from Hell'. When asked by his Companions to describe the one distinguished and 'saved sect', he replied, **"Those who follow that which I and my Companions are upon."**[13] In a narration he said, **"They are the *Jamā'ah*"**[14] The term *jama'ah* refers to a body of Muslims who adhere to the truth even if they are small in number.[15] It was a well-known characteristic of the early Muslim scholars to use terms to distinguish the various Islamic sects in line with their particular beliefs so, for example, the early terrorists, insurgents and extremists were known, and are still known, as the *Khawārij* (the Rebellious Ones). The sect that rejected the first three *Rightly Guided Caliphs*, and virtually all the other Companions save a handful, and then ascribed divinity to 'Ali (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) and his offspring, were known as the *Shi'ah* (the Faction of 'Ali), or the *Rāfidah* (the Rejecters). When these and other sects appeared, the Companions of the Prophet and the scholars after them, made the correct path and creed distinct in the following ways: 1) By refuting the innovated ideologies that deviated from the established and agreed-upon creed and methodology (*manhaj*) of the Prophet. 2) Clarifying the truth with quotes from the revealed texts and with reasoned arguments. 3) Allying with the people of truth, their scholars and the ***Saved Sect***. These early scholars used several titles to identify the adherents of the Saved Sect, such as: *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, *Ahl al-Hadīth* (The People of Narration), and the *Salafis*. The usage of the term *Salaf* dates back to the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), when he described himself as being a **"blessed *Salaf*"** of his daughter, Fātimah.[16] In the third century it was known that scholars would refer to the upholders of the correct creed and methodology as *Salafis*.[17] In fact Ibn Taymiyyah and other scholars[18] reported a consensus of the Muslims in approving the usage of the ascription Salafi.[19]

13. Tirmidhī (2641)
14. Ibn Mājah (3992). This is proof that the *Jamā'ah* is not the majority, but those who follow the Prophet and his Companions.
15. The Companion, Ibn Mas'ūd said, **"The *Jamā'ah* is what agrees with the truth, even if you are just one person."** *Al-Bā'ith 'ala Inkār al-Bid'ah wa al-Hawādith* of Abu Shāmah (22).
16. Bukhārī (6285), Muslim (2450).
17. As an example: Muhammad Ibn Khalaf Al-Wakī' (died 306AH) described the scholar, Ismā'īl Ibn Hammād as **"a true Salafi."** *Akhbār al-Qudāt* (167/2).
18. Such as: Albānī, Ibn Uthaimīn and Ibn Bāz.

—SALAFISM IS ONE CREED & METHODOLOGY, NOT DIVISIBLE: IDENTIFYING THE FALSE CLAIMANTS

Part of the problem that *Salafis* are faced with in these times is that there are extremist and politicised groups that have misappropriated the *Salafi* label and claimed it for themselves. This has caused difficulties in identifying the true adherents from the false claimants. The proliferation of Salafist literature and lectures has meant that Muslims have become more enlightened regarding true Salafism and this has led to a large influx of Muslims and new converts into the *Salafist* creed in recent years. This proliferation did not go unnoticed by the radical groups who saw an opportunity to entice unsuspecting Muslims to their cause by misappropriating the label. They did not of-course adopt those core elements of *Salafist* doctrine that forbids excommunication (*takfir*) of sinful Muslims, as well as terrorism, killing of innocents and rebellion against righteous or oppressive rulers. *Salafis* in fact are not the target audience of extremists because *Salafis* are the most theologically aware of all Muslims and are acquainted with the deviations of the *Khawārij*. So instead, extremists focus on recruiting common criminals, simple-minded youth and new converts. There is a myth propagated by some observers which states that Muslims are initially attracted to a 'quietest' form of *Salafism*, and then move on to radical and violent expressions of Islam. This is a false notion which has been disproved through academic research. A recent survey[20] of nearly four thousand English-speaking *Salafis* from more than twenty countries has shown that *Salafism* unequivocally turns people away from extremism. One academic stated that she found *Salafi* preachers to be "very vocal and active in condemning ISIS in the strongest possible terms".[21] So far from being a stepping stone to extremism, *Salafism* is a proven conveyor belt that carries people away from terrorist ideologies to the balanced and moderate path of the Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

19. *Majmū' al-Fatāwa* (149/4).
20. Conducted by an independent online survey provider, from

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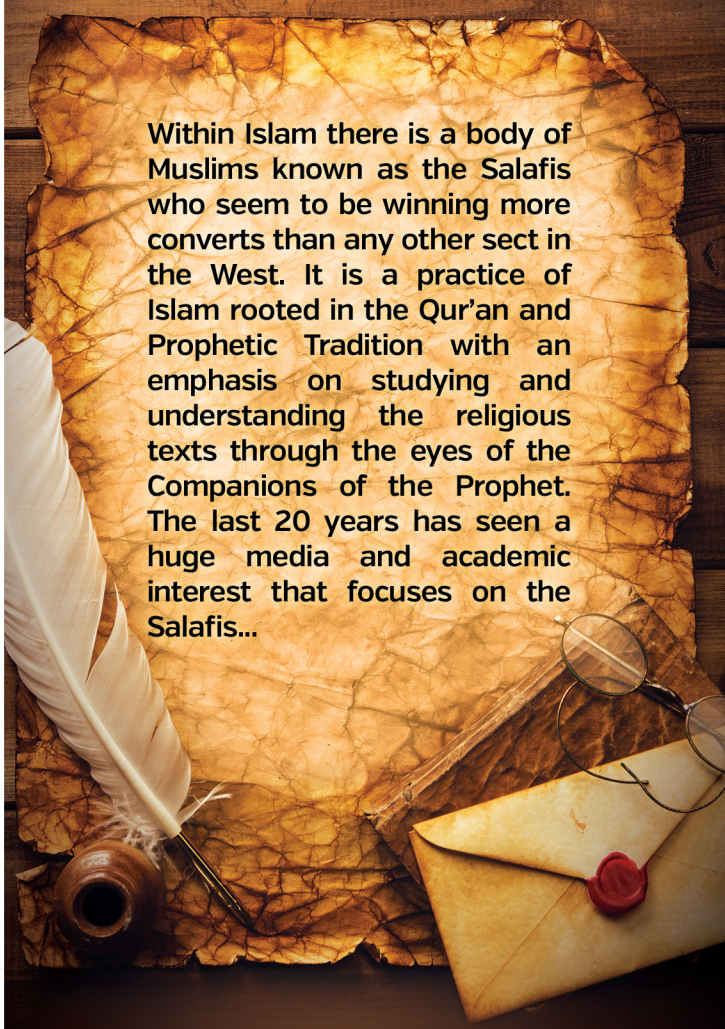
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SALAFISM

AND WHO ARE THE SALAFIS IN THE ERA?

By Abu Khadeejah Waheed Alam



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—SALAFISM IS NOT A NEW SECT

Salaf is an Arabic term that refers to a people who preceded, from the earlier generations. In Islamic terminology it refers to the righteous predecessors from the first three generations of Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) referred to them in his saying, **"The best of mankind is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them."**[1] The Qur'ān also mentions them with praise, and also those who follow them, **"The first and foremost in faith from the Migrants of Makkah and the Helpers in Madinah, then those who follow them in best way, Allāh is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them Gardens of Paradise under which rivers flow, they will remain therein forever. That is the supreme success."**[2] Those being referred to in these texts are the *Salaf*, the Righteous Predecessors. They had a united belief and methodology which they learned from the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) and passed on to the following generations. In times of differing, controversy and upheaval, the Prophet (ﷺ) commanded those who lived after him to return to his way and the way of his most trusted Companions for resolution and guidance.[3] These early *Salaf* did not differ in their understanding of the Oneness of Allāh in His Lordship, His sole right of worship and His beautiful names and lofty attributes. They agreed upon the forbiddance of excommunication (*takfīr*) of Muslims due to sins lesser than idolatry, and agreed upon the forbiddance of rebellion against the ruler, whether righteous or tyrannical.[4] Differing did occur amongst them, but never in the fundamentals of the religion and belief. They may have differed in subsidiary matters related to purification and its manner, or individual actions in the prayer, or the types of food that are permitted or disliked, but they remained united on the core beliefs and methodology.[5] It is for this reason, one finds that the early scholars of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*[6] produced writings in the field of belief that were identical in the core elements of creed and methodology. These scholars may have been separated by seas, and huge land masses due to the vastness of the Muslim lands and may have lived in different generations, but their writings in which they expound upon the creed of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) is virtually identical in content, though their styles of writing may have differed.[7] It is truly a blessing from Allāh that many of these works from the first four centuries are still with us, have been verified from manuscripts, translated, and available to study. Thus, one can test the veracity of the *Salafist* claims by simply studying these texts. For example, *The Creed of Al-Bukhārī* (died 256H), *The Foundations of the Sunnah* of Ahmad b. Hanbal (died 241H), *The Explanation of the Creed* of Al-Barbahārī (died 329H) and there several dozen works from that era that are now published and available to the English reader. In these times, a ***Salafi*** in religious terms is a person who follows the *Salaf* in creed, methodology, worship, and every aspect of religious life. He must be true to the ascription and not merely claim it whilst acting contrary to the principles of *Salafism*. These books are a must-read for western academics who seek to understand *Salafism*.

—SALAFISM IS NOT AN EXTREMIST SECT

There is a misunderstanding amongst many Muslims and non-Muslims alike who have been led to believe that *Salafism* is an extreme or radical sect within Islam. This notion is propagated by ill-informed journalists, unscrupulous 'academics' and others seeking to malign the *Salafis* based on sectarian agendas. Unfortunately, policy makers within government are sometimes influenced by these fallacies and myths surrounding *Salafism*. *Salafis* see it as a duty to explain the falsehood of these aspersions. From the outset it should be stated: *Salafism* is an orthodox understanding of Islam. It is moderate and balanced, giving leeway where necessary,[8] firmly rooted in the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic texts (*hadīth*), based upon the interpretation and understanding of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). These teachings were further explained and expounded upon by the scholars of *Ahl as-Sunnah* of the first four centuries.[9] These generations are referred to as the *Salaf*. It is this methodology and its application that protects *Salafism* from extremism and terrorist violence. There are numerous Quranic verses, Prophetic sayings and writings of the great early *Salafist* scholars that vehemently oppose the killing of non-combatants: men, women and children including ambassadors and emissaries[10]. These texts forbid attacking non-Muslim countries who have pacts and covenants with Muslim nations. War is not declared except by a ruler of a nation who sends his army into battle in a *just war* that is openly declared between two nations. Civilians are not to be harmed in such conflicts. This rules out the idea of insurgencies, terrorist activities and suicide bombings in any country, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.[11] The rules of engagement in war are well-known and recorded in the books of jurisprudence and in the edicts of the *Salafist* scholars, past and present. We have expounded upon these in numerous published writings and articles.

—IF SALAFISM AND ISLAM ARE BOTH ONE AND THE SAME, WHY USE THE TERM AT ALL?

This is a question that *Salafis* are often asked and the simple answer is that Islam itself called to distinguishing the people of truth from the people who are misguided. The Muslims were always destined to fall into schism just as occurred with the Jews and Christians.[12] The Prophet foretold that the Muslims would divide into 'seventy-three sects', one sect was described by the Prophet as being 'saved

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1. Bukhārī (2651), Muslim (2535).
2. *Surah At-Tawbah* (100).
3. Ahmad (17142), Ibn Majah (43), authenticated by Albānī.
4. *Minhāj as-Sunnah* of Ibn Taymiyyah (336/6), and throughout *Sharh as-Sunnah* of Barbahārī (died 329H).
5. Ibn 'Uthaimīn in *Al-Fatāwa ash-Shar'iyyah fi al-Masā'il al-'Asriyyah min Fatāwa 'Ulamah al-Bilād al-Haram* (p.792)
6. Translated as: *The people of the Prophetic way and those who hold fast to the body of the Companions.* This term was used by the Companions of the Prophet such as Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه). The opposers of this guided group were referred to by Ibn 'Abbās as *Ahl al-Bid'ah wa al-Furqah* (*The people of innovation and separation*). See Lālikā'ī (74), *Tafsir* of Ibn Kathīr (76/2).
7. Abu Mudhaffar in *Al-Hujjah fi Bayān al-Muhajjah* (224/2)
8. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Let the Jews understand that there is leeway in our Religion. Surely, I was sent with the pure and forgiving Religion."** *As-Sahīhah* of Albānī (881).
9. This is the path of rectification as the second century scholar, Mālik Ibn Anas said, **"The latter part of this *ummah* will not be rectified except by that which rectified its earliest part."** *Ash-Shifā* of Qādī Iyād (88/2), *Al-Iqtidā* of Ibn Taymiyyah (762/2).
10. A narration collected by Abu Dāwūd (2761).
11. See: IslamAgainstExtremism.com and AbuKhadeejah.com
12. The Prophet informed his Companions that the Jews divided into seventy-one sects and the Christians in seventy-two, and the Muslims will divide into seventy-three. Reported by Ibn Mājah (3992).