

The Ghayr Muqalid / Ahle Hadith/Salafism

Salafism "early generations"), is a school of thought that takes the pious ancestors (Salaf) of the patristic period of early Islam as exemplary models.¹ Salafis view the first three generations of Muslims, who are the Prophet's companions, and the two succeeding generations after them, the Tabi'in and the Taba' at-Tabi'in, as examples of how Islam should be practiced. This principle is derived from the following hadith by The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace):

The people of my generation are the best, then those who follow them, and then those who follow the latter (i.e. the first three generations of Muslims).²

The principal tenet of Salafism is that Islam was perfect and complete during the days of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his companions, but that undesirable innovations have been added over the later centuries due to materialist and cultural influences. Salafism seeks to revive a practice of Islam that more closely resembles the religion during the time of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Salafism has also been described as a simplified version of Islam, in which adherents follow a few commands and practices.^[6]

Salafism is often used interchangeably with "Wahhabism". Adherents usually reject this term because it is considered derogatory and because they believe that The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) ibn Abd-al-Wahhab did not establish a new school of thought nor self-describe themselves as such. Typically, adherents used terms like "Muwahidoon," "Ahle Hadith,"³ or "Ahl at-Tawheed."⁴

1 Ghazali *And The Poetics Of Imagination*, by Ebrahim Moosa ISBN 0807856126 - Page 21.

2 Bukhari 3:48:819 and 820 [1] and Muslim 31:6150 and 6151.

3 *The Muslim World After 9/11* By Angel M. Rabasa, pg. 275

4 *GlobalSecurity.org Salafi Islam*

Distinctive beliefs and practices

Whichever definition is used, Salafis idealise an uncorrupted, pure Islamic religious community. They believe that Islam's decline after the early generations is the result of religious innovations (bid'ah) and that an Islamic revival will result through the emulation of the three early generations and the purging of foreign influences from the religion.

Abstaining from Bidah or Newly invented matters in the Islamic creed

Salafis maintain that bidah or innovation in the Islamic creed can cause considerable rifts amongst Muslims and future generations of Muslims. They explain that Muslims in one part of the world who engage in bidahs, such as circumambulating around shrines of saints, celebrating the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace)'s birthday, or commemorating the day of the death of a saint ("urs"), may not receive their newly invented practice with much welcome in other areas of the Islamic world where the practice is totally foreign, thus sparking dogmatic division. Salafis further assert that actions stemming from a practice rooted in bidah will not result in any reward in spite of a worshiper's good intentions and, are dangerous to the Islamic creed since they replace or corrupt the religious practices ("Sunnah") of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Salafis assert that if such practices increase a devotee's faith, the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would have known about it and assuredly directed Muslims to do such acts since he was the best worshiper amongst mankind and most dutiful. In showing textual support for the impermissibility of bidah or innovation in the Islamic creed, Salafis frequently quote the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) who emphasized: *"Every innovation is misguidance and going astray."*^[19] Salafis maintain that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) also warned against the People of Innovation, from befriending, supporting, or taking from them, as the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) noted: *"Whoever innovates or accommodates an innovator*

then upon him is the curse of Allah, His Angels, and the whole of mankind."⁵ Salafis often quote many companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) including Ibn Abbas who said: "Indeed the most detestable of things to Allah are the innovations,".⁶

Staunch Monotheism

Particular emphasis is given to monotheism - (tawhid); many Muslim practices which have now become common are condemned as polytheism (shirk). Salafis believe that widespread Muslim practices such as venerating the graves of Prophets and saints to be shirk. Salafis in general are opposed to Sufi doctrines, which Salafis regard as having many aspects of shirk, bid'ah and impermissible intercession of religious figures.

Prohibition of Kalam

Salafis reject the application of discourse and debate in the development Islamic theology (a doctrine known as "kalam"). They consider this process as a foreign import from Greek philosophy (such as Plato and Aristotle) and alien to the original practice of Islam.

Imaam adh-Dhahabi (d. 748H) said: "It is authentically related from ad-Darqutni that he said: There is nothing more despised by me than kalam (innovating speech and rhetoric). I say: He never entered into kalam, nor argumentation. Rather, was a Salafi (a follower of the Salaf)." [*Siyar* 16/457]⁷

Salafis, similar to adherents of orthodox denominations of Islam, place great emphasis on ritual not only in prayer but in every activity in daily life -- many are careful to always use three fingers when eating, drink water in three pauses with the right hand while sitting,^[21] make sure their galabea or other garment worn by them does not extend below the ankle -- so as to follow the example of the Prophet

5 Bidah, *SalafiiPublications.com, Knowledge Base - Bidah section*

6 Bidah, *SalafiiPublications.com, Knowledge Base - Bidah section*

7 Statements from the Salaf on Ascription to the Salaf, *SalafiiPublications.com, Article ID: SLF010001*

(may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the companions and make religion part of every activity in life.

Comparison with Islamism

Salafism differs from the earlier contemporary Islamic revival movements of the 1970s and 1980s commonly referred to as Islamism, in that (at least many) Salafis reject not only Western ideologies such as Socialism and Capitalism, but also common Western concepts like economics, constitutions, political parties, revolution and social justice. Muslims should not engage in Western activities like politics, "even by giving them an Islamic slant." [22] Instead, Muslims should stick to traditional activities, particularly Dawah. Salafis promote Shariah rather than an Islamic political program or state.

Madh'hab

Salafism is a movement, divided on the question of adherence to the four recognized schools of legal interpretation (madh'habs).

- Salafis must base their jurisprudence directly on the Qur'aan and Sunnah and the first three generations of Muslims. They believe that literal readings of the Qur'aan and the Hadith and the Ijma (consensus) of the Ulema, are sufficient guidance for the believing Muslim. Virtually all Salafi scholars support this position.
- Salafis also reference many of their teachings to the 14th century Syrian scholars Ibn Taymiya, and his students Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathir and Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab in the 18th century.

Some Salafis rely on the jurisprudence of one of the four famous madh'habs. For example, Ibn Taymiya followed the Hanbali madh'hab. Some of his students (such as Ibn Kathir and Al-Dhahabi) followed the Shafi madh'hab. Other students (such as Ibn Abu al-Iz) follow the Hanafi madh'hab. However none of the madh'habs are to be followed blindly, and in some cases Salafis may choose opinions that differ from any of them.

Ahle hadith is a school found predominately in the Middle East and South Asia, in particular, Pakistan and India. The term Ahl-e-Hadith is often used interchangeably with the Salafi dawah.⁸

Unlike the *Ahl-al-rai*, literally “the people of rhetorical theology,” the *Ahl-e hadith*, “the people of prophetic narrations” are not bound by taqlid of the four sunni Imams but consider themselves free to seek guidance in matters of religious faith and practices from the authentic traditions (from Bukhari and Muslim alone) which, together with the Qur’aan, are in their view the only worthy guide for Muslims.

The Ghair Muqallids are also a branch of the Wahabis. The Ghair Muqalids do not accept the four schools of thought in Fiqh and have innovated a path different from the true path. They say that to make Taqleed (follow one of the four Imams of fiqh) is forbidden and bidat. They even slander the great Imams of the Schools. The reality is that they too make Taqleed too as they will quote from Ibn Taymiyya or Muhammad ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab.

The Ahl-e hadith exert effort to raise traditional principles while restoring the original simplicity and purity to faith and practices. Emphasis is accordingly laid in particular on the reassertion of Tawheed and the denial of occult powers and knowledge of the hidden things to any of his creatures. This involves a rejection of the miraculous powers of saints and of the exaggerated veneration paid to them. They also make every effort to eradicate customs either to innovation (bid‘a) or non-Islamic systems. As strict adherents to hadith, members of the Ahl-e hadith take for themselves a broader meaning with wider implications and claim themselves to be the followers of Sahih (authentic) Hadith.

The Ahl-e Hadith significantly grew as a movement in Bengal in the 1830s,⁹ and later spread to other parts of South Asia. Its members reject the four major Sunni schools of Islamic law and emphasize what members say are the original principles of Islam. Indeed, the movement

8 The Muslim World After 9/11 By Angel M. Rabasa, pg. 275

9 History of Bengali-speaking People by Nitish Sengupta, p 210, 212-213.

spread extensively throughout British India during the second half of the nineteenth century. Inspired by the ways of life of the early generation of Muslims, the members of Ahl-e-Hadith launched the movement for reviving Islam on the basis of its fundamental principles.

In a word, Ahl-e-Hadith leans strongly towards strict and immutable principles formulated by their leading advocates. Contemporary exponents of Ahl-e-Hadith in the subcontinent convincingly depict it as a continuous religious puritanical movement. According to their scholars the Ahl-e-Hadith movement in India has been founded on four pillars: (a) belief in pure tawheed, (b) the Sunnah, (c) enthusiasm for jihad (struggle against the self) and (d) submission to Allah. Ahl-e hadith insists on taking all decisions on the basis of the Qur'aan and hadith, and not by applying the methodology of Qiyas (analogy).¹⁰

10 Banglapedia

History of Salafism

From the perspective of the Salafis themselves, their history starts with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself. They consider themselves direct followers of his teachings, and wish to emulate the piety of the first three generations of Islam (the Salaf). All later scholars are merely revivers (not 'founders'). Modern scholars may only come to teach (or remind) us of the instructions of the original followers of Islam. From the perspective of some others, however, the history of Salafism started a few hundred years ago, the exact time and place still being a matter of discussion.

Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din, Rashid Rida

From a perspective widely shared by scholars of Islam, the history of Salafism started in Egypt in the mid 19th century among intellectuals at al-Azhar University, the preeminent center of Islamic learning, located in Cairo. Prominent among them were Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) and Rashid Rida (1865-1935).¹¹ These early reformers recognized the need for an Islamic revival, noticing the changing fortunes in the Islamic world following the Enlightenment in Europe. Al-Afghani was a political activist, whereas Abduh, an educator, and head of Egypt's religious law courts, sought gradual social reform and legal reform "to make shariah relevant to modern problems." Abduh argued that the early generations of Muslims (the *salaf al-salihin*, hence the name Salafiyya, which is given to Abduh and his disciples) had produced a vibrant civilization because they had creatively interpreted the Qur'aan and hadith to answer the needs of their times.¹²

Other self-described Salafi disavow these early figures. One prominent Salafi website, for example, describing itself as promoting

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Macmillan Reference, 2004, v.2, p.609. *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* by Cyril Glasse, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, p.19. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* by John L. Esposito, OUP, 2003, p.275. *Historical Dictionary of Islam* by Ludwig W. Wadamed, Scarecrow Press, 2001, p.233.

¹² *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Macmillan Reference, 2004, p.7

"the creed and manhaj of the salaf us-saalih - pure and clear,"¹³ includes claims that al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh were "known freemasons and ... [show] great misguidance in their ideologies." It alleges they were interested in an "anti-colonial political movement" rather than "orthodox Islam" or "the way of the Salaf," but their call was deceptively surrounded with slogans of `returning back to the way of the forefathers. ` These divisions introduce controversy concerning the proper founders and proponets of the `Salafiyyah` movement. [30]

Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab

Many self-described Salafi today point instead to Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab as the first figure in the modern era to push for a return to the religious practices of the salaf as-salih or "righteous predecessors".¹⁴ His evangelizing in 18th century Saudi Arabia was a call to return to what he believed were the practices of the early generations of Muslims. His works (especially *Kitab at-Tawhid*) are still widely read by Salafis around the world today, and the majority of Salafi scholars still reference his works frequently.¹⁵ After his death, his views spread under the generous financing of the House of Saud and initiated the current worldwide Salafi movement. Wahhabism has been variously described as a subset of Salafism,¹⁶ a derogatory synonym for Salafism,¹⁷ or a formerly separate current of Islamic thought that appropriated "language and symbolism of Salafism" until the two became "practically indistinguishable" in the 1970s.¹⁸

In recent years considerable publicity has been given to the self-described Salafism of Al-Qaeda, and related groups calling for the

13 salafipublications.com

14 *The Principles of Salafiyyah*

15 *Ibn Abdul-Wahhab: His Salafi Creed, Reformist Movement and Scholars' Praise of Him, 4th ed.* by Judge Ahmad Ibn 'Hajar Ibn The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) al-Butami al-Bin Ali, Ad-Dar as-Salafiyyah, Kuwait, 1983, p. 108-164

16 GlobalSecurity.org Salafi Islam

17 *What is a Salafi and What is Salafism?*

18 *Abou El Fadl, Khaled M., The Great Theft, HarperSanFrancisco, 2005, p. 79*

killing of civilians, and opposed many Muslim groups and governments, including the Saudi government and Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁹ Debate continues today over the appropriate method of reform, ranging from violent political Islamism to less politicized evangelism. Despite some similarities, the different modern groups that claim to be part of Salafism often strongly disapprove of each other and deny their Salafi character.

Spread and effect

Salafism is a movement that includes many groups and shades of belief. It is also found in most other Muslim-majority countries. It is increasingly important to diasporic Muslims in Europe, Canada, and the United States.

For rootless immigrants and disaffected second-generation youths in Europe, salafism provides the attraction of the authentic. For those living in the squalid metropolises of the Middle East, it offers an emotionally rich alternative to the slogans of Arab nationalism. Salafism appeals to younger Muslims as a way to differentiate themselves from their parents and grandparents because it is seen as pure, stripped of the local, superstitious, and customary usages of their families' countries of origin. It confers a sense of moral superiority. Salafism has a potent appeal because it underscores Islam's universality.²⁰

The spread of Salafism has prompted political leaders in the Middle East to accommodate a greater role for religion in public policy.²¹

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Wahabis use the term Kufr, bidat and Shirk in abundance. Everything they see, they label as Kufr, bidat and Shirk.

¹⁹ PBS Frontline, interview with Dr. Mamoun Fandy [3]

²⁰ The Next Attack, By Daniel Benjamin Steven Simon, ISBN 0805079416 - Page 55

²¹ The Next Attack, By Daniel Benjamin, Steven Simon, ISBN 0805079416 - Page 274

Allama Sayyid Ahmad Tahtawi, one of the scholars of the Hanafi Madh-hab, writes in Durr-e-Mukhtar, “One who departs from the path of scholars of Fiqh, from ‘As-Sawas Al-Azam’ will have directed himself to Hell. O Muslims! Therefore, hold fast to the path of Ahl-e-Sunnah, which is called ‘al-Firqat an-Najiya’ (group of salvation), the unique group reported by the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to be saved from Hell! Because Allah’s (The Exalted) help, protection and obtaining to bliss, are only for those who are on this path. Allah’s (The Exalted) wrath and torture are for those who dissent from this path. Today, this firqat Najiyya has gathered in the four Madh-habs, namely, Hanafi, Shafi’i, Maliki, and Hanbali. One who does not belong to any one of these is a man of bid’ah or a man of Hell.”²²

Imam Sufyan Thawri (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, “If one who is not a scholar in Fiqh tries to adopt his affairs to ahadith, he leads himself to heresy.”

In Sharr al-Maqasid the scholars have written: “It is necessary to treat severely, to humiliate, to refute and to expel the men of bid’ah. When Muslims see them in high ranks, their hearts incline to listen to them and with Shaytan’s cheating, begin to love them. In actual fact, those who cooperate with the men of Bid’ah cause destruction of religion. Those who say that they will wake up Muslims, in fact, try to poison them and lead them to disaster.”

22 Siraat-e-Ahle Sunnah. p. 44

Notable modern Salafi scholars

Saudi Arabia

- Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab (1703 C.E. - 1792 C.E.)
- 'Abd al-Rahman b. Nasir al-Sa'di (1889 C.E.- 1956 C.E.)
- Abdul 'Azeez ibn Abdullah ibn Baaz (1909 C.E. - 1999 C.E.)
- Muhammad ibn al Uthaymeen (1925 C.E. - 2001 C.E.)
- Abdul-Azeez ibn Abdullah Aal ash-Shaikh (1941 C.E. - Present)
- Rabee Al-Madkhali (1931 C.E. - Present)

Albania

- Naasiruddin al-Albani (1914 C.E. - 1999 C.E.)

Yemen

- Muhammad bin 'Ali al Shawkani (1750 C.E. - 1834)
- Muqbil bin Haadi al-Waadi'ee (d. 2001 C.E.)

Pakistan

- Badee-ud-Deen Shah as-Sindhee (d.1996)
- Ehsan Elahi Zaheer (d.1987)

India

- Dr Zakir Naik

References

1. The Muslim World After 9/11 By Angel M. Rabasa, pg. 275
2. *History of Bengali-speaking People* by Nitish Sengupta, p 210, 212-213.
3. Banglapedia