The Hanbali and Wahhabi Schools of Thought
As Observed Through the Case of Ziyārah

Thesis

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Abstract

The Hanbali madhhab (school of jurisprudence) underwent great changes due to the influence of two major scholars who challenged the system of taqālīd (adhering to the views of a certain scholar or school of thought), Ahmad Taqī al-dīn Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1327/8 C.E.) and Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb (d. 1791/2 C.E.). Both would emphasize a return to the Qur’an and sunnah (the words and deeds, or, exemplary model) of the Prophet of Islam in the form of an anti-madhhab stance that can clearly be observed in rulings that pertain to ziyārah (visiting graves). However, despite his opposition to taqālīd, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb was clearly influenced by the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah. Similarly, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s views would be echoed by later jurists who came to be known as the “Wahhabis.” In this way, one might argue that initial opposition to taqālīd ultimately led to further taqālīd and what can be classified as a new madhhab. In order to demonstrate the changing views concerning ziyārah in the Hanbali madhhab, I will examine the major works of Hanbali jurists before and after Ibn Taymiyyah. It will be shown that matters that Wahhabi jurists consider to be prohibited (such as kissing or wiping the graves of righteous figures) or even heretical (like seeking forgiveness or intercession from the deceased) were not viewed as such before Ibn Taymiyyah. Rather, Ibn Taymiyyah’s views gradually gained legitimacy in the Hanbali madhhab until they were formally propagated by Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and the Saudi state. But Ibn ‘Abdi’l-
Wahhāb caused a further break in the Hanbali *madhhab* due to his opinion that a large number of Muslims had apostatized. His views gained legitimacy by means of their implementation in Arabia. What would eventually emerge was a group of scholars who employed the same methodologies and proofs as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb while simultaneously insisting that they were not a new *madhhab*, but rather, the true followers of the path of the earliest generations of Muslims, or, the *salaf*. In the following pages, I will address the opinions concerning *ziyārah* of Hanbalis and Wahhabis and ask whether the trends observed necessitate that Wahhabism be classified as a new *madhhab*. 
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father for teaching me to be courageous in the pursuit of knowledge, even when it is not convenient.
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Publications

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Introduction

A study of the works of Hanbali and Wahhabi jurisists reveals that the Hanbali madhab experienced trends in which the opinions of certain prominent figures would come to be challenged by iconoclastic jurists. Eventually, though, such iconoclastic jurists would themselves come to occupy the position of the scholars whom they sought to challenge in the first place. The origins of the Wahhabi movement can be traced to two points of rupture in Hanbali fiqh. The first was in the fourteenth century, when Aḥmad Taqī al-dīn Ibn Taymiyyah decided to challenge the existent madhab system and favor independent thinking over taqlīd. He called for a return to the Qur’an and the sunnah of the Prophet of Islam. Then, after a decline in original scholarship in the Hanbali school in the eighteenth century, Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, a great admirer of Ibn Taymiyyah, would take a similar stance. While also calling for an Islamic revival, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb emphasized the deviation of the people of his time arguing that many

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1 In the following pages, I will address the question of why Wahhabis are named as such. While those known as “Wahhabis” refer to themselves as “Salafis,” I have chosen to refrain from using the latter term in order to avoid confusion. That is to say, “Salafi” does not always refer to those who are commonly labeled “Wahhabi.”
2 School of thought. Here, a school of jurisprudence.
3 Jurisprudence.
4 Adhering to the views of a certain scholar or school of thought.
5 The words and deeds, or, exemplary model.
who professed Islam had, in fact, fallen into a state of apostasy. Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb also presented his arguments as a return to the Qur‘an and sunnah and independent of scholarly imitation. While most associate this approach in jurisprudence with Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, Wahhabism takes as its inspiration the works of Ibn Taymiyyah perhaps to an even greater extent than those of its eponym. However, it was by way of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb that Ibn Taymiyyah came to occupy the role of the unofficial founder of a new madhhab. But this involves a contradiction; while Wahhabis emphasize independent reasoning and oppose taqlīd, their school of thought oftentimes takes as dogma the views of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. One instance by which one can see the influences of these two figures on the Hanbali madhhab is in regard to the matter of ziyārah. A close look at Hanbali fiqh before Ibn Taymiyyah reveals that early Hanbali jurists considered displays of reverence (such as kissing or wiping the graves of righteous figures) and seeking forgiveness or intercession from the deceased to be permissible or meritorious. Oftentimes, they considered the question of the permissibility of these acts to be of such small consequence that they did not even address these matters in their works. However, Ibn Taymiyyah’s view that such acts were either innovations in religion (bida‘, singular: bid‘ah) or forbidden (ḥarām) gradually gained legitimacy among certain Hanbali jurists in the centuries after his death. Then, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb would not only help Ibn Taymiyyah’s perspective gain authority, but he would take the new approach a step further; Muslims who participated in certain acts near graves were to be considered disbelievers, as they were guilty of shirk, and were to be opposed with

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6 The visitation of graves.
7 By “wiping,” what is intended here is a particular form of wiping by which one seeks blessings.
8 Associating partners with God.
violence. After the success of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s thought, due in large part to the establishment of the Saudi state in Arabia, Ibn Taymiyyah was viewed as the ultimate authority on a great number of issues in jurisprudence. Additionally, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s policy of takfīr would also find a place among later Hanbali jurists. The methods and particular hadith employed by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb were implemented by Wahhabi scholars much the way other scholars might adhere to a particular madhhab. However, Wahhabis do not consider themselves to be part of a new madhhab known as “Wahhabism” but rather insist that they are simply the true adherents of a puritanical form of Islam, or, the madhhab of the salaf, free from the shackles of taqlīd and true to the original message of the Qur’an and the sunnah.

“Wahhabism” is, by no means, a term preferred by those with whom the term is associated. Rather, such individuals refer to themselves as Salafis, muwahhidūn (monotheists) or muslimūn (Muslims) and are most closely linked with the Hanbali madhhab (school of thought) in terms of fiqh. By using the phrase “Wahhabi,” the opponents of Wahhabism sought to link such individuals to the 18th century C.E. scholar, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb (d. 1206 A.H./ 1791/2 C.E.). Thus, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-

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9 Dismissing another as a disbeliever. I have translated kāfir as “disbeliever” because what is intended in the cases examined here is one who knowingly rejects the message of Islam, and not merely one who does not believe (which would include those who do not believe due to their ignorance of Islam).

10 Uwaidah Al Juhany’s work Najd Before the Salafi Reform Movement: Social, Political and Religious Conditions During the Three Centuries preceding the Rise of the Saudi State finds its origins in Al Juhany’s dissertation of a similar name: “The History of Najd Prior to the Wahhabis: A Study of Social, Political and Religious Conditions in Najd During the Three Centuries Preceding the Wahhabi Reform Movement.” However, when his book was published in Riyadh (in association with the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives), he replaced the word “Wahhabis” with “Salafis.” See: Al Juhany, Uwaidah, Najd Before the Salafi Reform Movement: Social, Political and Religious Conditions During the Three Centuries preceding the Rise of the Saudi State, (Riyadh: Ithaca Press, in association with the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 2002), ix.

11 This term is to be found in their earlier sources.

12 For instance, Sulaymān ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb used the phrase al-Wahhābiyyah in his critique of his brother’s movement (Al-Ṣawā’iq al-ilāhiyyah ft al-radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah).
Wahhāb was viewed as the founder of a new madhhab, or, Wahhabism. Wahhabis are not considered to be part of the four major madhāhib due to the great contrast between their approach in methodology and the methodologies of the Hanbalis and other madhāhib. Examples can be given of a number of issues in fiqh (jurisprudence) that separate Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb from previous Hanbali scholars. Here the focus will be on Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s claim that those who engaged in what he deemed superstitious practices at graves (such as kissing or wiping graves or calling upon the deceased for help) were misguided and in some cases (like seeking help from the deceased) had apostatized and were therefore deserving of death. If one looks at earlier Hanbali sources, it is possible to see the gradual development of the Hanbali madhhab concerning this issue (as well as other matters in fiqh), culminating in Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s controversial language, which was capable of dismissing a large percentage of Muslims as being disbelievers.

It is only appropriate to ask how and why Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb derived these rulings that separated him and his sympathizers from other Hanbalis. Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and the early Wahhabi historians from the late 18th and early 19th centuries prefer to focus on the degradation of Muslim practice and the numerous shrines that had been erected for the worship of respected figures. The Wahhabi movement, they argue, was therefore the natural outcome of the deviance of Muslims at large. A closer examination of his life, however, reveals that Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s teacher, Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī (d. 1163 A.H./ 1749/50 C.E.), greatly influenced his stance on taqlīd (adhering to the opinion of another scholar) and “superstitious” practice. But perhaps the greatest

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13 I have put the word “superstitious” in quotations because it is the Wahhabis and their sympathizers who classify these acts as such. This is despite the fact that (as I will demonstrate) these acts are ultimately justifiable by means of Islamic sources, both primary (Prophetic narrations and/or verses of the Qur’ān) and
factor that contributed to the creation of the Wahhabi movement was the writings of Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 A.H./ 1327/8 C.E.).

As will be demonstrated shortly, before Ibn Taymiyyah, certain acts that were performed near graves, such as seeking blessings from the graves of righteous individuals or prophets, were either implicitly encouraged or considered to be of questionable merit. Earlier Hanbali scholars, though, did not forbid such acts. Ibn Taymiyyah expressed the differing opinions in Hanbali thought and stated his own personal opinion, arguing that these acts were forbidden. Therefore, while he provided his own opinion on these matters, it is clear from his works that such issues were far from settled during his time. Ibn Taymiyyah would also occasionally write that such acts constituted *shirk*, though he did not explicitly state that those guilty of these acts were to be treated as apostates.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s particular approach and his break with the representatives of the *madhhab* system created a stir during his own time. In fact, it was his *fatwā* forbidding the act of traveling in order to visit the grave of the Prophet that led to him being declared an unbeliever and imprisoned in Cairo until he met his death. But he was popular with average Muslims and remained dedicated to his cause, refusing to change his opinions even when threatened with imprisonment. Also, his loyal (though limited) following from among his students kept his message alive after his death. Later Hanbali scholars

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15 *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, pp. 41-2.
17 *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, p. 31. Caterina Bori writes that Zain al-dīn Ibn Rajab (d. 795 A.H. / 1393 C.E.) describes only nine Hanbali scholars as being companions or direct disciples of Ibn Taymiyyah.
18 *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, p. 41.
would address Ibn Taymiyyah’s view on the matter, though many would state opinions that disagreed with Ibn Taymiyyah’s verdicts. Such was the case until the rise of Wahhabism.

Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb embraced Ibn Taymiyyah’s stance on visiting grave sites and, in fact, challenged previous Hanbali scholarship even further. Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb did not even entertain the notion that kissing or wiping graves could be permissible, ignoring previous Hanbali scholarship in the process. And he considered seeking help from other than God to be a clear case of *shirk*, which meant that those who engaged in such practice, like other *mushrikūn* from among those who professed Islam, were to be killed. Furthermore, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb argued that those who did not do *takfīr* of such idolaters were to be considered disbelievers themselves.¹⁹ It is such rhetoric that drew a line between Wahhabis and the majority of Muslims.

The clear break Wahhabism makes with even Ibn Taymiyyah’s controversial approach in *fiqh* has been observed by critics of the movement from its very outset. Sulaymān ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, Muḥammad’s brother, in his *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-ilāhiyyah fī al-radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah* (“divine bolts of lightening in the refutation of Wahhabism”) repeatedly points out the distinction between deeming certain acts forbidden (in accordance with Ibn Taymiyyah, whose opinions Sulaymān greatly values) and considering them to be *shirk*, and the validity of the former as opposed to the latter. Sulaymān argues that his brother and the earliest Wahhabis were not qualified to contradict the opinions of the scholars who preceded them, as the Wahhabis were not

qualified mujtahids.  

And Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s status as a jurist was challenged by others as well. In fact, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb himself denied that he was a mujtahid and instead insisted that in cases where he expressed a different opinion, he was simply relying on the opinions of earlier scholars. Nonetheless, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb would reshape the landscape of Hanbali jurisprudence both by means of his own opinions and by further cementing the role of Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinions within the madhhab. These two scholars had similar approaches. They presented their doctrines as being a return to the Qur’an and sunnah as opposed to a reliance upon dogma, or, taqlīd (following the ijtihād of the imams of the madhāhib). They would mention certain verses of the Qur’an that speak of shirk in general as well as hadith that warned Muslims of the potential dangers of frequenting graves. They compared the reverence shown by Muslims towards pious figures at graves to the acts of idolaters. In fact, they argued, idolatry began at the graves of righteous figures from the people of Noah. And it is this method of strongly adhering to particular traditions and verses of the Qur’an that speak of shirk in general that was adopted by later Wahhabi scholars. The opinions of previous Hanbali scholars who permitted these

21 ‘Abd Allāh Šāliḥ Al-‘Uthaymīn writes: “From an early period, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was accused by Sulaymān ibn Suḥaym of claiming to have the right to exercise ijtihād and reject taqlīd, and of banning the works of the Hanbali school. He was urged to accepted taqlīd because he was not qualified to exercise ijtihād. Muḥammad ibn ‘Afālīq wrote a treatise called Tahakkum al-Muqallidīn bi-mān Idd’ā Tajdīd al-Dīn [The supremacy of the traditionalists over whoever claims to renew religion], in which he tried to prove that the conditions required for the exercising of ijtihād were not attained by the Shaykh. Al-Khālidī, too, in his tract Ashadd al-Jihād ft Ihfal Da’wa ‘l-Ijtihād [The harshest struggle to nullify the call to independent judgment], had the same aim.” Taken from: Al-‘Uthaymīn, ‘Abd Allāh Šāliḥ, Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb: The Man and his Works, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, in association with the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 2009), p. 141 [brackets are from the original].
23 For instance, the idea that one should not turn graves into mosques or make the Prophet’s grave into a place of gathering.
displays of reverence are not always represented in the works of Wahhabi scholars. Here, the opinions (or lack thereof) of previous Hanbali scholars will be presented alongside the opinions of Wahhabis so that this evolution in Hanbali thought is made evident.

I will first give an explanation of the particular views of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. Then I will provide a survey of Hanbali verdicts before and after Ibn Taymiyyah to demonstrate the change he brought about in the madhhab. After that, I will examine Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s approach and his affirmation of certain elements of Ibn Taymiyyah’s thought as well as points of divergence in his works. Finally, I will analyze the great disparity between early Hanbali jurists and Wahhabi scholars on the matter of ziya’rah. Wahhabis accept as dogma the interpretations of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb concerning verses of the Qur’an and hadith that discuss ziya’rah. This is despite the fact that the two aforementioned scholars ostensibly sought to eradicate the reliance upon the views of other scholars, or, taqlīd. The reality is that Wahhabis defend the views of the founders of their madhhab similarly to how Hanbali scholars rely upon the opinions of prestigious jurists. Thus it will be seen why this group is labeled as being “Wahhabi,” or, of the madhhab of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb to be distinguished from the Hanbali madhhab and not considered a return to the salaf outside of Wahhabi circles.
Chapter 1: Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb

On the Matter of Ziyārah

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, ziyārah of the Prophet should consist of a simple salutation.24 One should not wipe or kiss the walls of his chamber where his grave is located,25 as this is a form of innovation in religion (bid‘ah).26 Also, one should not ask the Prophet for one’s needs, whether spiritual or physical. Ibn Taymiyyah uses as proof for his arguments the consensus of scholars, hadith from the Prophet (such as those that prohibit turning graveyards into mosques) and the story of the people of Noah who fell into idolatry.

As for the issue of wiping or kissing the Prophet’s grave, the 420th question in Ibn Taymiyyah’s Al-Tasā’ulāt al-shar‘iyyah ‘alā al-ikhtiyārāt al-fiqhiyyah is as follows:

Q: Is it legitimate (hal yushra’) for one who sends salutations (salām) upon the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, to kiss or wipe the grave [seeking blessings]?

Ibn Taymiyyah responds:

26 Ibn Taymiyyah, Ziyārat al-Qubūr, p. 25.
A: The first generations of Muslims (al-salaf) and the imams [of the four Sunni schools of fiqh] have all agreed that he who sends salutations upon the Prophet should neither wipe nor kiss the grave. Rather, they have all agreed that salutations and kissing are reserved for Al-hajar al-aswad. And Al-rukn al-yamānī can be touched, but not kissed, based on the correct opinion.

In his Ziyārat al-Qubūr wa’l-Istinjād bi’l-Maqbūr (“visiting graves and seeking help from those in graves”), Ibn Taymiyyah gives a similar opinion but then follows that with language that reveals that he may have been aware that the matter was not as clear as he indicated:

And all scholars agree that one who visits the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny, or the grave of any of the prophets or righteous - such as the Companions, the household [of the Prophet] or others - should not wipe it (lā yatamassaḥ bihi) nor should he kiss it (lā yuqabbiluhu). Rather, [the correct opinion is that] it is not legitimate (lā yushra’) to kiss any inanimate object (al-jamādāt) in this world other than Al-hajar al-aswad... And for this reason, all of the imams agree that it is not sunnah to kiss... the grave of any of the prophets or the righteous... As for wiping the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny, and kissing [his grave], all of them [the imams] considered it to be makrūḥ and forbade it (nahā ‘anhu). This is because they were aware of the what the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny, intended in terms of uprooting shirk, the realization of monotheism and being sincere in the reserving the practice of religion for God (ikhlāṣ al-dīn li’Allāh), Lord of the worlds.

This passage seems to contain some contradictions. In the beginning, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that one should not wipe nor kiss the grave of any individuals,
prophets included, and that it is not legitimate to do so.\(^{33}\) He then argues that all the imams agreed it is not *sunnah* to kiss the graves of any individual, prophets included. But while not being *sunnah* does not necessitate that these actions are forbidden, it may be said in his defense that he was refuting the notion that such actions were actually practiced by the Prophet or the Companions. This may have been a notion entertained by the Muslims of his time.

When he arrives at the discussion of kissing the grave of the Prophet of Islam, he argues that all of the imams considered it to be *makrūh* and forbade it. The apparent contradiction between something being *makrūh* and forbidden can be resolved by saying that *karāhah* is itself a branch of something being prohibited, though prohibition in the case of *makrūh* things does not entail punishment in the Afterlife. However, what is one to say of the contradiction between wiping and kissing of prophets being illegitimate and forbidden in the beginning and then simply *makrūh* in the case of one particular prophet, the Prophet of Islam? In defense of Ibn Taymiyyah, it can be argued that he may have used the term *al-anbiyā’* (the prophets) to mean prophets other than the seal of the prophets, the Prophet of Islam. However, this would mean that kissing the grave of the Prophet is not forbidden and would apparently contradict with the response Ibn Taymiyyah gave to the 420th question in *Al-Tasā’ulāt al-shar‘iyyah* mentioned above.

Another point that can be taken from this passage is that Ibn Taymiyyah’s reasoning at the end of the passage (that the imams considered kissing and wiping the grave of the Prophet to be *makrūh* because this was in keeping with the Prophet’s mission of uprooting *shirk* and preserving worship for God) does not explicitly state that these

\(^{33}\) The phrase *lā yushra’* would seem to indicate that to engage in such practice would then be considered *bid‘ah*. 
acts were *shirk* themselves. Rather, if one were to engage in these regularly, he would be in danger of falling into *shirk*, or associating certain powers reserved for God to a lifeless structure (the grave of the Prophet). Thus, these acts were made *makrūḥ* to prevent this from happening. However, if these acts were *shirk* themselves (without the intention of worship or the belief that the grave held powers), they would be forbidden outright; *shirk* is never permissible, and it is hard to imagine Ibn Taymiyyah making an exception in the case of the Prophet (by saying that wiping and kissing his grave is merely *makrūḥ*). In support of this idea is the fact that shortly before the passage in question, Ibn Taymiyyah writes a brief history of the origins of *shirk*, which began as a result of the people of Noah showing great reverence to the graves of noble figures from their community. For this reason, Ibn Taymiyyah writes immediately before the passage above, “And clinging to graves, wiping them, kissing them, praying near them and at graveyards, etc., is the origin of *shirk* and worshipping idols…” It thus may be said that Ibn Taymiyyah used the word *makrūḥ* in its original linguistic sense (“something that is reprehensible”), meaning that these acts were frowned upon but not to the point where they would be forbidden. Rather, they were capable of serving as a gateway to the great offense that is *shirk*.

If the prohibition of kissing and wiping graves was a matter of controversy among scholars, placing one’s head near graves or kissing the earth that contains them were, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, not up for debate. It might be argued that this was because these acts (particular placing one’s head on a grave) more clearly resembled acts of worship or strong reverence. It is for this reason that in *Ziyārat al-Qubūr* Ibn Taymiyyah

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34 A *makrūḥ* act, though reprehensible, is still technically permissible, in that, one who performs it will not be punished.
writes:

As for placing one’s head near [the graves of] great shaykhs or others, or kissing the earth, etc., this is something about which there is no debate that the imams [of the schools of jurisprudence] forbade...36

As will be seen shortly, the act of placing one’s face on the grave of the Prophet was addressed in a hadith narrated by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the founder of the Hanbali madhhab. The nature of the narration makes it difficult to accept the consensus Ibn Taymiyyah claims in this regard.

The second major matter concerning ziyārah that will be addressed here is seeking one’s needs from the deceased, specifically the Prophet of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah forbids asking the Prophet for anything after his death as well as asking of him intercession or forgiveness,37 as these would constitute shirk (associating partners with God).38 Ibn Taymiyyah writes concerning asking the Prophet for forgiveness at his grave:

If what a servant (of God) desires is something that only God, exalted is He, has power over, such as seeking the health of one who is sick from another person, or seeking that he can repay his loan without specifying a means, or seeking that his family be in good health, or any other form of tribulation in this world or in the Hereafter, or seeking help against his enemy, or that his heart be guided, or that his sin be forgiven, or that he may be made to enter paradise, or saved from Hellfire... in all of these cases, it is not permissible (lā yajūz) to make such requests other than from God, exalted is He... And it is not permissible (lā yajūz) to say to an angel, a prophet or a shaykh, whether alive or dead, “forgive me my sin,” nor to say, “help me against my enemy,” nor, “heal my sick [friend or relative],” or, “heal me,” or “my family” or “my ride,” (dābbatī) etc. And one who asks a creature (makhlūq) for such things, whoever [that creature] may be, has associated partners with God and is of the same category as the mushrikūn who worshipped the angels, the prophets and the images that they would draw...39

It should be noted that Ibn Taymiyyah does not deny that the Prophet can serve as an intermediary between a servant and God. In fact, one should ask God to make the Prophet

37 Ibn Taymiyyah, Ziyārat al-Qubūr, p. 22.
a means (*wastl*ah) to God. Such a Muslim will then be deserving of the Prophet’s intercession. Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

He [the Prophet] said, “Ask God to grant me the means (*al-*was*ī*lah*), for it is a station in paradise that is only appropriate for one of God’s servants. And I hope that I can be that servant. So one who asks God to grant me the means will be granted my intercession on the Day of Resurrection.”

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, one can also achieve the Prophet’s intercession by the affection he shows towards him.

As for *tawassul* by way of having faith in him [the Prophet], loving him, obeying him, sending blessings and peace upon him, and by way of his prayer and intercession and other such things that he did and that servants were commanded to do in regard to him, these are legitimate (*mashrūt*) according to all Muslims.

However, he was of the opinion that asking the Prophet for his intercession directly was particular to his lifetime. Ibn Taymiyyah relates a hadith that the great hadith compilers Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī and Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī narrated concerning the Prophet, in which it is reported that he taught some of his companions to pray as such:

O God, I ask you and seek a means to you by way of your Prophet, the Prophet of mercy. O Muḥammad, O Messenger of God! Verily I seek a means to my lord by you in [order to attain] my need so that He may fulfill it for me. O God, make him an intercessor for me.

Ibn Taymiyyah then writes that this hadith only shows the permissibility of doing *tawassul* “during his life and in his presence.” Furthermore, seeking intercession from a noble figure is a Christian practice and not permissible in Islam:

So, if one says, “I call upon [or, pray to] a *shaykh* so that he may intercede on my behalf,” this is of the same category as the Christians who call upon Mary, monks and priests.

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41 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-*fatāwā al-*kubrā* (Cairo: Maṭba’at Kurdistān al-*`îmiyyah, 1908/9), vol. 1, p. 293.
After the Prophet’s death, for Ibn Taymiyyah, the most that could be said was that the permissibility of seeking a means by way of the Prophet’s prayers (not from him directly) was up for debate. This depended on whether it was permissible to swear by the Prophet (instead of by God). If it were permissible to do so, then seeking a means to God by way of the prayers of the Prophet would also be permissible. In *Al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, the 201st verdict Ibn Taymiyyah gives is as such:

And that Companions, may God be pleased with them, would seek a means by way of him during his life and sought a means by way of his uncle, al-‘Abbās, after his death just as they would seek a means by way of him [the Prophet].

As for saying, “O God, verily I seek a means to you by way of him,” there are opinions among scholars... Ahmad said, one can do *tawassul* to the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, by way of his prayers, whereas others have said that this is swearing to God by means of him, and one should not swear to God by means of His creation. And Ahmad [ibn Hanbal], in one of the opinions narrated from him, permitted swearing by him [the Prophet]. And for this reason, he permitted doing *tawassul* by way of him. However, the other narrated opinion from Ahmad is what the majority of scholars say, that it is not permissible to swear by him...44

Ibn Taymiyyah then narrates differing opinions on the matter before concluding, “And God knows better.”45

What, then, remains of *ziyārah* for Ibn Taymiyyah? He believed that *ziyārah* should be restricted to simply sending blessings upon the deceased. In this way, the deceased benefit while the visitor does not seek any benefit from those in graves. A “legitimate form of visiting graves,” according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is:

That one sends salutations upon the deceased and prays for him such that one sends blessings (*ṣalāt*) upon a corpse... So *ziyārah* in Islamic law (*al-ziyārah al-shar‘iyyah*) does not involve the living attaining his needs from the deceased, nor asking him [his needs], nor seeking a means to him. Rather, it [*ziyārah*] involves the living benefitting the dead, by, for instance, sending blessings upon him.46

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And other forms of *ziyārah* are either debated among scholars (in the case of seeking a means by way of the Prophet’s prayers), forbidden (in the case of touching and kissing the grave) or *shirk* (in the case of asking things of the Prophet). But whether Ibn Taymiyyah believed that asking the Prophet for his intercession is a major form of *shirk* that takes one out of the realm of Islam or minor *shirk*, a term used to describe sins such as ostentatiousness (*riyā’*), is a matter of debate. Sulaymān ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb argued that the Wahhabis did not properly understand Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings and that what was intended was minor *shirk*. Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and later Wahhabis clearly believed that Ibn Taymiyyah argued that asking the deceased for one’s needs made one a *mushrik* deserving of death. Ibn Taymiyyah regularly used the word *shirk* without specifying which form he intended. However, in some of his writings, he compared Muslims who committed such acts to the idolaters from before Islam, which would mean he intended greater *shirk*. Kissing and touching the graves of righteous individuals from the people of Noah were the roots of polytheism, he argues. It is worth noting, though, that Ibn Taymiyyah did not go as far as Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and other Wahhabis who followed such statements by writing that it was permissible to shed the blood of such individuals.

As for Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, he classifies “that which a great number of common people do at the graves of the righteous, and with the dead, the living and the *jinn*” (*mā

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48 Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, *Mu'llafāt*, vol. 1, (Mu'ttāf al-mustafāt) p. 296. After writing on the previous page that the student of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, considered seeking one’s needs from the deceased to be cases of greater *shirk*, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb writes, “… some of the stubborn have attributed to al-shaykh (Ibn Taymiyyah) [the opinion] that this is lesser *shirk.*” He then argues that the passages they use to prove their point are not open to interpretation [i.e., they must be interpreted to mean greater *shirk*].
yaf‘aluhu kathır min al-‘awāmm ‘inda qubūr al-šālihīn, wa ma‘ kathır min al-amwāt wa‘l-ahyā’ wa‘l-jinn) as manifestations of al-shirk al-akbar (greater polytheism). His language is vague and it is not clear if he means to include touching and kissing graves. However, like Ibn Taymiyyah before him, he clearly considered such acts to be forbidden. In his Kitāb muftid al-mustaftid fi kufr tārik al-tawḥīd (“that which benefits the one who seeks [to know] concerning the state of disbelief of one who abandons monotheism”), he puts a passage from Ibn Taymiyyah’s Al-risālah al-sunnīyyah in his own words, writing, “And for this reason, all scholars agree that one who sends peace upon the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, near his grave should not wipe his chamber nor kiss it...” He then adds that one should try to comprehend Ibn Taymiyyah’s words (fa ta‘ammal) and thereafter, “the matter will become clear for you, God willing” (yatabayyin laka al-amr inshā’Allāh), thus showing his support.

Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s views concerning seeking help or intercession from one who is deceased are similar to those of Ibn Taymiyyah. Like Ibn Taymiyyah, he argues that polytheism originated when a group from the people of Noah sought intercession (shafā‘ah) from righteous individuals. It is this sort of outcome that both scholars feared for Muslims who showed reverence to the deceased. However, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s language is different from that of Ibn Taymiyyah in that he regularly points out that the

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crimes such individuals committed made it permissible to shed their blood.\textsuperscript{55}

The significance of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s language and opinions in jurisprudence and Islamic history is rather consequential. It is his policy of takfīr that allowed for the establishment of the Saudi kingdom, as surrounding cities could be attacked on the basis that they were enemies of Islam and had rejected its message.\textsuperscript{56} The political success of the Saudi-Wahhabi movement meant that a number of scholars would eventually side with Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s ideas and the Saudi government, which would provide financial means for Wahhabi scholars.\textsuperscript{57} It is due to the spread of ideas by way of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb that the madhhab in question is called Wahhabism and not Taymiyyism, for instance. But both scholars greatly contributed to the formation of this break in the Hanbali school of thought.

In the following pages, I hope to demonstrate that Ibn Taymiyyah’s views on ziyařah were a clear break with the Hanbali jurists before him. I will do so by presenting a short survey of major jurists who addressed these matters. In many cases, their views are not entirely clear, though their lack of a firm position is still telling; had such acts been practiced during the times of these Hanbali jurists, they would presumably not be at liberty to refrain from passing judgment, as it would have been their religious duty to


\textsuperscript{56} John Lewis Burckhardt writes that Muhammad Ibn Sa’ūd (the first Saudi leader and he who led Wahhabis into battle) “propagates his religion with the sword,” and that, “whenever he purposes to attack a district of heretics, he cautions them three times, and invites them to adopt his religion; after the third summons, he proclaims that the time for pardon has elapsed, and he then allows his troops to pillage and kill at their pleasure.” See Burckhardt, Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys, (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 103-104. Also, Ibn Ghannām regularly refers to the opponents of the Saudis as apostates upon whom the “Muslims” (Wahhabis) declared jihād (see, for instance, Ibn Ghannām, Tarīkh Ibn Ghannām, vol. 2, pp. 694, 689, 806 and 892). He also mentions the religious mission of destroying idols in al-Qaţīf and the battle that ensued with “the misguided people” (Ibid., p. 899).

warn Muslims of such forms of deviance.
Chapter 2: Hanbali Scholars Prior to Ibn Taymiyyah

In this section the opinions of some of the earliest scholars of Hanbali fiqh will be presented. It will be shown that relatively little can be known of the stance of the earlier scholars of this period concerning rituals at graveyards. This could possibly be due to a general acceptance of such acts, such that their permissibility was not called into question. Or, perhaps such practices became more prominent at a later time. At any rate, graveyard practice and the potential sins or heresies that might be associated with them were not of great concern to the earliest Hanbali scholars, perhaps suggesting that these matters were perceived as being irrelevant at the time. What one does observe is that the scholars whose time was closer to Ibn Taymiyyah’s would more clearly address issues such as wiping the grave of the Prophet. However, they would neither forbid this act nor declare that it caused one to become an apostate.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 A.H./855/6 C.E.)

The founder of the Hanbali school of thought reportedly never composed a book of fiqh himself. Rather, his students gathered his opinions from what Ibn Ḥanbal said, did
and the answers he gave.\(^\text{58}\) This makes it difficult to say with any certainty what Ibn Ḥanbal’s views concerning the visitation (ziyārah) of graves were. One way to gain an understanding of Ibn Ḥanbal’s stance on the matter is to look at his compendia of hadith, which are believed to have been dictated by Ibn Ḥanbal himself.\(^\text{59}\) These do not contain his official opinions on particular hadiths. Rather, Ibn Ḥanbal narrated mashhūr (widely accepted) hadith as well as jayyid (good) ones and those that were radī’ (bad) without saying which was the official stance of his school of thought.\(^\text{60}\) Instead, it would be upon later Hanbali scholars to determine whether a particular hadith would be șahīh (sound), ḍaʿīf (weak) and so on based on the standards Ibn Ḥanbal stipulated in the sciences of ‘ilm al-rijāl (biographical evaluation) and uṣūl al-fiqh (the principles of jurisprudence).\(^\text{62}\) However, it is worth noting that the classification of some hadith as weak does not necessarily mean that Ibn Ḥanbal found them unacceptable for the purposes of deriving a verdict. Rather, they were weak only insofar as they were not of the highest standard, or, șahīh. In fact, Ibn Ṭaymiyyah clarified that what Ibn Ḥanbal meant by weak hadith would actually be classified as ḥasan (good, solid) by later scholars, who came after the field of ‘ilm al-rijāl (the study of the individuals in chains of narration) was developed into a sophisticated science.\(^\text{63}\) Furthermore, Ibn Ḥanbal is quoted to have said concerning his Al-Musnad compilation, “Protect this musnad, for it will be a source of guidance (imāman) for the people.”\(^\text{64}\) Also, Ibn Ḥanbal reportedly selected these hadith from 700,000\(^\text{65}\) or


\(^\text{59}\) Ibn Ḥanbal, Ahmad, Al-Musnad, (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1995), vol. 1, p. 33.

\(^\text{60}\) Ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Musnad, vol. 1, p. 64.

\(^\text{61}\) And thus, permissible to use in ijtihād.


\(^\text{63}\) Al-Matroudi, The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation, p. 47.

750,000 hadith to provide a source of reference for Muslims. Therefore, while one cannot say with certainty what Ibn Ḥanbal’s view on ziyārah practices may have been, the following hadith narrated in his **Musnad** must carry some weight.

According to Ibn Ḥanbal, Kathīr ibn Zayd narrates from Dāwūd ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ who said:

One day, Marwān came and saw that a man had placed his face on a grave. He (Marwān) said, “Do you know what you are doing?” He then approached the man and saw that he was Abū Ayyūb, who said, “Yes, (for) I have come to the (grave of) the messenger of God. It is not that I have come to a (mere) rock. I have heard the Messenger of God say, ‘Do not lament religion if those who are qualified are put in charge. Rather, you should lament for (religion) when those who are not qualified are put in charge.”

The prominent Al-Azhar-educated scholar of hadith Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (d. 1958 C.E.), commentator for this particular edition of **Al-Musnad**, writes that this hadith is to be considered sound (ṣaḥīḥ) according to the standards held by Ibn Ḥanbal, as the founder of the Hanbali madhhab considered the only narrator about whom there might be concern, Kathīr ibn Zayd, to be reliable. Based on this assessment, the validity of using such a tradition in **fiqh** would be indisputably permissible.

There are a number of important explicit and implicit points that can be gathered from this hadith. Firstly, in the hadith Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī not only touches the grave but rather he places his face on it. This is not a simple touching of the grave. Rather, this is an act that could clearly be confused with worship, as it resembles prostration. In other words, this is a case that is far more extreme than the acts in which Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb would later find fault. However, Abū Ayyūb, instead of justifying his action to Marwān and acknowledging that he was in the wrong, seemingly adopts a

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67 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 34.
pedantic tone, educating Marwān on this matter. This is because, he reasons, the Messenger of God, due to his lofty status, is to be shown great respect, and his grave is not to be afforded the same treatment one would grant a mere rock, or, a material entity similar in outward appearance though lacking the lofty spiritual status of the resting abode of the Prophet. Abū Ayyūb then adopts a political tone, criticizing the government of his time. While it cannot be determined for sure whether the government was the source of Marwān’s supposed misconception, this is a possibility one might entertain.

Even if it cannot be determined whether or not Ibn Hanbal definitely accepted this hadith as sound and worthy of being the source of a verdict, the fact that Ibn Ḥanbal included this hadith in his Musnad is telling. Wahhabi policies towards ziyārah would necessitate that this act be a sin. Therefore, based on the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, it would have been Marwān’s duty to reprimand Abū Ayyūb for behaving as such due to the necessity of prohibiting the evil (al-nahy ‘an al-munkar). Furthermore, according to this hadith, Abū Ayyūb, a Companion of the Prophet ⁶⁹, would be portrayed as a sinner or perhaps even a disbeliever. This conflicts with the understanding of the Companions accepted by Sunni jurists, who maintain that the Companions were all upright (‘ādil). ⁷⁰ For these reasons it becomes clear that during Ibn Ḥanbal’s time, such actions were not of such significance that Ibn Ḥanbal found it necessary to either dismiss this hadith or to at least provide an alternative approach to understanding it. Otherwise, it would not make much sense for Ibn Ḥanbal to narrate this hadith.

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hadith. Thus, the fact that Ibn Ḥanbal narrates this hadith proves the great disparity between early Hanbali fiqh and that which it would become in later times.

Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl (d. 311 A.H./

Al-Khallāl studied with a number of Ibn Ḥanbal’s students, including two of his sons, Ṣāliḥ and ‘Abd Allāh.71 Al-Khallāl is known for having strived to preserve Ibn Ḥanbal’s teachings.72 As for his original works, two of the most renowned are Al-Amr bi’l-ma‘rūf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar (“commanding the good and forbidding the evil”) and Al-Qirā’ah ‘ind al-qubūr (“recitation near graves”). The former includes an enumeration of frequently committed sins that Al-Khallāl considered worthy of warning. However, he makes no mention of polytheistic acts or sins performed at graves. Rather, the sins with which he is more concerned revolve around poetry and musical instruments, perhaps sins that were commonplace at the time. This would seem to demonstrate that potential heresy or sin being practiced near graves was not of particular concern for al-Khallāl.

In Al-Qirā’ah ‘ind al-qubūr, al-Khallāl addresses matters the legitimacy of reciting near graves. However, while one familiar with contemporary Hanbali (or, Wahhabi) literature might expect a book with such a title to warn one of the potential sins and heretical actions that may occur near graves, al-Khallāl makes no mention of such matters. Rather, Al-Khallāl was more concerned with firmly cementing the notion that believers should frequent gravesites and recite the Qur’an in order to benefit their loved

71 al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad, Al-Amr bi’l-Ma‘rūf wa al-nahy ‘an al-Munkar, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-ilmiyah, 2003), p. 9
72 al-Khallāl, Al-Amr bi’l-Ma‘rūf wa al-nahy ‘an al-Munkar, pp. 9-10.
ones who have passed. Al-Khallāl narrates ‘Alī ibn Musā al-Ḥaddād reported that he was with Āḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Jawharī at a funeral procession (jināzah). When the deceased was buried, a blind man recited the Qur’an above a grave. Āḥmad ibn Ḥanbal exclaimed, “What is this?! (yā hādhā) Verily, reciting at a grave is bid‘ah (heretical innovation).” Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Jawharī, however, narrated a reliable hadith for Ibn Ḥanbal who then changed his mind and said to tell the blind man to return and recite the Qur’an above the grave. Elsewhere, Al-Khallāl mentions Al-Shāfi‘ī’s opinion on the matter, who simply replied, “it is fine” (lā ba’s bihā). He continues to mention the virtues and miraculous powers of reciting the Qur’an at graves. Thus, al-Khallāl, one of the earliest Hanbali scholars, was apparently not concerned with potential sins and acts of heresy that might occur near graves.

Al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Barbahārī (d. 329 A.H. / 940/1 C.E.)

Al-Barbahārī was a respected Hanbali jurist who studied with Āḥmad ibn Muḥammad Al-Murūdhī and Sahl ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, two of the most prominent students of Ibn Ḥanbal. Ibn Kathīr wrote that Al-Barbahārī was harshly opposed to those who committed bid‘ah and sin. In the only book of his that is available, Sharḥ al-sunnah, in which he mentions 156 critical matters including heretical innovations and

73 al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad, Al-Qirā’ah ‘ind al-Qubūr, pp. 87-90.
75 al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad, Al-Qirā’ah ‘ind al-Qubūr, p. 89.
76 al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad, Al-Qirā’ah ‘ind al-Qubūr, p. 90.
78 al-Barbahārī, Sharḥ al-Sunnah, p. 11.
sins to be avoided,\textsuperscript{79} al-Barbahārī makes no mention of the sins about which Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb wrote concerning ziyārah. Rather, when discussing visiting graves, al-Barbahārī mentions that the deceased indeed hear the one who visits them.\textsuperscript{80} Another important matter al-Barbahārī desires every believer to know is that should one come to their graves, it is obligatory to send salutations (\textit{salām}) upon Abū Bakr al-Šiddīq and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb\textsuperscript{81} after having sent salutations upon the Prophet.\textsuperscript{82} Thus, despite addressing numerous issues and mentioning visiting the grave of the Prophet, al-Barbahārī, in the only available work of his, did not mention the sins and heresy performed at graves.


Ibn ‘Aqīl was a renowned jurist of the fifth and sixth centuries A.H. who was later called “the imam of his age” by the great Hanbali jurist of the sixth century Abū’l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī.\textsuperscript{83} In his \textit{Ṣayd al-Khawāṭir} (“trapping desires”), Ibn ‘Aqīl dedicates an entire section to “disavowing that which is performed at mosques and graveyards.” However, the focus of his criticism is a far cry from the concerns of the likes of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. Rather than write of the sin of kissing or touching sacred relics, he instead writes of “a group of people in our time” who frequent mosques and other places of gathering (\textit{mashāhid}) where they perform insincere acts of worship desiring to be seen (\textit{riyā’}) or heard (\textit{sum‘ah}) as well as behaving playfully (\textit{al-la’b}), lying and being

\textsuperscript{79} For instance, from pages 134-138, al-Barbahārī discusses \textit{bid‘ah} on every page.
\textsuperscript{80} al-Barbahārī \textit{Sharḥ al-Sunnah}, pp. 83-84.
\textsuperscript{81} The first two caliphs. They are buried alongside the Prophet.
\textsuperscript{82} al-Barbahārī \textit{Sharḥ al-Sunnah}, p. 108.
heedless. They do these heinous acts in “places that are not designed to be kept lit by their lamps and [that are to be] pure of their sins [such as ostentation] and transgressions.” Rather, he writes:

I consider a [true] man to be one who knows the value of a candle [performs his acts of worship discreetly at night] and uses [a candle] to take oil and firewood to the homes of the poor, then stops at a zāwiyyah after having fulfilled his duties to his family, such that [by stopping at a zāwiyyah to pray in the middle of the night] he can be mentioned as being one of those who spends his nights in worship, praying two prayer units [rak‘atayn] with sorrow in his heart [for his shortcomings in relation to God] and then prays for himself, his family and the Muslims, then begins his day [bakkara] seeking his sustenance, not headed towards the graveyard. For, abandoning the graveyards in this case would be an instance of worship.85

In other words, certain individuals who desired to demonstrate their piety would choose graveyards as their settings. It might then be argued that average Muslims viewed the merits of visiting graveyards and performing worship there as being meritorious. Otherwise, they would not have sought the praise of others as a result of doing so. Ibn ‘Aqīl’s discourse may also reflect the fact that scholars mentioned the merits of graveyards and did not attach any sort of stigma to frequenting them when done properly. Therefore, insincere individuals, in Ibn ‘Aqīl’s estimation, would flock to these sites in order to earn the praises of others or they would disregard the sanctity of such sites by behaving inappropriately, lying and such. Speaking to such individuals, he writes, “You did not go there except to pretend to be pure. And you did not return except that you are now a sinner” (mā kharajta ʿillā mutanazzihan wa mā ‘udta ʿillā muta’aththimā). While the purpose of visiting graveyards is to remind one of the Afterlife, for such heedless individuals, there is no difference between a graveyard and a garden.86 Of course, for Ibn ‘Aqīl, there was no stigma attached to visiting graves sincerely and with proper etiquette.

84 A sufi lodge or place of worship.
86 Ibn ‘Aqīl, Ṣayd al-Khawāṭir, p. 91.
Ibn ‘Aqīl does not take this opportunity to mention the immoral acts that may be cases of bid‘ah (heretical innovation) or shirk, as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb later would. And this is despite the fact that Ibn ‘Aqīl was writing centuries before Ibn Taymiyyah, or, only about five hundred years after the entire Arabian Peninsula had (according to the traditional narrative of Islamic history) abandoned polytheism in favor of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah, meanwhile, lived approximately two centuries later while Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb lived nearly seven hundred years later. That is to say, the danger of Muslims reverting to polytheism would have conceivably been a greater threat during Ibn ‘Aqīl’s time. Yet, he felt there was no need to warn Muslims of such acts.

Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī (d. 620 A.H./ 1223/4 C.E.)

Ibn Qudāmah was reportedly considered to be the imam of the Hanbali School in Damascus of his time.87 In his Al-Mughnī (“that which suffices”), he includes two short chapters that explicitly mention the etiquettes of visiting the Prophet’s grave. Here one notices a difference in style from the Hanbali scholars mentioned above that did not systematically approach such issues. Ibn Qudāmah relates that which al-‘Utbiyy narrated concerning the ziyārah of the Prophet:

I was sitting by the grave of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, when a bedouin man [a’rābi] entered and said, “Peace be upon you, o messenger of God. I have heard God say [in the Qur’an], ‘Had they come to you [the Prophet] after having done injustice to themselves [sinned] and asked God for forgiveness and [additionally had] the Messenger asked for forgiveness on their behalf, they would have found God to be oft-turning [in repentance] and merciful88.’ And I have come to you seeking forgiveness for my sin[s], and seeking your intercession near God.” He [the bedouin man] then said the following poem:

88 Qur’an: 4:64.
O he who is the greatest of those buried in the grandest land,
[Of] those whose scent has made the valley and hills fragrant,
May my life be sacrificed for the grave that is your abode,
Where chastity, generosity and nobility reside.  

Al-‘Utbiyy then narrates that he fell asleep and saw the Prophet in a dream and was informed that the bedouin man had indeed been forgiven.

By narrating this story and not criticizing it, Ibn Qudāmah seems to be giving his approval of asking the Prophet for forgiveness and his intercession even after his death. Ibn Qudāmah then provides even more explicit approval of these actions. As he continues with the etiquette of the Prophet’s grave, Ibn Qudāmah writes that one is to “turn his back to the qiblah and to face the middle of the grave” and recite what is a lengthy salutation.

Ibn Qudāmah mentions the same verse the bedouin man recited and that one is to say, “I have come to you [the Prophet] seeking forgiveness for my sins, and seeking your intercession near my lord. So I ask you, O my lord, that you deem my forgiveness necessary, as you did during his [the Prophet’s life]. O God, make him [the Prophet] the foremost of the intercessors, the most successful of those who supplicate and the most noble of the first and last [of creation]...”

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89 yā khayra man dufinat bi’l-qā’ a’azamuhu / fa ūbā min ūbihinna al-qā’u wa’l-akamu
89 naft al-fidā’ li qabri anta sākinuhu / fthi al-’afāfu wa fthi al-jiđū wa’l-karamu
90 Ibn Qudāmah, Al-Mughnī, p. 795.
91 The salutation on page 795 is as such: “Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy and blessings of God. Peace be upon you, O prophet of God, and His chosen one from among His creation and His servants. I bear witness that there is no god but God, He alone, He has no partners. And I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger. I bear witness that you [the Prophet] delivered the messages of your lord, advised your community, invited to the path of your lord with wisdom and good council and that you worshiped God until certainty [death] befell you. So may the blessings of God be upon you, plentifully, such that pleases our lord and makes him content. O God, reward our Prophet on our behalf better than you have rewarded any of the prophets or messengers and raise him to the station of praiseworthiness [maqām māḥmūd] which you have promised. May the first and last [of mankind] be envious of him. O God, send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, just as you have blessed Ibrāḥīm and the family of Ibrāhīm. Verily, you are the Praised One and the Majestic One.”
92 Ibn Qudāmah, Al-Mughnī, p. 795.
Ibn Qudāmah sees no problem in seeking intercession directly from the Prophet at his grave. This is opposed to the views of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, who both argue that one should not seek anything from the deceased. God, then, granted the bedouin man forgiveness, based on this story. So by narrating this, Ibn Qudāmah seems to be supporting the view that the Prophet does indeed have the ability to effect change in spiritual matters, even after his death. Further, Ibn Qudāmah writes that one should turn towards the Prophet (and turn his back to God) when sending salutations and seeking forgiveness and intercession. This is contrary to what Ibn Taymiyyah wrote. Lastly, the salutation Ibn Qudāmah mentions is far longer than merely the salutation sent upon the recently deceased when performing *salāt al-mayyit*. However, Ibn Taymiyyah declared that one should give only a succinct salutation, just like one does when praying *salāt al-mayyit*.

The second chapter concerning the grave of the Prophet immediately follows. Ibn Qudāmah writes:

It is not *mustahabb* [recommended] to wipe the wall of the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, nor to kiss it. Ahmad [ibn Hanbal] said, ‘I have not heard of this’ (*lā a’rif hādhā*). Al-Athram said, ‘I saw that the scholars of Medina would not touch the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him. [Rather,] they would stand in a corner and send salutations.’ Abū ‘Abd Allāh said, ‘And such was the practice of Ibn ‘Umar.’ He [Abū ‘Abd Allāh or Al-Athram?] said, ‘As for the [Prophet’s] pulpit, it [touching it for blessings] has been mentioned.’ By this he intends that which Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Qārī’ narrated, that he looked at Ibn ‘Umar while he placed his hand on the seat of the Prophet’s pulpit, blessings and peace be upon him. Then he wiped his hand on his face.

While Ibn Qudāmah’s language is more direct than the Hanbali scholars before him, it is clear that the matter was far from settled. As demonstrated earlier, the question of whether one should touch the Prophet’s grave for blessings was not on the minds of early Hanbali jurists. Ibn ‘Aqīl, in his massive *Al-Mughnī*, does dedicate a small section
to the topic (translated in its entirety above), but does not give a direct answer. Ibn Ḥanbal did not know of the validity of such an act, the scholars of Medina would not do so, and Ibn ‘Umar would touch the pulpit but not the grave. Therefore, it cannot be said that it is *mustahabb* or *wājib* (obligatory). But does this make touching the Prophet’s grave *makrūh* (disliked), *ḥarām* (forbidden) or *mubāh* (permissible)? And if it is forbidden, is it *bid‘ah* or, even worse, *shirk*? If, in Ibn Qudāmah’s opinion, this act was an instance of polytheism, or, of the sort of grave worship to which the communities of previous prophets succumbed, why would he mention the seemingly meritorious nature of seeking blessings from the Prophet’s pulpit (another lifeless object granted a certain station because of its association with the Prophet)? Clearly, for Ibn Qudāmah, the matter was not as serious or as indicative of paganism as it would be for Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb.
Chapter 3: Ibn Taymiyyah’s Break with Hanbali jurists

Approximately five hundred years after his death, Ibn Taymiyyah would come to occupy an elevated station among Hanbali jurists.\(^\text{93}\) This was due, in large part, to the movement of Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. However, during his lifetime, Ibn Taymiyyah had a limited (albeit, loyal) following,\(^\text{94}\) though he was popular among average Muslims. In fact, it is said that fifteen or sixteen thousand women and up to two hundred thousand men attended his funeral\(^\text{95}\) and that Muslims from all over the world prayed for him, including some in China.\(^\text{96}\) This popularity was due in large part to *fatwās* he gave that made life easier for the average Muslim. For instance, he argued that leasing orchards was permissible,\(^\text{97}\) sharecropping was to be treated like rent (meaning, sharecropping contracts did not need to be stipulated in a contract),\(^\text{98}\) a woman could circumambulate the Ka‘bah when menstruating,\(^\text{99}\) standing water became pure after an

\(^{93}\) *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, p. 311.

\(^{94}\) *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, p. 31. On the same page, Caterina Bori writes that Ibn Rajab mentions only nine Hanbali scholars who were seen as being closely attached to Ibn Taymiyyah.

\(^{95}\) *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, p. 41.

\(^{96}\) Al-Matroudi, *The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation*, p. 30.

\(^{97}\) *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, 206.

\(^{98}\) *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*, 196.

impure substance became dissolved in it, and a conditional divorce could be breached.\(^{100}\)

Another reason for Ibn Taymiyyah’s popularity and legacy is his stance against Mongol invaders. Ibn Taymiyyah declared that the Mongols must be fought, as they were worse than the heretical \textit{khawārij} of early Islam.\(^{101}\) Ibn Taymiyyah acted as a representative of the Mamluk Sunni resistance in Egypt and Syria.\(^{102}\) Ibn Taymiyyah is even said to have traveled to the Mamluk capital, Cairo, to incite people to wage \textit{jihād}, using the Qur’an and hadith as proof.\(^{103}\) Furthermore, he declared the Mongol ruler Ghāzān an unbeliever (despite his profession of Islam) for maintaining customary Mongol law (and disregarding Islamic law) while also allowing his soldiers to remain non-Muslim.\(^{104}\)

But while his bold \textit{fatwās} as well as his role in popular politics made him a champion of non-scholars who appreciated his courage (and more lenient opinions),\(^{105}\) Ibn Taymiyyah met a great deal of opposition from the jurists of his day. His controversial \textit{fatwās} were dealt with sternly, leading to multiple imprisonments. However, it was his opinion forbidding travel for the purpose of \textit{ziyārah} that landed him in the Cairo prison in which he would eventually die.\(^{106}\) One of the four chief judges of Cairo who issued the verdict for his imprisonment was the Hanbali Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-Maqdisī, who declared Ibn Taymiyya’s verdicts \textit{al-bāṭinah al-gharībah al-mardūdah}

\(^{100}\) \textit{Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times}, 191.
\(^{102}\) Jansen, p. 394.
\(^{103}\) Jansen, p. 394.
\(^{104}\) Jansen, pp. 394-5.
\(^{105}\) \textit{Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times}, p. 41.
\(^{106}\) Al-Matroudi, p. 20.
(vain, odd and unacceptable) and also declared Ibn Taymiyyah to be a kāfir (disbeliever) for his fatwā on ziyārah. This fatwā was so controversial that reportedly a group of scholars in Baghdad who supported Ibn Taymiyyah’s stance were also jailed. It then should be no surprise that the first time one sees matters related to ziyārah declared to be sinful and heretical is in Ibn Taymiyyah’s writings.

It is not a mere coincidence that Ibn Taymiyyah’s views on ziyārah stood in stark contrast to Hanbali scholars before him. He argued for the authoritativeness of the Qur’an and sunnah over all else. And while ultimately this is something upon which all Islamic scholars might agree, Ibn Taymiyyah meant to target the madhhab system. He did so not by criticizing the founders of the madhāhib directly, but rather, by emphasizing that their authority is derived from nothing other than the Qur’an and the sunnah. Therefore, the views of the Hanbali School, for instance, should not be given preference over someone like Ibn Taymiyyah who, according to himself, only stated that which was in accordance with the Qur’an and sunnah.

Ibn Taymiyyah composed a book whose title (Raf’ al-malām ‘an al-a’īmmah al-a’alām, or, “removing blame from the luminous imams”) indicates that its purpose is to absolve the founders of the madhāhib, or, imams, from blame. However, the book actually serves as a means by which their authority can be questioned. He begins Raf’ al-malām by relating the value of scholars and that they are well-intentioned, writing:

It is obligatory upon Muslims... to befriend [muwālār] the believers... particularly the scholars, who are the inheritors of the prophets... In all communities prior to the mission of our prophet, Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, scholars were the most evil among them, except for [i.e., “but this is not the case for”] Muslims. For their scholars are the best among them... And

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107 Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times, p. 35.
108 Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times, p. 40.
109 Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times, p. 48.
it should be known that there is not one of the imams who are widely accepted by the community who intends to disobey the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, in anything concerning his sunnah... For they [the imams] all agree that that it is obligatory to follow the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him...

He then addresses the subject matter of this work, namely, defending the imams from blame. He argues that they would never oppose the sunnah of the Prophet intentionally. So, if one, through his own independent reason, finds a case in which it appears that they have opposed the sunnah, he should simply know that this could be the result of a number of causes. Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

If it is found that one of them [the imams] has contradicted an authentic hadith, then he must have an excuse for abandoning it [the hadith in question]. And all the excuses are of three types: 1. He did not believe that the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said it. 2. He did not believe that he [the Prophet] addressed that issue in what he [the Prophet] said. 3. He believed that the ruling was abrogated.

Ibn Taymiyyah then elaborates, providing ten reasons any of the above three could occur. The first four reasons all pertain to the science of hadith narrators (‘ilm al-rijāl). For instance, it is possible that a particular hadith did not reach one of the imams, or that the hadith reached him, but he did not find it acceptable. These reasons do not seem to necessarily diminish the status of the imams. However, the fifth possibility Ibn Taymiyyah includes is that the imam simply forgot the hadith. That is to say, the imams would never intentionally oppose the sunnah of the Prophet, which would constitute a great sin. He offers as proof of this possibility a story concerning the second caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who incorrectly said that a man who could not find water to perform his ritual washing should not pray until he does. ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir then

113 Ibn Taymiyyah, Raf‘ al-malām ‘an al-‘a’immah al-‘ālām, p. 22.
reportedly reminded him that this was an instance in which one should perform *tayammum* (purification by means of dirt).\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, *Raf‘ al-malām ’an al-a‘immah al-a‘alām*, pp. 22-23.} Similarly, a woman corrected ‘Umar for claiming that a dowry could not exceed that of the wives of the Prophet by reciting a verse of the Qur’ān as proof.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, *Raf‘ al-malām ’an al-a‘immah al-a‘alām*, p. 23.} Ibn Taymiyyah uses the example of an esteemed Companion to demonstrate that no Muslim is beyond reproach, the imams included. Reasons six through ten deal with the *dalālah* of a hadith, or, what it indicates, and how the imams may have erred in their understanding.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, *Raf‘ al-malām ’an al-a‘immah al-a‘alām*, pages 25-35.}

In closing, Ibn Taymiyyah writes that, were one to abandon the hadith of the Prophet out of fear of insulting scholars who gave opinions that contradicted such hadith, he would be no better than the People of the Book (Christians and the Jews\footnote{While “the People of the Book” could include other religions as well, here it appears that what is intended is Christians and Jews, due to the phrase “priests and rabbis.”}, who took their priests and rabbis to be lords to the exclusion of God.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, *Raf‘ al-malām ’an al-a‘immah al-a‘alām*, pp. 88-89.} He then includes a hadith of the Prophet, in which he is believed to have said, “They [Christians and Jews] did not worship them [their scholars], but rather, they [the scholars] made permissible that which was impermissible, and they [Christians and Jews] followed them. And they made impermissible that which was permissible, and they followed them.”\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, *Raf‘ al-malām ’an al-a‘immah al-a‘alām*, p. 89.} Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that, “scholars disagree with each other a lot of the time” and he includes verse fifty-nine of the fourth chapter of the Qur’ān, which states that when Muslims disagree concerning something, they should refer it to God and the Messenger.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyyah, *Raf‘ al-malām ’an al-a‘immah al-a‘alām*, p. 88.} It is worth noting that early in this work, Ibn Taymiyyah stated that Muslim scholars were the best of the
Islamic community. This was as opposed to the scholars of previous religions, who were the worst of their respective communities. After a lengthy discussion, in which Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrates cases where the opinions of scholars differ with Ibn Taymiyyah’s interpretation of what certain hadith indicate, he appears to be warning Muslims that if they follow these scholars in verdicts Ibn Taymiyyah believes to be clearly in disagreement with the sunnah of the Prophet, such Muslims will be no better than the deviant Christians and Jews.

This work, then, defends the imams in one sense while also calling upon Muslims to adhere more strictly to the sunnah of the Prophet. It is for this reason that Yossef Rapoport has written concerning Raf‘ al-malām:

The treaty ostensibly sets out to absolve the school founders from the accusation of proclaiming legal rulings that go against authentic Hadith. But... the main purpose of the treatise is actually to undermine the authority of the schools... Ibn Taymiyyah’s generosity... should not obscure the main objective of the treatise, which is to demonstrate that the school founders were not infallible. Indeed, the conclusion of the treatise is that it is not allowed for a jurist to turn away an opinion indicated by the Sunna in favour of an opinion of a scholar, as knowledgeable as he may be... even that of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal...121

I might add that Ibn Taymiyyah presents his own understanding of the sunnah as being one that is entirely objective and better informed than what previous scholars had understood. And his students and followers would afford him the same regard. Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinions on issues that had been addressed by the imams and students of the four madhāhib were considered more valid because of what was perceived as a more accurate interpretation of the Prophet’s sunnah. In reality, such scholars had granted Ibn Taymiyyah the same authority and license to interpret that followers of the madhāhib had granted the imams. In other words, the ideal of achieving the truest understanding of the

121 Ibn Taymiyya and His Times, pp. 203-4.
message of Islam is in the eyes of the beholder. Clearly, this was the claim of scholars before Ibn Taymiyyah. He merely does what other scholars had done, that is, clarifies why he chose his particular opinion based on certain proofs and his decisions regarding the authenticity and indication of certain hadith. However, for Ibn Taymiyyah, his opinion is not merely an opinion, but rather, an objective presentation of the sunnah of the Prophet, regardless of what previous scholars may have written. And the fact that the opinions of previous scholars were not independent proofs may have been why Ibn Taymiyyah did not believe in the authority of scholarly consensus (ijmâ’) after the time of the first generations of Muslims, in part because it would be nearly impossible to prove.122

Ibn Taymiyyah encouraged each knowledgeable Muslim to form and express his own opinion.123 “A judge,” he writes, “is merely one of the Muslims. If he possesses knowledge, he should express his opinion in accordance with that knowledge... If then the truth becomes apparent, and the judgment of God and His messenger becomes known, it is obligatory for all to follow that opinion.”124 The official opinions of the madhâhib are not proofs in and of themselves. Rather, they must be judged insofar as they agree with the Qur’an and sunnah. For this reason, Ibn Taymiyyah did not view school affiliation as being obligatory. One should not simply follow his school of thought out of custom (‘âdah), but rather, follow whatever judgment most corresponds with the revealed texts.125

It is with this understanding that one must read Ibn Taymiyyah’s fatâwâ on

122 Ibn Taymiyya and His Times, pp. 204-5.
123 Ibn Taymiyya and His Times, p. 207.
124 Ibn Taymiyya and His Times, p. 207.
ziyarah. He would not allow the works of previous Hanbali scholars to shape his approach. Ibn Taymiyyah, like any scholar, approached these issues to the best of his ability. However, his willingness to issue bold verdicts that prohibited what had previously been allowed based on his particular understanding of certain hadith and verses of the Qur’an is what caused a rupture in the Hanbali madhab.

The earliest Hanbali scholars arguably did not take a firm stance on matters pertaining to seeking blessings while performing ziyarah. And while Ibn Qudāmah directly addressed issues such as wiping and kissing the grave of the Prophet, he did not seem to have an official fatwā to offer. He merely argued that these acts could not be deemed mustahabb and that previous scholars like Ibn Ḣanbal had not known of them. However, Ibn Taymiyyah’s language is stronger as he asserts that all have agreed as to its impermissibility. Earlier I mentioned the 420th question and answer in Ibn Taymiyyah’s Al-tasā’ulāt al-shar‘iyyah ‘alā al-ikhtiyārāt al-fiqhiyyah (essentially, “questions pertaining to jurisprudence”) in which he argued that all the imams agree that one should not kiss or wipe the grave of the Prophet.

It is worth noting that the editor of this work, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abbās al-Ba‘lī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 803 A.H. 1400/01 C.E.), added the following after Ibn Taymiyyah’s reply: “Rather, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī127 has said that it is mustahabb to kiss the [walls of] the Prophet’s chamber,

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blessings and peace be upon him. And God knows better.”

This statement made by a Hanbali scholar less than a century later makes it difficult to accept Ibn Taymiyyah’s claim that the imams all agreed that one should not touch or kiss the grave. It seems to make apparent the very point at hand, namely that Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinions on such matters marked a clear break with his predecessors.

Another example of the rupture that Ibn Taymiyyah’s thought created in the Hanbali madhhab concerns the matter of facing the Prophet’s grave when supplicating. Ibn Qudāmah mentioned that one should “turn his back to the qiblah” and “face the middle of the grave” when calling upon the Prophet. Moreover, one is not to merely recite salutations, but rather, to seek forgiveness by means of the Prophet as well as his intercession. Ibn Taymiyyah, however, takes a drastically different stance. I demonstrated above that Ibn Taymiyyah prohibited asking the Prophet for his intercession directly after his death. He also deemed this a form of shirk (apparently he intended greater shirk, though Sulaymān ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb would disagree). The only act he considered permissible at the Prophet’s grave was to send salutations upon him. For this reason, he also forbade facing the Prophet’s grave when supplicating. The 421st question of Al-tasā’ulāt al-shar ‘iyyah ‘alā al-ikhtiyārāt al-fiqhiyyah is as follows:

Q: When one sends salutations upon the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, should one [also] supplicate? If so, how?

Ibn Taymiyyah responds:

A: When one sends salutations upon the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, he should face the qiblah and pray in the mosque [as opposed to in the Prophet’s chamber]. And one should not supplicate while facing the grave, just as the Companions would do [i.e., they would not face the grave]. And I know not of any dispute concerning this [opinion]. And that which has been

narrated concerning Mālik [ibn Anas], in which he disputes with Al-Manṣūr concerning this, is not authentic. Rather, the dispute concerns when one is sending salutations [not when one is praying], and whether one should face the qiblah or the grave at that time. For, Abū Ḥanīfah has said that one should face the qiblah, while the majority have said that one should face the grave.

Again, it is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyyah “knows not of any dispute” concerning the opinion that one should face the qiblah, and not the Prophet’s grave, when supplicating. However, Ibn Qudāmah, a renowned Hanbali jurist who lived in the century before Ibn Taymiyyah, clearly states the opposite opinion, as he encourages those who visit the Prophet’s grave to face him and ask for forgiveness and his intercession.

Lastly, it is worth noting the language Ibn Taymiyyah employed in debates concerning ziyārah. His particular choice of hadith would be used by Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and later Wahhabi scholars. Here I will include some of the themes in hadith that became commonplace in Wahhabi works on the topic ziyārah. Ibn Taymiyyah compared Muslims who visited graves to the people of Noah as a result of his application of a story

129 In Al-shifā’ li’l-Qāḍī ‘Ayād, the story is narrated as such:
Muḥammad ibn Ḥamīd narrates that Abū Ja’far al-Manṣūr, the commander of the believers (amīr al-mu’mīnīn) debated Mālik in the mosque of the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him. Mālik said to him [al-Manṣūr], “O Commander of the Believers, do not raise your voice in this mosque, for verily God has disciplined a group of people by saying, ‘Do not raise your voices louder than the voice of the Prophet.’ (Qur’an: 49:2) And He has praised another group of people, saying, ‘Verily those who lower their voices in the presence of the Prophet...’ (Qur’an: 49:3) And he has reprimanded another group of people, saying, ‘Verily those who call you from beyond a curtain...’ (Qur’an: 49:4). For verily his sanctity while deceased is like his sanctity when he was alive.”

Abū Ja’far [Al-Manṣūr] was humbled by this and said, “O Abū ‘Abd Allāh, shall I face the qiblah and supplicate or face the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him?”

He [Mālik] said, “Why would you turn your face from him when he is your means and the means of your father, Adam, peace be upon him, to God, Exalted is He, on the Day of Resurrection. In fact, you should face him and seek his intercession so that God makes him an intercessor.” Taken from Ṣabīḥ, Maḥmūd, Akhtā’ Ibn Taymiyyah, (Cairo: Dār al-rukn wa’l-maqām, 2003), p. 230.

In fact, Ṣabīḥ demonstrates that this story was narrated in noteworthy books of Mālikī scholars as well as by Ibn Ḥanbal. Furthermore, its authenticity was never questioned prior to Ibn Taymiyyah. The narrator, Muḥammad ibn Ḥamīd (d. 248) was considered reliable by a group of scholars and unreliable by others. However, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Tirmīdhī and Abū Dāwūd (authors of three of the six authentic books of Sunni hadith) all narrated from him. Therefore, Ṣabīḥ argues, it is strange that it took until the time of Ibn Taymiyyah (480 years after Muḥammad ibn Ḥamīd’s death) for this story to be questioned. (Ṣabīḥ, p. 230)

related in hadith. Essentially, what began as displays of reverence for righteous figures gradually developed into shirk. It is for this reason that actions like kissing or wiping graves are forbidden. Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

As for graves, it has been documented (fa qad warada) that the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, prohibited making them into mosques and cursed he who does so. And a number of the Companions and the tābi‘īn [the generation after the Companions] have mentioned this as well, just as al-Bukhārī mentioned in his sahih compilation. Also, al-Tabarānī and others have mentioned this in their tafsīr [exegeses of the Qur’an]. And Wathnāh and others have mentioned this in their tafsīr [exegeses of the Qur’an]. And al-Rāzī and others have mentioned this in their books on the stories of the lives of the prophets when discussing the following verse: “And they said, do not abandon your gods, and do not abandon Wadd, Suwā’, Yaghūth, Ya’ūq or Nasr.”131 They [the aforementioned scholars] said that these were the names of righteous members of the people of Noah. Then, when they died, they [individuals from among the people of Noah] would cling to [ya’kūfūn ‘alā] their graves. Then after time passed, they took their statues to be idols. And clinging to graves, wiping them, kissing them, praying near them and at graveyards, etc., is the origin of shirk and worshipping idols…132

Another hadith of particular concern for Ibn Taymiyyah became the basis for his controversial verdict forbidding traveling to the Prophet’s mosque for the purpose of ziyārah. The hadith in question says, “Do not pack to go [anywhere, or, a mosque] except for three mosques: al-masjid al-ḥarām134, al-masjid al-aqṣā135 and this mosque of mine” (lā tushadd al-riḥāl illā ilā thalāthat masājid: al-masjid al-ḥarām, al-masjid al-aqṣā wa masjidīt hādhā).137

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131 Qur’an: 71:23.
133 This is a matter of debate. It is Ibn Taymiyyah’s particular understanding (that this forbids traveling anywhere with the purpose of seeking nearness to God other than the three mosques mentioned) that inspired his controversial fatwā. An alternative understanding is that this is saying that it is not appropriate to travel to a mosque other than these three mosques, for the merit of other mosques is similar to that of one’s local mosque. In this case, the hadith would not contain a prohibition but rather mere guidance (irshād).
134 The mosque in Mecca that houses the Ka’bah.
135 In Jerusalem.
136 The Prophet’s mosque in Medina.
Other hadith that are prominent in Ibn Taymiyyah’s works and those of other Wahhabi scholars concern turning graves into mosques and making the Prophet’s grave into an ‘īd.138 In the passage from Ziyārat al-Qubūr given above concerning the people of Noah and the origins of idolatry, Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that the Prophet prohibited turning graves into mosques and cursed those who did so. Elsewhere in the same work Ibn Taymiyyah narrates that the Prophet said, “God has cursed the Jews and Christians who took the graves of their prophets to be mosques.”139 As for the second theme in hadith, in Iqtiḍā’ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqtīm li mukhālafat ahl al-jaḥīm (“adhering to the straight path in order to oppose the people of Hell”) Ibn Taymiyyah narrates multiple hadith with the same essential message that the Messenger of God said, “Do not make your homes into graveyards, do not make my grave an ‘īd, and send blessings upon me, for your prayers reach me wherever you may be.”140 According to Ibn Taymiyyah, ‘īd here means, “a place of gathering.”141 In Ziyārat al-Qubūr Ibn Taymiyyah also relates that the Prophet said, “Do not take my grave to be an ‘īd.”142

While these hadith were accessible to previous scholars, they would receive particular attention from Ibn Taymiyyah. They would then figure prominently in the works of a number of later Wahhabi scholars, suggesting that Wahhabi scholars reiterated his attitude towards ziyārah due to his lofty status in their estimation, essentially allotting him the position of founder of a madhhab. Wahhabi scholars favor Ibn Taymiyyah’s views concerning the authenticity of these hadith as well as the inauthenticity of hadith

138 Usually this means “celebration.” However, as will be seen shortly, Ibn Taymiyyah translates ‘īd as “a place of gathering” (See: Ibn Taymiyyah, Iqtiḍā’ al-ṣirāṭ, vol. 2, p. 665).
139 Ibn Taymiyyah, Ziyārat al-Qubūr, p. 22.
142 Ibn Taymiyyah, Ziyārat al-Qubūr, p. 22.
that seem to contradict them.
Chapter 4: Hanbali Jurists After Ibn Taymiyyah

While later scholars expressed similar sentiments regarding the venerations of saints and shrines, it is not clear how much of this can be attributed to Ibn Taymiyyah’s influence. But whether it was due to posthumous recognition for his scholarship or the popularity of his views among non-scholars, Hanbali jurists before Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb thought it relevant to mention Ibn Taymiyyah’s views in their works.

In the following pages, works of fiqh that would have been read in the scholarly milieu of Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb will be given great attention. It is by examining Ibn Taymiyyah’s place in Hanbali fiqh (or at least Hanbali fiqh in Najd and the Hijaz) that one can better understand Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb’s enforcement of Ibn Taymiyyah’s views in general as well as his departure in terms of his opinions concerning the apostasy of Muslims.

Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751 A.H. / 1350/1 C.E.)

Ibn al-Qayyim was a prominent student of Ibn Taymiyahh who, according to Muḥammad Sayyid Kīlānī, spent a great deal of time in his company and “wrote many

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143 Ibn Taymiyyah and his times, p. 304.
144 The editor of the particular edition of Ighāthat al-lahfān fī maṣāyid al-shayṭān that will be used here.
books in order to propagate [Ibn Taymiyyah’s] opinions and teachings. As a result, like his teacher, Ibn al-Qayyim was imprisoned multiple times and freed only after the death of Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn al-Qayyim is also a major figure in the literature of Wahhabi scholars, as his opinions are frequently cited, oftentimes alongside those of Ibn Taymiyyah. In his Ighāthat al-lahfān fī maṣāyid al-shayṭān, or, “help for the troubled one from the traps of Satan,” Ibn al-Qayyim delineates the different schemes of the satans. One such scheme that, according to Ibn al-Qayyim, has existed since ancient times is the fitnah (source of dissension) brought about by graves, to the point where those who reside in graves, and not God, are worshipped. Like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim mentions the story of the people of Noah and how this “disease” afflicted them. And according to “more than one member of the salaf,” he writes, grave worship began when a group of righteous people from among the people of Noah passed away and others began to cling to their graves, make statues of them and, eventually, worship them. Ibn al-Qayyim then quotes shaykhanā (“our great teacher”), Ibn Taymiyyah, who said that it was due to the people of Noah that God prohibited taking graves to be mosques. In this regard, Ibn al-Qayyim narrates hadith similar to those Ibn Taymiyyah narrated prohibiting taking graves as mosques and how Jews and Christians were cursed as a result of doing so. Ibn al-Qayyim also dedicates a short chapter to the concept of taking graves to be an ‘id. Like his teacher, Ibn al-Qayyim mentions multiple hadith attributed

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146 Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 3.
147 Ibn al-Qayyim, pp. 201-2.
149 Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 203.
151 Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 204.
to the Prophet in which he prohibited taking his grave to be an ‘īd. He also agreed with Ibn Taymiyyah in defining ‘īd to mean “a place of gathering.”152

Ibn al-Qayyim then tells his reader to “now listen to the ziyārah of the people of faith[, or,] that which God, exalted is He, has legislated…” and then to “compare it the ziyārah of the people of polytheism which Satan has legislated, and choose for yourself.”153 He mentions a number of hadith in which the Prophet dictates to others what to say when visiting graves. The hadith in question contain simple salutations similar to what Ibn Taymiyyah considered a valid form of ziyārah.154 Ibn al-Qayyim first dismisses the practices of seeking blessings (al-tabarruk) from graves as having no merit, as they are not a part of the sunnah.155 He then demonstrates that such acts are forbidden by providing a list of things that the Prophet prohibited concerning graves, which includes kissing and grazing graves.156 Furthermore, he writes, the mushrikūn would take rocks, trees or wells as idols (anṣāb) and wipe (yatamassāḥūn) or graze (yastalimūn) them. And, he writes, the greatest of these of idols was graves, which are the origins of idolatry, “as al-salaf from among the Companions and their followers have said.”157 It is worth noting that Ibn al-Qayyim seems to suggest that not only are wiping and kissing graves forbidden, but also the lighter form of touching, istilām (grazing).

As for calling upon those in graves for help, Ibn al-Qayyim argues that it is not permissible to choose a gravesite specifically as the place of one’s supplication, let alone

152 Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 209.
153 Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 218.
155 Ibn al-Qayyim, pp. 221-2.
156 Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 222.
calling upon those in the graves themselves.\textsuperscript{158} He writes that “it is not possible” that calling upon those in graves is legitimate.\textsuperscript{159} Ibn al-Qayyim quotes Ibn Taymiyyah in writing some of the forbidden innovations of visiting graves, including asking of them things from the unseen realm as well as wiping and kissing graves.\textsuperscript{160} Ibn al-Qayyim adds that \textit{al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ} would even turn their backs to the Prophet’s grave when supplicating.\textsuperscript{161} According to Ibn al-Qayyim, the only permissible form of seeking intercession is to ask God to make another intercede on one’s behalf, which is the view held by Ibn Taymiyyah.\textsuperscript{162} In this way, one can see that on the matter of \textit{ziyārah}, Ibn al-Qayyim’s views were closely aligned with those of his teacher and stood in contrast to earlier Hanbali scholars like Ibn Qudāmah.

\textbf{Musā ibn Ahmad al-Hajjāwī (d. 968 A.H./ 1560/61 C.E.) and Mansūr al-Buhūtī (d. 1051 A.H./ 1641 C.E.)}

While Ibn al-Qayyim and other dedicated students and admirers of Ibn Taymiyyah held him in high esteem, it is around the 15th century C.E. that one begins to see the impact Ibn Taymiyyah had on Hanbali \textit{fiqh} in general. Abū Bakr ibn Zayd al-Jurā’ī (d. 883 A.H./ 1478 C.E.) was a 15th century Hanbali jurist who apparently respected Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinions.\textsuperscript{163} In some cases where Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinion conflicted with other members of the Hanbali school, al-Jurā’ī referred to Ibn

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 223.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 221.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Ibn al-Qayyim, pp. 235-6.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 220.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 239.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Al-Matroudi, p. 142.
\end{itemize}
Taymiyyah’s views as the more popular opinion (al-ashhar).\(^{164}\) Meanwhile, on other issues, he stated that Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinion was contrary to the consensus of the Hanbali school.\(^{165}\) Another 15th century Hanbali jurist, Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Mardāwī (d. 885 A.H./ 1480 C.E.), also favored Ibn Taymiyyah’s view over the views of other Hanbali scholars while criticizing Ibn Taymiyyah in other cases.\(^{166}\) Additionally, al-Mardāwī consulted Ibn Taymiyyah’s works for the writing of his Al-Inṣāf.\(^{167}\) But it is in al-Ḥajjāwī’s works where one observes that Ibn Taymiyyah gains an even more elevated status in the madhhab. Prior to Ibn Taymiyyah, shaykh and shaykh al-islām were terms used to describe Ibn Qudāmah. Afterwards, the terms were used for Ibn Taymiyyah as well. And by the time of al-Ḥajjāwī, these terms were used exclusively for Ibn Taymiyyah.\(^{168}\)

Al-Ḥajjāwī was the mufti of the Hanbali madhhab in Damascus of his time.\(^{169}\) It has been recorded that five Najdi scholars traveled to study with four prominent Hanbali jurists in Damascus and Cairo in the 10th century A.H./ 16th century C.E. Al-Ḥajjāwī was one of these four prominent jurists.\(^{170}\) Also, there was a perceived decline in Hanbali scholarship in the 18th century (or, the century in which Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb lived). For this reason, books like Al-Ḥajjāwī’s Al-Iqnā’ li ṭālib al-intifā’ (“that which makes content one who seeks benefit”) and commentaries written on it were used as textbooks in Najd,

\(^{164}\) Al-Matroudi, p. 143.
\(^{165}\) Al-Matroudi, p. 144.
\(^{166}\) Al-Matroudi, pp. 146-147.
\(^{167}\) Al-Matroudi, p. 148.
\(^{168}\) Al-Matroudi, p. 151.
\(^{170}\) Al Juhany, p. 129.
as travel to Syria and Egypt declined.\textsuperscript{171} Perhaps the most prominent\textsuperscript{172} of such commentaries was \textit{Kashshāf al-qinā‘ ‘an al-iqnā‘}, by al-Buhūtī.

In \textit{Al-Iqnā‘}, al-Ḥajjāwī addresses the matter of visiting the grave of the prophet, writing:

And the visitor should stand in front of the grave and come close to it. There is no problem with touching it with one’s hand (\textit{lā ba’s bi lamsīhi bi’l-yad}). As for wiping it (\textit{wa ammā al-tamassuh bihi}), praying near it, or approaching it with the intention to pray, believing that praying there has more merit than praying elsewhere, or making a vow for it (\textit{al-nadhr lahu}),\textsuperscript{173} al-shaykh has said, “This\textsuperscript{174} is not of the religion of the Muslims. Rather, this is an example of an ugly \textit{bid’ah} that has come about, which is a branch of \textit{shirk}.”\textsuperscript{175}

In his commentary, Al-Buhūtī then adds the aforementioned response Ibn Taymiyyah gave to the 420th question in his \textit{Ikhtiyārāt},\textsuperscript{176} including the comment made by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Ba’lī, who said Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī considered kissing the walls of the Prophet’s chamber to be \textit{mustaḥabb}.\textsuperscript{177}

Al-Ḥajjāwī, then, begins by stating his own opinion-- touching the grave (\textit{lams}) is permissible. As seen in his verdicts given above, Ibn Taymiyyah did not distinguish between touching (\textit{lams}) and wiping (\textit{al-tamassuh bi}). Then, when al-Ḥajjāwī wants to address other issues related to acts performed near the grave of the Prophet, he simply mentions Ibn Taymiyyah’s views without passing judgment.

As for that which should be said near the Prophet’s grave, al-Ḥajjāwī writes that

\begin{paracol}{171} Al-Juhany, p. 133. 
\end{paracol} 
\begin{paracol}{172} Al-Juhany, p. 133. 
\end{paracol} 
\begin{paracol}{173} This could possibly mean vowing to the grave itself, though it seems more likely that what was meant was making a vow that one’s vow would require him to perform some sort of charitable act for the grave. 
\end{paracol} 
\begin{paracol}{174} It is unclear what to what “this” refers. 
\end{paracol} 
\begin{paracol}{175} al-Buhūtī, 	extit{Maṣūr ibn Yūnus, Kashshāf al-Qinā‘ ‘an al-Iqnā‘}, (Riyadh: The Ministry of Justice of Saudi Arabia, 2003), vol. 4, p. 245. 
\end{paracol} 
\begin{paracol}{176} “The first generations of Muslims (\textit{al-salaf}) and the imams [of the four Sunni schools of \textit{fiqh}] have all agreed that he who sends salutations upon the Prophet should neither wipe nor kiss the grave. Rather, they have all agreed that salutations and kissing are reserved for \textit{Al-hajar al-aswad}. And \textit{Al-rukn al-yamānt} can be touched, but not kissed, based on the correct opinion.” 
\end{paracol} 
\begin{paracol}{177} al-Buhūtī, \textit{Kashshāf}, vol. 4, p. 245. 
\end{paracol}
one should turn his back to the qiblah and face the Prophet in order to send salutations.

“And if one adds to this,” he writes, “then this is appropriate (ḥasan).”178 Al-Buhūṭī then expands upon this statement by including essentially the same content as Ibn Qudāmah. He mentions a lengthy salutation nearly identical to that which Ibn Qudāmah mentioned, except that he adds, “and bless Muḥammad and the progeny of Muḥammad as you have blessed Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm. Verily, you are the Praised One, the Majestic One.”179 He then writes that one should say, “O God, you have said - and what you say is the truth...” before including the sixty-fourth verse of the fourth chapter of the Qur’ān,180 or, the verse the bedouin recited in the story Ibn Qudāmah related. Then, according to al-Buhūṭī, one is to ask the Prophet forgiveness and for his intercession. Al-Buhūṭī then relates the story of the bedouin man narrated by al-ʿUtbiyy.181

Al-Ḥajjāwī then writes that one is to step slightly to the left and supplicate to God while facing the qiblah. This is so that he does not turn his back to the Prophet, but at the same time, is not facing the Prophet’s grave while supplicating.182 This seems to be a sort

179 The salutation on page 345 begins with the same wording as what was mentioned in Ibn Qudāmah’s Al-Mughnī: “Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy and blessings of God. Peace be upon you, O prophet of God, and His chosen one from among His creation and His servants. I bear witness that there is no god but God, He alone, He has no partners. And I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger. I bear witness that you [the Prophet] delivered the messages of your lord, advised your community, invited to the path of your lord with wisdom and good council and that you worshiped God until certainty [death] befell you. So may the blessings of God be upon you, plentifully, such that pleases our lord and makes him content. O God, reward our Prophet on our behalf better than you have rewarded any of the prophets or messengers and raise him to the station of praiseworthiness [maqām maḥmūd] which you have promised. May the first and last [of mankind] be envious of him. O God, send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the progeny of Muhammad, just as you have blessed Ibrāhīm and the progeny of Ibrāhīm. Verily, you are the Praised One, the Majestic One.”
180 “Had they come to you [the Prophet] after having done injustice to themselves [sinned] and asked God for forgiveness and [additionally had] the Messenger asked for forgiveness on their behalf, they would have found God to be oft-turning [in repentance] and merciful.”
181 al-Buhūṭī, Kashshāf, vol. 6, p. 346.
182 al-Buhūṭī, Kashshāf, vol. 6, p. 347.
of compromise of the opinions of Ibn Qudāmah (who said one should face the Prophet’s grave while supplicating) and Ibn Taymiyyah (who prohibited this). As for wiping and touching the grave, Ḥajjāwī writes, “One should neither wipe nor touch the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, nor the wall of [his grave]. Similarly, one should not touch his chest to it nor kiss it.”\(^{183}\) Al-Buhūṭī then comments, “that is to say, it\(^{184}\) is makrūh, due to it being impolite\(^{185}\) and a form of innovation.”\(^{186}\) Again, it appears that al-Buhūṭī did not want to stray too far from the opinions of earlier Hanbali scholars while still acknowledging the attitude of Ibn Taymiyyah supported by Ḥajjāwī. Al-Buhūṭī then reiterates the language of Ibn Qudāmah, writing that al-Athram said the scholars of Medina would send their salutations from a distance, and Abū ‘Abd Allāh said that such was the practice of Ibn ‘Umar.\(^{187}\)

Al-Ḥajjāwī writes that Ibn Taymiyyah said that it is hāram to circumambulate other than al-bayt al-‘ātīq (the Ka‘bah). Al-Ḥajjāwī’s words imply that to circumambulate the Prophet’s grave would be hāram in his opinion as well. However, it is worth noting that he does not give an explicit fatwā, instead relying upon the authoritative voice of Ibn Taymiyyah. Al-Buhūṭī then adds, “and he [Ibn Taymiyyah] said, ‘they [scholars] all agree that one should not kiss nor wipe it [the grave], for this is shirk.’ And he [Ibn Taymiyyah] said, ‘God does not forgive shirk, even if it is minor’.”\(^{188}\)

In his chapter entitled “Book on the Ruling for Apostates,” Ḥajjāwī provides

\(^{183}\) al-Buhūṭī, Kashshāf, vol. 6, p. 347.
\(^{184}\) The author chose to employ a singular pronoun, grouping all of these acts as one.
\(^{185}\) Or, perhaps, “inappropriate.” The actual phrase is isā‘ at al-adāb. This could either be taken to mean that to touch, wipe or kiss the grave is disrespectful towards the Prophet, or, that it is a lowly act to which one should not reduce oneself.
\(^{186}\) al-Buhūṭī, Kashshāf, vol. 6, p. 347.
\(^{187}\) al-Buhūṭī, Kashshāf, vol. 6, p. 347.
\(^{188}\) al-Buhūṭī, Kashshāf, vol. 6, p. 348.
his own definition of an apostate, writing that an apostate is one who disbelieves after having been Muslim,\textsuperscript{189} either by associating partners with God,\textsuperscript{190} or disbelieving in one of God’s attributes,\textsuperscript{191} or claiming to be a prophet,\textsuperscript{192} or cursing God or His prophet,\textsuperscript{193} or mocking God, His prophets or His books.\textsuperscript{194} He then adds the following:

\textit{And al-shaykh} has said, “or [another case where one becomes an apostate is] if one despises His messenger or that which he brought [the message of Islam] \textit{ittifāqan} [this is according to all scholars]. Or [another case where one becomes an apostate is] if one stipulates intermediaries between himself and God, relying upon them, calling upon them and asking them \textit{ijmā’an} [this is according to all scholars].\textsuperscript{195}"

Thus Ibn Taymiyyah’s influence can be seen. He was not regarded as the ultimate authority in the Hanbali \textit{madhhab}. However, acknowledging his opinions seems to have been what respected jurists did. Whether this was due to his popularity or because his opinions presented an alternative approach that needed to be addressed cannot be known for sure. The works of previous Hanbali jurists may have been what prevented scholars like al-Ḥajjāwī from issuing precisely the same verdicts as Ibn Taymiyyah. Instead, al-Ḥajjāwī reiterated Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinions without passing judgment, or, after al-Ḥajjāwī gave his own verdict.

\textbf{Ahmad al-Tamīmī al-Najdī al-Manqūr (d 1125 AH / 1713/14 CE)}

Al-Manqūr was well respected among the Najdi scholars of his time for being reliable and cautious in his verdicts. He studied al-Ḥajjāwī’s \textit{Al-Iqnā’} with the chief judge

\textsuperscript{190} al-Buhārī, \textit{Kashshāf}, vol. 14, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{191} al-Buhārī, \textit{Kashshāf}, vol. 14, p. 226.
\textsuperscript{192} al-Buhārī, \textit{Kashshāf}, vol. 14, p. 226.
of Riyadh, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Dhahalān, who would not allow al-Manqūr to write down that which he learned from him. For this reason, some have theorized that al-Manqūr’s *Al-Fawākih al-‘Adīdah fī al-Masā’il al-Muftīdah* (“plentiful fruit related to beneficial questions”) is actually Dhalān’s commentary on *Al-Iqnā*’. 196 This work was in fact a collection of the opinions of famous medieval Hanbali scholars as well as the judgments of prominent Najdi judges and *muftīs*. Such works were used as manuals for lesser scholars who were incapable of deriving their own opinions. 197 Of course, this reliance upon the opinions of previous scholars and the absence of new *ijtihād* would leave an impact upon the likes of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb.

Al-Manqūr also writes that one should face the Prophet’s grave and recite salutations similar to those that Ibn Qudāmah and al-Buhūtī related, both in terms of content and length. 198 However, he does not mention the story related by al-‘Utbiyy of the bedouin man, nor does he write that one should ask the Prophet for his intercession or for forgiveness. Instead, after sending peace and blessings upon the Prophet and testifying to his message, al-Manqūr writes that one should supplicate to God as follows:

O God, may I live in accordance with his [the Prophet’s] *sunnah*, and die as a part of his nation, and may I love, help and obey him, believe in him and comply with [his orders]. And do not separate me from him in abode of your generosity. O God, I bear witness that this messenger delivered his message and that with which he was entrusted and advised his community. O God, give him the means [al-*wasīlah*199], merit, and elevated rank, and raise him to a station of praiseworthiness (*maqām mahmūd*), as you promised him... 200

197 Al Juhany, p. 137.
199 From the same root as *tawassul*, or, seeking a means to God by way of the Prophet. When previous scholars wrote that one should ask the Prophet himself to intercede on his behalf or ask God for forgiveness, they were essentially saying that the Prophet’s role as an intermediary should be sought from him. However, al-Manqūr writes that one should ask these things of God.
This opinion of al-Manqūr is in keeping with Ibn Taymiyyah’s view that one should ask God to make the Prophet a wasīlah, and not seek this from the Prophet himself.

Elsewhere, al-Manqūr addresses the issue of touching and kissing sacred relics in language very similar to that of Ibn Taymiyyah. In fact, he employs the exact same word, yastalim, which can mean “to graze”, as opposed to yatamassaḥ bihi (“to wipe”) or yalmis (“to touch or feel”). Al-Manqūr writes:

The black corner [of the Ka‘bah] can be touched and kissed, the Yemeni corner (al-rukn al-yamānī) can be touched but not kissed, the other two should not be touched nor kissed. And touching (al-istilām) [means]: to wipe with one’s hand. As for the other parts of the house [of God], the standing place (maqām) of Abraham, all other mosques on Earth and the graves of the prophets and the righteous, like the chamber of our prophet, blessings and peace be upon him... they should not be touched nor kissed, according to all scholars.201

Like Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Manqūr argues that the prohibition of touching and kissing graves is something upon which all scholars agreed. This is despite the fact that, as demonstrated above, early Hanbali scholars did not give explicit verdicts prohibiting these acts.

Lastly, al-Manqūr does not repeat Ibn Taymiyyah’s verdict concerning traveling for the purpose of visiting the Prophet’s grave. Instead, he mentions that visiting mosques other than al-masjid al-ḫarām is not sunnah. “And none of the imams considered [such journeys] to be mustahabb,”202 he writes. He then mentions that mountains and places around Mecca (like jabal ḥirā’203) other than those that are part of the hajj ritual (or, ‘arafah, mina and muzdalifah) are also not to be visited. He also forbids visiting mosques or other structures built upon relics. Visiting any mosque other than al-masjid al-ḫarām is

201 al-Manqūr, p. 68.
202 al-Manqūr, p. 72.
203 The mountain that contains the cave (ḥirā’) where it is believed the Qur’ān was first revealed to the Prophet.
both forbidden and bid‘ah, according to al-Manqūr.204 Thus, al-Manqūr forbids visiting a number of religious sites but does not repeat the fatwā of Ibn Taymiyyah that prohibits traveling for the purpose of visiting the Prophet’s grave.

The opinions of scholars after Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrate that forbidding acts that were commonly practiced near graves had become more frequent. Ibn Taymiyyah gained gradual respect as time progressed, eventually coming to be regarded as shaykh al-islām. But what one does not find is the rhetoric that those who commit certain deeds near graves were to be fought like the mushrikūn of the time of the Prophet. This element came about with the rise of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and the Saudi movement which further promoted Ibn Taymiyyah’s ideas as well as Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s particular interpretations of both Ibn Taymiyyah’s verdicts and the hadith he believed were relevant to the topics at hand.

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204 al-Manqūr, p. 72.
Chapter 5: Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb

And the Groundwork For a New Madhhhab

Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb was born into a family of Hanbali jurists. His grandfather, Sulaymān, was reportedly the most distinguished Najdi scholar of the 11th/17th century.205 He served as the judge of al-‘Uyaynah and was known as an authority on Hanbali fiqh. Sulaymān supposedly wrote a commentary on al-Ḥājjāwī’s Al-Iqnā‘, but destroyed it after learning of al-Buhūtī’s commentary,206 perhaps out of respect or because he felt it was no longer necessary. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad’s father, was also a respected scholar who served as the chief judge of al-‘Uyaynah.207 It therefore is no surprise that Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb was first introduced to Hanbali fiqh.208 However, after traveling to Medina, he began to study under Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī, reportedly the most eminent scholar of hadith in Medina in the first half of the eighteenth century.

206 Al-’Uthaymīn, p. 28.
207 Al-’Uthaymīn, p. 29.
208 Al-’Uthaymīn, pp. 30-1.
C.E.²⁰⁹ According to Basheer Nafi, al-Sindī was opposed to the legacy of the madhhāb system, calling it bid’ah.²¹⁰ He advised his students against following a madhhāb blindly (taqlīḍ) and encouraged them to instead follow the Qur’an and hadith.²¹¹ One can clearly see the influence of Ibn Taymiyyah in his thought. For instance, according to Nafi, al-Sindī’s Al-īqāf ‘alā sabab al-ikhtilāf, in which he tries to explain the differences of opinion in the madhāhib despite the presumption that all rely upon the Qur’an and sunnah, reads like a commentary of Ibn Taymiyyah’s Raf’ al-Malām ‘an al-a’immah al-a’alām.²¹² However, unlike Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Sindī was primarily a scholar of hadith who disregarded the instruments of the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh).²¹³ For this reason, Nafi considered al-Sindī, like Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb, to be “irreverent of the legacy of fiqh” and closer to the ahl al-ḥadīth than Ibn Taymiyyah in terms of methodology.²¹⁴

Al-Sindī studied under scholars of various schools of thought and was a member of the Naqshbandiyyah Sufi order but also a Hanafi.²¹⁵ After leaving India, which was ruled by the Awrangzeb of the Mogul Empire, who was, according to Nafi, “a strict Muslim and proponent of orthodox Islam,”²¹⁶ al-Sindī joined the circle of hadith scholar

²¹⁰ Nafi, p. 215.
²¹¹ Nafi, p. 215.
²¹² Nafi, p. 227.
²¹³ Nafi, p. 208.
²¹⁴ Nafi, p. 208.
²¹⁶ Nafi, p. 211.
Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Sindī (or, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Sindī the elder) in Medina.\textsuperscript{217}

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, Medina had been experiencing a revived interest in hadith and the ideas of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah.\textsuperscript{218} Muḥammad Ḥayāt was an exceptional student of hadith who would inherit his teacher’s position.\textsuperscript{219} Muḥammad Ḥayāt’s students would also become politically active scholars of hadith.\textsuperscript{220}

Perhaps his most controversial student was Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb.\textsuperscript{221} In addition to his emphasis upon hadith and his aversion for the madḥhab system and disregard for technical discussions that employ the principles of jurisprudence, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s policies on ziyārah may have also been the result of studying with al-Sindī.\textsuperscript{222} One of the themes al-Sindī mentioned in his works was his opposition to erecting tombs.\textsuperscript{223} Al-Sindī reportedly encouraged his student to reject popular practice regarding saints and

\textsuperscript{217} Nafi, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{218} Nafi, p. 214.
\textsuperscript{219} Nafi, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{220} Voll, p. 38. Nafi, pp. 219-221.
\textsuperscript{221} According to one of the earliest sources of Wahhabi history, \textit{Lamʿ al-shīhāb} (author unknown), Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb traveled from land to land in the Islamic world in the pursuit of knowledge, encountering scholarly opposition and changing his name several times in the process. And after he was forced to leave Basra secretly and head to Baghdad, a judge who had offered council and guidance to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb in Baghdad, Qadī al-Ḥusayn, said the following when he learned of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s escape: “I seek refuge in God from the evil of this man and the opinions he holds. Were he not concerned with his own wellbeing he would destroy sharīʿah (Islamic law). And you shall know what he is capable of in the future.” See pages 17-19 of \textit{Lamʿ al-shīhāb}, (author unknown), edited by Abū Ḥākimah, Aḥmad Muṣṭafā, (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1967).


\textsuperscript{222} This is an idea that has been challenged by Ahmad Dallal, who argues that al-Sindī’s influence on Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb is not clear. Furthermore, Dallal suggests that Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s most influential work, \textit{Kitāb al-tawālid}, was written before he studied under al-Sindī. However, Basheer Nafi respon\textsuperscript{}ds to this, writing that sources for the life of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb do not support Dallal’s chronology (see Nafi, p. 210).

\textsuperscript{223} Nafi, p. 217.
The early Wahhabi scholar, ‘Uthmān Ibn Bishr (d. 1288 A.H. / 1871/2 C.E.), narrates an event that, if true, may just have left a lasting impression on the young Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. Ibn Bishr writes:

It has been related that one day Shaykh Muḥammad [Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb] stood by the chamber of the Prophet where people were calling [upon him or supplicating] and seeking help by the Prophet’s chamber, blessings and peace be upon him. He then saw Muḥammad Ḥayāt [al-Sindī] and came to him. The shaykh [Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb] asked, “What do you say about them?” He [al-Sindī] said, “Verily that in which they are engaged shall be destroyed and their acts are invalid.”

The verse that al-Sindī recited in response to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb seems to draw a comparison between the Muslims of the time and the Children of Israel of Moses’ time who desired to imitate idol worshippers due to their ignorance. It is then possible that al-Sindī instilled in Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb the idea that their people had fallen into a state of apostasy similar to the idolaters of pre-Islamic times. This would be key to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s doctrines and a source of the rupture within the Hanbali madhhab that he created.

It should be mentioned that from the perspective of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb and his early followers, the Wahhabi mission was one that was necessary due to the religious deviation found in the Islamic world in the 18th century. In Mufīd al-mustafīd, Ibn ‘Abd’il-Wahhāb refers to Abū al-‘Abbās, author of Iqtīḍā’ al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm fi al-kalām, writing that “a number of places in Damascus” resemble the idols of the pagans.

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224 Voll, p. 32.
225 Qur’an: 7:139.
227 The verse immediately before this one is: “And we helped the Children of Israel cross the sea, and they came upon a people who clung to their idols. They [the Children of Israel] said, ‘O Moses, make a god for us like the gods they have.’ He [Moses] said, ‘Verily, you are an ignorant people’.”
before Islam.\textsuperscript{228} For instance\textsuperscript{229}, a place called \textit{masjid al-kaff} (“the mosque of the palm”) contains a statue that is believed to be the palm of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.\textsuperscript{230} Similar such places exist in the Hijaz, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb writes\textsuperscript{231,232} Ḥusayn ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Ghannām (d. 1811 C.E.), a contemporary and dedicated follower of Ibn ‘Abdil-Wahhāb\textsuperscript{233}, writes at length of the state of Muslims in Arabia and surrounding Arab countries.\textsuperscript{234} He writes that, “Most people during his (Ibn ‘Abdil-Wahhāb’s) time were scented with filth, soiled with impurity to the point that they were immersed in idol worship.”\textsuperscript{235} He then mentions the widespread nature of idol worship in the cities of Najd, particularly in the city of Al-Jubaylah at the grave of Zayd ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb, whom they would call upon to relieve them of their distress and misery.\textsuperscript{236} Similarly, in the land of Qiryūh in Dir‘iyyah, people claimed that some of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad were buried there. They would therefore worship these graves and circumambulate them.\textsuperscript{237} In the small city of Al-Fadā, unwed women would plead with a palm tree named “Al-Faḥḥāl” (the impregnator) to provide them with a husband.\textsuperscript{238} In the southernmost part of Dir‘iyyah was a large cave. It was claimed that God created this cave for a woman named “Bint al-Amīr” who fled from corrupt individuals who sought

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{228} Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, \textit{Mu’allaftāt}, vol. 1, (\textit{Muftid al-mustafıd}) p. 287.
\item \textsuperscript{229} It is not clear from Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s writing whether the examples given are taken from Abū al-‘Abbās’ work or are provided by Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb himself.
\item \textsuperscript{230} Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, \textit{Mu’allaftāt}, vol. 1, (\textit{Muftid al-mustafıd}) p. 287.
\item \textsuperscript{231} Again, this could be in Abū al-‘Abbās’ work or added by Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb.
\item \textsuperscript{232} Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, \textit{Mu’allaftāt}, vol. 1, (\textit{Muftid al-mustafıd}) p. 287.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Vassiliev, Alexei, \textit{The History of Saudi Arabia}, p. 13.
\item \textsuperscript{235} Ibn Ghannām, vol. 1, p. 171.
\item \textsuperscript{236} Ibn Ghannām, vol. 1, p. 173.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Ibn Ghannām, vol. 1, pp. 173-174.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Ibn Ghannām, vol. 1, p. 174.
\end{itemize}
to persecute her. They therefore place meat and bread in that cave.²³⁹ Such claims made by early Wahhabis sought to place Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s mission on par with that of the Prophet of Islam, or, the mission to eradicate idolatry and to establish monotheism. From their perspective Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb was able to remind Muslims of the original message of their religion.

Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb approached what he perceived as a crisis in the Islamic world with an attitude of militancy. This is because, according to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb:

… the essence of the divine message and the Prophet’s call is tawḥīd²⁴⁰ of God in worship - He alone, He has no partners - and shattering idols. And it is clear that shattering them is not possible (lā yastaqīm) without showing great hostility and unsheathing one’s sword…²⁴¹

And it is this attitude that inspires Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s departure from Ibn Taymiyyah, at least in terms of language. Early it was mentioned that Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb explicitly states that Muslims who ask the Prophet for their needs are to be fought. Here I will further examine this matter. According to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, he who seeks the intercession of others and gaining nearness to God by means of it has come to reject the message of Islam and is now technically a polytheist.²⁴² In Kashf al-shubuhāt (“resolving doubts”) he writes, “… and it is also kufr (disbelief) for one to intend [to visit or approach] the righteous. And the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, fought [those who did so].”²⁴³ In his Tafsir kalimat al-tawḥīd, or, “exposition on the profession of monotheism,” Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb writes, “… one who calls upon a prophet

²³⁹ Ibn Ghannām, vol. 1, p. 177.
²⁴⁰ Tawḥīd is normally translated as “monotheism.” However, another meaning is “to consider God to be one,” which seems applicable in this case.
²⁴¹ P. 284.
or an angel or mourns for them or seeks their help has left Islam. And this is the *kufr* over which the Messenger of God fought them [the *mushrikūn"][244]

In *Muftid al-mustafīd*, Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb uses as proof for his *takfīr* of large populations of Muslims opinions he attributes to Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Taymiyyah’s prominent student, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. He writes that the question of whether Ibn al-Qayyim intended that such offenses constituted greater or lesser *shirk* is not open to interpretation, for Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned that:

… calling upon the deceased to intercede for one near God and making vows to them are [cases of] the greater *shirk* for which God sent His prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, in order to prohibit [them]. So one who does not repent from this is a disbeliever, and should be fought and made an enemy… and Islam is not valid unless one shows enmity towards the people of *shirk*. And if one does not show enmity towards them, then he is one of them, even if he does not perform [*shirk*].  

Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb then narrates that Musā ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥajjāwī wrote that Ibn Taymiyyah was of the opinion that, “… one who calls upon ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib is a disbeliever. And that one who doubts whether such an individual is a disbeliever is a disbeliever [as well][…][246]

Where Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb differed from previous scholars was that he applied such reasoning to large groups of Muslims, whereas previously, *takfīr* was applied on a case-by-case basis. In *Muftid al-mustafīd*, Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb follows what he argues were the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim with stories of the Companions of the Prophet in which they did *takfīr* of individuals who professed Islam in order to appease his reader as to the apparently controversial nature of his discourse. For instance, Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb relates that one should not be surprised by the idea of fighting those

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who profess Islam when what made it permissible to fight those who refused to pay zakāt, take their families captive and loot their property was simply that they failed to perform one of the obligatory duties of Muslims. In *Muftī al-mustafīd*, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb dedicates an entire chapter to “the obligation of showing enmity towards the enemies of God from among the disbelievers, apostates and hypocrites” (*Bāb fī wujūb ‘adāwat a‘dā’ Allāh min al-kuffār wa’l-murtaddīn wa’l-munāfiqīn*). But despite his controversial language and opinions, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s movement found great success due to political factors and the formation of the Saudi state (referred to above) as well as cultural factors. Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb lived during a time that reportedly lacked for new scholarship. This may have influenced his aversion for taqlīd, as textbooks of fiqh were reexamined instead of jurists producing original opinions. But it also likely provided Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb with an environment that was less likely to challenge his message. According to Uwaidah Al Juhany, the number of Najdi scholars who traveled to Syria and Egypt in pursuit of knowledge decreased in the 12th/18th century. Instead, the works of previous scholars, including the aforementioned al-Ḥajjāwī and al-Buhūtī, were used as instruction manuals. Al Juhany writes:

This decline [in Najdi scholars who traveled to study with renowned Hanbali jurists] might be due to the absence of famous Hanbali scholars in those two countries during this period. The Hanbali scholars of the 10th/16th century and the 11th/17th century were the last eminent authorities of their madhhab. Later students of the Hanbali school of thought depended on the manuals and commentaries composed by the ‘ulama’ of those two centuries, such as al-Iqna‘ and Zad al-Mustaqni‘ by Musa al-Hajjawi, Jam‘ al-Jawami‘ and Mughni Dhawi al-Afham by Yusuf Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi, Ghayat al-Muntaha and Dalil al-Talib by Mar‘i Ibn Yusuf and al-’Umdah, and a commentary on al-Iqna‘ by Mansur al-Buhūtī.

It might be argued that the lack of new scholarship paved the way for a scholar

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249 Al-Juhany, p. 133.
like Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb to issue verdicts that might otherwise have been refuted by more capable scholars. This theory gains support when one closely observes that his controversial opinions resembled those of Ibn Taymiyyah, who was shunned by the scholars of his time. Like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb claimed scholarly consensus regarding issues related to *ziyārah* when apparently no such consensus existed, often citing Ibn Taymiyyah in the process.\(^{250}\) And in the earliest stages of the Saudi-Wahhabi movement, Ibn Taymiyyah’s controversial verdict concerning traveling for the purpose of *ziyārah* became part of the Wahhabi mission and a call to return to the Qur’an and *sunnah*. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Muḥammad ibn Saʿūd (d. 1803) was the second Saudi leader and as well as an intimate student of Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb who would later become a Wahhabi scholar.\(^{251}\) In a letter he sent to invite others to Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb’s cause, he echoed the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah that led to Ibn Taymiyyah being called a disbeliever and imprisoned concerning traveling for the purpose of *ziyārah*.\(^{252}\) Also, Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb used the same hadith that Ibn Taymiyyah decided to emphasize, repeatedly mentioning that the Prophet warned Muslims of making his grave into an ‘*ād*\(^{253}\) and of turning graveyards into mosques\(^{254}\).

Lastly, Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb’s methodology included a modest form of *ijtihād* in which he employed general verses used verses of the Qur’an that speak of clear forms of idolatry and applied them to the commonplace practices of average Muslims of his time. For instance, in *Kashf al-shubuhāt*, he writes:

\(^{251}\) Al-‘Uthaymīn, p. 74.
\(^{254}\) Ibn ‘Abdi’il-Wahhāb, *Mu’allafāt*, vol. 1, (*Kitāb al-tawḥīd*), p. 64.
And it is also kufr for one to intend [to visit] the righteous. And the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, would fight them [those who did so]. Therefore, if the disbelievers [Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s adversaries in this treatise] say, “they [the ones who the Prophet fought] desired something from them [the deceased]. And I bear witness that God is the one who causes benefit and harm and distributes [sustenance]. I do not want anything from him [a righteous man]. And the righteous do not have anything [they are powerless]. Rather, I intend [to visit them] hoping for God’s intercession.”

The reply is that this is precisely what the disbelievers said (sawā’ bi sawā’). And read for him what He, exalted is He, said, “And those who take as guardians (awliyā’) other than God [say], “we do not worship them [idols] except that they may bring us closer to God”255 256.

In this excerpt, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb does not acknowledge the heritage of Hanbali works that preceded him. Respected scholars like Ibn Qudāmah and al-Buhūtī who mentioned that one should ask the Prophet for intercession and forgiveness are dismissed by Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s employment of a verse of the Qur’an that does not directly address the issue at hand. This less complicated form of ijtihād would have likely been challenged by other Hanbali jurists had Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb lived in a scholarly environment like that of Ibn Taymiyyah. Instead, his opinions gained popular and political support, whereas Ibn Taymiyyah was sentenced to prison by contemporary jurists (including the Hanbali judge Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-Maqdisī).

In fact, arguably the greatest challenge to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s opinions during his lifetime came from his own brother, Sulaymān. In his Al-Ṣawā‘iq al-ilāhiyyah fi al-radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah, Sulaymān challenges his brother’s qualifications as a mujtahid as well as his understanding of the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah. As mentioned earlier, Sulaymān believed that Ibn Taymiyyah never meant to dismiss Muslims at large as being disbelievers.

255 Qur’an: 39:3.
Sulaymān ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb (d. 1210 A.H. / 1795/6 C.E.)

Sulaymān was the brother of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb as well as a scholar and the judge of Ḥuraymilā’. According to the historian Ḥusayn Ibn Ghannām (d. 1811 C.E.), who was a follower of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s teachings, Sulaymān is said to have “created doubt” in the minds of others, causing them to reject Wahhabism and to have sent a letter to the people of al-‘Uyaynah, creating “doubts” in their minds. Sulaymān had, according to Ibn Ghannām, secretly escaped to the city of Huraymilā’ and had begun propagating against his brother’s cause. He had already caused an uprising in Huraymilā’ in 1165 A.H. / 1751/2 C.E. Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, who feared losing further support, sent a letter entitled Mufīd al-mustafīd fī kufr tārik al-tawḥīd to the people of al-‘Uyaynah in response to Sulaymān’s anti-Wahhabi propaganda.

There are four major arguments of particular concern in Sulaymān’s Al-Ṣawā’iq al-ilāhiyyah fī al-radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyyah that challenge Wahhabi thinking from the perspective of the traditional madhhab system. 1. The Wahhabis wrongly do takfīr of Muslims for acts that are, at worst, simply forbidden and do not take one out of the realm of Islam. 2. The Wahhabis are not qualified to perform ījtihād. 3. Their opinions are contrary to those of the imams, ījmā’ and the correct understanding of the verdicts of Hanbali scholars and even Ibn Taymiyyah. 4. The Wahhabis have formed their own

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257 Al-‘Uthaymin, p. 30.
258 Al-‘Uthaymin, p. 62.
264 See pp. 35, 44 and 109 of Al-Ṣawā’iq.
265 For example, see p. 34 of Al-Ṣawā’iq.
madhhab and give opinions based on their own illegitimate understanding (in terms of proper fiqh methodology).\textsuperscript{266}

The Wahhabis, Sulaymān writes, were not authorized to determine what is greater or lesser shirk, as they were not qualified to do independent ijtihād (forming new opinions that differed with the verdicts of the imams). The inability to make this distinction led the Wahhabis to believe that many Muslims had fallen into a state of apostasy. Sulaymān writes:

Where do you get this that a Muslim who says shahādatayn, if he calls upon one who is absent or dead... or touches a grave or takes dirt from that this is greater shirk... and that it is permissible to shed his blood and take his property?... If you say, we understood this from the Book and the sunnah, I say, your understanding means nothing. And it is not permissible for another Muslim to act in accordance with what you understand. For, the ummah all agrees, as mentioned earlier, that istinbāf (deriving a verdict) is a station that belongs to those who have absolute ijtihād.\textsuperscript{267}

Rather, according to Sulaymān, many of the acts that the Wahhabis classified as manifestations of greater shirk were merely considered makrūh or forbidden by previous Hanbali scholars. Sulaymān finds fault in the Wahhabis for doing takfīr to Muslims who perform acts such as kissing and wiping graves. Furthermore, he argues, the Wahhabis are guilty of doing takfīr to those who do not do takfīr of ones who commit these acts near graves. Sulaymān then refers the Wahhabis to standard books of fiqh that are rooted in the school of thought of Ibn Ḥanbal. He writes:

As for seeking blessings, wiping graves, taking dirt from them and circumambulating them, these issues have been mentioned by scholars. Some of consider them to be makrūh. Others consider them to forbidden. And not one of them has said that the one who performs these acts is an apostate, as you say. Rather, you do takfīr to one who does not do takfīr of the one who performs these. And the issue is mentioned in the book of corpses in the chapter on burying and visiting the

\textsuperscript{266} Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb, Sulaymān, Al-Ṣawā‘iq, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{267} Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb, Sulaymān, Al-Ṣawā‘iq, p. 44.
deceased. So, if you desire to refer to that which I have mentioned, read *Al-Furūʿ* 268 and *Al-
Iqnāʿ* 269 and other books of fiqh.

And if you find fault in those who wrote these books, which would not be a big deal coming from
you, you should know that they did not relate their own madhhāb. Rather, they related the
madhhāb of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and his likes from among the imams of guidance, whose
guidance and understanding the ummah has all agreed upon, save the stubborn. And you claim
high stations and that you adhere to proofs without doing taqlīd to the imams. But, as mentioned
earlier, this is against ījmāʿ. 270

Concerning asking the deceased for help, Sulaymān writes:

... you have done takfīr of those who ask one who is absent or deceased [for something]. In fact,
you claim that the idolaters who disbelieved and denied God and His messenger, blessings and
peace be upon him, were less of idolaters than one who asks other than God on land or water.
And you use your own understanding as proof, [even though this] is impermissible and cannot be
relied upon by others... Do you believe that calling upon one who is absent is necessarily an act of
disbelief, even though the imams of Islam did not know of such [an opinion]?... 271

Up until this point, Sulaymān criticized the Wahhabis for deviating from the
Hanbali school of thought, as he mentioned the works of authors who represented the
Hanbali madhhāb. However, the Wahhabis might then argue that they in fact follow Ibn
Taymiyyah. Sulaymān responds that following Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn al-
Qayyim al-Jawziyyah is valid. However, the Wahhabis did not properly understand the
verdicts of these two scholars either. Sulaymān writes:

We agree with you in doing taqlīd to the two shaykhs [Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Shams al-
Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah] who say that these acts are shirk.
However, they do not say that these are [instances of] greater shirk that take one out of the realm
of Islam and that the laws of apostasy apply to all lands in which these occur.

Sulaymān then quotes Ibn Taymiyyah in *Iqtīdāʿ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* as having written
that traveling to places seeking benefit (khayr) is one of the munkarāt (reprehensible

268 A work by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥliḥ al-Maqdisī (d. 763 A.H. / 1361/2 C.E.) that contains
the opinions of prominent Hanbali jurists. The book was perceived as being of great value by the likes of
Ibn Kathīr, a student of Ibn Taymiyyah.

269 Al-Hajjāwī’s book discussed above.


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Sulaymān’s point is that Ibn Taymiyyah, while prohibiting such journeys, does not believe that they make one a disbeliever.

Thus, Sulaymān begins by arguing for the authoritativeness of the Hanbali school of thought. But as the Wahhabis were not inclined towards doing taqlīd to such scholars, he then argues that the Wahhabi approach is also in contradiction with the iconoclastic Ibn Taymiyyah (and Ibn al-Qayyim), who did not practice takfīr as freely as the Wahhabis. The only justification for this new attitude in fiqh then, according to Sulaymān, would be a new act of ijtihād. But as demonstrated above, Sulaymān did not believe the Wahhabis were qualified to introduce new verdicts in fiqh according to the standards for ijtihād he delineated in the beginning of his treatise.\footnote{Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, Sulaymān, Al-Ṣawā’iq, p. 118.}

\footnote{Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, Sulaymān Al-Ṣawā’iq, p. 35. The conditions Sulaymān Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb mentions include: knowing the different dialects of Arabic, the rules of grammar, the different recitations of the Qur’an, the exegesis of the Qur’an, which verses are clear (muhkam) and which are ambiguous (mutashābīh), cases of abrogation, having the ability to distinguish sound (ṣaḥīh) hadith from faulty (ṣaqlīm) hadith as well as those that have a continuous chain of narration (muttaṣil) from those that do not (munqatī’). He mentions other categories of hadith as well before mentioning that a mujtahid should be pious and control his desires, honest and reliable and base his madhhab on the Qur’an and sunnah.}
Chapter 6: Hanbali/Wahhabi Jurists

After Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb

The opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb regarding visiting graves were echoed by Wahhabi jurists after Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s death in 1791/2 and continue to find sympathizers to this day. In Taysīr al-‘Aẓīz al-Ḥamīd fī sharḥ Kitāb al-tawhīd (“the exposition of Kitāb al-tawhīd made easy by the Mighty, the Praised”), an exposition of his grandfather’s Kitāb al-tawhīd, Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb (d. 1233 A.H. / 1817/8 C.E.) adheres to the views on ziyārah of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd Allāh similarly condemns traveling to, clinging to and sitting near graves.274 He also condemns those who seek intercession from the Prophet himself, even during his life.275 Included in the mafāsid (heinous acts or evils) he lists that occur at graves are the idolatrous practices of

taking graveyards to be mosques, taking mosques as an ‘īd and traveling to visit graves.

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The Wahhabis and the Saudis would suffer defeat at the hands of the Ottomans in 1818.277 However, the Saudi state would rise again, and after the establishment of the modern state of Saudi Arabia in 1932278 one finds major Hanbali-Wahhabi scholars echoing the sentiments of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. Numerous expositions have been written on Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s Kitāb al-tawḥīd as well as books that specifically address the mafāsid that occur near graves.

‘Abd al-’Azīz ibn ‘Abd Allah Ibn Bāz (d. 1999 C.E.)

Ibn Bāz was the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia before his death. His Al-tahqīq -wa’l-tadhīh li kathīr min masā’il al-ḥajj wa al-’umrah wa al-ziyārah ‘alā ḍaw’ al-kitāb wa al-sunnah (“research and clarification concerning a number of the issues that pertain to hajj, ‘umrah and ziyārah, in light of the book and the sunnah”) was, according to Şāliḥ ibn Muqbil al-’Uṣaymī al-Tamīmī,279 of all his works, the one “dearest to his [Ibn Bāz’s] heart.”280 In this work, Ibn Bāz, like Ibn Taymiyyah, writes that visiting the Prophet’s grave should consist of simple salutations. He writes that one should face the grave of the Prophet and send peace and the mercy of God upon the Prophet, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, saying, al-salām ‘alayka yā rasūl Allāh wa raḥmat Allāh wa barakātuh, al-salām ‘alayka yā Abū Bakr wa raḥmat Allāh wa barakātuh, al-salām ‘alayka yā ‘Umar wa raḥmat

278 Vassiliev, p. 284.
279 The editor of the particular edition that will be used here.
**Allāh wa barakātuh.** After this, one is to leave the site of the graves.\(^{281}\) When doing so, one should face the grave of the Prophet, “as Ibn Taymiyyah has mentioned.”\(^{282}\) However, “when one wants to supplicate, as Shaykh al-Islām has said, he should not face the grave. Rather, he should face the qiblah.”\(^{283}\)

In his section on “things those who visit the Prophet’s grave should be aware of” \((tanbīḥāt li zā’irī qabr al-nabī), Ibn Bāz writes:

1. It is not permissible for anyone to wipe the chamber [of the grave of the Prophet], kiss it or circumambulate it, for this has not been related concerning the righteous first generations of Muslims \((al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ).\) Rather, it is a despicable heretical innovation \((bid‘ah munkarah).\)
2. It is not permissible for anyone to ask the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, to fulfill a need, to relieve him of trouble, to heal one who is sick, etc. This is because all of these can only be asked of God, immaculate is He. And to ask them of the deceased is to associate partners \((shirk)\) with God and to worship other than Him...
3. Similarly, it is not permissible for anyone to seek intercession from the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him...
4. As for the deceased, nothing should be asked of them, neither intercession nor anything else, whether they are prophets or non-prophets,
   a. because this is not legitimate \((lām yushra‘)\)
   b. because the deceased’s deeds are cut off, except for those things the Legislator \([God]\) has made exceptions...\(^{284}\)

In the first and third impermissible actions Ibn Bāz mentions the commentator of this particular edition quotes shaykh al-Islām, Ibn Taymiyyah, in order to demonstrate Ibn Bāz’s reasoning.

Ibn Bāz then lists five “grievances that pilgrims of the noble grave commit” \((akḥā’ taqa‘ min ba‘d zuwwār al-qabr al-shartf).\) The second grievance is that these pilgrims supplicate facing the grave, “for this is opposed to the actions of the righteous forbearers \((al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ)\) from among the companions of the Messenger of God and

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\(^{281}\) Ibn Bāz, p. 231.

\(^{282}\) Ibn Bāz, p. 231.

\(^{283}\) Ibn Bāz, p. 231.

\(^{284}\) Ibn Bāz, pp. 240-42.
those who followed them with good behavior. Nay, this is an innovation.” Ibn Bāz dismisses the writings of Ibn Qudāmah and other prominent Hanbali jurists in saying this, much the way Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb made their arguments.

Ibn Bāz mentions that it is not permissible to pack to set out for doing ziyārah of the Prophet’s grave due to the hadith that Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned (lā tushadd al-riḥāl...). He then adds that the Prophet warned that one should not take his grave as an ‘īd. Clearly, Ibn Taymiyyah’s approach directly influenced Ibn Bāz’s verdicts and his attitude towards ziyārah far more than the early Hanbali jurists or even those before Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb.

Ṣāliḥ ibn Fawzān ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Fawzān (born 1933)

Al-Fawzān is a prominent contemporary Wahhabi scholar who is a member of the Committee of Great Scholars (Hay’at kibār al-‘ulamā’) as well as the Permanent Council of Issuing Verdicts (Al-lajnat al-dā’imah li’l-iftā’) in Saudi Arabia. His Al-Mulakhkhas fī sharh kitāb al-tawḥīd, or, concise commentary on Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s Kitāb al-tawḥīd (“the book of monotheism”), contains many of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s particular views concerning the state of the Muslims of his time. In many cases, Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s methodology in Kitāb al-tawḥīd was simply to mention a verse of the Qur’an or a number of hadith under a chapter title. In his commentary, al-Fawzān takes it upon himself to clarify why Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb chose a particular verse or hadith and how it relates to the chapter at hand. For instance, in the chapter entitled “One who seeks

285 Ibn Bāz, p. 246.
286 Ibn Bāz, p. 250.
287 Ibn Bāz, p. 252.
blessings from a tree, rock, etc.,” al-Fawzān expounds upon verses 19-33 of the 53 chapter of the Qur’an (which mention idols of pre-Islamic Arabia), writing:

These verses contain a prohibition of seeking blessings from trees and rocks and consider this to be shirk. For verily those who worshiped the idols mentioned did this because they believed they would gain blessings by glorifying them and calling upon them. And seeking blessings from graves is like seeking blessings from al-Lāt [one of the idols of pre-Islamic Arabia].

In an attempt to remain faithful to Kitāb al-Tawḥīd and that which he understood of the author’s intent, al-Fawzān concludes that this verse can be applied to those who seek blessings from graves as well, despite the fact that a clear connection is absent. The fact that the polytheists sought blessings from their idols, whom they considered to have powers similar to God, does not necessarily mean that seeking blessings from anything is shirk. Otherwise, there would be no need to specifically mention idols, or, the objects of worship.

As for the question of whether it is permissible to call upon the righteous for help (including their intercession), al-Fawzān adheres to the school of thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb, dismissing this as polytheism. Concerning this topic, al-Fawzān similarly clarifies Ibn ‘Abdīl-Wahhāb’s intention behind mentioning the following verse under the title head “Intercession”: “And warn those who fear being gathered unto their lord and have no guardian nor intercessor other than God.”

Al-Fawzān writes:

The concise meaning of this verse is: He, exalted is He, says to His prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, strike fear by way of the Qur’an in those who are in awe (yakhshawna) of their lord, those whose hearts are aware and call to mind that they will have to stand before their lord, separated from every family member (qarīb) who can help them and [separated from] any...

289 Qur’an, 6:151.
290 This could also perhaps be translated as “one who is close.”
mediator who can intercede on their behalf near Him, other than by His permission...
The appropriateness of this verse is that it contains a refutation of polytheists who call upon prophets and righteous individuals seeking intercession from them.291

Al-Fawzân’s assessment of the verse in question is not entirely clear. The verse does seem to restrict intercession to the intercession of God. But the idea that those who call upon prophets or righteous individuals are necessarily polytheists cannot be derived from this verse. Furthermore, the Qur’an itself affirms that one can intercede so long as God grants His permission or is pleased with one interceding.292 Therefore, there is no direct correlation between asking pious figures for their intercession and *shirk*. As a result, al-Fawzân’s opinion seems to be the result of a preconceived notion of *shirk* that was influenced by the works of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb.

As for al-Fawzân’s own verdicts (as opposed to his commentaries), in his *Durūs wa fatāwā al-haajj*, he offers support for Ibn Taymiyyah’s controversial opinion regarding traveling for the sake of *ziyārah*. He writes that: “traveling for the sake of visiting the grave of the Messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, is forbidden and an innovation.”293 He also employs the same hadith that Ibn Taymiyyah used in his argument for forbidding this journey (*lā tushadd al-riḥāl*...).294 This hadith also appears in his *Sharḥ manāṣik al-haajj wa’l-‘umrah ‘alā ḏaw‘ al-kitāb wa’l-sunnah mujarradah ‘an al-

291 al-Fawzân, pp. 141-42.
292 See verse 255 of the second chapter of the Qur’an: “... who can intercede near Him other than with His permission?...”
293 Also, see verse 28 of chapter 21: “and they cannot intercede except he with whom He is pleased...
295 al-Fawzân, *Durūs wa fatāwā al-haajj*, p. 453. While both Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Fawzân relate the hadith from the *ṣāḥîḥ* compilers al-Bukhârî and Muslim, in al-Fawzân’s version, the order of the mosques listed is different. Al-Fawzân writes: *al-masjid al-harâm wa masjidî ḥâdhâ wa al-masjid al-aqṣâ*. 76
bida' wa’l-khurāfāt al-latt ʿulṣiqat bihā wa hiya laysat minhā on more than one occasion. Al-Fawzān also writes in Sharḥ manāsik al-ḥajj wa’l-ʿumrah that ziyārah should consist of one standing in front of the Prophet’s grave and saying, al-salām ‘alayka yā rasūl Allāh wa rahmat Allāh wa barakātuḥ, then similarly sending salutations upon Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. Al-Fawzān continues:

And if one desires to supplicate, he should do so facing the qiblah. And one should not wipe the walls of the Prophet’s chamber, nor its windows. For verily this is bid’ah and a means to shirk.

And one should not seek the Prophet’s help, blessings and peace be upon him, or request anything of him. For verily this is greater shirk.

In his section on the “rules and etiquettes of ziyārah,” al-Fawzān includes a slightly longer salutation that “is harmless” (lā ba’s bi dhālik) before mentioning the very concise form used by Ibn ‘Umar (al-salām ‘alayka yā rasūl Allāh). This is as opposed to the language of the likes of Ibn Qudāmah who provided lengthy salutations without implicitly dismissing their desirability. Also, al-Fawzān does not include the parts of the salutation in which one is to ask the Prophet for his help. Later in the “rules and etiquettes” section, al-Fawzān writes:

And it is not permissible for anyone to ask the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, to fulfill a need, relieve one of distress, heal the sick, etc. For all of these are things that can only be asked of God, Immaculate and Exalted is He. And seek these from the deceased is shirk of God and worshipping other than Him… similarly, it is not permissible to seek intercession from the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him... [Rather,] one should say, “O God, make your prophet my intercessor”... And seeking intercession from the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, is only permissible in his lifetime and on the Day of Resurrection, as he has the power to do so [at those times]...
Al-Fawzān also emphasizes that the Prophet is reported to have said, “Do not take my grave as an ‘īd.” The examples given above of al-Fawzān’s own verdicts demonstrate the similarity in language between this contemporary jurist and the verdicts of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. His opinions seem to be a combination of the works of the two great Wahhabi scholars. For instance, while Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, unlike Ibn Taymiyyah, did not necessarily mention the hadith that forbids traveling to the Prophet’s grave (lā tushadd al-riḥāl), he emphasized that seeking help from the Prophet is greater shirk, a matter that is up for debate in regard to Ibn Taymiyyah. And al-Fawzān includes the hadith that prohibit one from making the Prophet’s grave into an ‘īd in his section on ziyārah, in keeping with practices of both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. Al-Fawzān’s opinions, then, seem to reflect a modern understanding of the works of the two aforementioned scholars in what has now become a relatively clearly defined Wahhabi madhhab. Wahhabis, due to the influence of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, are largely concerned with heretical practices near graves.

In his Al-Irshād ilā ṣaḥīḥ al-i’tiqād wa’l-radd ‘alā al-shirk wa’l-ilhād (“guidance towards correct beliefs and refuting idolatry and heresy”), al-Fawzān expounds upon innovations (bida’) that Muslims face today, which he perceives to be essentially the same as those of the times of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. The first innovation concerns celebrating the Prophet’s birthday. Regarding this bid’ah, al-Fawzān refers to the authority of Ibn Taymiyyah. The last two innovations are directly related

301 al-Fawzān, Sharḥ manāsik al-hajj wa’l-‘umrah, pp. 177-8 and 180.
to visiting graves: “seeking blessings from the places and relics of the deceased, etc.” and “innovations at places of worship and seeking nearness to God.”

Al-Fawzān, like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdī’l-Wahhāb, mentions that the Prophet has cursed those who take graves to be mosques. This book provides further proof that the Wahhabi madhhab perceives problems in the Muslim community through the lens of the methodological approaches of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdī’l-Wahhāb. This is because the greatest instances of innovation in religion mentioned by al-Fawzān, a great Wahhabi scholar and representative of the madhhab, are to be found in the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdī’l-Wahhāb and their sympathizers while such issues were not nearly as prominent in Hanbali books before Ibn Taymiyyah.

Sa‘ūd ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shuraym (born 1964)

Al-Shuraym is a Wahhabi scholar respected by the likes of Ibn Bāz. In his Al-Minḥāj li’l-mu’tamir wa’l-ḥājj (“course of action for one who performs ‘umrah and hajj”), he echoes essentially the same arguments as the Wahhabi scholars before him. Al-Shuraym argues that one should not make the grave of the Prophet his intended destination when setting out on a journey, due to the hadith employed by Ibn Taymiyyah and other Wahhabi scholars (lā tushadd al-riḥāl…). Rather, he should intend to visit the Prophet’s mosque. One who intends on visiting the grave would be guilty of bid‘ah.

Al-Shuraym argues that the hadith that seem to contradict this are all weak or fabricated,
as Ibn Taymiyyah pointed out before him.\textsuperscript{308} Al-Shuraym, like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Bāz and al-Fawzān, believes that visiting the grave should consist of simple salutations. He writes that one should face the graves of the Prophet, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar and send peace and the mercy of God upon them, saying, \textit{al-salām ʿalayka yā rasūl Allāh wa rahmat Allāh wa barakātuh, al-salām ʿalayka yā Abū Bakr wa rahmat Allāh wa barakātuh, al-salām ʿalayka yā ʿUmar wa rahmat Allāh wa barakātuh}. After this, one is to leave the site of the graves.\textsuperscript{309}

Al-Shuraym then argues that one is not to face the \textit{qiblah}, raise his hands and pray to God, for this is “opposed to the way of the righteous \textit{salaf}.”\textsuperscript{310} He mentions that the Prophet’s grandson, ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (also the fourth Imam of the Shi‘ah), is reported to have found a man praying near the Prophet’s grave. ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn then reportedly said that it has been related to him that the Prophet said, “[Do not take my grave to be an ‘Īd…”\textsuperscript{311} Al-Shuraym then mentions Ibn Taymiyyah’s analysis of this tradition.\textsuperscript{312} He also relates that the Prophet reportedly said, “O God, do not make my grave an idol that is worshiped. God became very angry at a group of people who took the graves of their prophets to be mosques.”\textsuperscript{313} Thus, al-Shuraym employs the same hadith as Wahhabi scholars before him concerning making the Prophet’s grave an ‘Īd and turning graves into

\textsuperscript{308} Al-Shuraym, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{309} Al-Shuraym, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{310} Al-Shuraym, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{311} Al-Shuraym, p. 110. He quotes Ibn Taymiyyah as having said, \textit{fa unẓūr ilā hādhīhi al-sunnah kayfa anna nukhrijahā min ahl al-madīnah wa ahl al-bayt al-ladhīna lahum min rasūl Allāh, ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa sallam, qurb al-nasab wa qurb al-dār, li annahum ilā dhālika aḥwaj min ghayrihim fa kānū lahu aḍbaḍ}. The translation is as such: “Look at the one who relates this \textit{sunnah}, how he is from Medina and the people of the household (of the Prophet), who were close to the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, both in terms of familial relations and proximity. This [perhaps he means the significance of this] is because they were in greater need of him and therefore better in recording [his sayings and actions].”
\textsuperscript{312} Al-Shuraym, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{313} Al-Shuraym, p. 116.
mosques.

Seeking a means to God (al-tawassul) by way of the prayers of those in graves is, al-Shuraym claims, rejected by all scholars (bi ittifāq al-ʿulamāʾ), “for verily calling upon a prophet or pious person (waliyy) in his grave and expressing one’s needs to him, hoping that he will fulfill it, is shirk.” By claiming consensus for a matter that was far from settled before Ibn Taymiyyah’s time, al-Shuraym continues the same attitude as Ibn Taymiyyah and others. Al-Shuraym also considers calling upon those in graves to ask things of God to be shirk. As proof, he uses a general hadith that does not directly address the issue. He relates a hadith of the Prophet narrated by al-Bukhārī: “One who dies while [still guilty of the sin of] calling upon an equal (nidd) of God shall enter the Hellfire.” However, the issue at hand does not necessitate that one consider the one in the grave to be an equal of God. In fact, the one who supplicates in this scenario acknowledges God’s place as the source of all power, as he does not believe the deceased has power on his own. It is for this reason that he asks the one in the grave (a righteous individual with a station near God) to plead with this source (God) to grant him his needs. Al-Shuraym’s employment of the verse above is similar to Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s methodology of using verses that speak of shirk in general and applying them to the issue of ziyārah.

Permissible ziyārah, according to al-Shuraym, is that which reminds one of the Afterlife and where one prays for the deceased. Or, as Ibn Taymiyyah wrote, “the living benefitting the dead.” Any form of praying other than this either falls into the category of bidʿah or shirk:

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314 Al-Shuraym, p. 113.
315 Al-Shuraym, p. 113.
316 Ibn Taymiyyah, Ziyārat al-Qubār, p. 18.
And by this, you now know, O Muslim, that it is not permissible to visit graves with the intention of praying or supplicating near them, clinging to them, asking the people of [the graves] for your needs, or to heal the sick, or asking God by [means of] them or by [means of] their station [near God]. And some of these matters are bid’ah, but not shirk, like praying to God, immaculate is He, at graves. Other [examples mentioned] are major polytheism (shirk akbar), like calling upon the deceased, or seeking their help or aid, etc.\(^{317}\)

Like Ibn Taymiyyah in Ziyārat al-Qubūr (as mentioned above), al-Shuraym categorizes \(du‘ā‘\) (supplication) into that which is shirk (asking that which one has no power over) and that which is not (asking something within one’s power). To ask of the deceased is always of the former category.\(^{318}\)

Al-Shuraym dismisses a clear example of seeking help from the Prophet that is in conflict with the Wahhabi madhhab, even though it was accepted by great Hanbali scholars. Al-Shuraym takes it upon himself to address the story related by al-‘Utbīyy of the bedouin man who came to the Prophet’s grave seeking forgiveness. However, he resolves this story by giving an inaccurate assessment of its place in scholarship. “No scholar would use this as a proof;” (lā yuṭaṭaj bihā ‘inda ahl al-‘ilm) he argues. Earlier it was mentioned that one of the great Hanbali scholars in history, Ibn Qudāmah, related this story without criticizing it. In fact, after mentioning the story, Ibn Qudāmah writes that one of the etiquettes of visiting the Prophet’s grave is to face the grave, recite the same verse the bedouin man recited and to ask the Prophet for forgiveness and to intercede on one’s behalf. Later, al-Buhūtī would similarly relate this story.

Like Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb, al-Shuraym makes a general statement about the deviant practices of the people of his time and thus places them in the same category as the disbelievers from the time of the Prophet. “It then becomes clear, O Muslim

\(^{317}\) Al-Shuraym, p. 113.

\(^{318}\) Al-Shuraym, p. 113.
[reader],” writes al-Shuraym, “that what some people do today, seeking a means [to God] by way of graves, requesting their needs from the occupants of [graves]... seeking help or aid from them, all of these are precisely what the disbelievers said and did.”

Al-Shuraym is yet another example of a Wahhabi scholar who uses similar arguments and hadith as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. And it is the continuation of this particular understanding pertaining to ziyārah that allows one to classify such scholars as an independent school of thought. This, however, is a matter that Wahhabis themselves choose to reject, as will be discussed immediately.

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319 Al-Shuraym, p. 115.
Chapter 7: Wahhabism As a Separate *Madhhhab*

I have demonstrated that the group known as “Wahhabis” is to be distinguished from non-Wahhabi scholars and the methods of early Hanbali scholars. The Wahhabis take a particular stance concerning *ziyārah* and employ certain hadith in this regard. Hadith that they believe forbid traveling for the sake of visiting the Prophet as well as hadith that forbid making his grave an ‘*īd* or turning graves into mosques are used repeatedly in their works. The leniency or lack of clarity in early Hanbali books of jurisprudence is transformed into definitive opinions that deem touching or kissing graves and seeking help from the Prophet to be prohibited or *shirk*. It would then make sense to assign those who adhere to this sort of thinking a name of their own. “Wahhabis” was chosen due to the strong link between this branch of *fiqh* and the person of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb. But the founders of Wahhabism were not likely to accept that their works were designed to create a *madhhhab* that stands in opposition to the other four *madhāhib* of Sunni jurisprudence. Rather, from their own perspectives, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb were true adherents of the Qur’an and the *sunnah*. They had freed themselves from the shackles of *taqlīd*, which imposed upon Muslims opinions of scholars, whether those opinions were in accordance with the sources of Islamic law. But
what is the perspective of modern Wahhabi scholars?

Al-Fawzān wrote a short treatise in response to Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī’s *Al-Salafiyyah marḥalah zamāniyyah mubahah, lā madhhab islāmī* (“Salafiyyah is a point in time, not a school of thought in Islam,” which sought to dismiss scholars like al-Fawzān as being part of a temporary phenomenon, rather than a true madhhab. In his refutation of al-Būṭī entitled *Taʿqībat ʿalā kitāb al-salafiyyah laysat madhhaban* (“corrections to the book *Salafis Are Not a School of Thought*”), al-Fawzān seeks to prove that the *salaf*, or, those who adhere to the practices of the earliest Muslims (as opposed to the *khalaf*) are to be considered a *madhhab* that opposes innovations and superstition.\(^{320}\)

Al-Fawzān writes:

Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdiʾl-Wahhāb does not have a particular *madhhab* called *al-Wahhābiyyah*. This is because, in terms of beliefs, he adhered to the way of the *salaf* and in *furūʿ* (the branches of religion\(^{321}\)) to the *madhhab* of al-imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who the scholars of Najd before him [Ibn ʿAbdiʾl-Wahhāb] followed, as well as before his time and after it. And his followers call [others] to adhere to the *madhhab* of the *salaf*, and they traverse this path. And I call upon him [al-Būṭī] to bring proof that al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdiʾl-Wahhāb brought a new *madhhab* that is associated with him. And if he did not bring [one] – and he never will bring it – then he [al-Būṭī] is slandering al-shaykh and those who follow him. And God will recompense those who slander [others].\(^{322}\)

In this excerpt of al-Fawzān’s response, he uses the same sort of circular logic as the Wahhabi scholars before him. Salafis claim they simply follow the pure form of Islam as it was practiced by the earliest Muslims. They are not, therefore, a new *madhhab* with merely different interpretations. It is either that you follow the *madhhab* of the *salaf* or

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\(^{321}\) This is a term used to relate aspects of religion that do not pertain to beliefs (which are the roots, or, *uṣūl*). *Furūʿ* (branches) oftentimes refers to matters of jurisprudence and practice.

\(^{322}\) al-Fawzān, *Taʿqībat ʿalā kitāb al-salafiyyah laysat madhhaban*, p. 69.
the madhhab of the khalaf (those who came after the salaf). But the claim that they follow the way of the salaf is one that any madhhab would make. The attitude of al-Fawzân resembles that of Ibn Taymiyyah in his Raf’ al-malâm in which he argues that the imams should not be followed when they do not properly address an authentic hadith. Ibn Taymiyyah was essentially arguing that his interpretation of such hadith was the only one that was in keeping with the true intentions of the Prophet. Again, this is the apparent goal of every mujtahid, not just Ibn Taymiyyah.

The issue of ziyārah provides a clear example of how the Wahhabis took a strong stance on certain matters and claimed that their opinions are not due to any sort of taqlīd, but rather, because the likes of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb were most loyal to the way of the salaf. Al-Būṭī writes:

… We and a great number of other Sunnis have been accused of committing bid‘ah and apostasy because we are of the same opinion as the majority of the salaf scholars (al-jumhūr min ‘ulamā’ al-salaf) and others in that [we say] there is no harm for a man to intend to visit either the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, and his mosque.

In his response, al-Fawzân once again repeats the opinions of Ibn Taymiyyah and other Wahhabi scholars. He uses as proof the hadith that begins with lā tushadd as well. Al-Fawzân writes:

As for traveling for the purpose of visiting his [the Prophet’s] grave, this is bid‘ah. This is because it is not permissible to grave for the purpose of visiting graves, not the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, and not the grave of any other from among the saints (al-awliyā’), the righteous or family members. This is because he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, has said, lā tushadd… And, because they acted on this hadith, the salaf and the four imams and other imams who were followed did not travel for the purpose of visiting graves. And [al-Būṭī] made a hasty mistake when he claimed that the majority of scholars from the salaf and others believed that there is no harm in a man intending to do so. For the salaf scholars forbade that which the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, forbade, meaning

\[323\] Al-Fawzân makes reference to this on page twelve of Ta’qīb ‘alā kitāb al-salafiyyah laysat madhhaban.

\[324\] al-Fawzân, Ta’qīb, p. 70.
traveling to visit graves in general, and the grave of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, and others.

As the field of jurisprudence was not particular developed during the time of the Companions and their followers, it may be said that al-Būṭī and al-Fawzān mean to include the imams when they speak of the scholars of the *salaf* and perhaps other early jurists. For al-Fawzān the matter is clear. This hadith clearly states that such journeys are forbidden and such was the opinion of early scholars. From the perspective of al-Būṭī, this was a rare opinion. It may added that if such were not the case, it would not make sense for Ibn Taymiyyah to be dismissed as a disbeliever and jailed as a result of issuing a verdict prohibiting such journeys based on this hadith. But in order to maintain the link to the *salaf*, Wahhabi scholars must claim that their stance is one that is agreed upon by the earliest scholars.

It is for this reason that certain prominent stories or hadith that disagree with Wahhabism, like that which was narrated by al-‘Utbiyy, are either dismissed (by Ibn Taymiyyah) or simply ignored (in the case of Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb). And the opinions of scholars like Ibn Qudāmah are only related insofar as they agree with Wahhabi thinking. For instance, *Al-Jāmi‘ li aḥkām al-hajj wa’l-‘umrah* (“the compendium for rulings concerning hajj and ‘umrah”) is a survey of the opinions of prominent Hanbali scholars concerning the rites of the pilgrimages of *al-hajj* and *al-‘umrah* that was written by ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad al-Harfī and reviewed in its entirety by al-Fawzān and partially reviewed by Ibn Bāz. The first jurist al-Harfī mentions is Ibn Qudāmah. However, when he arrives at Ibn Qudāmah’s discussion concerning visiting the Prophet’s grave, al-Harfī does not mention the story of al-‘Utbiyy nor that Ibn Qudāmah wrote that
one should ask the Prophet for forgiveness and his intercession. Instead, al-Harî relates that Ibn Qudāmah wrote that it is not mustahabb to wipe or kiss the wall of the grave of the Prophet, that Aḥmad said, “I do not know of this [wiping or kissing the grave],” that al-Athram said the scholars of Medina would not wipe the grave, but rather, send salutations from afar, that Abū ‘Abd Allāh said this was also the practice of Ibn ‘Umar and that Ibn ‘Umar would only seek blessings from the Prophet’s pulpit.\(^{325}\) As mentioned earlier, these were all part of Ibn Qudāmah’s second short chapter on ziyārah. The first one mentioned the praiseworthiness of seeking shafā‘ah from the Prophet. Al-Harî strategically only included in his summary of Ibn Qudāmah’s opinions that which would be capable of presenting the Wahhabi madhab as consistent with early Hanbali scholars. The other scholars al-Harî chose to include can all be classified as Wahhabi, beginning with Ibn Taymiyyah’s student Ibn al-Qayyim and continuing down to Ibn Bāz and Muḥammad ibn al-‘Uthaymīn (d. 2001 C.E.). In other words, al-Harî presents solely those opinions that are in keeping with the Wahhabi madhab.

It is contradictory for Wahhabis to claim that they are not a separate school of thought but are merely loyal adherents of a puritan form of Islam while dismissing opinions with which they disagree. What is a madhab other than a scholarly approach based on the reported methods and opinions of a founder that are then adopted, repeated and defended by later scholars?\(^{326}\) This is precisely what Wahhabism is. One difference, though, is that other madhâhab acknowledge the legitimacy of opinions with which they disagree. A madhab does not present itself as being the only proper understanding of the


\(^{326}\) For a more detailed analysis of the madhab system, see: Hallaq, Wael, Authority, Change and Continuity in Islamic Law, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
It is this tendency in Wahhabi scholars that propels them to refer to themselves as “Salafis” and free of the madhhab system and taqlīd. This is despite the fact that, as demonstrated in the case of ziyārah, Wahhabis are just as likely to adhere to an opinion simply because it was advanced by Ibn Taymiyyah as followers of other madḥāhib are to adhere to the opinions of their respective imams. In fact, if the examples concerning ziyārah are any indication, Wahhabis arguably do a greater amount of taqlīd. After all, the innovations and grievances committed at graves occupy great portions of their books, whereas such discussions were of little concern before Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote an entire treatise dedicated to the matter, Ziyārat al-Qubūr, which consists mostly of warnings of the deviant practices that occur near graves. Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Wahhāb’s Kitāb al-tawhīd, which would at first seem to be interested in expounding upon the meaning of monotheism in Islam, is instead mostly preoccupied with what is perceived as rampant shirk found among Muslims, mostly occurring near graves. And this emphasis upon ziyārah continues to this day, as entire books are written on the subject, such as Al-Qubūriyyah (“the extreme practices performed near graves”) by Ibn Bāz’s student Ahmad ibn Hasan al-Mu‘allim, a seven hundred-page work dedicated to the excessive acts performed near graves through the ages and how one is to uproot such evils, by force and education. Al-Fawzān has written numerous books on hajj and ‘umrah (many of which were referred to above), all of which dedicate one section to warnings for pilgrims concerning visiting the Prophet’s grave. In fact, all of the Wahhabi books of hajj and ‘umrah I have encountered are alike in this regard. And, as mentioned earlier, two of the

327 The translation is in accordance with the definition provided by the author on pages 29-31.
three forms of contemporary *bida'* that al-Fawzān mentioned in *Al-Irshād ilā ṣaḥṭ al-
*i’tiqād wa’l-radd ‘alā al-shirk wa’ilhād* pertained to graves, while the third was also
inspired by Ibn Taymiyyah. Therefore, if *taqlīd* means to refer to the authority and
methodology of other great scholars, Wahhabis are at the very least just as prone to doing
*taqlīd*. 
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