that Allahu ta'ala alone creates and affects everything.

"When saying that it is polytheism to pray through somebody, the heretics show examples from the words of ignorant people, who say, e.g., 'Do my such and such affair,' towards a dead wali's grave or regard ordinary people as awliya' and expect miracles from them. However, even such ignorant people who express such wrong words and thoughts believe also that no one besides Allahu ta'ala can create use or harm. They know they have recourse to awliya' in order to get blessings from Allahu ta'ala. And the heretics say that they try to prevent their wrong, doubtful words. We remind the heretics that none of those who express such wrong, doubtful words ever think that somebody besides Allahu ta'ala can create use or harm. They all have recourse to awliya' in order to get a share from

their blessings. When they say, 'Awliya' did,' they do not mean that awliya' affected. If they want to prevent doubtful words, why do they call all believers 'polytheists'? They say he who has recourse to somebody (tawassul) for any reason becomes an unbeliever. If they are sincere in their word, they should prohibit only the words which they consider as doubtful and teach the manners of tawassul. Moreover, the words which they prohibit are metaphorical words with different meanings, for example, 'This food has satiated me,' or 'This medicine has cured me,' which are interpreted compatibly with reason and Islam by Ahl as-Sunnat scholars as, 'What satiates one is not the food or the medicine but Allahu ta'ala. The food or the medicine is a means created by Allahu ta'ala.' When a Muslim says that a thing can affect, the one who hears him should interpret it in this way. The fact that the speaker is a Muslim shows that he has expressed it in this meaning, as the scholars of ma'ani (semantics) have decided unanimously.

"Ibn Taymiyya and his disciples said that tawassul was haram. The Wahhabis said that it was polytheism. Whereas, the Prophet ('alaihi 's-salam), as-Sahabat al-kiram and all Muslims did tawassul. It is not possible that the whole umma have committed haram or kufr. It is declared in the Hadith, 'My umma do not agree on deviation!' It is declared in the hundred and tenth ayat of the surat al 'Imran, 'You have become the best of ummas!' Is it conceivable that all or the majority of such an umma would agree on deviation or heresy?

"Ibn Humam, a Hanafi scholar, said, 'It is better to turn towards the Prophet's ('alaihi 's-salam) grave than towards the qibla when sending one's prayers.' To say that al-Imam al-azam (rahmat-Allahi 'alaih) said, 'It is better to turn towards the qibla would be a big slander against the exalted imam, for he wrote in his book Musnad that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (radi-Allahu 'anhuma) said, 'It is sunnat to turn towards the Prophet's ('alaihi 's-salam) grave, one's back being towards the qibla.' All the Hanafi scholars have reported that al-Imam al-azam (rahmat-Allahi 'alaih) said, 'It is mustahab to turn towards the Blessed Grave.' Rasulallah (sall-Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam) is alive in his blessed grave and recognizes those who visit him. Those who visited him when he was alive used to turn towards his blessed face, and the Kaba would be behind them. It is certainly the same while visiting his blessed grave. If, in the Masjid al-Haram, the mosque around the Kaba, a person approaches to tell something to his master or father who stands towards the Kaba, he certainly says it facing him, the Kaba being behind him. Turning one's face towards Rasulallah ('alaihi 's-salam) is certainly more necessary than turning towards one's father or master. The scholars of the four madhhabs unanimously said that it was necessary to turn towards the Prophet's ('alaihi 's-salam) blessed grave when visiting. Imam as-Subki quotes their writings one by one in his book Shifa as-saqam. That al-Imam al-azam was against tawassul, as written in the tafsir of Alusi, is not true. No Hanafi scholar has agreed with this statement. All Hanafi scholars have reported that tawassul was mustahab. We should not believe Alusi's statement.

"Az-Zarqani wrote: 'When one says, 'O my Rabb! I pray to Thee through Thine Prophet ('alaihi 's-salam). O the Prophet, who is [Allahu ta'ala's] compassion for men! Intercede for me in the presence of Thine Rabb!' Allahu ta'ala accepts this prayer.' [Az-Zarqani, his annotation to Al-mawahib al-ladunniyya in 8 volumes Beirut, 1393 (1973).]

"The above proofs eradicate the bidat that has come forth at the roots. As Imam al-Baihaki reports, a villager visited Rasulallah ('alaihi 's-salam) and begged him to pray so that it would rain and said, 'We have nobody besides you to trust ourselves to. The place where men will take refuge is their Prophet ('alaihi 's-salam) only.' Rasulallah ('alaihi 's-salam) did not say anything against him and,

as Anas ibn Malik noted, Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) immediately mounted the pulpit and prayed for rain. The prayer was not finished when it began to rain. It is written in the Sahih of al-Bukhari that a villager complained about dearth to Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) and as soon as Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) began to pray, it began to rain, upon which he said, 'If Abu Talib was alive, he would be pleased a lot.'

"Great scholar Hadrat Ibn Hajar al-Makki wrote in his book Khairat al-hisan, 'Imam Muhammad ash-Shafi'i, on the days when he was in Baghdad, would visit Imam Abu Hanifa's grave and greet him. He would pray through the imam so that his wish would be accepted.' And Imam Ahmad used to pray through al-Imam ash-Shafi'i. In fact, when his son, 'Abdullah, was surprised at this, he said, 'O my son! al-Imam ash-Shafi'i is like the sun among men! He is like good health for bodies! In western countries, Imam Malik would be put as an intermediary when praying, and al-Imam ash-Shafi'i heard this and did not oppose it. Imam Abu 'I-Hasan ash-Shadhili said, 'The person who asks something from Allahu ta'ala should pray through Imam al-Ghazali.' It is written in the book Sawa'iq by Ibn Hajar al-Makki that al-Imam ash-Shafi'i always prayed through Ahl al-Bait an-Nabawi.

"As Allahu ta'ala has made pious deeds and worship means to happiness and high status, so He has made His beloved, select men, anbiya', awliya' and sulaha', whom He has commanded us to love, intermediaries for the admission of prayers. It is for this reason that as-Sahabat al-kiram and all scholars have performed tawassul when praying. None of them has denied this. By giving wrong meaning to ayats and hadiths and denying many true reports, ahl al-bidat have been defiling Muslims' iman. They have been striving to cause Ahl al-qibla (Muslims) to dissent from the right path. Any person, upon whose lot Allahu ta'ala has endowed auspicion and happiness, will learn the above evidences, thus escape the disaster of being deceived by them." [Yusuf an-Nabhani, Shawahid al-haqq.]