

A Response to the False Claim of Joas Wagemakers Regarding Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī in His Book ‘Salafism in Jordan’ (2016)

Joas Wagemakers is an Assistant Professor at Utrecht University and has written extensively on Salafism. He frames the Khārijites as Salafists by taking their claims at face value whilst lacking the knowledge and insight to penetrate the deception and sophistry of modern-day Khārijite ideologues and movements and their violations of basic Islāmic principles (uṣūl). Wagemaker’s 2012 book, “A Quietist Jihādī”, centred around the Takfīrī Khārijite **Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī** is first-hand evidence of this and demonstrates how he alongside many others have been taken for a ride by al-Maqdisī in particular and the Khārijites in general.¹

¹ Those upon the elementary Khārijite concepts of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Quṭb and al-Mawdūdī began to make various classifications of Salafism during the 80s and 90s as a means of separating foundations (uṣūl) into matters of creed and matters of methodology. The aim behind this separation was to broaden the reach of their ideas and to basically state that as long as your creed is Salafī (in the fields of the names and attributes, the nature of faith, divine decree, position towards the Companions, belief in the unseen affairs and so on), you can engage in any modern political methodology of reform (meaning, in a broad sense, the methodology of the Khārijites). A range of Ikhwānīs and Quṭbists were responsible for this during the 80s and 90s and they also laid down many principles to push this notion. On the back of this, different classifications began to appear in their writings: Salafīyyah Taqlīdiyyah, Salafīyyah ‘Ilmiyyah, Salafīyyah Siyāsiyyah, Salafīyyah Jihādiyyah and so on. It is from within this pool that the division of Salafīs into purists (quietists), politicians (activists) and jihādists (violent extremists) has been derived by Western academics and researchers. This categorisation is rejected by an objective analysis of what constitutes the core Khārijite ideology in light of history, the Qur’ānic texts as understood and applied by the Companions to

Every Western academic or orientalist who ascribes Salafism to the Khārijites has automatically displayed his ignorance of the foundations of Islām itself. ‘Salafism’ is simply a concise term referring to the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions. The ‘Salaf’, predecessors, being the Prophet and His Companions and a ‘Salafī’ being one who adopts and traverses that guidance in opposition to the groups who opposed something from its foundations (uṣūl) such as the Khārijites, Rāfiḍites, Qadarites, Murjiṭes, Jahmites, Mu‘tazilites and others. ‘Salafism’ is not merely a blessed period of time as claimed by al-Būṭī, nor is it ‘an approach’ amongst the approaches. Rather, it is, as stated by the Prophet (ﷺ): “What I and my Companions are upon today.” That which the Prophet and Companions were upon of the foundations of Islām was that sinful Muslims are not guilty of disbelief and tyrannical, oppressive rulers are not to rebelled against in order to maintain security and safety for the majority. By definition a Khārijite or anyone who propounds the creed or methodology of the Khārijites and opposes such foundations cannot be a Salafī even if he agrees with every other foundation or branch of the religion and does not depart from the way of the Salaf with respect to it in any form or fashion. To fail to grasp this crucial point as Wagemakers and many others do demonstrates a failure to understand ‘Salafism’ from its basic foundations and from its sources from the very beginning and indicates ignorance of the Prophetic traditions and the body of Salafī literature from the first three centuries that amply illustrates this.

the Khārijites, the Prophetic traditions regarding them and how the Salaf characterised them through specific traits and doctrines.

The Khārijites were the first sect to break away from Islām and from the Companions (the ‘Salaf’). They treated as sin what is not a sin², expelled Muslims from Islām on account of sin or alleged sin and made it permissible to rebel against rulers, having made takfīr of them first due to either what is not a sin, or an errant judgement for which they are pardoned, or actual sin and transgression. The Prophet informed that they will continue to arise throughout the ages and indicated that they will appear as a distinct body after periods of civil strife. He mentioned many of their traits allowing them to be easily recognised. He also ordered that they be fought and killed despite their overt display of great levels of piety. Contemporary well-known, respected and acknowledged authoritative scholars of Salafism have correctly identified and labelled those individuals and factions influenced by Qūtb and Mawdūdī’s writings on Imāmah, Ḥākimiyyah, Takfīr and Jāhiliyyah as Khārijites. They have appeared over the past decades in numerous forms, from localised jamā‘at in Egypt in the 1970s and culminating today as a distinct body in the lands of Irāq and Syria as the “Islāmic State” wherein they appeared

² The use of arbitration in a matter of war was considered by the Khārijites to be an act of disbelief, as it entailed granting Allāh’s unique authority in judgement (referred to today as Qūtb and Mawdūdī as ḥākimiyyah) to men in their errant view. In a similar vain, today’s Khārijites such as al-Maqdisī take affairs permitted in the Sharī‘ah, such as truces, treaties, giving gifts to non-Muslim rulers, diplomatic relations, trade relations, legislation in matters of broad public interest (customs, immigration, road regulations) and consider them to be major shirk and disbelief because these actions in his view violate the ḥākimiyyah of Allāh and also his understanding of loyalty and disownment. To support his views, al-Maqdisī claims to draw from scholarly heritage of Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his offspring - however, due to his ignorance, he does not actually understand these writings and the proof (and refutation) of al-Maqdisī’s misunderstanding and misapplication of their statements is actually found in their very own statements.

following civil and political strife in the region. Their Khārijite ancestors of old appeared some miles outside of Baghdād in a place called Nahrawān which they made the seat of their “Islāmīc State” following their leader ‘Abdullāh bin Wahb al-Rāsibī, also after a period of civil strife. ‘Alī, the Prophet’s cousin, fought them and disbanded their state after recognising them as the Khārijites mentioned in the traditions.

One of the doctrinal position of the Khārijites of old was that whoever does not consider the Muslim who does not pray out of laziness despite affirming its obligation to have left Islām has claimed deeds are not from faith and do not impact faith and has agreed with the Murji’ites. One can refer to the texts of Ḥarb bin Ismā’īl al-Kirmānī (280H) and also Abū al-Faḍl al-Saksakī (683H) for details. In modern times (mid 1990s), this doubt was revived by the neo-Khārijite Quṭbists and those affected by them. Shaykh al-Albānī’s viewpoint of the absence of takfīr of the one who abandons prayer out of laziness and neglect was made the basis for this same accusation of Irjā’. The wider objective behind this was to lay down foundations for the justification of the Khārijite ideology – takfīr by way of sin, takfīr of the rulers who do not judge fully by what Allāh has revealed, and revolution. To put these ideas into the public conscience, they targeted al-Albānī because of his opposition to the figureheads of their movement and their errant methodologies. Two decades earlier in 1974, al-Albānī had alluded to the emergence of this Khārijite ideology in his brief commentary on al-Ṭaḥāwī’s creed in the topic pertaining to faith. After explaining that a Muslim will be saved on account of his faith despite committing major sins he writes, “A new faction has sprung who have followed them [the Khārijites and

Mu‘tazilah] in making takfīr of the majority of the Muslims, both leaders and subjects. Factions of them have gathered in Syria, Makkah and elsewhere, and they have doubts just like the doubts of the Khārijites...” Al-Albānī had also critiqued Sayyid Quṭb as well as the political activities of Ikhwānīs and Quṭbists who had donned the cloak of Salafism and reformulated the Khārijite foundations of takfir cloaked with “al-Ḥākimiyyah” and revolution cloaked with “enjoining good and forbidding evil” and “jihād”. From them is the Egyptian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Khāliq, an Egyptian Ikhwānī Takfīrī who used the cloak of Salafism to push the ideology of the Khārijites within Salafī societies in the Gulf and beyond. These individuals were the ones who started to make classifications for Salafīyyah for their own ideological ends and it is from the likes of these that Western academics have derived their false division of Salafism into “quietists”, “politicos” and “jihādīs”. They have essentially fallen for the propaganda of the Khārijites.

In his latest book “Salafism in Jordan” (September 2016, Cambridge University Press) Wagemakers writes on page 229, emphasis added: “One of the areas in which al-Albani was ideologically independent was his conviction that, unlike belief in the heart or speech with the tongue, acts – though part of faith – **could not decrease īmān or take it away altogether**, but could only increase it.” This is a lie against al-Albānī and an example of Wagemakers’s victimhood to Quṭbist Khārijite propaganda and his absence of proper verification within the wider context of his inability to understand Salafism more objectively. Abū al-Ḥusayn Al-Maṭīyy al-Shāfi‘īyy (377H) mentions this viewpoint as one of the statements of the Murji‘ites: “Amongst them are a faction who claim that īmān

increases with an increase in actions continuously, without end or limit **but that it does not decrease on account of any action from the actions of the [sinful] criminals**, nor by abandonment of the emphasized obligations (farā'id) or perpetrating what is perpetrated by the oppressors.”³

In al-Dhabb al-Aḥmad ‘an Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad (pp. 32-33), Shaykh al-Albānī responds to these allegations that were levelled against him from the direction of the Quṭbist Khārijites as part of a wider agenda to build an ideological case for takfīr of all contemporary Muslim rulers. He states, “And Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah has explained the angle of faith comprising of deeds and that it increases **and decreases** with what needs no further [elaboration] in his book ‘al-Īmān’, let the one who desires more detail refer to it. I say: this is what I used to write for more than twenty years, affirming the madhhab of the Salaf and the ‘aqīdah of Ahl al-Sunnah – and all praise is due to Allāh – regarding the issues of faith and then there come today reckless ignoramuses who are but young newcomers accusing us of Irjā’!! To Allāh is the complaint of the evil that they are upon, [the evil] of ignorance, misguidance and scum.”

In al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah (7/153-154), he states, “I say that faith increases **and decreases** and that righteous deeds are from faith, that it is permissible to make the istithnā (to deny one has attained complete, perfect faith), in opposition to the Murjīites.”

³ Al-Tanbīh wal-Radd ‘alā Ahl al-Ahwā’ wal-Bida’ (Cairo, 1413H, from p. 105 onwards).

He also wrote in al-‘Aqīdat al-Ṭaḥāwīyyah Sharḥ wa Ta’līq (p. 28) way back in 1974, “For if the Ḥanafites were not opposed to the majority in substance in their rejection of deeds being from faith, they would have agreed with them that faith increases **and decreases**, that its increase is through obedience **and its decrease** is through disobedience. Alongside [the fact] that the evidences of the Book, the Sunnah and reports from the Salaf are replete with that.... However, the Ḥanafites have persisted upon this saying opposing those explicit evidences regarding the increase **and decrease** [of faith].”

He also wrote in al-Silsilah al-Ḍā‘īfah (1/213), “As for the first pillar from these five pillars: the testimony that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh (alone), without it no righteous deeds are of benefit. Likewise [is the case] if a person said it without understanding the reality of its meaning or he understood it **but invalidated it through a deed** such as invoking others besides Allāh for rescue during calamities and other such deeds of shirk”. These are just a few statements amongst many in al-Albānī’s works that establish his view that (sinful) deeds decrease faith and some can invalidate faith altogether.

This instance of factual error in a significant matter of belief which is not difficult to verify from al-Albānī’s writings is an indication that Wagemaker is not qualified to speak on Salafism when he is unable to ascertain and accurately convey the creed of one of Salafism’s highly-regarded contemporary scholars. Many other inaccuracies and discrepancies can be found in Wagemakers’s writings and speeches.

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5 October 2016, Kharijites.Com

Updated 21 October 2016

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- al-Za'tarī, As'ad bin Fathī (2011). *Ijmā' al-Salaf Fil-'Itiqād Kamā Ḥakāhu al-Imām Ḥarb bin Ismā'īl al-Kirmānī*. Cairo: Dār al-Imām Aḥmad. "And as for the Khārijites, they call Ahl al-Sunnah 'Murji'ah'. The Khārijites have lied in their saying. On the contrary, they are Murji'ah, they claim that they (alone) are upon faith and truth exclusive to the people and that whoever opposes them are disbelievers." p. 99.
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