

Wahhabi Islam – From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad
by Natana J. Delong-Bas. I.B. Tauris 2004.

Since the attacks on America in 2001, many in the Western world have struggled to understand what has happened and is continuing to happen in the Islamic World to fuel its apparent hatred of everything that the West stands for. Often the attempts to elucidate are factually flawed and thus give rise to more misconceptions that in the current atmosphere of fear and mistrust are both damaging and unhelpful. One of the chief areas of 'fog' concerns so-called 'Wahhabism', the Islamic philosophy developed by the 18th century cleric Muhammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and particularly influential in Saudi Arabia.

Natana Delong-Bas has done all seekers after the truth a great favour in producing this excellent volume, the first to consider in depth and rationally the writings of Wahhabism's founder and to shatter many of the myths that have been fostered out of ignorance or mischief.

In the course of six highly readable chapters, Professor Delong-Bas surveys al-Wahhab's origins and theology, before considering his stand on Islamic Law, Women, and the concept of Jihad. The final chapter The Trajectory of Wahhabism: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad details how the teachings of al-Wahhab have been mis-interpreted and misunderstood to the point where they have in many minds an ineradicable association with terrorism of the most savage kind.

This is a book for all serious students of the developing politics and international relationships of the early 21st century, and a great debt is owed to Natana Delong-Bas for having written it.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh