

writing makes Islam accessible to people who may have distorted perceptions of Islam and Muslims. The book will undoubtedly encourage many readers to launch out into relationships with Muslims and so begin a journey of discovery of their own faith as 'followers of Christ' and of those 'submitted to God'. But it is only a beginning . . .

Reviewed by Keith Fraser-Smith

PS. I would like to acknowledge and thank my novelist friend Davis Bunn for recommending these two books to me to read.

48 Carl Medearis, *Muslims, Christians, and Jesus* (Bethany House 2008) page 18.

49 Bukhari 2:36.

50 I would like to acknowledge and thank my novelist friend Davis Bunn for recommending these two books to me to read.

51 Fouad Elias Accad, *Building Bridges – Christianity and Islam* (Navpress 1997).

52 Paul-Gordon Chandler, *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road – Exploring a New Path between Two Faiths* (Cowley Publications 2007).

GOD'S TERRORISTS: THE WAHHABI CULT AND THE HIDDEN ROOTS OF MODERN JIHAD

by Charles Allen

London: Abacus, 2007 (ISBN: 978-0-349-11879-6)

Drawing upon extensive research and an intimate knowledge of the history of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, Charles Allen presents an extensive and disturbing account of the historical origins and roots of the present day Wahhabi ideology, ideologues, and terrorist leaders and organizations. Writing as a scholarly critic who is very unsympathetic to this politicized Islamic cult, Allan traces, in exhaustive detail and with many compelling and chilling stories, the centuries long saga of the Wahhabi ideology. He describes its long standing significant backing and financial support by the House of Saud (Saudi Arabia's ruling oligarchy), and how it has borne fruit in contemporary groups like the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and such terrorists organizers and charismatic leaders as Osama Bin Laden.

Of particular interest to SEEDBED readers will be the history of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia, and how the early leaders of the house of Saud turned to the influential but largely discredited and marginalized Wahhabi sect in order to gain the political and ideological strength (the fanatical Wahhabis made great warriors) that helped give Islamic legitimacy to Ibn Saud's ambition to conquer the entire Arabian Peninsula early in the 20th century. Equally disturbing is the

realization that much of the dangerous and often deadly influence that Saudi Wahhabi institutions and organizations now have around the world, would likely have never seen the light of day were it not for support by the British prior to WWII and then by the Americans following that war. The wealth from oil exploration and development by Standard Oil Company of California (which later grew into Exxon, Chevron, Mobil, and which in partnering with the house of Saud became ARAMCO) made the previously poor desert kingdom fabulously wealthy. The house of Saud then funded the exportation of this radical, violent and extreme jihadist ideology around the world. The Wahhabist Saudi regime organized itself to propagate its ideology around the world but did little until they became rich.

The Founding Committee of the Muslim World League, the Supreme Committee for Islamic Propagation, the World Supreme Council for Mosques and other religious bodies were set up specifically to promote Wahhabism. However, the relative poverty of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia initially prevented the ulema from promoting Wahhabism effectively beyond its borders – until 1973, when the price of crude oil went through the roof following the Arab-Israeli war and the formation of the OPEC oil cartel. Saudi Arabia was suddenly awash with petrodollars, and at last the Wahhabi authorities were able to commit massive sums to producing Wahhabi literature and funding mosques and madrassahs wherever there were Sunni communities. (pp. 258-259)

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It is said that since 1979 the Wahhabi Establishment has committed an estimated *seventy billion* dollars to Islamist missionary work, 'ranging from the funding of some 10,000 madrassas in Pakistan to the construction of thousands of mosques and seminaries and community centers all over the Muslim and Western worlds' (p. 277, my emphasis).

The main narrative of the book brings together and shows the cross fertilization between the Wahhabis of Arabia and the 'fanatics' (as the British called them) of India and Afghanistan. The ideology taught across the northwest frontier province (present day Pakistan and parts of NW India) that led to repeated uprisings against the British colonial rule was an Indian version of the violent Saudi doctrine and ideology.

It is only in the last three chapters that Allen brings these parallel and interwoven historical narratives together and shows their connection to the Egyptian based brotherhood and shows how the Taliban and Islamist trained in

the Islamist schools in Pakistan were funded by Wahhabist Saudi Arabia. He concludes the book by giving a brief history of how Osama bin Laden came into his current prominence, once again tying the influences of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan together. The brilliant visionary Egyptian doctor, the Islamist Al-Zawahri, had to step aside from the role of amir/emir and let Bin Laden take that symbolic public leadership role because:

he lacked precisely the qualities that... Bin Laden had in full measure: charisma and a capacity for leadership. So Al-Zawahri, the organizer and ideas man, remained in the shadows in the role of wazir (counsellor) content to stand at the shoulder of the man to whom the world community of Islam could rally as *both* amir and imam of world jihad: Osama bin Laden, idealist and romantic, dreamer of past and future glories and perhaps even then harbouring apocalyptic visions of martyrdom, a Wahhabi Arab at heart but fully conscious of Islam's ache for a Mahdi, the 'expected one' who would set matters to rights – and well aware that already as 'Al-Shaykh' he was adored by his 'Arabs' and by many Afghans and Pathans as the personification of Islamic resistance to Western imperialism. (pp. 294-295)

Allen's well researched three-century long narrative tracing the roots of the Wahhabi cult and its role in the contemporary worldwide Islamism is both informative and disturbing.

In his final four pages (294-297) he offers an analysis of the implications of today's Islamist realities and suggests ways that Western powers may be able to deal effectively with this global menace. He argues that the vast majority of the Muslim community worldwide consists of:

law-abiding men and women with strong moral values who wish nothing more than to live in harmony with their Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours. They want to see others embrace their faith, but are no more and no less bent on world domination than Christian Evangelicals who wish to see humankind 'saved'. Islamist fundamentalism... is as much a threat to this Muslim majority as to the West. (pp. 294-5)

He goes on to argue that history teaches two significant lessons. First, he believes that fundamentalist theocracy does not work over the long haul 'simply because people will not put up with it' (p. 295). Such theocracies rarely outlast their main propagator. Normally such fundamentalist governments fall apart as factions accuse each other of heresy. Saudi Arabia is an exception to the rule so far because of the unique combination of one strong ruling family supporting and supported by the religious ideologues, combined with oil generated wealth.

So long as the US continues to support the house of Saud, and the world continues to buy oil from the Saudis, Wabbabism will prosper (p. 295).

The second lesson to apply from history, according to Allen, is that 'fundamentalists will always be listened to whenever and wherever people believe themselves or their religion or their co-religionists to be threatened' (p. 295). Fundamentalists may not be followed, but they will receive popular support in such circumstances. So, as long as there remain political injustices that Western nations could have and should have put right, extremism will gain supporters. Remove the grievances, and the 'extremists and the terrorists must wither away for lack of popular support' (p. 297). Allen argues that one only has to remove the sources of legitimate grievances and the mainstream, majority, moderate Islam will have a chance to reassert itself (p. 297).

I believe that Allen's thesis is overly simplistic, although history does appear to partly bear him out. The core question in such analysis is whether he is right in believing that the vast majority of Muslims around the world are indeed, as Allen asserts, 'law-abiding men and women with strong moral values' (p. 294). My experience, living among Muslims in Muslim nations, suggests that Islam does not actually produce 'law-abiding people with strong moral values.' Rather, Islam tends to produce people who conform to exterior moral standards only as long as they are forced to do so. There are few exceptions to the normal reality that the stable Muslim countries (like Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, for example) remain stable largely because they have strong governments backed up by large police forces and militaries. The stability is forced upon the people.

Built into Islam, and casting its shadow over most Muslim people, is a system of morality that typically operates by social intimidation and fear. That is why, again and again across the Muslim world, one harsh and despotic regime tends to get replaced by another such regime. And when a more democratic-like regime gains strength trying to promote a more open society that is able to live in peace with its non-Muslim neighbours, then an Islamist type party will try to wrest control of the government from them, and once more set up a theocratic government ruling through tyranny and fear. Though I agree that grievances against the West, and the perception that Muslims have that they have been victims of injustice, are a main stimulus to fundamentalist violence, the root of these problems are built into the very nature of Islam as a religious system. It is only when a government seeks to rule with little reference to Islam that stability and some degree of social and economic justice can become common place. But then things begin to be set up for a repeat cycle, as Muslims living under such regimes again turn to the Qur'an and Hadith and lament that society is leaving the 'true path' laid out in the orthodox Islamic traditions.

Reflecting on all of this though a spiritual lens, it becomes clear that there is a desperate need for spiritual transformation and the removal of the harmful yoke

of Islam from the necks of Muslim peoples around the globe. The current widespread unrest among Muslim youth across the Arab world, and the increasing access that people have to mass media is helping pull many out from under the weight of an Islamic worldview. God appears to be using the Wahhabi engendered violence of such groups as the Taliban and Al Qaida to increase the number of Muslims who are dissatisfied with Islam as a religion, and not merely with its radical violent application. I can make no predictions about the balance of powers in the Arab world in the next few decades, but it does appear as if God is using the Wahhabi jihadists to stir increasing numbers of people up to long for something better than the Islam they have known to date. We may yet live to see the day when Islam is abandoned by vast numbers of Muslims *outside* of Iran as well. Is God using the evil schemes of men to accomplish his purposes? Has God allowed the rise of Saudi funded global Wahhabism in order to use it to help shake millions of Muslims to their core? Only time will tell, but let us pray to that end, even as we continue to incarnate and proclaim the gospel of the only true Kingdom whose rule is just, and whose ruler is loving, to people in desperate need of such a ruler.

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Reviewed by Don Little

THE UNIVERSAL HUNGER FOR LIBERTY: WHY THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS IS NOT INEVITABLE

By Michael Novak

New York: Basic Books, 2004 (ISBN: 0-465-05131-6)

In *The Universal Hunger for Liberty* Michael Novak seeks to explore ways for Muslims to actively engage in what he believes is a growing worldwide move towards democracy and greater human freedom. The cover flap made the following intriguing statements:

Michael Novak charts a new course for navigating the murderous confrontations between Islamic states and the West. In place of ongoing tension and violence, he offers a surprisingly optimistic vision of how to heal our cultural, economic, and political differences over the next hundred years... *He poses the possibility of a peaceful democratization of the Islamic third world* – one based not on a clash of civilizations, but on a profound understanding of our common cause... (Emphasis added)