
Correction of a Historical Misunderstanding Concerning the “Wahhabiyyah”

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It is fitting that I should explain to the reader the reason for which I wrote, Correction of a Historical Misunderstanding Concerning the “Wahhabiyyah” for Allaah has made for everything a reason. The following dialogue, which brought forth a persuasive knowledge-based debate, and a fruitful and guiding discussion, is the reason for my proceeding in writing this treatise.

In the year 1407H, I was involved in some important business in Mauritania, after which we flew to Senegal, and the flight schedule forced us to stay in the Kingdom of Morocco for six days. And during one of these days, I was in the company of one of the teachers of a university there known as Doctor ` Abdullaah . And during a sitting, in his library, several discussions took place.

Due to his love for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and his attending several conferences there, he posed the following question to me before those present and their number was around twelve shaykhs, from the noble people of the land there:

He said, “We love the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the souls of the Muslims and their hearts go out to it, and between us and you is much affection and mutual understanding, and amazement at what the governors and scholars of the kingdom have put forth of sincere striving, for Islaam and the Muslims, but how much better it would be if you all were to leave the madh-hab of the Wahhaabiyyah, which has split up the Muslims?!”

So I answered him, “Perhaps you may have some erroneous ideas, taken from the wrong source, but, we would love take up this topic, in the presence of the brothers, for a knowledge-based discussion, to be accompanied by evidences until we come to a meeting of the minds...”

Then I said, “And since every human is at rest with, and has his heart is comforted by, what the scholars of his own land have written, then, in this debate, I will not go beyond the resources of this library, which is enclosed by these four walls, because as you see I am not carrying a single book, and I did not foresee this debate.

And so, before we begin, I hope that this debate will be far from stubbornness and partisanship, or presenting of opinions without satisfactory evidence to support it, because seeking the truth is our objective, and compliance with the order of Allaah and the order of His Messenger ((مرسو و هيلع هللا ك لص)) is our goal, and aiding the religion is our hope of hopes.”

He said, "I agree with you on this, and these noble shaykhs shall be the judges between us."

I said, "I am pleased with that, and after relying upon Allaah I await for you to present an introduction to this debate."

He said, "Take as an example, that which al- Wanshareesi mentioned in his book al- Mi'yaar volume 11, and it is his statement: al- Lakhmi was asked about the people of a land in which the Wahhaabis have built a masjid, what is the ruling of prayer in it?"

And for general information: this book al- Mi'yaar, is a book which collects the religious verdicts from Maaliki fiqh, it was compiled by Ahmad bin Muhammad al- Wanshareesi, and it is printed in 13 volumes, and it was printed by the Moroccan government, and they distribute copies as donations.

After the presentation of the question, and bringing forth the mentioned book, volume 11, I responded to him: that the religious verdict regarding this question is correct, and we agree with al- Lakhmi in what has been mentioned in his verdict.

He said, "Then we are agreed about this sect, and the mistake which it is upon, and especially, since the Mufti said: this sect is Khaariji and misguided and disbelieving, may Allaah cut off their remains from the earth, and destruction of the masjid is obligatory, as well as removing them from the lands of the Muslims."

I said, "we have not yet come to agreement, and we have not ceased to be in the very beginning of this debate...and I will let you know that this verdict has many like it from before al- Lakhmi and after him which have occurred from the scholars of Spain, and the scholars from North Africa, and this is due to the ruling of the Messenger of Allaah about the Khawaarij, whom 'Ali ibn Abee Taalib, may Allaah be pleased with him, fought at Nahrawaan .

And in this debate of ours we will arrive, if Allaah wills, at the correction of this historical misunderstanding, in regard to what is meant by this sect, which the scholars of Islaam in Spain and North Africa and their like have passed verdicts about, and regarding the name which has been attached as a faulty description of the reforming da'wah of Shaykh Muhammad bin 'Abdul- Wahhaab, may Allaah have mercy on him. This correction will not be satisfactory except with accompaniment of evidences, which you are pleased with, because we all wish to arrive at the truth of the matter...and a goodly and calm state of mind is what will remove the blindfold and aid in correcting this misunderstanding."

He said, "We all wish to arrive at the truth..."

Then he said, "and after this verdict, we would like that you present to us whatever is with you, and we will listen, as will the brothers who will judge between us, and they will judge what is said or brought before them to be correct or incorrect."

I stated, "You will see, if Allaah wills, that which will light the path to uncovering this affair, for the one who wishes to arrive at the correct opinion, and with this: we will begin with what is before you from the volumes of al- Mi'yaar ...

Can you read from the cover of the book so that the brothers may hear?

He said, "You mean the verdict, so I can read it before them, or should I begin with the information on the outside cover??"

I said, "The outside cover...or the inside cover, it is the same, either way..."

So he read, "Al-Kitaab al- Ma'rib Fee Fataawaa Ahl al-Maghrib, compiled by: Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Wanshareesi who died 914H in Fez, Morocco .

I said to the eldest of the shaykhs, and he is a venerable shaykh, with an easy nature, whose name is Ahmad, "Oh Shaykh Ahmad, write down the date of the death of the author Ahmad al- Wanshareesi ..." so he wrote it as the year 914H.

Then I said, "Can we present the biography of al- Lakhami ?"

He said, "Yes..." then he stood up to go to a shelf from the shelves of the library and brought a volume from the books of biographies, and in it was the biography of: 'Ali bin Muhammad al- Lakhami, the Mufti of Spain and North Africa and the biography was long, in it were praises of him and of his level of knowledge...I said, "There is a line of poetry at the end of the biography: so when did he die?"

The reader said, "... and he died the year 478H."

So I said to Shaykh Ahmad, "Write the date of the death of Shaykh 'Ali al- Lakhami, so he wrote it as the year 478H."

So Doctor ` Abdullaah said, "Do you doubt our scholars and their verdicts?"

I said, "And what lends you to this doubt ?... then I turned to the shaykhs... and said: Has anything come from me which calls for the doubt which this statement contains?.."

So the answer came, by consensus, to the negative.

I said, "In order to negate this doubt concerning myself, and from the scholars of my country, for we honor them and praise them, and we regard as correct all of their verdicts, which are accompanied by evidence from the Noble Book, and what is authentic from the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah ((مرسو هيلع هللا صلص)) However, arriving at that for which we began the discussion in the first place, is linked to what he used as evidence, and it requires some patience and forbearance.

And from that which will hasten the response is that: I will present before everyone this question: Is it possible that the scholars gave a verdict about a creed whose advocate, whom the creed is ascribed to, had not even come into existence yet, or that they judge about a sect from the multiple sects which had not even come about yet??!"

They all said, "No... and this can not be known, except that which reports from the Messenger of Allaah ((صلص) (مرسو هيلع هللا)) concerning it have come. And this is from the prophetic miracles, and most of the time these are by description without mention of the name."

I said, directing my words to the one with whom I was having the dialogue, "Don't you believe, as do others, that the Wahhaabiyah were first created by Muhammad bin 'Abdul- Wahhaab in Najd ?"

He responded, "Of course."

I said, "Indeed, Shaykh Muhammad bin 'Abdul- Wahhaab ; when al- Lakhmi gave his verdict, as well as the others from the Maaliki scholars in Spain, and those in North Africa, there were more than 22 of his forefathers that had yet to even be born, by the assumption that in each century there were three forefathers. Just like between the death of 'Abdul- Wahhaab bin Rustum and the death of Shaykh Muhammad bin 'Abdul- Wahhaab there were nearly 31 forefathers. And your scholars, and the scholars of the Muslims do not know the Unseen, and we know them to be free from involvement in any sorcery or magic, and from speaking about what they do not know, as He the Glorified said: "Say: None in the heavens in the earth knows the Unseen except Allaah, and they do not know when they will be brought forth."

He said: Clarify more...!!

I said: Indeed the Shaykh Muhammad bin 'Abdul- Wahhaab was born in the year 1115H, and died in the year 1206H, and between him and Ahmad al- Wanshareesi, who wrote the book al- Mi'yaar, and the one who quoted the verdict of al- Lakhmi - as we have seen- is 292 years according to the dates of their deaths. Just like between Shaykh Muhammad bin 'Abdul- Wahhaab and al- Lakhmi, who is the source of the verdict, there is 728 years, by the dates of their deaths, according to what Shaykh Ahmad has written for the deaths of each of them.

And we make analogy, by this, with all who passed a verdict, from the scholars of Spain and North Africa, about these Wahhaabiyah ...

He said: Is it possible that you could clarify more what it is you intend...with satisfactory evidence?

I said: The scholars of North Africa and Spain were not concerned with pronouncing verdicts upon the Wahhaabiyah and warning from them, except due to the fact that they were present amongst them, as opposed to them being in other Muslim lands, whose sects ash- Shahrastaani identified and provided clarification concerning in his book al- Milal wan Nihal as did ibn Hazm in his book al- Fisal Fee al- Milal wal Ahwaa ' wan- Nihal .

And concerning our discussion, do you have with you the book al- Firaq al- Islaamiyyah Fee Shimaal Afreeqiyyah, which was compiled by the Frenchman: Verdibel, which ` Abdur-Rahmaan Badawi translated to Arabic...and it is one volume.

He said: here it is right here...then he stood to get it.

I said, "We will read near its end, the letter " Waaw " ...so he read one of them: al- Wahabiyyah or al- Wahhaabiyyah : a Khaariji ` Ibaadhi sect which was created by `Abdul- Wahhaab bin ` Abdur-Rahmaan bin Rustum, al- Khaariji al- ` Ibaadhi, and it was named al- Wahhaabiyyah after his name. He changed the Islaamic Law, and he annulled hajj, and there occurred between him and his opposition several wars...until he said: he died in the year 197H, in the city of Taahirat in North Africa, and he informed that this sect took its name: because of what it innovated into the madhhab from changes and beliefs, and they used to hate the Shi'ah, with the same hatred they had towards Ahl as-Sunnah. And this individual had spoke in his praiseworthy book about the Islaamic sects in North Africa from the conquering of the Arabs till the time of the author, nearly the present time.

And concerning `Abdul- Wahhaab bin Rustum there is some difference of opinion, regarding the date of his death, from those who wrote about him, and az-Zarkili said in al- A'laam that he died about 190 H.

With that, I said to him, and those present: This is the Wahhaabiyyah which split up the Muslims, and the one for which these verdicts, from the scholars and the fuqahaa ' of Spain and North Africa, were given about, just as you see in their books of creed, and they are correct in what they said about it.

As for the da'wah of Shaykh Muhammad bin `Abdul- Wahhaab, which was aided by the Imaam Muhammad bin Sa'ud, may Allaah have mercy on him, and is authentic Salafiyyah, then it is the opposite of the Khawaarij and their actions, because it was established upon the Book of Allaah, and what is authentic from the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah ((مرسو و هي لع هل ل ا ل ص)), and it discards what opposes them, and it is from Ahl as-Sunnah wal Jama'ah.

And the doubts which were spread in the Islaamic lands, were circulated by the enemies of Islaam, and the Muslims, from the colonialists as well as others, in order to create a division in their ranks, as the colonialists had taken over most of the Islaamic World at that time, and it was their prime time, and they knew from their crusades that their first enemy in actualizing their power: was an Islaam free of taint, as exemplified by following the path of the Salaf. And so they saw a guise by which they could cover this da'wah in order to drive people away from it, and to split up the Muslims- because their strategy was divide and conquer. And this is because Salaah ad- Deen al- Ayyoobi (R) did not remove them from the lands of Shaam to some other place except after he put an end to the state of the Fatimids -the ' Ubaydi Baatinis -in Egypt, then he took the scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah from ash-Shaam and spread them throughout the lands of Egypt, so Egypt was changed from Baatini Shi'ism, to the way of Ahl as-Sunnah, which is clear in its evidences, action, and creed.

So the colonialists feared a replay of events, after they saw that the Sunni Nation of Tawheed - which was lead by the two Imaams: Muhammad bin `Abdul- Wahhaab, and Muhammad bin Sa'ud, then those who came after them- that its works were spreading, and those who were responding to its da'wah were increasing. And it is known to you that the colonialist did not enter an Islaamic land except that he sought to alienate Ahl as-Sunnah, and become close with the people of innovation and desire, because they are his means for what they wish to do in the Islaamic lands.

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