

## Some Recent Publication on Islam/Muslims

### **Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Beyond by Simon Ross Valentine, 2015. (Hurst & Co (Publishers) Ltd.**

Wahhabism is an Islamic reform movement found mainly in Saudi Arabia. Closely linked to the Saudi monarchy, it enforces a strict code of morality and conduct monitored by mutawa (religious police), and governs every facet of Saudi life according to its own strict interpretation of Shariah, including gender segregation. Wahhabism also prohibits the practice of any other faith (even other forms of Islam) in Saudi Arabia, which is also the only country that forbids women from driving.

But what exactly is Wahhabism? This question drove Valentine to live in the Kingdom for three years, familiarising himself with its distinct interpretation of Islam. His book defines Wahhabism and Wahhabi beliefs and considers the life and teaching of Muhammad ibn Abd'al Wahhab and the later expansion of his sect. Also discussed are the rejection of later developments in Islam such as *bidah*; harmful innovations, among them celebrating the prophet's birthday and visiting the tombs of saints; the destruction of holy sites due to the fear of idolatry; Wahhabi law, which imposes the death sentence for crimes as archaic as witchcraft and sorcery, and the connection of Wahhabism with militant Islam globally.