

The Citadel of Salafism

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1 Introduction

“Salafism [...] is a danger to Muslims themselves and thus a danger to France as well.” This is how former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls referred to Salafism in late July 2016. A certain level of hyperbole in talking about Islam was perhaps to be expected a few weeks after the French city of Nice had been the target of a terrorist attack by what appeared to be a radical Islamist, killing over eighty people. Yet it was significant that Valls apparently felt the need to single out Salafism, which he blamed for having “destroyed and perverted part of the Muslim world,” despite the fact that the perpetrator of the Nice attacks did not appear to be a Salafi at all (AFP 2016). A French Member of Parliament, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, even went so far as to call for a ban on Salafism altogether (Lefeuvre 2016).

Such criticism of Salafism as being dangerous and even calls for banning this trend altogether are not limited to France. A similar call was heard in the Netherlands, for instance, from Ahmed Marcouch, a former Member of Parliament for the Dutch Labour Party, who considers Salafism a “breeding ground of jihadism and the ideological cradle of [the Islamic State (IS)]” (Marcouch and El Bouch 2015). In Kazakhstan, to mention one more example, a Muslim-majority country with an officially secular regime, President Nursultan Nazarbaev indicated in October 2016 that his country intended to ban Salafism, which he said, “poses a destructive threat to Kazakhstan” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2016).

Salafism, in other words, is controversial. Ironically, this is also the case among Salafis themselves. Issues such as who may be labelled a Salafi and what types of Salafism exist are highly contested among adherents to this branch of Sunnī Islam themselves, which—as we will see later on in this chapter—indicates that Salafis are far less unified than the politicians quoted above appear to believe. This chapter will shed light on such contestations by dealing with the definition, history and ideological development of Salafism, the means adherents to this trend use to defend their doctrinal turf, its spreading throughout the Muslim world, Salafis’ everyday practices, and the faultlines that exist within the trend.

I argue that Salafism is like a citadel or a fortress, experienced by Salafis as, on the one hand, a refuge providing them protection from their daily frustrations and unwanted outside influences and, on the other, as a place where they can safely pursue an alternative project of living and breathing a religiously purposeful life. Although this ‘fortress-factor’ is not the only reason for the rise of Salafism, it does account for at least part of its popularity among people who—frustrated as they are by repression, corruption and/or Islamophobia—seek solace in the eternal truths they believe Salafism embodies and live their lives keeping them ‘pure’.

2 Constructing the Citadel: Definition, History, and Ideological Development

Based on the meaning of the word, a ‘Salafi’ is someone who is ‘*salaf*’-like. According to several *ḥadīths*, the Prophet Muḥammad once stated that his “generation” are “the best people” or “the best of my community” and then the two generations following his.¹ These words have led many to equate the term *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious predecessors) with these first three generations of Muslims. This chapter concentrates on the trend in Islam whose adherents claim to have made being *salaf*-like the be-all and end-all of their ideology. It is therefore justified to base our label for them on this characteristic, to name them Salafis and to define them as those Sunnī Muslims who claim to emulate the first three generations of Muslims as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible.

Salafis are, of course, not the only ones who read the *ḥadīths* mentioned above and, as such, are not the only Sunnī Muslims who hold the *salaf* in very high esteem. A crucial difference between these non-Salafi Sunnīs on the one hand and Salafis on the other is that the latter gear their entire teachings and lifestyles to emulating the predecessors, rather than ‘merely’ seeing the *salaf* as an inspirational example, as many non-Salafi Sunnīs do. This difference can be difficult to spot for the uninitiated, however, and it is therefore not surprising that Salafis are sometimes viewed as merely very pious or doctrinally ‘pure’ Sunnīs, both by Muslims and non-Muslims (Hamid 2009: 387–390; Hegghammer 2009: 249). Indeed, while Salafis can be distinguished from other

1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book 57 (“Kitāb Faḍā’il Aṣḥāb al-Nabī”), chapter 1 (“Faḍā’il Aṣḥāb al-Nabī”), nos. 2–3; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, book 44 (“Kitāb Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥāba”), chapter 52 (“Faḍl al-Ṣaḥāba, thumma lladhīna Yalūnahum, thumma lladhīna Yalūnahum”), nos. 2533–2536.

Sunnīs, the site on which their citadel was constructed and the bricks with which it was built were produced in debates with scholars and trends within Sunnī Islam as a whole.

2.1 *Law: The Ahl al-Ḥadīth as a Construction Site for Salafism*

With regard to law, modern-day Salafism's genealogy goes back to the question of how to live one's life after the Prophet had died, when Muslims could no longer rely on his legal verdicts. One group of early scholars (*'ulamā'*) advocated the view that, when searching for answers, Muslims should rely on the Qur'ān, the memorised practices (*sunan*, sing. *sunna*) and considered opinion (*ra'y*) of early believers (including, especially, the Prophet) and the consensus view (*ijmā'*) of the scholars themselves. Because of their reliance on their own considered opinion in establishing rulings, these scholars were referred to as the *ahl al-ra'y* (the people of considered opinion) (Coulson 1999 [1964]: 38–41; Schacht 1982 [1964]: 29–33).

Not everyone agreed to the *ahl al-ra'y*'s approach of emulating the Prophet, however. Some scholars, including the eponymous 'founder' of the Ḥanbalī school of Islamic law (*madhhab*, pl. *madhāhib*), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (780–855), argued that the example of Muḥammad should be searched for in the traditions (*ḥadīths*) ascribed to him. The emulation of the Prophet, in other words, was to be done on the basis of *ḥadīths*, which led to the name *ahl al-ḥadīth* (the people of tradition) for those who subscribed to this view. The debates between these two different trends resulted in a compromise—forged partly by the eponymous 'founder' of the Shāfi'ī school of Islamic law, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (767–820)—that came to embody what may be termed the mainstream legal approach to Sunnī Islam: the Qur'ān and *sunna* of the Prophet as central sources, complemented by the insights and judgements of scholars (Coulson 1999 [1964]: 41–61; Hallaq 2009: 55–59; Schacht 1982 [1964]: 33–48).

The legal compromise between the approaches of the *ahl al-ra'y* and the *ahl al-ḥadīth* became embodied in the four schools of Islamic law (Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī) and has had a great impact on Sunnī Islam. This does not mean, however, that the ideas of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* have died. Their view that only direct recourse to the primary sources of Islamic law (the Qur'ān and the *sunna*) suffices and that everything else distracts from the alleged purity of early Islam—when believers did not have *madhāhib* either—is one that can be found among many Salafis today. This does not mean that the original *ahl al-ḥadīth* were Salafis; Salafism, after all, encompasses more than just the legal sphere. Yet it does entail that today's Salafis' derive one aspect of their

ideological citadel—reverting to the *salaf* in legal matters and circumventing the *madhāhib* in doing so—from an early-Islamic trend and that they have built their edifice on a construction site put in place by the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

Salafism's debt to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* also shows us how Salafis differ from mainstream Sunnī Muslims in the legal sphere: whereas the former often seek to avoid the schools of Islamic law in favour of referring directly to the Qur'ān and the *sunna* according to the understanding of the *salaf*, the latter believe the Prophet should be emulated through the prism of the *madhāhib*, thereby allowing more room for scholarly input in the legal sphere (Brown 2015: 117–144).

A natural consequence of Salafis' approach to legal issues is the use of independent reasoning on the basis of the Qur'ān and the *sunna* (*ijtihād*), rather than the blind following (*taqlīd*) of the *madhāhib* that many non-Salafi Sunnīs make use of. The concept of *ijtihād* was used in varying ways by scholars that are held in very high esteem by Salafis today, including Ḥanbalī 'ulamā' such as ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and his student ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350). Through scholars such as these, as well as others on the Indian Subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula, the practice of *ijtihād* was kept alive and turned out to be an important tenet in the beliefs of many Salafis today (Brown 2007: 314–321; Haykel 2003: 89–108; Haykel 2009: 43–44).

2.2 *Theology: The Bricks of the Salafi Citadel*

As important as the issue of *ijtihād* may be for modern-day Salafis, it was not always agreed upon by all of them. Although the practice seems to have been accepted by many Salafis now, a famous scholar like the Saudi mufti Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh (1893–1969) advocated a less far-reaching approach to *ijtihād*. His rulings were therefore mostly limited to those found within the Ḥanbalī school of Islamic law (Lacroix 2009: 66). The *ahl al-ḥadīth* can thus be said to have laid some of the groundwork for Salafism and the question of *ijtihād* is certainly an important one to Salafis, but it is not central to them in the way theology is, in which Salafis really distinguish themselves from other believers and which provides the bricks to the walls of the Salafi citadel that protect their 'pure' lifestyle.

The theological concept most central to modern-day Salafism is *tawḥīd* (the unity of God), which Salafis—unlike other Muslims, for whom this concept is also of great importance—divide into three different aspects: the unity of God's lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), the unity of his divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*) and God's unity of names and attributes (*tawḥīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*). The first of these signifies the belief in one Lord and Creator, while the second one more clearly distinguishes Salafis from pre-Islamic polytheists by denoting the need

to worship the one true god (Allāh) alone. *Tawḥīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*, finally, refers to the idea that God is utterly unique and incomparable.

The latter aspect of *tawḥīd* has been linked to the word '*salafī*' since at least ibn Taymiyya (Haykel 2009: 38) and is of crucial importance to today's Salafis in their attempts to distinguish themselves from other trends in Islam. For example, when other Muslims read references to God's physical attributes such as his hand (Qur'ān 38:75, 67:1), they may apply metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) or anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*). To Salafis, however, neither approach is acceptable. While *ta'wīl* clashes with their desire to read the Qur'ānic text literally, *tashbīh* does not square with their belief in the uniqueness of God as expressed in Qur'ān 42:11 ("like Him there is naught" [Arberry's translation]) to underline their belief that nothing can be compared with God. Adherents to the mainstream Ash'arī and Māturīdī schools of Islamic theology have solved this problem by reading the texts literally but allowing for some speculation about the character of God's attributes, while Ḥanbalī scholars accepted the texts simply as they are "without [asking] how" they could be explained (*bi-lā kayfa*) (El-Bizri 2008: 122–131). The Salafī position on this matter strongly resembles the Ḥanbalī one, with Salafis believing that God does have a certain form, but without ascribing any descriptive designation to him (*bi-lā takyīf*) (Gharaibeh 2014: 112–124).

The issue of *tawḥīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt* separates Salafis from other Sunnī Muslims today, just as it separated ibn Taymiyya and his followers from mediæval trends such as the rationalist Mu'tazila, who used *ta'wīl* as an interpretative tool. In a similar way, today's Salafis use the theological concepts of faith (*īmān*) and unbelief (*kufṛ*) not only as tools to express what they see as the true creed (*'aqīda*), but also as the very bricks with which to build walls meant to separate them from other trends in Islam. Firstly, according to Salafis, faith consists of belief in the heart (*al-i'tiqād bi-l-qalb*), speech with the tongue (*al-qawl bi-l-lisān*) and acts with the limbs (*al-a'māl bi-l-jawāriḥ*) and is incomplete without any of these three elements. Today's Salafis (as well as some other Sunnī Muslims) not only believe this to be the correct doctrinal position, but also hold on to this to distinguish themselves from, for example, the early-Islamic (and long extinct) Murji'a, who generally believed faith consisted only of belief and speech. Secondly, there is the question of whether *īmān* can increase (*yazīdu*) and decrease (*yanquṣu*) or is indivisible. The adherents to some trends in Islam, such as many scholars belonging to the Ḥanafī school of Islamic law, believe that faith is either present or absent and cannot change in size. Salafis, however, believe *īmān* does increase with every good belief, act of speech or deed and decreases whenever a person thinks, says or does something sinful (Wagemakers 2016a: 46–48).

Apart from the different elements of faith, today's Salafis also divide *īmān* into three different levels on which sins can take place: *ṣiḥḥat al-dīn* (the soundness of the religion), *wājib al-dīn* (the compulsory of the religion) and *kamāl al-dīn* (the perfection of the religion). The first of these encompasses beliefs such as the existence of God, which are so basic to Islam that any opposition to this is seen as unbelief. *Wājib al-dīn* refers to the level of faith on which transgressions are seen as major sins (*kabā'ir*, sing. *kabīra*), but which do not in and of themselves make one guilty of *kufr*. Beliefs, sayings or acts on the level of *kamāl al-dīn*, finally, are not seen as sins at all and can therefore not decrease one's faith, only increase it. Salafis believe that mistakes on the level of *ṣiḥḥat al-dīn* as well as consciously perpetrated sins on the level of *wājib al-dīn* are so grave that they are labelled 'major unbelief' (*kufr akbar*) and expel the culprit from Islam as an unbeliever (*kāfir*, pl. *kuffār*). Sins on the level of *wājib al-dīn* made without a sinful intention—but, for example, because of compulsion (*ikrāh*), out of ignorance (*jahl*) or by mistake (*khata'*)—mean the person in question is only guilty of minor unbelief (*kufr aṣghar*), which does not expel one from Islam (Wagemakers 2009: 97–99).

Modern-day Salafī views on this issue mean that they only apply excommunication (the expulsion of a Muslim from Islam [*takfīr*]) in cases of *kufr akbar*. In fact, even Salafis who are accused of being too restrictive or, conversely, too casual in using *takfīr* emphasise that they are adhering to the doctrinal positions outlined above. Salafis stress this not only for doctrinal reasons, but also to distinguish themselves from the early-Islamic Murji'a and Khawārij trends (although neither still exists anymore in its earlier form), who are, respectively, said to have refrained from applying *takfīr* even in cases of *kufr akbar* and to have applied excommunication for 'mere' cases of *kufr aṣghar* (Wagemakers 2012b: 154–156).

3 Defending the Citadel: Salafi Means of Maintaining 'Purity'

Through their views on law and theology, Salafis thus distinguish themselves from 'blind' followers of a *madhhab*, mainstream Ash'arī-Māturīdī theologians, the Murji'a, many Ḥanafī scholars and the Khawārij. The result is a legal and especially theological fortress that Salafis believe represents a resurrected form of what the Prophet and the *salaf* themselves stood for. Salafis believe the 'purity' of their creed to be under constant attack, however, from outside influences coming from the Islamic trends mentioned above, as well as Shī'ites, who are often viewed with great scepticism, and members of other religions (Wagemakers 2016a: 71–72). In order to defend their citadel from

such influences and keep their own house in order, Salafis have developed or adopted several concepts from Islamic tradition that aid them in warding off unwanted views and the people who hold them.

The first of these concepts is *al-firqa al-nājiya* (the sect saved [from hellfire]) or *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra* (the victorious group). These terms are derived from a number of *ḥadīths* that differ slightly in content and in which the Prophet says that his community (*umma*) will split up into seventy-three sects (*firqa*), “all of which are in hell, except for one.” This one sect is believed to be linked to another *ḥadīth*, which states that “a group (*ṭāʾifa*) from my *umma* will remain committed to the truth.”² Salafis believe that they are the people referred to in these *ḥadīths* and they thus equate themselves with *al-firqa al-nājiya* and *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra* and their beliefs with “the truth” (Haykel 2009: 34).

While Salafis believe the concepts of *al-firqa al-nājiya* and *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra* set them apart as different, the term *ghurabāʾ* (sing. *gharīb*; strangers) underlines this. Again based on a *ḥadīth*, the Prophet is said to have stated that “Islam began as a stranger (*gharīban*) and it will return as it began, a stranger” and added “so good tidings (*tūbā*) to the strangers (*al-ghurabāʾ*).”³ Another *ḥadīth* states: “Be in the world (*kun fi l-dunyā*) as if you are a stranger (*gharīb*) or a traveller (*ʿābir al-sabīl*).”⁴ Although this tradition and those following it in collections of *ḥadīths* seem aimed at keeping believers from attaching too much value to earthly pleasures and possessions, the concept of *ghurabāʾ* easily lends itself to more specific interpretations of ideological and doctrinal purity and exclusiveness. As such, Salafis see the label of *ghurabāʾ* as a badge of honour⁵ and may even view their being marginalised as a sign that they do not belong anywhere but in Islam (De Koning, Wagemakers, and Becker 2012: 128–129; Köpfer 2014: 449, 451–460).

Given the exclusive claims to truth that Salafis make, it is obvious that they want to keep their supposedly pure beliefs from becoming sullied. This attitude is not only translated in a doctrinal position that differs from other, ‘deviant’ trends in Islam, as we saw above, but also from any addition to the religion

2 See, for instance, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book 56 (“Kitāb al-Manāqib”), chapter 27 (“Bāb”), nos. 834 and 835; book 92 (“Kitāb al-ʾItisām bi-l-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna”), chapter 10 (“Qawl al-Nabī Ṣallā llāh ʿalayhi wa-Sallam: Lā Tazālu Ṭāʾifatun min Ummatī Zāhirīna ʿalā l-Ḥaqq wa-Hum Ahl al-ʾIlm”), no. 414.

3 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, book 1 (“Kitāb al-Īmān”), chapter 65 (“Bāb Bayān anna l-Islām Badaʾa Gharīban wa-innahu Yaʾziru bayna l-Masjidayn”), no. 145.

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book 76 (“Kitāb al-Riqāʾiq”), chapter 3 (“Bāb Qawl al-Nabī Ṣallā llāh ʿalayhi wa-Sallam: Kun fi l-Dunyā ka-annaka Gharībun”), no. 425.

5 See, for example, the famous *nashīd* (song) “Ghurabāʾ” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLRj2u475RU, accessed 18/11/2016, which is particularly popular among militant Salafis.

as Salafis believe it was understood by the *salaf*. They refer to such additions as *bida'* (sing. *bid'a*; religious innovations) and condemn them in matters of law, theology, lifestyle, customs, rituals and language (Wiktorowicz 2001: 116–117). Precisely because such *bida'* were allegedly absent among the *salaf*, Salafis see them as steps toward the slow corruption of Islam. It is for this reason that Salafis often cite a *ḥadīth* that states that “every novelty (*muḥdatha*) is an innovation (*bid'a*) and every innovation is an error (*ḍalāla*) and every error is in hell (*fi l-nār*)” (Wagemakers 2016a: 43).

The main tool that Salafis use to keep alleged threats to their legal and theological views and their general ‘purity’ at bay is *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* (loyalty and disavowal). This concept is used to stimulate a strong sense of allegiance toward God, Islam and other Muslims (particularly Salafis), on the one hand, and a clear repudiation of everything else, on the other. This is applied in the personal sphere, with regard to clothing, names, (religious) holidays and dealing with non-Salafis, but also in the political sphere, where Salafis believe in solidarity with Muslims in times of conflict and principally oppose asking ‘unbelievers’ for help (*al-isti'āna bi-l-kuffār*) against other Muslims (Wagemakers 2008).

Al-walā' wa-l-barā' is thus used by Salafis to stick together inside the citadel and keep others away from its walls. In practice, however, it is important to note that Salafis have built an ideological fortress, not an actual one. In other words, Salafis do not live in physical seclusion but among people who have very different beliefs, which may hamper their efforts to disavow others, particularly in non-Muslim countries. Friendly relations with Christian neighbours, for example, can easily be portrayed as causing one to stray from ‘true’ Islam if they are not framed in the context of missionary activities (*da'wa*) (Shavit 2014: 71–78). *Al-walā' wa-l-barā'*, precisely because it is meant to keep Salafis away from any ‘un-Islamic’ influences, can therefore be an effective instrument against the ‘corruption’ of Islam but can simultaneously cause friction with non-Salafis when zealously applied.

4 Expanding the Citadel: The Spread of Salafism

The spread of the Salafi message based on the ideas espoused by men such as the aforementioned ibn Taymiyya, ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and their ideological heirs has perhaps had less drastic consequences than Salafi ideology may suggest. While it is true that Salafism represents a break with the Islamic tradition of following a *madhhab* and adhering to Ash'arī-Māturīdī theology, it is

also true that its adherents claim to merely follow the Qur'ān and the *sunna*, a principle that few Sunnī Muslims will reject, even if they disagree with Salafis' precise way of doing so. This means that while Sunnī Muslims cannot simply be labelled potential Salafis, they can be said to be somewhat susceptible to the core Salafi message of returning to the Islam's primary sources.

In this context, and in addition to factors specific to certain countries or communities, several reasons can be mentioned that strongly aided the spread of Salafism, all of them related to Saudi Arabia. The reason Saudi Arabia is involved in all of them stems from that country's unique historical ties with Salafism. Influenced by the writings of ibn Taymiyya and others, the Arabian reformer Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792) started spreading his Salafi message across the Arabian Peninsula, particularly from 1744 on, when he made a pact with the tribal leader Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd (d. 1765), the ancestor of the Saudi royal family. Together, they conquered most of the Arabian Peninsula and made Salafism, often referred to as "Wahhabism," the Saudi state's guiding ideology, which it has remained ever since (Commins 2005; Crawford 2014).

Despite Salafism's importance to Saudi Arabia and, to a lesser extent, other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, it did not spread much outside its borders initially. This changed with the exploitation of the kingdom's oil reserves after the Second World War. Because of Saudi Arabia's booming oil industry and its lack of qualified personnel to run it, the kingdom had to employ many foreign workers (often Muslim Arabs), who not only lived and worked in the Saudi state, but frequently also adopted its religious customs, which they subsequently took home with them after several years. This trend was abetted by a second factor that influenced the spread of Salafism, namely the Saudi efforts use the kingdom's oil wealth to spread Salafi beliefs, for example through the Muslim World League (MWL) (Schulze 1990) and the Islamic University of Medina (Farquhar 2017). In response to the socialist rhetoric of Egypt's President Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir or Nasser (r. 1954–1970) and, later, the revolutionary propaganda emanating from Iran after 1979, the kingdom poured great amounts of money into spreading a conservative Salafi message. This, in turn, was connected with a third factor allowing Salafism to spread: the decline of Nasser's Arab socialism after the Arab defeat against Israel in 1967 and the search for an alternative that very often turned out to be religion. In the 1960s and 1970s, Saudi Arabia was therefore spreading a Salafi message, both through individuals and through organisations to a Middle East that was increasingly susceptible to it. As a result, Salafism grew extensively (Kepel 2002: 62–75).

5 Inside the Citadel: Living the Life of a Salafi

So far, this chapter has focussed on the first half of the ‘fortress-factor’ of Salafism: seeking refuge from outside influences considered detrimental to the ‘purity’ of Islam. Yet once inside the citadel—constructed by legal and theological means and defended by various instruments of maintaining ‘purity’—Salafis can safely pursue their alternative lifestyle of strictly emulating the *salaf* in every detail of their lives, provided they stay within the fortress’ walls. This latter condition is quite important since it speaks for itself that for Salafis, life in any country—even in Saudi Arabia—is often stubborn and unruly because of the simple fact that it is difficult to keep up a lifestyle that differs so much from the one preferred by many other people. That is a clear drawback from living in an ideological citadel, rather than one made of actual bricks and mortar. Salafis therefore strive to withdraw into the safety of their religious fortress, which guarantees doctrinal soundness and provides them with the best opportunity to live their daily lives in accordance with the example of the predecessors.

5.1 *Citadel Life: Salafi Everyday Practice*

Given the importance of doctrine, it is obvious that for many Salafis the study of the sources (the Qur’ān and the *sunna*) and the books based on those by scholars considered Salafi is of great importance. Precisely because Salafis attach such great value to emulating the *salaf*, they believe it is highly important to know what those predecessors said and did and, conversely, what they did not say or do. This process of ‘cleansing’ Islamic tradition to look for ‘true’ Islam is referred to as *taṣfiya* (cleansing) and it is a process in which many Salafi scholars engage, most famously Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914–1999), who compiled several volumes of ‘sound’ and ‘weak’ *ḥadīths* in order to establish exactly what the Prophet did and which of his sayings should be dismissed as inauthentic (Amin 2004).

For ‘ordinary’ Salafis, who may not always have the time to engage in such scholarly endeavours, life according to the predecessors’ example is often found in the exact performance of many rituals concerning things like prayer, good manners and personal hygiene. Quite often, instructions on how to perform these are given in small booklets that are handed out or can be picked up free of charge at mosques and other Salafi places of gathering. As such, ritual purity is a theme that plays a major role in Salafis’ everyday lives (Gauvain 2013; Wagemakers 2016a: 170–171).

One booklet that is perhaps more popular than any other is *Ḥiṣn al-Muslim*, which gives a highly detailed description of what one must say when

awakening, putting on clothes, leaving one's home, entering a mosque, etcetera, all based on texts from the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet (Al-Qaḥṭānī 2010). Although the use of this booklet—whose title, aptly, can be translated as “The Citadel of the Muslim”—is not limited to Salafis, it is ubiquitous among the latter, who really try to live in accordance with these verses and sayings (Wagemakers 2016a: 172–173). This same attitude can also be discerned with regard to speech and clothes, in which Salafis also try to emulate the predecessors. Islamic phrases such as *jazāka llāh khayr* (‘may God bless you for it’) when thanking someone, instead of the more common *shukran* (‘thanks’), are frequently used by Salafis. Similarly, Salafi women very often wear a facial veil (*niqāb*) and a wide dress (*‘abāya*) covering their entire body, while men often dress in a white tunic (*thawb* or *dishdasha*), generally wear a skullcap (*qulunsuwa*) and usually have long beards. All of this is done not only to emulate the predecessors, but also—again in an effort to keep outside influences away from their Salafi citadel—to clearly distinguish themselves from non-Muslims (Amghar 2011: 148–149; Bonnefoy 2011: 49; Wagemakers 2016a: 173–174).

5.2 *A Citadel Divided: Faultlines within Salafism*

While few Salafis would be against the lifestyle described above, a truly purposeful life lived within the Salafi citadel does not just focus on one's own situation, but also on that of others. The term Salafis use for the way they deal with society is *manhaj* (“method”), but the way this concept takes shape differs greatly. The first and probably biggest group of Salafis in the world are the ones I label ‘quietists’⁶ because of their unwillingness to engage in political activism such as setting up political parties, attending demonstrations or debating topical issues in political terms. Instead, they focus mostly on studying the sources and teaching others about them through *da‘wa*. Their relationship with political authorities is one of quiet obedience and sometimes extends into working in the service of regimes, either through loyalty to or explicit propaganda for the rulers (Wagemakers 2016c). Examples of such groups exist in many countries, including, for example, France (Adraoui 2013), Jordan (Wagemakers 2016a), and Yemen (Bonnefoy 2011).

The second major group within Salafism I refer to as ‘political Salafis’ because of their commitment to extending their ideas on religion to the political sphere in the form of demonstrations, political parties, participating in elections and engaging in political debates. This is not to suggest that quietists do not care about, for example, the civil war in Syria after 2011, but that they discuss this

6 It should be borne in mind that ‘quietists’ and other labels are ideal types and that, in practice, Salafis sometimes cannot be placed in one single category.

issue strictly in religious terms (sectarian, doctrinal, theological), not political ones like international relations, the involvement of Russia and the regional balance of power, as political Salafis do. Some political Salafis do not engage in actual party politics, such as the so-called *ṣaḥwa* (renaissance) movement in Saudi Arabia, which started in the kingdom in the 1960s through a cross-over between Muslim Brotherhood ideas and Salafism (Fandy 1999; Lacroix 2010; al-Rasheed 2007; Teitelbaum 2000). Others do engage in elections and run for public office, but do so with different reasons: some want to engage in the actual political process and discuss issues like taxes, such as some Salafis in Kuwait before the Gulf War in 1990, while others see parliament as another platform for *da'wa*, such as Kuwaiti Salafis after the Gulf War and the Nur Party in post-coup Egypt, and are therefore perhaps best seen as quietist Salafis in a political guise (Lacroix 2016; Lahoud-Tatar 2011: 190–197).

The third and final group within Salafism is the one I call 'Jihadi-Salafism'. The adherents to this trend believe that the regimes in the Muslim world do not rule (entirely) according to the *sharī'a* and, as such, should be overthrown. This does not always mean that Jihadi-Salafis actively strive to topple regimes in Muslim countries, although they do believe such action would be legitimate (Wagemakers 2012a: 9). Organisations adhering to this trend include al-Qā'ida and, most recently, the Islamic State (IS), although there are strong disagreements between these two, with supporters of the former accusing the latter of extremism in ideology and actions (Wagemakers 2016b).

The accusations levelled at IS by members of al-Qā'ida are not exceptional among Salafis. In fact, Salafis verbally attack each other quite often, with quietists labelling political Salafis 'Ikhwānīs', after the highly political Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn), and framing Jihadi-Salafis as *takfīrīs* or 'Khawārij', because of their views on *takfīr*. Conversely, Jihadi-Salafis (and, to a lesser extent, political Salafis) accuse quietists of being like the Murji'a, because of their alleged tendency to exclude acts from their definition of faith and thereby letting supposedly apostate rulers and their 'sinful' acts off the hook (Lav 2012; Wagemakers 2012a). As such, Salafis often deny each other the very label of 'Salafi', epitomising the fact that—despite sharing a strong desire to emulate the predecessors—the citadel of Salafism is deeply divided.

6 Conclusion

Considering the long history of Salafism's various concepts, Salafis' detailed arguments and the strictness and wide range with which they apply their beliefs, it is easy to understand that Salafism baffles a lot of people, including

policy makers. Moreover, given the fact that Salafis more or less look the same and are all engaged in keeping up, defending and living inside a citadel that often appears, and sometimes is, unwelcoming to others, it seems natural to generalise about them. Furthermore, the critical views that Salafis take toward others (including other Muslims) in their doctrine—not to mention the fact that some Salafi groups, such as al-Qā'ida and IS, actually engage in terrorism—makes it seem all the more obvious to echo former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls' words mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Yet Salafism is an ideology adhered to by people who mostly never engage in violence of any kind, let alone terrorism. Their views may be too strict for many from a societal point of view, but this cannot simply be equated with destruction. While IS may be responsible for the latter, it is an over-generalisation to suggest that all Salafis are guilty of this. For that claim to be justified, the Salafi citadel is simply too divided.

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