CICM448572

Queries
Adis Duderija

Dear Author
Please address all the numbered queries on this page which are clearly identified on the proof for your convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation

Q1 Please reduce abstract to 100-150 words
Q2 d. 855/241 – years need explanation? and below
Q3 Izutsu 2006 please supply reference
Q4 Please give reference for this quote
Q5 Note 14: See further below, p. **. Please enter page from proofs. And nn.17,28,39
Q6 Note 51: see 1999 – please add name
Q7 Arafat, W.N. 1976 please give volume no.
Constructing the religious Self and the Other: neo-traditional Salafi manhaj

Adis Duderija

School of Social and Cultural Studies, Centre for Muslim States and Societies, University of Western Australia

The discussion on how a contemporary Islamic school of thought, here referred to as neo-traditional Salafism (NTS) constructs the religious Self and the religious Other on the basis of their approach to the interpretation (manhaj) of relevant Qur’an–Sunna textual indicants forms the subject matter of this article. In the first section, NTS thought and its main proponents are defined in relation to how they conceptualize, engage with and interpret the Islamic tradition (turaḍḥ). In the second section, NTS is situated in relation to the broader madhhab-based Islamic tradition. In the following part, the delineating features of the NTS manhaj are briefly summarized. The fourth section presents a discussion on some general trends and the context behind the unfolding of Muslim Self identity vis-à-vis the Other. The fifth and the sixth parts investigate how the application of the NTS manhaj to relevant Qur’an and hadith textual indicants results in their particular understanding of the religious Self and the religious Other. In the seventh part, the socio-political ramifications of NTS ‘theological boundaries’ are discussed. The article concludes that the NTS manhaj, characterized by a (semi-)decontextualist, textually segmentalist approach that hermeneutically marginalizes ethico-moral and objective and values-based dimensions of the Qur’an and Sunna, engenders a religiously exclusivist Self construct vis-à-vis the religious Other and clearly delineates between the two, and that this has very important socio-political implications for relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Keywords: Islam; religious exclusivism; Salafism; ahl al-hadīth; Muslims; manhaj; Muslim–Christian relations; Muslim–Jewish relations; Qur’an; Sunna

1. Definition of neo-traditional Salafism

Neo-traditional Salafism (NTS) is a contemporary Islamic movement whose worldview is based upon the Salafi-revivalist manhaj1 of interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna. This phrase highlights several points that apply to its Qur’an–Sunna methodology: Salafism – because it is framed within the larger umbrella concept of Salafism briefly explained below; the prefix ‘neo-’ refers to the fact that it is a contemporary phenomenon. An alternative term ‘neo-Ahl-Hadithism’ could also be used, but the reason for using the term neo-traditional Salafism here is that the scholars who subscribe to this approach to interpretation of the Sunna (and Qur’an) use the term Salafism more frequently than the term ahl al-hadith in their self-definition. In addition, Salafism is a term that has a broader base in Islamic tradition and is more encompassing than Ahl-Hadith, which has more sectarian implications. Among the most influential exponents of NTS are some contemporary Middle Eastern Muslim scholars such as Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999),2 ‘Abd al-‘Aziz bin Baz (d. 1999),3 Muhammad Salih al-‘Uthaymin (d. 2001),4 and Yahya al-Hajuri, to name but a few, who held senior positions on religious councils responsible for issuing fatwās5 (legal opinions) and/or were lecturers in Islamic sciences at traditional Islamic institutions such as the Universities of Medina and Riyadh.6

*Email: dudera02@student.uwa.edu.au
Although many of them are of Saudi Arabian background or have lived in the Saudi Kingdom, the proponents of NTS are well entrenched in many parts of the Muslim clerical establishment (Roy 2004, 241 – Roy refers to them as Neo-Fundamentalists). Their students are many and include a number of influential present-day NTS scholars such as: ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Halabi (Palestinian), Salim al-Hilali (Palestinian), Shaykh Ibn Fawzan (Saudi), Shaykh al-Madkhali (Saudi), Shaykh al-Athari (Saudi), Shaykh Ghudayn (Saudi), Shaykh al-Shaqanti (Mauritanian), Marzuq al-Banna (Egyptian), Shaykh al-Wadi’i (Yemeni, d. 2001), and Abu Bakr al-Jaziri (Algerian). In the Western context, NTS scholars include personalities such as Shaykh Zarabozo, Shaykh B. Philips, Jamaaluddin Haidar and Shaykh El-Faisal. Although the Middle Eastern NTS Shaykhs write exclusively in Arabic, their Western colleagues write in English. The influence of NTS Middle Eastern scholars is felt not only across the Middle East but also North Africa, the Indo-Pakistani Subcontinent (see Roy 2004, 234–243) and, due to easier and faster communications, among major Muslim communities living in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, where their ideological sympathizers have established their own publishing houses and websites which translate the works of Middle Eastern NTS scholars into English. The publishing houses include TROID and Tarbiyyah publications in Toronto, Invitation to Islam and Al-Khilafat Publications in London, and Salafi Publications and Maktabah Darussalaam in Birmingham, UK. Among numerous websites are www.salafipublications.com, www.tarbiyyabookstore.com, www.qss.org, http://al-sunnah.com and www.salah.com (For a more exhaustive list, see Roy 2004, 241–242 n19). Individual scholars’ websites, such as www.binbaz.org.sa, www.rabee.net and www.ibnothaimeen.com have also been set up by the proponents of NTS in the West and a number of NTS websites are located and hosted in Western universities, such as the Universities of Southern California (www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/introduction/understandingislam.html) and Houston (www.uh.edu/campus/msa/home.php) in the United States. Associations that endorse NTS in the West include societies such as the Salafi Society of North America, the Qur’an and Sunnah Society of Canada, and the Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah in Britain (Roy 2004, 241–242).

2. Neo-traditional Salafism and classical8 Sunni Islamic scholarship

For the purposes of this article, NTS is viewed primarily as the belief that the historical legacy of the Prophet’s interpretation of the Qur’an as understood by the most eminent authorities belonging to the first three generations of Muslims (al-salaf al-ṣaḥīḥ) is normative, static and universalistic in nature (in terms of methodology/manhaj and its by-product, the creed/‘aqīda). As such, these teachings are to be literally adhered to and imitated in a temporal and spatial vacuum by all subsequent generations of Muslims, primarily by being faithful to a literal and decontextualized Qur’ān—Sunna hermeneutic epistemologically and methodologically anchored in Hadith-based literature. The contemporary Saudi Arabian scholar, al-‘Uthaymin put it this way:

For Salafīyyah is neither a group and [sic] nor an exclusive party. Rather it is the following of what the Prophet and his companions were upon in aqidah (creed), manhaj (methodology) and ibaadah (worship) . . . distinguished from the various Islamic factions due to their ascription to what guarantees for them the correct and true Islam, which is adherence to what the Messenger and his Companions were upon, as occurs in the authentic Hadiths [sic]. (Shaikh bin Uthaimeen (i.e. Muhammad al-‘Uthaymin), quoted in Salafi Publications 2003, 5, 48)

The epistemological framework of the Islamic tradition (turāth) in NTS thought asserts that ahl al-hadith (Melchert 2000, 6) are the sole and true followers of the al-salaf al-ṣaḥīḥ understanding of the scope and the nature of the concept of Sunna because of their literal adherence to ‘authentic’ Hadith. Melchert asserts that ahl al-hadith is a school of thought that accepted only the Qur’ān and Hadith as sources of law and theology.
Then verily the one who studies the condition of the previous and subsequent ones [generations of Muslims] who are affiliated to the Ummah of Muhammad and studies their methodology, their beliefs and conceptions, doing so with justness, understanding and without bias, will find that the Ahl-ul-Hadith are the sternest of the people following, obeying and associating themselves to that which the Prophet Muhammad came to them with, by the way of the Book (i.e. the Qur’an) and the Sunnah, in their beliefs (‘aqidah), in their various acts of worship, in their dealings, in their da’wa, in their deriving of rulings and in their establishing of proofs. (al-Madkhlī 2001, 7; cf. al-Athārī 2003, 29; Zaynū 1999, 15)

To argue for this type of understanding of the nature and scope of the concept of Sunna, NTS scholars rely on the views of selected authorities from the past, such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855/241) who is considered to be a major proponent of the ahl al-hadith manhaj (e.g., al-Madkhālī 2001; cf. al-Athārī 2003).

As part of their overall claim to be the sole custodians of the al-salaf al-sāliḥ understanding of the scope and nature of the Qur’an and Sunna, NTS scholars maintain that the way in which the nature and the scope of the Qur’an and Sunna were understood and interpreted from the time of the Prophet until now remained the same and is adhered to in its original form by the ahl al-hadith. Asking, ‘Who are the ahl al-hadith?’ NTS scholar al-Madkhālī writes: ‘They [the ahl al-hadith] after all of the Companions – and the head of them the rightly guided Caliphs – are the leaders of the tabi‘īn and at the head of them’ (al-Madkhālī 2001, 10). Authorities amongst the second generation of Muslims named as belonging to the ahl al-hadith movement include9 al-Musāyyib (d. 708/90), M. ibn Hanafiyya (d. 699/80), Ibn Mas‘ud (d. 712/94), al-Basri (d. 728/110), ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (d. 719/101) and al-Zuhri (d. 742/125). Among the followers of the tābi‘īn (atbā‘at al-tābi‘īn), or the third generation of Muslims, are included: Imam Malik (d. 795/179), Awza‘ī (d. 773/157) and Abu Hanifa (d. 767/150). Al-Madkhlī adds al-Shāfī‘ī (d. 819/204), Ibn Hanbal (d. 855/241), al-Bukhari (d. 869/256), Muslim (d. 874/261), Ibn Salah (d. 1245/643) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1327/728)10 from subsequent generations.

NTS scholars claim to be the sole custodians of the al-salaf al-sāliḥ understanding of the concept of the Sunna by adhering to the ahl al-hadith manhaj of understanding and interpreting the Qur’an and Sunna through the classical ‘ullūm al-hadith science,11 namely the ‘authentic Hadith’ as defined by ahl al-hadith. ‘The religion of the prophet Muhammad is the narrations . . . the knowledge that is followed is that what contains “haddathana” and everything else is whispers from the Shaytaan’ (al-Madkhālī 2001, 193–194). Authentic hadith and the nature and the scope of the concept of Sunna are thus used interchangeably. According to NTS, the right manhaj for determining the Prophet’s Sunna consists entirely of following an ahistorical, decontextualized meaning of the Qur’an and hadith texts. As al-Madānī states:

The prophetic manhaj [is that] which is found in the Qur’an, the sahih of Muslim and Bukhari and the remaining books of Sunnah12 and the sayings and actions of Salafus-Salih, not the various new and pretentious methodologies . . . Every issue of ‘aqidah (creed), ‘ibadah (worship) or manhaj (methodology) which the Book of Allah and the Sunnah have not provided a text for and upon which the Companions never agreed is falsehood, vain and innovated. (al-Madānī 2005, 170)

The NTS manhaj reason and reason-based, non-textual sources of knowledge, which are relied on to some extent in the broader madhhab-based traditional Islamic scholarship (see e.g. Hallaq 2005), are considered to function outside the scope of the ‘valid’ religious knowledge contained in the Qur’an and the hadith-based Sunna. Al-Madānī (2005, 136, 128) asserts:
One who puts forward his *ijtihad* in a matter of *fiqh*, or analogy (*qiyas*), or a belief of *shirk*, or an innovated desire in the belief, statement or action – over even the smallest of clear established Prophetic Sunnah found in the authorised reliable books of *ahadith*, after coming across it in them – then he is not from the Saved Sect which the truthful Messenger specified. There is no need to go to what has been collected by the people of opinions and people of *ijtihad*, from their many judgments and their papers on subsidiary issues. Most of them have no supporting proof for the declarations in them of what is lawful and what is unlawful, the permissible and the impermissible.

Furthermore, Qur’anic sciences pertaining to chronology, modes and occasions of revelation, collection and transmission of the Qur’an, prosody and textual units, and exegesis are epistemologically constrained by the body of knowledge that underpins *ulūm al-ḥadīth*. The ahistorical, decontextualized acceptance of the sacred text characterized by unflinching adherence to tradition when engaging in Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsı̂r*) is known as *tafsı̂r bi-al-ma’turu*, or traditionalist exegesis, and is one of many *tafsı̂r* categories, including theological, literary-rhetorical, mystical, reason/opinion based (*ra’yi*), literary-philological, Shi’a, esoteric, or juristic exegesis. Without going into detail, it is important to point out that the boundaries of the NTS body of knowledge pertaining to the conceptualization and interpretation of Qur’anic indicants function within traditional madhhab-based Islamic scholarship and are entirely pre-modern in their scope (Arkoun 2001, 326). Furthermore, the major difference between the NTS and madhhab-based Islamic scholarship are two-fold. First, they differ over the epistemological worth of isolated (*ahād*) hadith in *uul al-fiqh* sciences, the status of taqlı̂d and the scope of reason-based opinion (*ra’yi*) in Qur’anic interpretation. Second, according to Abou El Fadl, the classical madhhab approach to *uul al-fiqh* had ‘a distinctly egalitarian, open-ended, non-deterministic, and cumulative evolutionary character’, while its modern, what I refer to as NTS, version, ‘has become deterministic, closed, resolute, and authoritarian’ (Abou El Fadl 2005a, 23).

3. The delineating features of the neo-traditional Salafi model of interpretation (*manhaj*) of Qur’an–Sunna textual indicants

The delineating features of the NTS interpretational model and its interpretational assumptions have been discussed elsewhere at length (Duderija 2007). These include: textually- and philologically-centred interpretational orientation; textual ‘intentionalism’ – the subscription to a voluntaristic view of law, ethics, morality and ontology; belief in the fixed, stable nature of the meaning of the Qur’anic text residing in totality in the mind of its Originator, and, as a corollary, the principle of Qur’anic semiotic monovalency; decontextualization and the marginalization of Qur’anic revelatory background; a ‘voluntarist–traditionalist’ view of the relationship between reason and revelation; textual segmentalism; and the lack of a thematic, value- and aim-centred (*maqāsīd*) approach to Qur’anic hermeneutics. Lastly, NTS considers the concepts of Sunna and *‘sahih’* hadith, as defined by the *ahl al-ḥadith manhaj*, to be coalescing conceptually and that, by holding this view, they are the true custodians of *al-salaf al-sālih* understanding of the concept of Sunna.

The purpose of this article is to examine how NTS thought employs these hermeneutical principles and assumptions in order to construct the religious Self and the Other.

4. The religious Self and the religious Other in the Qur’an and Sunna: the importance of context

Prior to examining the question raised above, more needs to be said about the revelatory environment in which the revelation and the Prophet’s embodiment of it took place, as it relates to the
question of the identity of the Self and that of the Other, especially in the Medinan period. This is so because not only was it primarily in Medina that Muhammad’s Message, and therefore the Muslim identity, became more self-aware, but also because the Medinan model of the Prophetic and early Muslim community is considered by many Muslims as one to be emulated in as many aspects as possible, including that of the relationship with the (religious) Other. Furthermore, this approach is warranted by the fact that even a cursory examination of qur’anic content (and therefore Prophet’s legacy) was organically linked to this context, especially the dimension of it that relates to the relationship between Muslims and the religious Other. Donner (2002–2003, 267–268) describes the context and the dynamics behind the relationship between Muslims and their normative tradition and non-Muslims, in particular the People of the Book, in following manner:

Islam’s relationship with the People of the Book has had its ups and downs. The growing familiarity of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula with the ideas, institutions and the communities of the surrounding monotheisms followed by the initial and increasingly intense encounters of the nascent Muslim umma with the same, bred the complex mixture of attitudes to Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism discernable through the classical literature of the faith. The seminal texts and genres – Qur’an, Hadith, Tafsir, Sharh and fiqh – evince a multifaceted and pendulating posture vis-à-vis the religio-cultural Other that partakes more of dialectic than dogma.

On the basis of Donner’s analysis, there are several general points that need to be considered when trying to understand the concept of the religious Self and the religious Other during the lifetime of the Prophet, as depicted in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s embodiment of it.

First, the context behind the emergence of the Prophet Muhammad’s Message in seventh-century Hijaz was such that it took place alongside other already well-established religious communities, the most important of which were, apart from Arabian pre-qur’anic beliefs, Judaism, Hanifiyya, and Christianity. The very fabric and nature of the Message embodied in the Qur’an clearly depicts many of the actions and attitudes of the Muslim community towards non-Muslim others and vice versa.

Second, it is essential to note that the qur’anic attitude (and Muhammad’s praxis) towards the non-Muslim Other is highly contextual in nature and therefore ambivalent or context-dependent. In addition, for a large part of the ‘formative period’ of the Muslim community in Medina, a climate of conflict, friction and hostility between Muslims, mushrikūn, large Jewish tribes, Christians and religious hypocrites (munāfiqūn) prevailed, in which Muslims were constantly concerned about the sheer survival of their community, and this often expressed itself in a reactionary, antagonistic way of identifying in relation to the religious Other. Watt (1956, 217) describes the circumstances and the motives behind the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially between the Prophet of Islam and the Jews in Medina, as follows:

In Muhammad’s first two years at Medina the Jews were the most dangerous critics of his claim to be a prophet, and the religious fervour of his followers, on which so much depended, was liable to be greatly reduced unless Jewish criticisms could be silenced or rendered impotent. In so far as the Jews changed their attitude and ceased to be actively hostile, they were unmolested.

As we shall see, this is well attested by the qur’anic content itself. This context-dependency of the scriptures towards the view of the (religious) Other (and therefore by implication the religious Self) leads Waardenburg (2003, 99) to assert, ‘Looking back at the interaction of the new Islamic religious movement with the existing religious communities, we are struck by the importance of socio-political factors’ (cf. Waardenburg 1979).

Apart from the socio-political factors, religious ideas were also significant since qur’anic progressive consolidation of Islamic religious identity is inextricably linked with the religious identity of others, notably Jews and Christians. The aspects of religious identity continuity
and commonality with other faiths in the Qur’an are knotted with those that stress the distinctiveness and uniqueness of Muslim identity (Zebiri 1997; cf. Donner 2002–2003). Thus, the religious aspects of and interactions between various religious communities in the qur’anic milieu led to the genesis of the construction of religious identity of Muslims and played a very important role in its construction (Zebiri 1997).

In his study of the question of the extent to which the Prophet Muhammad and qur’anic scripture emphasized confessional distinctiveness, Donner demonstrated that scripturally (or on the basis of qur’anic evidence) and in early Islam, ‘the community of Believers was originally conceptualized independent of confessional identities’ and that

It was only later – apparently during the third quarter of the first century A.H., a full generation or more after the founding of Muhammad’s community – that membership in the community of Believers came to be seen as confessional identity in itself-when, to use a somewhat later formulation of religious terminology, being a Believer and a Muslim meant that one could not also be a Christian, say, or a Jew. (Donner 2002–2003, 12; cf. Maghen 2003, 268–269)

In other words, Donner (2002–2003, 17–24, 28–34) adduces a substantial amount of evidence that it could be argued that qur’anically (some) Jews and Christians qualify as mu’minūn (believers) as well as muslimūn (those who submit to God) (cf. Miraly 2006).

Another trend significant in the ‘historicity’ of the development of the Muslim religious Self was the gradual ever-growing religious self-consciousness of the Prophet of Islam and his early community. Whilst attempts to find common ground and syncretism featured more frequently during the earlier periods of Muhammad’s life, later periods stressed ‘features constituting specific identity and what distinguished one [i.e. Muslims] fundamentally from others’ (Waardenburg 2003, 44). In this context, Miraly (2006, 33) asserts:

Whereas pluralism was an essential foundation of Islam, exclusivism was a later addition. In the centuries following the Revelation, the original pluralist impulse that prompted the Constitution of Medina was usurped by politically motivated factions who propounded exclusivist interpretations of the Qur’an in order to justify warfare and territorial expansion.

Similarly, Shboul (2004, 242) echoes this observation with regard to the early Muslim view of the Byzantines in the days of the Prophet Muhammad: ‘the attitudes of the Muslims developed from sympathy and affinity, reflected in the early qur’anic verses, to awe and apprehension of Byzantium’s military power, scorn of Byzantine wealth and luxury, and finally anticipation of open antagonism and prolonged warfare’.

Jews and Christians were eventually recognized as recipients of previous revelations (ahl al-kitāb) and were awarded the status of protected/secured minorities (dhimmūs).

An additional point to be considered is the qur’anic concept of a hanif, or millat Ibrāhīm (for more on this, refer to Beck 1952). Qur’anically, this belief system is presented as a primordial, monotheistic ‘Ur-religion’ based on the belief in One True God, as embodied in the message of Abraham (Arabic: Ibrāhīm), considered as the universal belief system and as potentially the final evolution in Muhammad’s attitude towards the religious Self and the Other (Waardenburg 2003, 87–94). It is, however, unclear, whether the Prophet of Islam himself identified historical Islam as the only or merely one possible realisation of the primordial religion, the Hanifiyyah, on earth’ (Waardenburg 2003, 106–107).

Lastly, an ‘Islamo-centric view’ of Muslim perceptions of the religious Other stem from a certain interpretation of the nature of Qur’an–Sunna teachings. This view is based upon the premise that the Qur’an is a source of empirical knowledge of the religious Other that is to be applied universally, ahistorically and decontextually.

Having outlined the general trends and the circumstances that shaped the Qur’an–Sunna view of the religious Self and of the Other, we shall now consider several examples of verses...
in the Qur’an and hadith literature as they pertain to the view of the view of the Self vis-à-vis the Other and analyse them in relation to the NTS model of interpretation of Qur’an–Sunna teachings.

5. Qur’an-hadith texts on the view of the religious Other from the perspective of the NTS approach to the interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna

Here we investigate how several qur’anic verses, when interpreted on the basis of the NTS manhaj, can result in the exclusivist construction of the religious Self vis-à-vis the Other advocated by NTS thought. Along with the quotation of the verses,30 a brief description of the historical period in which they were revealed will be given in order to contextualize them.

a) Qur’anic verses

Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: ‘The guidance of Allah that is the [only] guidance.’ Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee then wouldst thou find neither protector nor helper against Allah. (Q 2.120)

O ye who believe! Take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks; they will not fail to corrupt you. They only desire your ruin: rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths; what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made plain to you the Signs if ye have wisdom. (Q 3.118)

O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them [for friendship] is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust. (Q 5.51)

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war]; but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Q 9.5)

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam [submission to Allah], never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost [All spiritual good]. (Q 3.85)

Qur’anic exegesis has documented the context behind these verses and suras (chapters) (see e.g. Armstrong 1991, 2002; Watt, 1956). Broadly speaking, at the time of the revelation of these verses, and the larger chapters in which they are embedded, the sheer survival of the small Muslim population residing in Medina was under constant threat, from both within and without. The internal threat came from those that the Qur’an on numerous occasions calls as munafiqūn, religious hypocrites, who cooperated with the external sources of threat and attempted to sabotage the Muslim community from within. The external threat, apart from the Meccan tribe of Quraysh, was increasingly felt, particularly from the Jewish tribes living on the outskirts of Medina. These tribes at first signed a joint peace treaty known as the Constitution of Medina (see Lecker 2004) and swore allegiance to Muhammad. According to this document, all of the inhabitants of the city were considered as one community (umma) whose religious difference was respected (Miraly 2006, 47), as attested and endorsed by the Qur’an.31 Furthermore, the Constitution stipulated that there was to be ‘sincere friendship, and honourable dealing, not treachery’ between Muslims and Jews. All the signatories of the document were also to ‘help against whoever suddenly attacks[ed] Yathrib [Medina]’ (Miraly 2006, 59). However, as the Muslim community grew in numbers and strength and became more self-reliant and self-aware, these Jewish tribes withdrew their support and started to openly cooperate and conspire with the Meccans against the Muslim community (Armstrong...
Thus, they broke the constitutional agreement by committing treason. This inevitably prompted responses both in the Qur’an and by the Prophet as to how Muslims should deal with these tribes and individuals. In this context, the execution of (some of) the men of a Jewish tribe and the expulsion of another are often used as examples of an exclusivist orientation in Muhammad’s policies and the Qur’an (e.g., in Kister 1986). That the above quoted verses are, indeed, contextually embedded, and are not universal in nature is borne out not only by the fact that the Qur’anic discourse pertaining to Jews and Christians contains a large number of conciliatory verses that will be discussed below, but also, as Miraly (2006, 62) argues, by the fact that Muhammad’s actions against the Jewish tribes from Medina ‘[were] not motivated by any sense of religious exclusivism’ but ‘were the result of irresolvable civic tensions that had no bearing on the Qur’an’s position on religious pluralism’. Furthermore, Armstrong, a distinguished non-Muslim scholar of the Abrahamic faiths, asserts in this context that, after the expulsion and execution of the two Jewish tribes in question, ‘the Qur’an continued to revere Jewish prophets and to urge Muslims to respect the People of the Book. Smaller Jewish groups continued to live in Medina, and later Jews, like Christians, enjoyed full religious liberty in Islamic empires’ (Armstrong 1991, 207).

In relation to Q 3.85, Esack argues that, while the verse in the pre-classical or early stages of Islam was considered to afford salvation to groups outside the Muslim community, much later, the exegetes used more sophisticated exegetical devices, such as the theory of abrogation (naskh), to ‘secure exclusion from salvation for the Other’ (Esack 1997, 163).

Furthermore, the specific rather than general nature of Q 9.5 is based not only upon contextual considerations but also upon grammatical ones: the use of the definite article limits the application of the verse to specific tribes and is not to be understood as universally prescriptive and normative (Miraly 2006, 39).

**b) Hadith**

A reflection of the context described above is also found in many hadiths reportedly going back to the Prophet, in which the emphasis is on the difference between Muslims on the one side and Jews and Christians on the other, and the creation of a reactionary, dichotomous identity is noticeable. Here are several examples:

**Narrated Abu Hurayra:** ‘The Prophet said, “Jews and Christians do not dye their hair so you should do the opposite of what they do.”’ (Bukhari, *Sahih*, 7.786)

**Narrated ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-’As:** ‘Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said, “He does not belong to us who imitates other people. Do not imitate the Jews or the Christians, for the Jews’ salutation is to make a gesture with the fingers and the Christians’ salutation is to make a gesture with the palms of the hands.”’ (Tirmidhi, 4648, classified as weak).

**Narrated Abu Hurayra:** The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘Religion will continue to prevail as long as people hasten to break the fast, because the Jews and the Christians delay doing so.’ (Abu Dawud, 2346)

**Ibn ‘Abbas reported:** ‘The Messenger of Allah fasted on the day of ‘Ashurah and ordered the people to fast on it. The people said: “O Messenger of Allah, it is a day that the Jews and Christians honour.” The Prophet said, “When the following year comes – Allah willing – we shall fast on the ninth.”’ The
death of the Prophet came before the following year.’ This is recorded by Muslim and Abu Dawud. In one version the wording is: ‘If I remain until next year, we shall fast the ninth,’ meaning, the tenth. This is related by Muslim and Abu Dawud.34

It is not difficult to understand how these verses and hadiths, reportedly going back to the Prophet, if taken at face value without taking into account the historical circumstances and the background to the revelation outlined above, would result in construction of a very negative view of the religious Other, which could then come to be considered as normative. This is exactly what has happened with those Muslims who follow the NTS interpretational model of Qur’an–Sunna teachings, which is characterized by the marginalization of contextual background regarding the nature, content, understanding, interpretation and objective of these qur’anic injunctions and hadith texts. Furthermore, the interpretational proclivity to generalize and universalize these contextually-based injunctions, which is another feature of the NTS approach to the interpretation of Qur’an–Sunna teachings, would result in the application of these verses to all Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities both during the Prophet’s lifetime and after his death. The NTS atomistic or segmentalist approach to textual evidence, which does not systematically consider all the textual evidence on a particular theme in order to develop a coherent and holistic view, combined with the use of the principle of abrogation (naskh) as espoused by classical Islamic legal theory, is also responsible for the development of this view. In addition, the NTS hadith-dependent Sunna hermeneutic, and their ahl al-hadith manhaj in relation to hadith criticism, construe these hadiths as normative and thus religiously binding, so that ‘verses that appear to inspire intolerance and coercion were[are] willfully misrepresented, in an attempt to overpower the essential and overarching message of the Qur’an: one of toleration’ (Miraly 2006, 35).

In addition to the above, there are several qur’anic verses and a number of hadiths which, when taken out of their original context described above and applied decontextually, impact upon the view of the religious Other and thus upon a particular type of religious identity construction vis-à-vis the religious Other, as they emphasize the tension and enmity that existed between Muslims and Jews and Christians during the time of the Prophet’s early Medinan community expressed, for example, by invoking God’s curses on them. Here we consider several of these.

c) Qur’anic verses35

Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou fined the Jews and Pagans. (Q 5.82)

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His apostle nor acknowledge the religion of truth (even if they are) of the People of the Book until they pay the Jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued. (Q 9.29)

d) Hadith

Narrated ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar: ‘Allah’s Apostle said, “You [i.e. Muslims] will fight with the Jews till some of them will hide behind stones. The stones will (betray them) saying, ‘O ‘Abd Allah [i.e. slave of Allah]! There is a Jew hiding behind me; so kill him’”’. (Bukhari, 4.176)36

Narrated by ‘Abd Allah ibn Mulayka: ‘‘Aisha said that the Jews came to the Prophet and said, “As-Samu ‘Alaikum [death be on you].” ‘Aisha said [to them], “[Death] be on you, and may Allah curse you and shower His wrath upon you!” The Prophet said, “‘Be calm, O ‘Aisha! You should be kind and lenient, and beware of harshness and fuhsh [i.e. bad words].’” She said [to the Prophet], “Haven’t you heard what they [the Jews] have said?” He said, “Haven’t you heard what I have said [to them]? I said the same to them, and my invocation against them will be accepted while theirs against me will be rejected [by Allah].’’’ (Bukhari, 8.57)
The conflictive nature of these verses and hadith texts, again if considered from the NTS interpretational perspective, can have very grim implications and provide a religious foundation for a purely oppositional, conflictual Muslim identity construction vis-à-vis the religious Other. This is clearly stated by Abou El Fadl (2005b, 206):

The puritan worldview is bipolar – on the one end there is Islam which represents the unadulterated good, and on the other end are non-Muslims, who represent evil. Relying on the writings of some classical jurists, the puritans advocate a theology known as al-wala’ wa al-bara’ (the doctrine of loyalty and disassociation) which states it is imperative that Muslims care for, ally themselves with, and befriend only Muslims. Accordingly, Muslims may ally themselves with or seek the assistance of non-Muslims only for limited and identifiable purposes. Muslims should do so only if they are weak and in need, but as soon as Muslims are able to regain their power, they must regain their superior status... The fact that non-Muslims are not Muslim is seen as a moral fault.

This type of mentality and approach to Jews and Christians is promoted by the NTS scholar al-Albani (d.1999), for example, who considers that Prophet forbade the initiation of greetings with Jews and Christians and said that Muslims should not develop genuine, human-based relationships with non-Muslims. He bases his decisions upon a completely decontextualist and ahistorical approach to a couple of isolated hadiths, including the one cited above on the authority of ‘Aisha (al-Albani 2007).

Thus, the NTS manhaj engenders a construction of a religiously exclusivist Self vis-à-vis the religious Other.

6. Qur’an–hadith texts on the boundaries of faith as interpreted by the NTS approach to the Qur’an and Sunna

In this section we shall investigate how the NTS approach to the interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna draws and demarcates the boundaries of belief and unbelief and applies them to non-Muslims, especially Christians and Jews. As in the previous section, before we begin with the textual analysis, the historical development of the concept of faith/belief (ı̇man) and unbelief (kufr) requires some explanation in order for the NTS understanding of these concepts to be appreciated and situated in the broader Islamic tradition.

6.1. The qur’anic concepts of kufr and ı̇man

Izutsu (2002), drawing upon his theory/methodology of qur’anic historical semantics, gives several components of the implied/related meanings of the root k-f-r, based upon its qur’anic usage, namely:

1. To cover, ignore knowingly or be unthankful for received benefits – philological meaning,
2. Attitude of ingratitude towards and acts of rebellion against the Benefactor,
3. Giving lie (takhdhib) to God and God’s Apostle and the divine message,
4. Disbelief if used as antonym of ı̇man,
5. Man’s denial of the Creator manifesting itself in acts of insolence, haughtiness, contentiousness and presumptuousness (Izutsu 2002, 119–155),
6. Kufr associated with shirk or the practice of associating other gods with the One true God – the practice of the Arab polytheists termed mushrikün,

For the purposes of our study three important points need to be highlighted at this stage. First, the concept of kufr presupposes belief in God. Second, it can be applied to those who give the lie to God, God’s Apostle and his Message and thus have gone astray. Third, as is commonly
known, Jews and Christians in the Qur’an are primarily referred to as *ahl al-kitāb*, People of the Book, but in several instances (Q 5.17, 98.1, 5.57) the root *k-f-r* is also used, as shown below. Thus, as we have noted above, unless one adopts a holistic and thematic approach to Qur’anic interpretation, there is a degree of ambivalence when it comes to the Qur’anic attitude towards Jews and Christians in relation to their faith.

As Izutsu has pointed out, the Qur’anic concept of the *muslim*/kāfir relationship is based on a rather clear semantic dichotomy. However, subsequent Muslims changed the nature of the *muslim*/kāfir dialectic and introduced an additional element, namely the concept of the grave sinner (*murtakib kabīra*) or fāsiq. For example, the Khawarij, the first Muslim sect and first Muslim puritans, considered all those Muslims who did not subscribe to their view of Islam to be fāsiq and unbelievers, that is as kāfirūn. Murji’ites, the ‘pacifists’, considered fāsiqūn to be Muslims, while the Mu’tazilites regarded them as an independent category (see Izutsu 2006, 156–162).

*Fisq*, *kufr* and *nifaq* (religious hypocrisy) are, Qur’anicly, closely related concepts. Indeed, *fisq* and *nifaq* are regarded as types of *kufr* (Izutsu 2002, 156–162, 178–183).

Keeping the above distinctions in mind we are in a position to analyse several Qur’anic verses that deal with the issue of faith boundaries and how to behave towards the religious Other.

a) Qur’anic verses

Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers; if any do that in nothing will there be help from Allah; except by way of precaution that ye may guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you [to remember] Himself for the final goal is to Allah. (Q 3.28)

Those who reject [Truth] among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists will be in hell-fire to dwell therein [for aye]. They are the worst of creatures. (Q 98.6)

O ye who believe! Take not for friends and protectors those who take your religion for a mockery or sport whether among those who received the Scripture before you or among those who reject faith; but fear ye Allah if ye have Faith [indeed]. (Q 5.57)

In blasphemy [*kafara*] indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary. (Q 5.17)

Those who reject [*kafara*] (the truth) among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists were not going to depart [from their ways] until there should come to them Clear Evidence. (Q 98.1)

b) Hadith

Narrated Abu Hurayra: ‘The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) observed: “By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, he who amongst the community of Jews or Christians hears about me, but does not affirm his belief in that with which I have been sent and dies in this state [of disbelief], he shall be but one of the denizens of Hell-Fire.”’ (Muslim, 284)

Due to the enmity and tension that existed between Muslims and some of the *ahl al-kitāb* described above, the application to *ahl al-kitāb* of verses that referred to the fāsiqūn and munā- fiqūn (especially in the light of Q 5.57, 5.17 and 98.1 and the above hadith) could easily result from using the NTS interpretational model. More will be said about this after we analyse the concept of *imān* (faith).

Much like the concept of *kufr*, the concept of *imān*, from the Qur’anic perspective, is closely related to the context of the unfolding of the Qur’anic revelation. Similarly, the subsequent understandings of *imān* on the part of various Muslim factions were triggered by the turbulent socio-political and theological schisms that featured prominently and significantly shaped the formative period of Islamic thought (see van Ess 1993).
Izutsu maintains that the semantic field of ı¯mān revolves around the concept of kufr occupying the negative side of the semantic field (see Izutsu 1964) and the concepts of muslim (one who has willingly surrendered/submitted to God), iḥtiḍā’ (right guidance), taqwā (God consciousness/‘fear’ of God) and shukr (thankfulness [to God]) being positively related to it.

Izutsu’s chapter on the ‘Essential structure of the concept of iman’ (Izutsu 1965, 83–102) refers to its essential components as a theological concept that is concerned with answering the following three questions:

- Subject of belief (i.e. who is the believer?)
- Essential means of expressing belief (i.e. how is to be believed?)
- Object of belief (i.e. what is to be believed in?)

According to Izutsu (1965, 93), Muslim theologians, as representatives of past communities of interpretation, considered ı¯mān to be a by-product of the following elements:

- Knowledge (ma’rifa) of God;
- Assent by heart (taṣdiq bi-al-qalb);
- Verbal acknowledgment or confession in words (iqrār bi-al-lisan); and
- A’māl or acts of obedience or good works.

Muslim interpretative communities have differed significantly as to what constitute the essential elements of belief and what is the hierarchy of these constituents of ı¯mān. For example, as we have already noted, the fāsiqūn were considered by some sections of the Muslim community to be Muslims and by others not to be.

The NTS interpretation of the above Qur’an–hadith textual indicants in relation to the concepts of ı¯mān and kufr, following the NTS manhaj outlined in the third section of this article, is that both the ahl al-kita¯b referred to in the Qur’an and contemporary adherents of the Christian and Jewish faith are unbelievers, with all the implications of the qur’anic injunctions. According to this view of religious identity, Jews and Christians would fall outside the boundaries of belief and the Muslim religious identity would be constructed along the lines of the eternally oppositional, antagonistic view of the religious Other.

7. Socio-political ramifications of the NTS construction of the religious Self and the religious Other

This narrow theology has important political ramifications. To fully understand NTS’ broader worldview, an elucidation of the concept of al-walā’ wa-al-barā’ that they subscribe to is needed. Al-walā’ lexically means alliance with, friendship, showing preference for and associating with one of the parties engaged in a conflict (al-Qahtani 1999, 17). Al-barā’ on the other hand is its antonym, meaning severance, to walk away or distance oneself from or to be free of obligation from something or someone (al-Qahtani 1999, 19). According to al-Qahtani, a contemporary NTS writer, the concept of al-walā’ wa-al-barā’ ‘constitutes a fundamental principle’ of Salafi belief, ‘one that is firmly founded in both the Book of Allah [i.e. the Qur’an] and the Sunnah of His Prophet’ (al-Qahtani 1999, 234). Basing himself upon a literal interpretation of a selected number of qur’anic verses such as Q 5.51 and the general life of the Prophet, especially in the Medinan period, al-Qahtani considers these verses to be universally binding and trans-contextually valid. He asserts the following:

In conclusion the doctrine of alliance and dissociation [i.e. al- waalā’ wa-al-barā’] was brought to completion in the Medinan period when the Muslim state was established and the bonds of fraternity were based solely on belief. Jihad against the People of the Book [i.e. Jews and Christians], the pagans, and those who violate their treaties was established. (al-Qahtani 1999, 203)
Being thus theologically justified, a conflictual relationship between Muslims on one side and Jews and Christians on the other is considered religious in nature and never-ending. To support this view, al-Qahtani (1999, 75) quotes Sayyed Qutb (d. 1966), who asserted the following:

The truth about the battle in which the Jews and the Christians have engaged the Muslim Ummah in every corner of the Earth, and in every age, is that it centers upon our belief or creed. Although they may quarrel amongst themselves, they are forever united in the struggle against Islam and the Muslims.

Jews and Christians, according to this NTS view, are regarded as dominating Western civilization (thus allowing for no cross-pollination of civilizational formation theses) (al-Qahtani 1999, 214). Furthermore, according to this worldview, a clear delineation between ‘Islamic’ and ‘non-Islamic knowledge is argued for’ and considered as being normative (al-Qahtani 1999, 24–30). In addition, Jews and Christians fall outside the scope of belief and are to be considered unbelievers (al-Qahtani 1999, 218; cf. Wictorowitz 2006, 218).

Furthermore, al-Qahtani (1999, 206–228) considers the following acts (by Muslims) to be acts of disbelief:

- Endorsing the validity of any other religion;
- Relying on disbelievers;
- Seeking the affection and love of disbelievers;
- Inclining to and taking disbelievers as friends;
- Obedience to disbelievers and giving authority to disbelievers over Muslims;
- Drawing near to and expressing pleasure at the actions of disbelievers;
- Seeking the aid or advice of disbelievers, trusting or honouring them, living, colluding or being content with them;
- Supporting the ideologies of disbelievers.

Therefore, argues Wictorowitz (2006, 219), for proponents of NTS, ‘any interaction with non-believers is viewed as an opportunity for non-believers to infect Muslims’, so the followers of NTS living in the West ‘try to limit their interactions with the broader society, often developing enclave communities that function like Salafi ghettos’.

The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is ‘primarily characterised by their isolation and by a literally applied religious practice protected from Western cultural influences’ (Ramadan 2004, 25–26). Furthermore, the NTS political ideology, a direct result of its Salafi Weltanschauung and ahl al-hadith manhaj, as based upon the imitation of the early models of the Islamic caliphate (see Mansoor 2000, 175–178), is hostile towards any modern theories that do not have an epistemic root in a pre-modern Islamic tradition, and considers feminism, democracy and human rights to be issues entirely alien to Islam and ungodly innovations (bid’a) from the West, polluting the minds of Muslims (Abou El Fadl 2003, 58). Furthermore, the NTS movement’s political vision is based on what Noor (2003, 323) describes as the ‘rhetoric of oppositional dialectics’, ‘supremacist puritanism and a distinct sense of self-righteous arrogance vis-à-vis the non-descript other – whether the other is the West, non-believers in general or even Muslim women’ (Abou El Fadl 2003, 58). NTS, however, rejects political struggle as a means of establishing an Islamic state. In their view, proselytizing (da’wa) should takes precedence over political or physical action. According to this view, the aim of action is salvation, not revolution, and the objective is the individual, not society (Roy 2004, 247–248). Jihad, in its military form, is considered a collective rather than an individual duty, needing an amir and an organization whose conduct is subject to certain rules as developed by classical Muslim scholarship (Roy 2004, 254). The practice of declaring someone an
unbeliever, known as takfīr, is more restrained than the actions of radical political groups. Although militant radical groups with a political agenda, which operate in both the predominantly Muslim and the non-Muslim worlds and which we may term ‘radical political NTS’, such as al-Qa’eda, the Taliban, Jama’ah Islamiyah, al-Muwahhidun, and al-Muhajirun, together with Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri and other like-minded Muslims, do not have a large following among Muslims, they are ‘in fact extreme manifestations of a more prevalent intellectual current in modern Islam’ (Abou El Fadl 2003, 61; cf. Johns and Lahoud 2005, 2), which we have called NTS. In terms of their overall manhaj, radical political NTS is in essence indistinguishable from NTS (cf. Wictorowitz 2006). The only discernable socio-politically significant difference lies in the attitude to the use of political power and physical violence to bring about desired change (Ramadan 2004, 27). As noted above, while the proponents of radical political NTS ‘wedded the literal reading of texts with a political connotation concerning the management of power, the caliphate, authority, law and so on . . . opposing ruling powers, even in the west and struggling for the institution of the Islamic state in the form of the caliphate’, NTS has advocated a much more politically evolutionist rather than revolutionist approach to societal and political change, based upon the fulfilment of certain conditions espoused by classical jihad doctrine, mentioned above. In relation to this question, one of the main differences between the two is in the interpretation of certain Qur’an–hadith evidence. Whilst NTS scholars emphasize qur’anic verses and traditions (i.e. hadith) that are more quiescent in nature, political NTS give preponderance to those hadith that emphasize physical, violent struggle. As observed above, jihad for radical political NTS is an individual, permanent duty that has the aim of establishing an Islamic state. It is more important than da’wa and the practice of takfīr, and is more prevalent in their thinking than in apolitical NTS (see Ibn Baz n.d.). Thus, the category of kāfir, according to this view, includes everyone considered to be the enemy of Islam, including those who, in the view of radical political NTS, only pay lip service to the Islamic faith and are willing to tolerate shameless practices or even cooperate with the ‘enemies’ of Islam (see Anon 1999). By sharing similar approaches to the conceptualization and interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna, with the above albeit important exception of violence and physical jihad, the NTS worldview based on the belief in al-walā’ wa-al-barā’, and their manhaj itself, can be seen as providing a methodological-ideological foundation on the basis of which its radical and politically engaged offshoots operate.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, NTS is a contemporary Islamic current present among some Western-born Muslims whose worldview is entirely pre-modern and based upon a Salafi-revivalist mindset, following the ahl-hadīth manhaj for the interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna, whose origins can be traced back to the end of the first century of Islam. It is distinct from the madhhab-based approach to the Islamic tradition, which is regarded as embodying the most substantial part of the Sunni interpretational spectrum. Being based on a pre-modern body of knowledge, NTS does, however, share with the pre-modern madhhab-based Islamic tradition a number of epistemological and methodological assumptions in the interpretation of Qur’an–Sunna indicants (these are discussed in Duderija 2007).

This article has also contended that their manhaj, characterized by a (semi-)decontextualist, textually segmentalist approach that hermeneutically marginalizes ethical-moral and objective and values-based dimensions of the Qur’an and Sunna, engenders a religiously exclusivist Self construct vis-à-vis the religious Other and clearly delineates between the two. In the final section of the article the socio-political ramifications of NTS theology were examined particularly in relation to the NTS worldview based on the belief in al-walā’ wa-al-barā’. Although not
used for the purposes of justifying physical violence against non-Muslims (or other ways of being a Muslim for that matter), this belief in conjunction with the NTS subscription to the ahl-hadith manhaj can be seen as providing a methodological-ideological foundation for developing religious discourses that consider a permanently conflicting relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims as ‘normative’, leading, in the case of Muslims living in Western liberal democracies, to their utter isolation and ghettoization.

Notes

1. Here defined as a particular methodology of derivation, understanding and application of Qur’anic–Sunna bodies of knowledge; cf. al-Madkhalı 2001, 65. More on ahl al-hadith and their manhaj follows in the main body of text.

2. Al-Albani was a muhaddith and the author of more than 100 works on hadith sciences. Born in Albania in 1914, he completed his undergraduate studies in Istanbul. His family moved to the Middle East. He taught hadith studies at the University of Medina for two years and spent most of his time in Syria and Jordan. He died in 1999. For a brief biography, see http://www.fatwa-online.com/scholarsbiographies/15thcentury/albaanee.htm (accessed 8 September 2009). On his legacy in relation to hadith, see Lacroix (2008).

3. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz was born in the city of Riyadh in 1909. He was appointed judge and worked for 14 years in the judiciary before being deputed to the education faculty. He remained engaged in teaching for nine years at Riyadh Islamic Law College. Riyadh Religious Institute and held the position of Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, and the Presidency of many Islamic Committees and Councils, the most prominent among them being: the Senior Scholars Committee of the Kingdom, the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatawa, the Founding Committee of the Muslim World League, the World Supreme Council for Mosques, and the Islamic Jurisprudence Assembly Makkah. He was also a member of the Supreme Council of the Islamic University at al-Medina, and the Supreme Committee for Islamic propagation. He died in 1999. For a brief biography, see http://www.fatwa-online.com/scholarsbiographies/15thcentury/ibnbaaz.htm (accessed 8 September 2009).

4. Muhammad al-‘Uthaymin was born in the city of Unayzah, Qaseem Region in 1926 into a famous religious family. He received his education from many prominent scholars, including Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa’di, Shaykh Muhammad Amin al-Shanqiti and Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz. He taught Religious Fundamentals in the Shari’a Faculty at the Imam Muhammad ibn Sa’ud Islamic University, Qaseem Branch and was also a member of the Council of Senior Scholars of the Kingdom, and the imam and khaṭṭīb of the main mosque in Unayzah city. He died in 2001.

5. Such as the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatawa. The current members of the Permanent Committee include the following NTS scholars: Head: Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al al-Shaykh; Deputy Head: Shaykh ‘Abd Allah ibn Ghudayyan; Members: Shaykh ‘Abd Allah ibn Qu’ud, Shaykh ‘Abd Allah ibn Munay, Shaykh Salih ibn Fawzan, Shaykh Bakar ‘Abd Allah Abu Zayd (see http://fatwa-online.com/scholarsbiographies/15thcentury/permanentcommittee.htm (accessed 8 September 2009).


7. For a full list of NTS websites and their scholars’ websites visit www.salaf.com.

8. The word ‘classical’ here denotes madhhab-based.

9. This list is limited for the sake of brevity. For the full list, see al-Madkhalı (2001, 11–12).

10. Ibid. For a full list of the most renowned scholars who allegedly remained faithful to the manhaj of ahl al-hadith from the time of the caliphs up to the present, see al-Athari (2003, 178–182).

11. i.e., sciences pertaining to traditional Hadith methodology, such as compilation, transmission, authenticity, classification, criticism, etc.

12. i.e., Hadith compilations, primarily those compiled in the third, fourth and fifth century of the Islamic era. For some examples of these books, see al-Athari (2003, 184–192).

13. The remaining sciences, such as rhetoric and style and syntax, deal with aspects that are internal to Qur’an itself and generally do not rely on a transmitted body of knowledge in the form of hadith.

14. See further below, p. **.

15. That is, the principle of allegiance to the madhhab-based legal theory hermeneutic.
16. For more on this in relation to the concept of ‘the ethic of pluralism’ in the Qur’an, see Miraly (2006).
17. This is explained below on pp. **.
18. i.e., the **mu'minu¯n** – the believers.
19. i.e. **mushriku¯n** (polytheists), **munāfīqūn** (hypocrites), **al-ins** (human kind) and **ahl al-kitāb** (People of the Book, or recipients of Previous Revelations, primarily Jews and Christians) (for a lucid account of this issue, see Donner 2002–2003; cf. Maghen 2003).
20. This ambivalence and contextual contingency is also found in non-qur’anic elements of tradition as embodied in various ahādīth corpuses. On qur’anic ambivalence in relation to the Other, see also Maghen (2003, 268).
21. There were relatively few Christians in Medina and their economic influence was limited. Thus, Qur’an’s ‘complaints about Christians pertain primarily to the domain of dogma (for more on this, see McAuliffe 1991).
22. A group of people in Medina who only superficially and for their own self-interest became Muslims but in reality were on the side of enemies of the Muslim community. They were termed the munāfīqūn, or the religious hypocrites.
23. Such as belief in Allah (One, True God), previous prophets, belief in the Hereafter, the Day of Judgement, etc.
24. The latter trend being more prominent in the context of the Medinan Muslim community.
25. More on the pluralist interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna can be found in Duderija 2008.
26. Such as, for example, the importance of Jerusalem and the praxis of Muslims to turn towards it in prayer.
27. A case in point being the change of direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca. Traditions reportedly going back to the Prophet, such as those found in Ṣaḥīḥ Buhārī, for example, largely stress the distinctiveness and uniqueness of Islamic religious identity.
28. More on the constitution of Medina and its significance in relation to Self-Other identity construction follows on pp. **.
29. In other words, qur’anic criticisms of certain practices of Jewish and Christian communities living in seventh/first-century Hijaz are applied to all previous and subsequent Jewish and Christian communities in an ahistorical, decontextual, textually segmented and indiscriminate manner.
30. Yūsuf ‘Alī’s translation of the Qur’an (‘Alī 1988), one of the most authoritative and widely accepted translations among Muslims, will be used.
31. ‘Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other)’ (Q 21.92).
32. There are a number of interpretations of the motivations behind the fate of Banu Qurayza and, in particular, of whether the killings were large scale or restricted to some of the leaders (for two opposing views, see Arafat 1976; Kister 1986).
33. Ibid. Abu Dawud, cf. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, 5389: narrated Abu Hurayra: ‘Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it.”’
34. There are several more hadith of this genre for example found in Abu Dawud, hadith number 652 and 4185.
35. In this part of the analysis we have not included verses that address the kāfirūn rather than ahl-al-kitāb (such as Q 4.76, 9.5, 9.73, 47.4, 48.29). However, as we shall see in the next section, in several instances ahl-al-kitāb are also linked to the root k-f-r and, following the methodology of NTS, these verses could be and are applied to ahl-al-kitāb, including at the present time.
36. Cf. Bukhari, 4.791: ‘The same narrator heard Allah’s Apostle saying, “The Jews will fight with you, and you will be given victory over them so that a stone will say, “O Muslim! There is a Jew behind me; kill him!””; cf. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, 6985: ‘Narrated Abu Hurayra: “Allah’s Apostle (peace be upon him) said: “The Last Hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: “Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him”; but the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews.”’
37. For an interpretation of these and similar hadiths from a non-Muslim scholarly perspective, see Noth 2004.
38. Equivalent here to our term ‘NTS’. For the definition of puritans, see Abou El Fadl 2005b, 16–25.
39. Most commonly translated as ‘unbelief’ or sometimes ‘disbelief’. For more on the meaning of kufr, see below, pp. **.
40. Or more precisely, *mu’min*. However, since the religion of the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammed is termed Islam and its adherents Muslims, the word *muslim* is used here.

41. This was a result of the turbulent socio-political climate during the first two and a half centuries of Islam (see Watt 1998).

42. For example, whether or not *a’ma¯l*, or good works, were necessary for someone to be considered a believer.

43. ‘O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust.’ Other verses used include Q 2.105, 109, 135; 3.69, 72, 118 and 58.22.

44. Generally speaking, NTS opposes the teachings of Qutb and radical political groups dealt with below on issues concerning politics and the establishment of the Islamic state. However, as Wictorowitz (2006, 222) points out, Qutb espoused a number of NTS precepts particularly pertaining to the relationship of Muslims with non-Muslims.

45. Cf. Tibi 2002. This view is expressed, for example, by al-Qahtani (1999, 213) and also Anon (1999).

46. For more on political Islamic movements, see among many, Roy (2004, 1994); Burgat (2003).


48. For more on the Muḥājirūn movement, see Connor (2005). Q6

49. Cf. Wictorowitz (2006, 207), who rightly points out that the major difference between the various Salafi factions – he identifies three: purists (or in using our terminology NTS), politicos (political NTS) and jihadists – is to be found in issues pertaining to jihad, apostasy and the priority of activism.

50. For a detailed study of one of these radical political NTS groups, Hizb al-Tahrir, see Taji-Farouki (1996).

51. For more on the classical Islamic doctrine of violence and physical jihad, see 1999. Q7

52. For a good example, see al-Haddāfī (2005, 29–39).

53. For a refutation of ‘jihadis’ and their methodology by NTS scholars, see a number of articles at www.binbaz.co.uk; www.albani.co.uk; www.fawzan.co.uk; www.binuthaymin.co.uk; and www.rabee.co.uk. A typical example is Ibn Baz (n.d.). It is interesting that the epithet Khawarij is applied to these jihadis by NTS scholars, linking the contemporary radical political Islamists’ *manhaj* to that of the Kharijite sect that emerged in the early days of the Muslim community, renowned for their intolerant and violent ways vis-à-vis the (Muslim) Other (for more on the Khawarij, see Abou El Fadl 1999).

References


Al-Athārī, Fawzī. 2003. *Clarification that the ahlul-hadeeth are the saved sect and victorious group*. Toronto: TROID.


