

## The Hanifism, and the pre-Islamic Arab Hanifs in the book (Sira Al-Nabawiyya) by Al-Ghazali

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### Abstract

*Hanifism is considered to have originated since the beginning of human creation, as it is the source of guidance and light, and what the prophets (peace be upon them) brought in terms of beliefs and methodology, which Allah (glorified and exalted be He) clarified in the books revealed to them. Every period between one prophet and another that people go through, most of them deviate after its establishment, except that there was a group whose stance was firm in the belief of monotheism and the correct religion, and they sought to attract others to the religion they believed in, which is the religion of Hanifism to which they belong. Among them was Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufail in Mecca, who avoided idol worship, rejected polytheism, and multiple forms of worship, and remained on the religion of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him).*

**Keywords:** Hanifism , Arab beliefs , Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufail , pre-Islamic

### INTRODUCTION

In the Arabian Peninsula, before the emergence of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ﷺ, and before he conveyed the message of Islam to complete the messages of the heavens and guide people to the worship of the one God, the Arabs were in agreement on ignorance and misguidance, as they worshipped idols and statues. However, there was another group that rejected this path and turned towards the worship of God and following His path, and these individuals were known as the Hanifs<sup>1</sup>.

The term "Hanifs" refers to the belief followed by the father of the prophets, the Prophet of God, Ibrahim (peace be upon him). Linguistically, "Hanif" refers to a person who deviates from misguidance and seeks righteousness, or leans towards righteousness and slips into misguidance<sup>2</sup>.

Before the emergence of Islam and before the birth of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ﷺ, there was a group of Arabs known as the "Hanifs," who were the people who rejected the worship of idols and sought to find the true religion, diligently seeking knowledge of the truth. Therefore, some of them embraced Christianity, while others adhered to the remnants of the religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him)<sup>3</sup>.

Hanifism is the religion or call that the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) called to, and his call was based on explicit monotheism. The followers of Hanifism are those who adopted and followed the method of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) in its entirety. They were a group of wise Arabs who devoted themselves to the worship of the One God, abandoned idols and statues, believing in the oneness of Allah. <sup>4</sup>

The meaning of Hanifism is the inclination towards religions, meaning the inclination towards the truth. A Hanif is a Muslim who adheres to the truth, and Hanifah means inclination towards the truth. Hanifism is considered a group of people who remained on the religion of Ibrahim the Friend (peace be upon him), and they unify their statements in the meaning of Hanifism.<sup>5</sup>

*The First Requirement: Hanifism in the Book " Sira Al-Nabawiyya " by Sheikh Al-Ghazali*

One of the signs of the discussion about Hanifism mentioned by Al-Ghazali: "In a narration, Zaid bin Amr bin Nufayl went to the Levant to inquire about the religion and follow it. He met a Jewish scholar and asked about their religion.

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The scholar said: Do not follow our religion until you take your share of the anger of Allah!! Zaid said: I do not fear anything except the anger of Allah, and I can bear it!! Can you guide me to something else? The scholar said: I only know that you should be Hanif. Zaid asked: What is Hanif?

He said: "The religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was neither Jewish nor Christian; he worshipped only Allah. So Zaid went out and met a Christian scholar, and mentioned this to him. The scholar replied: "You will not be upon our religion until you take your share of Allah's curse!" Zaid said: "I only fear Allah's curse, and I do not bear anything of Allah's curse, ever, and I am capable of it! .. Can you guide me to something else?" The scholar said: "I only know of you to be upright." Zaid asked: "And what is upright?" The scholar replied: "The religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him), he was neither Jewish nor Christian; he worshipped only Allah." When Zaid heard his words about Ibrahim (peace be upon him), he left. When he appeared, he raised his hands and said: "O Allah, bear witness that I am upon the religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him)..."<sup>6</sup>

The text narrates the journey of Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail to Syria in search of religion and beliefs. During his journey, he met scholars from Jews and Christians and asked them about their religions, trying to understand them and consider the possibility of joining them. Through dialogue with them, Zaid raised inquiries about the different religions.<sup>7</sup>

The main point in the text appears when Zaid is asked to adhere to their religion and to comply with the commands of Allah, meaning that he must be upon their religion to escape the wrath and curse of Allah. However, Zaid rejects this concept and says that he does not fear Allah's anger and does not bear anything of His curse.<sup>8</sup>

Then he meets with Christian scholars and poses to them the same question, and the answer is similar: "You will not be on their religion until you take your share of God's curse." Then Zaid refuses and says that he does not fear God's curse and can overcome it.<sup>9</sup>

In the end, after talking with Jews and Christians, Zaid returns to his original religion and embraces Hanifism, which represents the religion of Ibrahim, who was neither Jewish nor Christian, and his religion was based on divine unity and the worship of God alone. Al-Shahrastani said: "Among the Arabs were those who believed in God and the Last Day, and awaited prophethood. They had customs and laws, as we mentioned, because it is a form of attainment. Among those who knew the evident light, the pure lineage, believed in the Hanifi religion, and awaited the coming of the prophetic precedence was Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufayl, who used to lean his back against the Kaaba and say: 'O people, come to me, for there is no one left on the religion of Ibrahim except me.'" <sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Tafsir Al-Tha'labi = Al-Jawahir Al-Hasan fi Tafsir Al-Quran (5/85), Tafsir Al-Iji Jami al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Quran (3/497).

<sup>10</sup>See: Tathbit Dalail Al-Nubuwwah by Al-Qadi Abdul Jabbar Al-Hamadhani (p. 23).

The general meaning of the text is that it highlights the importance of monotheism and belief in one God without partners in worship and faith. It shows that Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufayl rejected the idea of curse and God's anger in other religions and returned to a religion where he worshipped God alone, reflecting the great importance of monotheism in Islam and Hanifism as a religion embraced by individuals.<sup>11</sup>

*Second Point: Textual Analysis from a Doctrinal Perspective.*

**1. Hanifism and the Religion of Ibrahim:** Hanifism is a term used here to refer to the religion of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, wherein God is worshipped alone without any partners and without following other religions such as Judaism or Christianity. Hanifism represents the authentic and original religion followed by Ibrahim, peace be upon him, before the emergence of other religions.

**2. Rejection of God's Wrath and Curse:** Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufail shows readiness to convert to Judaism or Christianity, but he refuses to accept God's wrath and curse. This indicates his rejection of religious beliefs that suggest that God can curse or become angry with humans because of their actions.<sup>12</sup>

**3. Recognition of Hanifism:** Jewish and Christian scholars in the text suggest that Zaid could adhere to their religion if he embraced Hanifism, the religion of Ibrahim in which God alone is worshipped. This underscores the importance of monotheism and worship of God alone in Hanifism.<sup>13</sup>

**4. Hanifism acceptance:** Zaid accepts Hanifism and declares that he follows the religion of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, who was neither Jewish nor Christian, but followed a religion of worshipping Allah alone. This indicates Zaid's conversion to monotheism and his rejection of polytheism and multiple worship practices, reflecting the acceptance of Hanifism as a pure and authentic religious principle.<sup>14</sup>

After the emergence of Islam, the Arabs began to believe in the divine monotheism and the oneness of Allah in worship, and they developed a unified direction towards Allah. Islam established a political system based on the principle of monotheism in governance and authority under the banner of the caliphate.

The concept of religious and creedal monotheism existed sporadically and rarely in the pre-Islamic era, but it was not the prevailing concept in ancient times before the emergence of Islam. With the advent of Islam, the principle of monotheism was clearly and explicitly established in Islamic creed, and monotheism in worship and belief in Allah alone became the central principle in Islamic religion, distinguishing it from the beliefs of the Arabs before Islam.<sup>15</sup>

Al-Samarqandi said: "And this is as narrated from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said: 'Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail will come on the Day of Resurrection as a nation by himself,' and he had embraced Islam before the Prophet's departure when there was no believer in Makkah except him. Waraqah bin Nawfal followed him, and Waraqah bin Nawfal lived until the time of the Prophet's departure when revelation was sent down upon him."<sup>16</sup>

"Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail said:

"I have submitted my face to the One I have submitted to... To whom the earth carries a heavy rock

And I have submitted my face to the One I have submitted to... To whom the clouds carry sweet, refreshing water

The concept of Tawheed in Islam includes monotheism in worship, meaning that Muslims worship Allah alone in prayer, obedience, and drawing closer to Him. It also includes monotheism in creed, related to believing in the oneness of Allah in His names, attributes, and sovereignty.

The term "Hanifism" is associated with the pre-Islamic Arab society and referred to a type of religions or beliefs that were influenced by monotheistic concepts. It was commonly believed that Hanifism represented a type of Semitic religions that acknowledged the existence of one God.<sup>18</sup>

No matter what the details of Hanifism were before Islam, the emergence of Islam transformed the concept into another concept. Islam introduced a strict concept of monotheism and made monotheism one of the most important principles of the Islamic religion. Just as Islam emphasizes the oneness of God and rejects polytheism and idols, it brought about a radical change in beliefs and religions in the region.<sup>19</sup>

**The text presented contains a dialogue between Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail and scholars from the Jews and Christians when Zaid was searching for religion and beliefs. The text can be analyzed doctrinally as follows:**

**1. Hanifism and the religion of Ibrahim:** Hanifism is a term used here to refer to the religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him), a religion that worships only God without any partner and does not follow other religions like Judaism or Christianity. Hanifism represents the authentic and original religion followed by Ibrahim (peace be upon him) before the emergence of other religions.<sup>20</sup>

**2. Rejection of the anger and curse of God:** Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail shows willingness to convert to the religion of the Jews or Christians, but he refuses to accept the anger and curse of God, indicating his rejection of religious beliefs that believe God can curse or be angry with humans because of their actions. "Those whom Allah has guided" verse. Abdul Rahman bin Zaid said: This verse was revealed about Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail,

Abu Dhar Al-Ghifari, and Salman Al-Farisi, who avoided worshipping idols during their ignorance period and followed the best guidance that reached them.<sup>21</sup>

**3. Recognition of Hanifism:** Jewish and Christian scholars in the text indicate that Zaid could be of their religion if he embraced Hanifism, the religion of Ibrahim who worshiped Allah alone, highlighting the importance of monotheism and worshipping Allah alone in the Hanafi religion.

**4. Acceptance of Hanifism:** Zaid accepts Hanifism and declares that he follows the religion of Ibrahim, who was neither Jewish nor Christian, but a religion where only Allah was worshiped. This reflects Zaid's shift towards divine monotheism and rejection of polytheism and multiple worship. The text reflects the acceptance of Hanifism as a pure and authentic religious principle. <sup>22</sup>

The text reflects Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail's attempt to explore beliefs different from his original religion, shedding light on the concept of Hanifism, which can be summarized in the following points:

1. Monotheism: The text emphasizes monotheism as a fundamental element of Hanifism, stressing that in the Hanafi religion, Allah alone is worshiped without any partners or other gods.

2. Religion of Ibrahim: Hanifism refers to the religion followed by Ibrahim before the emergence of other religions. This means that Hanifism represents a religion that was neither Jewish nor Christian and worships only Allah.

3. Zaid rejects accepting the concept of God's anger and curse in other religions, reflecting his continued adherence to monotheism and worshipping God alone without any associations or partners.

5. Acknowledging Hanifism: Jewish and Christian scholars indicate that embracing Hanifism would make Zaid follow their religion, showing that Hanifism was considered an original and powerful religion that anyone could embrace, although the belief in Hanifism is derived from the belief of Ibrahim as stated in the Quran.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, the text reflects the concept of Hanifism as an authentic and unified religion that Zaid embraces after rejecting the concepts of anger and curse and acknowledging pure divine monotheism, in which only God is worshipped.

The text tells the story of Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufail, who embarked on a journey to the Levant in search of religion and beliefs. During his journey, he met scholars from Jews and Christians, asking them about their religions, trying to understand them, and considering the possibility of joining them. Through dialogue with them, Zaid raised questions about different religions.<sup>24</sup>

The main point in the text emerges when Zaid is asked to adhere to their religion and comply with the commands of God, meaning he must follow their religion to escape God's anger and curse. However, Zaid rejects this concept, saying that he does not fear God's anger and carries nothing of His curse.

Then he meets with Christian scholars and poses the same question to them, and the answer is similar: You will not be on their religion until you take your share of God's curse. Again, Zaid refuses and says that he does not fear God's curse and can overcome it.

In the end, after talking with Jews and Christians, Zaid returns to his original religion and embraces Hanifism, which represents the religion of Ibrahim, who was neither Jewish nor Christian, and his religion was based on monotheism and worshipping God alone.

The general meaning of the text is that it highlights the importance of monotheism and faith in the one God without partners in worship and belief. It appears that Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail rejected the idea of curse and anger of God in other religions and returned to a religion where he worships God alone, reflecting the great importance of monotheism in Islam and Hanifism as a religion embraced by the individual.

*The Third Point: Doctrinal Purposes in The Story of Zaid Bin Amr Bin Nufail*

**The mentioned story carries important doctrinal purposes that shed light on belief and faith in Islam. Among the prominent doctrinal purposes in this story:**

**1. Monotheism:** One of the main purposes is monotheism, which is the belief in the oneness of God and the rejection of any form of association or partnership in worship. Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail strongly rejects associating partners with God and emphasizes that a person cannot fear God's anger or curse if they are on the path of monotheism.

**2. Religion of Ibrahim:** Another purpose is to emphasize the importance of the religion of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, which was the religion of monotheism and the continuation of pure worship of God alone. Zaid shows his preference for this religion, which was neither Jewish nor Christian.<sup>25</sup> (Allah said) (Ibrahim (Abraham) was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim Hanifa (Islamic Monotheism - to worship none but Allah Alone)

**3. Rejection of slavery to fear and threats:** The novel shows Zaid's refusal of any form of slavery to God under threat or fear of punishment. This reflects his belief that worship should be based on faith and internal conviction without being influenced by threats or fear.<sup>26</sup>

edition (1/143), Al-Lubaab fi Ulum Al-Kitab (12/182), Al-Nisaburi's interpretation = The wonders of the Quran and the marvels of the Furqan (1/190).

**4. Seeking the truth:** Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail expresses his willingness to search for the truth and the correct religion, indicating the great importance of critical thinking and independence in accepting religious beliefs.

**5. Embracing authentic faith:** The ultimate goal is for Zaid to return to his original religion, Hanifism, characterized by pure monotheism and independence from other religious beliefs.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, it can be said that the doctrinal purposes in this novel primarily deal with monotheism, pure faith in God, the role of seeking truth, and personal commitment to the faith embraced by the individual.

**In another narration mentioned by Al-Ghazali, he says:** "Al-Bukhari narrated from Asmaa bint Abi Bakr, may Allah be pleased with them both, she said: I saw Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail standing leaning his back against the Kaaba, saying: 'O Quraysh, by Allah, none of you is upon the religion of Ibrahim except me.' He used to support the destitute, saying to a man - if he wanted to kill his daughter - 'I will provide for her, take her.' And when she grew up, he would say to her father: 'If you wish, I will return her to you, and if you wish, I will continue to support her.'<sup>28</sup>

Zaid was one of the few intellectuals who were displeased with the ignorance prevalent during the pre-Islamic era, and he was commended for seeking the truth. He did not envy his own or others' destinies among their people, but fate chose a man who could see the truth and possessed the energy to lead him to the horizons of the world, in the face of resistance that sought to maintain misguidance and cling to its dark and heavy night.

Fate prepared for this monumental message a man of great stature, and the great ones were fit for its greatness."<sup>29</sup>

The narration mentioned by Al-Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) speaks of Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail and his conversion to Hanifism, his steadfast stance on monotheism and the true religion. The narration indicates Zaid bin Amr's dedication in seeking the truth and inviting people to join the monotheistic faith, acknowledging his special role in spreading the religion. Zaid's resistance to misguidance and his dedication to involving others in this true religion are also evident.

The general meaning of the novel highlights the great importance of Hanifism and the search for truth in religion, and Zaid bin Amr is considered a model of a person who does not hesitate to defend the true faith and seeks to attract others to the religion he believes in. It also shows that fate or God guided Zaid to this important role in spreading religion and combating misguidance.

Al-Ghazali's words shed light on the role of Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail as a person with steadfast beliefs and a strong stance in a pagan environment dominated by polytheism and idols. Zaid stands alone against ignorance and calls his people to Hanifism and to embrace the religion he follows, reflecting his courage and steadfastness

in defending his beliefs. The text also emphasizes the importance of seeking truth, and how individuals can become symbols in spreading truth and confronting false beliefs and misguidance.

*The Doctrinal Purposes in This Text Can Be Summarized as Follows:*

**6. Seeking truth and transparency in belief:** Zaid bin Amr transcends ignorance and openly and courageously seeks the truth. This highlights the importance of transparency and independence in the search for true faith and religion.<sup>30</sup>

**7. The role of fate and selection in the religious call:** The text emphasizes the role of fate and how God chooses individuals to play important roles in spreading religion and faith in God. It indicates that Zaid bin Amr was chosen to play a major role in this context.<sup>31</sup>

**8. Expressing pride in religion:** The text shows Zaid bin Amr expressing his pride in the religion he embraces and believes in. It shows how believers should be proud of their religion and express it boldly and uprightly, as he was called a monotheist of the pre-Islamic era, and he used to say when he left his people's religion: Either one God or a thousand gods... I follow a religion if matters are divided.<sup>32</sup>

**9. The individual's role in spreading religion:** The text reflects the individual's role in spreading faith and the correct religion. It highlights the importance of personal dedication in calling people to God and guiding them towards faith.<sup>33</sup>

**10. Encouraging independence in the search for religious truth:** The text encourages the individual's independence in searching for the truth and the correct religion, without being influenced by wrong customs and beliefs. It suggests the importance of personal responsibility in choosing faith.

**11. Excellence in inviting to the correct creed:** The text demonstrates how individuals can excel in inviting others to the correct creed and spreading the true faith. It encourages individuals to be role models for others in adhering to faith and inviting to religion.

**12. Firmness in the face of polytheistic opposition:** The text shows the firmness of Zaid bin Amr and his strength in confronting opposition and erroneous beliefs that dominated his society. It encourages individuals to be steadfast in faith and stand firmly against misguidance.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The origin of Hanafiyah is Hanif, meaning inclination away from deviation and misleading towards righteousness and guidance. Arabs used it for those who wanted to perform Hajj and undergo circumcision, indicating adherence to the religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him), submitting to Allah, and not deviating from His guidance.

The role of the individual in spreading the correct creed and sacrificing for their belief without being influenced by customs and beliefs deviating from the truth.

The most important purpose for humans is monotheism and belief in the oneness of Allah, and not accepting any form of polytheism in worship or acts of devotion, as seen in the worship of Zaid ibn Amr ibn Nufayl who followed the religion of monotheism.

The religion of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) is the Hanifism that he followed before the appearance of other religions, where he was neither Jewish nor Christian and worshipped only Allah.

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